



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary – DCA16PM008

Interview of: ██████████, Rescue Swimmer for helicopter 6030

Date/Time: December 11, 2015 0905 to 1000

Location: Coast Guard sector Boston (Mr. ██████████ by phone from Air Station Cape Cod)

Interviewed by: ██████████ – NTSB, ██████████ – USCG, ██████████ – USCG,
██████████ – USCG

Case: Sinking of fishing vessel Orin C

AST 3 ██████████ joined the US Coast Guard in 2010 and is stationed at Cape Cod Air Station. He has been in the Boston area a little more than 2 years. He has been qualified as a rescue swimmer for about one year. This was his first case on his first operational deployment. It was a normal day when he reported to work around 1530. They conducted a safety brief and began preparations for a training mission around Nantucket sound. The training mission was to last about two hours. The weather was good during the mission. The wind was blowing good and he estimated the sea conditions at the time to be about 6 feet. Their training mission had been completed when they received a call from sector southeastern New England that there was a boat sinking and there was a 47-foot motor lifeboat from Gloucester sent to pick up the crew. They were informed that CPR was ongoing. There was no additional information.

The helicopter crew contacted sector Boston but there was not much more information available. They were relayed the GPS position of the vessel and helicopter started flying in that direction. He recalled it was about 20 to 25 minutes to reach the motor lifeboat. They had no radio contact with the motor lifeboat until about 10 minutes out. Once in contact they asked how long the person had been unconscious for and how long CPR was performed? They were informed CPR was ongoing for about 20 minutes. The motor lifeboat also said they had pulse which he considered to be a good sign. The crew onboard the helicopter discussed a plan to get down to the 47 with an AED.

Once the helicopter arrived on scene he recalled that the winds were strong with seas 8 to 10 feet. The motor lifeboat was moving good with the waves from the bow. Conditions were good for the hoist operation. The crew onboard discussed options. The rescue swimmer knew it was crucial to get down to the motor boat. They didn't want lifeboat to be dead in the water for the hoist. They planned for a trailing deployment of the rescue swimmer with an EMT kit. After the safety briefing they commenced the hoist. It was way rough and not like he had experienced before. They made two attempts to land him on the 47. On the second attempt he hit hard. Once he got hoisted back into the helicopter he plugged back into the intercom system. They stayed on scene for about 20 minutes after that until the fuel state became a concern. During that time, he overheard radio communications with sector regarding the recommendation to stop CPR. It was about 45 minutes to one hour since CPR commenced. He heard on the radio and 47 was headed back to Gloucester. The helicopter was cleared to return to base where they landed and conducted a debrief.

During the hoist he saw about three coast guard crewmembers on the aft deck. One or two doing CPR and the others tending the trail line. The helicopter had no communications directly with the flight surgeon.

When asked about the briefing conducted before the hoist, he said it was a normal rescue checks and they also briefed the 47. The helicopter remained on scene and returned to base only when fuel got low.

Details of the hoist: After they got the trail line down, he got lowered down. He remained down for both attempts to get on deck. He had a hard landing on the buoyancy chamber. That was where they practice. He would've fallen down if he unhooked. The EMT kit weighed about 50 pounds. On the second attempt he could not disconnect and he fell off the back of the motor lifeboat. It was not safe to disconnect. The flight mechanic then hoisted him back up to the helicopter. There were some harsh movements and he was upside down. The rescue swimmer stated he was not injured. He was sore but nothing more.

The first time they were notified of any distress was at the end of the training mission. They were first notified from sector southeastern New England. On scene they did not see any debris the rescue swimmer remembered using a forward-looking infrared camera until they have visual contact with the 47. Once on scene, the rescue swimmer was focused on getting ready. His biggest concern was how long the casualty had been unconscious.

Rescue swimmer stated that he only saw 47 with the forward-looking infrared camera and nothing else. He was not sure if it was recorded. At the time they were on scene it was dark.

When asked about the type of AED they had on board the helicopter, he said he did not know the specific brand but said it was one of the simplified ones where you press a button and it talks to you.

When asked to recall what he saw during the hoist, he remembered the casualty on deck with his immersion suit on. There were coast guard crew doing CPR and one on the trail line. One of the ones doing CPR came to help the other crew member working the trail line. The rescue swimmer had no communications directly with the boat at that time of the hoist. Once back in the helicopter and back on communications, the crew agreed to call off the hoist.

When asked if there were any discussions to lower the AED to the more lifeboat, he said he could not remember a discussion of this.

Interview concluded approx. 1000