

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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 IN RE: :  
 :  
 THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.  
 COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001  
 OCTOBER 1, 2015 :  
 :  
 -----:

INTERVIEW OF: JAMES ROBINSON, CHIEF ENGINEER

Thursday,  
 October 8, 2015

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE

CARRIE BELL, NTSB  
 BRIAN YOUNG, NTSB  
 MIKE MILLAR, ABS  
 LOUIS O'DONNELL, ABS  
 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard  
 LEE PETERSON, TOTE Services  
 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

GIL FELTEL, ESQ., Tanner Bishop

This transcript was produced from audio provided  
 by the National Transportation Safety Board.

## P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1  
2 MR. YOUNG: Thank you for being here, we  
3 appreciate it. The purpose of this investigation is to  
4 increase safety. We're not here to assign fault,  
5 blame, or liability. We can and will provide you with  
6 a transcript or a summary of this interview if you  
7 wish.

8 We will be recording the interview, and when  
9 we do go around the table and just verify that it's  
10 okay with you that we do record it. And the reason we  
11 record it is so that we accurately capture everything  
12 you're telling us. And I cannot write as fast as you  
13 speak, and I don't want to miss anything.

14 You are allowed to have one representative  
15 of your choice. The representative may not testify for  
16 the interviewee. And the representative's comments  
17 should be limited to objections and not grounds for the  
18 NTSB from refrain from asking questions. But I  
19 appreciate your help all day today.

20 My name is Brian Young, I am an NTSB  
21 investigator in the engineering group. My group has  
22 been formed to work with technical experts to try to  
23 work together and gather information and facts to help  
24 determine the probable cause of the accident.

25 In my group, we have three other companies.

1 One of them is American Bureau of Shipping, one is the  
2 United States Coast Guard, and one is TOTE. Each one  
3 of our groups is allowed to have multiple people within  
4 it and they are having other people at this interview  
5 as well to listen in and ask some other questions.

6 The way the interview will work is I will  
7 kick it off, I'll ask a few questions. We will all  
8 give you plenty of time to answer, no one will  
9 interrupt you. We try to keep it where we discuss one  
10 item that we're thinking about, and then we'll go  
11 around the room, other people will ask questions, and  
12 then we'll move on so that we're not firing random  
13 questions at you left and right.

14 And just as a review, the NTSB, we're an  
15 independent federal agency. We are charged with  
16 determining the probable cause. We are not a part of  
17 DOT or the United States Coast Guard and we have no  
18 regulatory or enforcement powers.

19 If you don't understand anything, just let  
20 us know. We'll rephrase the question. And if you  
21 don't know the answer, there's nothing wrong with  
22 saying I don't know or I can't recall. Do you have any  
23 questions? Good to go? And again, thank you for being  
24 here.

25 So we are going to go live, if everybody's

1 ready. Okay. The time is 1858. It's Thursday,  
2 October 8th. We're in Jacksonville, Florida  
3 interviewing the Chief Engineer who is off duty of the  
4 El Faro.

5 My name is Brian Young, I'm the NTSB Group  
6 Chairman for the Engineering department.

7 MR. O'DONNELL: Louie O'Donnell, Assistant  
8 Chief Surveyor of Americans, ABS.

9 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard.  
10 I'm here assisting with the engineering working group.

11 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED]  
12 [REDACTED] from the Coast Guard assisting with the  
13 stability part.

14 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB Human  
15 Performance Group Chairman.

16 MR. PETERSON: Lee Peterson. I'm the  
17 Director of Human Resources for TOTE Services.

18 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar with ABS, and I'm  
19 also assisting.

20 MR. FELTEL: Gil Feltel, Tanner Bishop law  
21 firm here on behalf of Mr. Robinson.

22 MR. YOUNG: Great. And if you would  
23 introduce yourself and spell your last name for the  
24 record, please.

25 MR. ROBINSON: James Robinson, R-O-B-I-N-S-

1 O-N. Off duty Chief Engineer of the SS El Faro.

2 MR. YOUNG: Great. Thank you very much.

3 And just before we start, we have gone through the  
4 basic set up of the engine room with the first and  
5 second engineers.

6 We've established the set up of the boilers  
7 and the propulsion system, the turbo generators, the  
8 emergency generator. So we have a very good account of  
9 the way those are set up, so we kind of want to just  
10 continue on and not start from scratch with all those  
11 details.

12 And I think we kind of discussed that  
13 beforehand, so we won't make this interview go on too  
14 long with that sort of information. But we would like  
15 to start with your background, Chief. If you would  
16 maybe give you a short description of your maritime  
17 training and your marine engineering experience.

18 MR. ROBINSON: I graduated Maine Maritime  
19 1996. I worked for Dyn Marine for a seven month tour  
20 on a survey vessel. Then I came back and I shipped out  
21 of the Great Lakes as third engineer for two and a half  
22 years.

23 And then September of '99 I started with Sea  
24 Star at the time. I did a ten week tour as third, came  
25 back as second. Worked as second engineer for, like, a

1 year and a half, then moved up to first. Then 2006 I  
2 came over to the El Faro as Chief Engineer. From 2006  
3 to 2009 I was on that ship, the El Faro.

4 And a job opened up on the SS El Moro  
5 because the El Faro was in between cargo going across  
6 seas. So I wanted a stateside job, so I got moved as  
7 chief engineer on the El Moro. And then when they  
8 decommissioned the El Moro and activated the El Faro, I  
9 reassumed chief on the El Faro and I've been chief  
10 since.

11 MR. YOUNG: That bump our date of when you  
12 assumed chief of the El Faro? About what year?

13 MR. ROBINSON: It was 2013 they, yes, like  
14 broke it back out. The ship died in 2013 and then --

15 PARTICIPANT: The end of '13?

16 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. Yes, it was December of  
17 '13.

18 MR. YOUNG: And just for the record, I  
19 forgot to say this one part in the introduction. We  
20 are recording this, and are you okay with that?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay, thank you. And what  
23 current license do you hold?

24 MR. ROBINSON: Chief engineer, unlimited  
25 steam and motor.

1 MR. YOUNG: And way back when in Maine  
2 Maritime, can you let us know what type of steam  
3 propulsion training you received at the academy?

4 MR. ROBINSON: We were on a steam ship.

5 MR. YOUNG: Were you?

6 MR. ROBINSON: So it was, yes it was a steam  
7 propulsion plant. We had classes on the ship, training  
8 on the ship. During the two month school cruise, you  
9 know, you get quizzed on the boilers, the operation,  
10 you would have junior duties with actual licensed  
11 people on board that would do that. So there was  
12 training on the ship.

13 MR. YOUNG: Throughout your entire academy  
14 time, you did all your sea time on the steam ship,  
15 correct?

16 MR. ROBINSON: The school ship was steam,  
17 and I went cadet shipping with Gulf Oil. That was an  
18 old steam ship.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Great.

20 PARTICIPANT: You got a noisy phone.

21 MR. YOUNG: Hit it with a hammer?

22 PARTICIPANT: Yes. How about the other end?

23 (Simultaneous speaking)

24 PARTICIPANT: Oh, gosh.

25 MR. ROBINSON: Actually, those are battery

1 operated, so it may keep running.

2 PARTICIPANT: There you go.

3 MR. ROBINSON: Done.

4 MR. YOUNG: Right? Okay, so when we did  
5 talk to the First and the Second, they did explain a  
6 good amount about the different propulsion systems.  
7 Getting into your daily routine as Chief, maybe you  
8 could just describe your job description and what your  
9 daily duties are as Chief aboard the El Faro.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Well, that was the good thing  
11 about being Chief. You didn't have a schedule. You  
12 could get your paperwork done. But on average, you  
13 know, I was always in the projects or whatever. I  
14 would be down in the engine room. If the first beat me  
15 down there, it was very odd.

16 But, you know, I take care of the ordering.  
17 And then I work with the first or whatever if it was  
18 time to o-val (phonetic) a pump or anything when I was  
19 on there, I wanted to have my hands on it.

20 So not that I did not trust my engineers,  
21 it's just I like mechanical mechanics and I would try  
22 to step back and let them get involved. But a lot of  
23 times I would get carried away. I was really active in  
24 the engine room, maintenance details. You know, the  
25 first ran the show.



1 I would back out of that and I would just  
2 keep track of the entries in AMOS, making sure that  
3 everything was being, you know, kept up to date. And  
4 he kept the running work log because he knew what he  
5 had this guys doing, but it was on the computer and I  
6 can see.

7 You know, and then any out of the ordinary  
8 things that I worked on, I would put that in the AMOS  
9 as far as if summaries and you had a pump you wanted to  
10 rebuild or whatever just for inspection, that was an  
11 unscheduled maintenance. So you know, anything like  
12 that I would always enter, reorder whatever parts I  
13 needed or whatever.

14 So basically hands on, take care of any of  
15 the operations, making sure that the AMOS is up.  
16 Reefer cargo, I was in charge of, you know, I would do  
17 a round with the electrician at least once a day. But  
18 if anything broke down or if he had a down reefer, it's  
19 the chief engineer's responsibility to work with the  
20 electrician who's the reefer guy. So we got involved  
21 with that quite a bit.

22 MR. YOUNG: And how about when it comes to,  
23 say management of the SMS system, how were you involved  
24 with that?

25 MR. ROBINSON: The deck bar, you mean you're

1 talking the safety management? You know, they have a  
2 list of activity, whatever they've got to cover each  
3 month. So each week at a drill we'll discuss this or  
4 cover, you know, our safety meeting.

5 So they had everything that they would go  
6 through the training. If it was something that the  
7 engine room, you know, black out recovery or flooding  
8 in a cargo hold, we would get involved and discuss  
9 during the meetings on any of the engine activities or  
10 whatever, we would be involved in that.

11 But a lot of the meetings or whatever, you  
12 know, like hot work permits and just that was all  
13 spread out. You had a month to cover all the topics  
14 required, and that's the way they did it each week.  
15 Take a little bit and --

16 MR. YOUNG: And would you hold any sort of  
17 daily, pre-work safety meetings? Was that any sort of  
18 requirement, like a toolbox talk or anything?

19 MR. ROBINSON: It would depend on what we  
20 were doing.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

22 MR. ROBINSON: I mean, regular daily  
23 maintenance. But if we had a boiler down for cleaning,  
24 you know, it's like hey, we're going to do this, this,  
25 this and as far as so everybody was up to snuff because

1 it's, boiler cleaning's routine. At least once a ten  
2 week tour you go into each boiler and clean it,  
3 inspection, you know, just for yourself to see what's  
4 going on.

5 You know, tank entry, something you don't do  
6 normal then you would have the toolbox meeting or  
7 whatever. But for regular maintenance, the first, he  
8 would discuss, you know, this is how I want to do it,  
9 make sure they understand. And then keep dropping by  
10 and making sure they're doing whatever the project is  
11 correctly.

12 MR. YOUNG: And I noticed trying to read  
13 through your SMS system, your company's SMS system that  
14 you, all the engineers are required to compile turn  
15 over notes.

16 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

17 MR. YOUNG: Are those sent into the office,  
18 or are they retained aboard the ship?

19 MR. ROBINSON: They're supposed to be sent  
20 into the office.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And do you know if that  
22 has been done?

23 MR. ROBINSON: As far as I know, my last  
24 reliefs, and I sent it to Tim Neace (phonetic) and this  
25 when I get off first of September. So pretty well

1 consistent.

2 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So of the three engineers  
3 we're talking to, you were the most recent aboard the  
4 ship. You just got off first of September?

5 MR. ROBINSON: I got off as chief there at  
6 first of September. But I went home for two weeks,  
7 then I came back to the vessel to help with the  
8 conversion work, doing wire and so I come back for a  
9 month and then I got off September 22nd I believe.

10 MR. YOUNG: Oh, so you just got off a week  
11 ago?

12 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, a week before. Yes.

13 MR. YOUNG: Okay, so you're very recent.  
14 The other guys we talked to were beginning of August.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. They're at the end of  
16 the ten week tour right now, vacation.

17 MR. YOUNG: So when you were aboard for this  
18 month of your vacation, what role were you in?

19 MR. ROBINSON: I was just a contractor.

20 MR. YOUNG: A supernumerary?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And you were assisting  
23 with the conversion work?

24 MR. ROBINSON: Pulling wires and whatever.

25 MR. YOUNG: On your time now, all right well

1 we'll just before I start changing to that, before I go  
2 on, we'll just go around the room. If anyone has any  
3 questions based on the Chief's experience or the daily  
4 routine or anything we just discussed before we move  
5 into anything else.

6 PARTICIPANT: No further questions.

7 MR. YOUNG: [REDACTED]

8 PARTICIPANT: I'm good.

9 PARTICIPANT: No further questions.

10 MR. YOUNG: Okay, good. And as we said  
11 before, we did get a lot of information about the  
12 equipment and how it's operated by your junior  
13 officers. But I didn't realize you had been aboard the  
14 ship so recently.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

16 MR. YOUNG: And I guess from what we  
17 understood the last two interviews, everything seemed  
18 to be working absolutely perfect. There was no  
19 problems with the boilers, the TGs, the emergency  
20 generator or the main unit. It seemed like there were  
21 no major incidents or anything to report.

22 Were you aware, or did you see anything  
23 different since you got off, during the time you were  
24 on there as the supernumerary. Did you see anything as  
25 you were riding back and forth with the ship at sea?

1 Anything --

2 MR. ROBINSON: No, not --

3 MR. YOUNG: -- operationally that could have  
4 caused --

5 MR. ROBINSON: Nothing that wasn't normal  
6 routine, I mean, steam ships there's always little  
7 things come up that, you know, nothing, it was nothing  
8 show stopping. It was just regular wear and tear, you  
9 know, and changing out a pump motor on one of the  
10 contaminated. But, I mean, nothing that would affect  
11 the propulsion or anything.

12 MR. YOUNG: Okay. The other chief that you  
13 relieved that was aboard the ship, did you guys have a  
14 good relationship on your turnovers?

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, yes. I mean, I worked  
16 side, I mean, we had the salt water line on the feed  
17 pumps that had pinholes in it, so we had to do a salt  
18 water service shutdown and I worked with him for a  
19 whole day doing that. I mean, I had a good  
20 relationship with him, you know, I could work with him.  
21 So I mean, we had no issues.

22 MR. YOUNG: No issues.

23 MR. ROBINSON: We got along.

24 MR. YOUNG: As chief, you're managing a  
25 whole department, engine department, licensed and

1       unlicensed guys, what was your general view of safety  
2       aboard the ship and the safety culture of your  
3       department?

4                   MR. ROBINSON:  It was very good.  I mean,  
5       each meeting (inaudible) first day safety meeting it's  
6       like hey, is there any safety issues, does everybody  
7       have everything to make, you know, has any questions if  
8       they don't have, you know, everything's addressed.

9                   I mean, everything for safety we have, and  
10      if it's something brought up, we don't have it, we'll  
11      get it.  So yes, as far as the safety factor on the  
12      ship, that is stressed big time.

13                  MR. YOUNG:  Okay.  And when it comes to the  
14      company supporting you in terms of safety issues, were  
15      you getting support from the company?

16                  MR. ROBINSON:  Oh, 100 percent, yes.

17                  MR. YOUNG:  Okay.  In terms of maintenance  
18      and AMOS, was there ever any pressure for you to defer  
19      any maintenance or did they give you support to receive  
20      --

21                  MR. ROBINSON:  They, yes, the support was  
22      great on that.  I mean, whatever the shortest time  
23      period, you get whatever you needed.  If you didn't  
24      have it on board, you put in an emergency req and as  
25      soon as the vendor can have it or whatever, it's there.

1 You know, there was no --

2 MR. YOUNG: And in AMOS, I'm familiar with  
3 AMOS in the maintenance where the jobs come up  
4 chronologically, and if they don't get done they  
5 continue to rise to the top. Is there any way that you  
6 know of that you can defer the maintenance and just  
7 delete it from the system or defer it?

8 MR. ROBINSON: You can't delete it. You can  
9 take it, if you put a defer date and then if they come  
10 on and look at that because when they first started it  
11 they were deferring it but they weren't going up in the  
12 detail section and writing okay, deferred until  
13 shipyard or whatever reasoning was, deferred because  
14 waiting for parts.

15 And we had an audit, this was a long time  
16 ago, and they actually brought that up. You know, it's  
17 like hey, why did you defer this because it wasn't  
18 consistent. Everybody didn't put a reason why it was  
19 deferred. So you can't delete. Any changes in that  
20 system, you've got to be a system administrator.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

22 MR. ROBINSON: So somebody external. If we  
23 had to add parts, we did not have access. So if I got  
24 a wicks (phonetic) filter instead of a Baldwin, I would  
25 have to send an email to have them put the part number



1 in just for a five minute change. So there was no way  
2 to manipulate that system and --

3 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

4 MR. ROBINSON: -- you could change due dates  
5 or stuff like that. But there was no way to take out a  
6 record that if this equipment wasn't there anymore, I  
7 would have to write a thing up. It's like hey, okay,  
8 we don't have this anymore, can you take this out.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And did the company ever  
10 oversee your maintenance and keep an eye, keep track of  
11 what was overdue? Was there any sort of oversight on  
12 their part?

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, because I mean, that  
14 was, when we first activated the ship, the ship had  
15 been laid up for, you know, a year or whatever it was.  
16 So you've got all these jobs that are due, past due.  
17 So you had to have a start point. So they worked with  
18 us and we got everything.

19 So it was getting replicated for the next  
20 month or two months or whatever. So yes, no, I mean  
21 they would come on board and during discussions or  
22 whatever, they'll ask if there's any issues or  
23 everything's going good and, you know, if you've got a  
24 problem you bring it up.

25 But you know, as far as you just let them

1 know. I mean, they can see AMOS on the other end on  
2 shore. So they get in sometimes and look what we have,  
3 parts, if the other ship needs it.

4 MR. YOUNG: Right, right. And I know part  
5 of SMS too is evaluating your junior officers and your  
6 crew. Did you do formal evaluations of any of the  
7 people that worked for you?

8 MR. ROBINSON: We did. It wasn't, you know,  
9 you sail with the guys for so long, they just get the  
10 same, you know, yes. You'll give excellence because  
11 you always got room for improvement.

12 I don't care how good you are or who you  
13 are, you know, superior you're not, I mean, you do that  
14 and then they start thinking, you know, it's like hey,  
15 I'm already at where I need to be. It's like no, I  
16 want these guys always thinking for themselves.

17 So yes, they have anybody that's under when  
18 I'm on the ship, if it's new crew you're supposed to  
19 submit them each time you depart the vessel. But if  
20 it's the same guys or whatever, you know, the new  
21 people, you give them two.

22 But if you've given 20 evals to these  
23 people. But if you've got a guy that's not pulling his  
24 weight or not progressing like he is, you'll give,  
25 like, a mid tour verbal or whatever.

1                   And then at the end, you know, or give him  
2 one that doesn't get submitted and that's his incentive  
3 to step it up. And you want to see a change by the end  
4 of the ten weeks. If not, don't bother coming back.

5                   MR. YOUNG: Right, right. And some of the  
6 guys that were aboard the El Faro, and I know you were  
7 just there recently, but did you have any prior  
8 evaluations or experience with Howard, Mike Holland, or  
9 Mitchell Kuflik? Had you ever dealt with those guys  
10 before?

11                   MR. ROBINSON: Mitch was my third on there.  
12 Yes, they all got, Howie --

13                   MR. YOUNG: Any performance issues?

14                   MR. ROBINSON: There was not. No.

15                   MR. YOUNG: No, okay.

16                   MR. ROBINSON: The new third I didn't. He  
17 came on in San Juan after I had departed the vessel so  
18 I didn't know him. Mike Holland, I mean, when they  
19 came on, yes they were fresh out of school. But they  
20 were smart kids. And it's like hey, you know, after  
21 the first week you stand six and six.

22                   I would discuss it with the first because I  
23 don't want to get a phone call in the middle of the  
24 night. It's like you guys are going to stay six and  
25 six until I'm confident that this guy knows some of the

1 emergency procedures.

2 Get started before the rest of the engineers  
3 get down. So I've never had, over the last, these  
4 engineers have progressed up, you know, to the ability  
5 that they can stand their own watch real quick.

6 MR. YOUNG: So when a new engineer does come  
7 aboard the ship, he's doubled up with somebody on  
8 watch?

9 MR. ROBINSON: That's, yes. Right, yes.

10 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

11 MR. ROBINSON: During the daytime I don't  
12 because we're always down there, somebody's down there.  
13 But the 12:00 to 4:00, if he was on that, they would be  
14 six and six until I'm comfortable.

15 MR. YOUNG: Until they prove themselves?

16 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

17 MR. YOUNG: That's good.

18 MR. ROBINSON: And that's what they do,  
19 they're drilling them. This happens, what are you  
20 going to do? You know, and then when they say he's  
21 ready, then I get together with them and it's like  
22 okay, what do you do if this happens right now? If I  
23 don't like his answer, they find out.

24 MR. YOUNG: More six and six?

25 MR. ROBINSON: Oh yes. The guys get really

1 tired of it real quick because they want, I say you  
2 guys got to get him up to speed.

3 MR. YOUNG: That's good incentive. And is  
4 this your own little system of qualified people, or is  
5 that a company --

6 MR. ROBINSON: No, I know my relief Rich was  
7 doing the same thing. But that's why, as far as I  
8 know, Mitch had stayed on to ride around just for  
9 training purposes. Am I correct on that?

10 PARTICIPANT: I don't know.

11 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. That was my  
12 understanding. But he was going to ride back to Jax.  
13 but why he rode further, I don't know.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay. But this wasn't a company  
15 policy to go six and six until the chief is  
16 comfortable. This was --

17 MR. ROBINSON: No, it's just something we do  
18 on board so they get him up to speed quicker no matter  
19 if they know the plant or whatever.

20 MR. YOUNG: Got it. Okay, any other  
21 questions regarding crew aboard and evaluations and  
22 from the rest of us?

23 PARTICIPANT: A question on something you  
24 mentioned. It's not relevant, I guess it is. Just can  
25 you clarify, you said that there was a salt water line

1 that had pinholes in it that you had worked on?

2 MR. ROBINSON: Oh, it's just --

3 PARTICIPANT: What line was that?

4 MR. ROBINSON: It's the cooling water line  
5 for the lube oil and feed pumps.

6 PARTICIPANT: Okay.

7 MR. ROBINSON: It just was starting to have  
8 a couple rubber soft patches on it. And before it got  
9 to the point, you know, to do a salt water shutdown,  
10 you've got a lot of set up external feeds for different  
11 equipment.

12 And then just go down, crop it up, and raise  
13 a new one in. But that was just a scheduled  
14 maintenance job that we didn't want to take the chance  
15 of having it pop. Even if it did, you can just hook a  
16 water hose up to it as a connection right there. So  
17 that's what we did do the salt water repair.

18 [REDACTED] This is Lieutenant  
19 Commander [REDACTED] Just in terms of the maintenance  
20 that you've had to do, did you see an increase in the  
21 amount of maintenance when the ship was going through  
22 rough seas ever, anything related to, you know, a lot  
23 of (inaudible) or blistering, things like that.

24 MR. ROBINSON: I can always say I've been on  
25 these ships since '99 and I've hit rough weather

1 probably a handful of times. And nothing changes. You  
2 may, you know, just latch everything down. But as far  
3 as plant efficient, I mean plant running or whatever,  
4 just hang on. Just makes your daily work a little  
5 harder. But no, I haven't seen, like I said, I've  
6 never been involved in the rough weather. So I can't  
7 say on that.

8 MS. BELL: I have a couple of questions.  
9 This is Carrie Bell, NTSB. For the new people that  
10 come, are you responsible for training them for safety  
11 drills? Is that something you do or your guys do?

12 MR. ROBINSON: You've got, well you've got a  
13 chief standing orders, then you've got an  
14 indoctrination log book. The first engineer, this is a  
15 company indoctrination book. You've got all the  
16 topics, the escape routes, what your duties are, your  
17 station bill duties, muster locations.

18 So when the new guy comes on board, the guy  
19 gets the book, reads through it. And then the first  
20 engineer talks through it, making sure he's understand,  
21 familiar with the whole indoctrination guidelines. And  
22 then he signs it and the first signs it. So that's --

23 MS. BELL: So about how long does that take,  
24 to go through all that?

25 MR. ROBINSON: The indoctrination, I mean,

1 usually they'll read it over when they're down on watch  
2 or the first maintenance they're on. So I mean, you're  
3 looking at a couple hours to read through it.

4 I mean, you're looking at about four hours  
5 maybe. But you know, it's sufficient for what we need  
6 there. You know, you can't cover all topics but that's  
7 what the training is for each month at drills.

8 You just get them started on what the duties  
9 are, muster locations. And then the training  
10 throughout, whether it's engine room training or if I'm  
11 teaching them how to do something it's covered  
12 throughout the rest of the time.

13 MS. BELL: And I think you answered my next  
14 question which was about how often you do the safety  
15 drills.

16 MR. ROBINSON: They've got, we've got fire  
17 drills, the safety meetings, you cover so many topics  
18 throughout the month. But monthly, you've got to hold  
19 a company or a ship wide safety meeting that basically  
20 anybody can bring up any concerns or whatever.

21 They discuss last month safety meeting  
22 minutes, whatever was brought up. This handrail was  
23 broke, and it's like next thing, yes it was repaired  
24 and it's got to be entered into the minutes. But as  
25 far as the training, that's a weekly. Each week we



1 have a fire drill and the training's covered each week.

2 MS. BELL: What about any kind of an abandon  
3 ship drill?

4 MR. ROBINSON: Those are scheduled. I'm not  
5 sure what the frequency, but at least once in whatever  
6 that rotation is of lists of all the different training  
7 that's got to be covered. There's an abandon ship, you  
8 know, man overboard. So they actually, northbound,  
9 will do a Williamson turn, go back and try to find the  
10 box.

11 MS. BELL: Okay.

12 MR. ROBINSON: Because northbound we don't  
13 have to, we can go slow and not meet schedules. So  
14 that's when they carry out drills like that.

15 MS. BELL: Okay, thank you.

16 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar with ABS. When you  
17 were talking about the indoctrination, is that the  
18 familiarization form for a new person, or does every  
19 time an engineer --

20 MR. ROBINSON: Every time an engineer or  
21 anybody comes on board, you've got to sign the chief  
22 engineer's standing orders. Go through --

23 (Simultaneous speaking)

24 MR. MILLAR: Okay, so they're going through  
25 a familiarization about their emergency station bill,

1 their emergency locations and assigned duties?

2 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

3 MR. MILLAR: And then they're getting more  
4 into the engineering side for the engineers, right?

5 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

6 MR. MILLAR: Okay, okay. And for the  
7 abandon ship drills that she brought up, since you've  
8 been on the ship, when they did them were they actual,  
9 did they lower the boat to the water? Did they launch  
10 it?

11 MR. ROBINSON: That's done monthly. But as  
12 far as during the drills, you lower to the embarkation  
13 deck, run the (inaudible). Then once a month --

14 (Off microphone comment)

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, the lifeboat engine  
16 itself is run weekly. The third engineer goes up there  
17 and checks all the levels. Any service is due on them,  
18 you know, changes the oil and stuff. But they exercise  
19 the flooding gear, you know, each drill.

20 So yes, everything exercised and brought to  
21 the embarkation deck unless something happens there  
22 that it was just done for, like, we had Chad Harding on  
23 there when I was here.

24 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

25 MR. ROBINSON: So we had just lowered them

1 to the embarkation deck. So the next day was the  
2 drill, so we didn't.

3 MR. MILLAR: Is that the clutch overhauls?

4 MR. ROBINSON: I'm not sure. I was getting  
5 them to process when I left. They were working on  
6 that. I don't know where that ended up.

7 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

8 MR. YOUNG: All set? Back with Brian Young  
9 from the NTSB. While you were aboard the ship as a  
10 supernumerary, was the Polish riding gang on there with  
11 you?

12 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, they were.

13 MR. YOUNG: Could you give us the scope of  
14 work of what they were working on?

15 MR. ROBINSON: During my time we had two  
16 welders that was building frameworks for motor  
17 controllers, installing bumpers. And then there were  
18 the other four. We pulled all the new cabled set up  
19 for the new ice wenchers and ramp wenchers and stuff.

20 It was, like, 5,000 feet of cable that had  
21 to be pulled. So that's pretty much, we had the lifts  
22 on board and void out whatever areas of cargo and they  
23 would be pulling wire north and south.

24 MR. YOUNG: They never had anything to do  
25 with any propulsion systems in the engine room?

1 MR. ROBINSON: No.

2 MR. YOUNG: Great, okay. What we like to  
3 do, unless any question about the riding gang, anybody?

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The scope of work, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
5 from the Coast Guard. Would they have any reason to be  
6 in the hold station while doing work?

7 MR. ROBINSON: No, everything was on the  
8 second deck. Yes, they had some, like I said, back on  
9 the stern they had a couple brackets and frameworks for  
10 a big wench controller that they were working on,  
11 platform. But it was all --

12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] So anything they were welding  
13 on, any cable runs, anything they were doing --

14 MR. ROBINSON: That was, 99 percent of it  
15 was on the weather deck. And either Jeff Mathias or  
16 myself was around --

17 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Supervising?

18 MR. ROBINSON: -- supervising each. We  
19 didn't just cut them loose. We had one guy that spoke  
20 English and he was the translator. You know, they  
21 could understand you, but you would find yourself  
22 talking down to people. Talk to people like you, I  
23 would be sitting here okay, you got to, it's like wait  
24 a minute. I'm not talking to somebody that doesn't  
25 speak English right now. It's like sorry.

1                   ██████████ That individual, that  
2 translator, do you know his name?

3                   MR. ROBINSON: Martin. I don't remember his  
4 last name. Martin was his first name. He would be on  
5 the ship's, yes, crew list.

6                   ██████████ Crew list, got you.

7                   MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar with ABS. When you  
8 were pulling the cables, were these cable transits  
9 above the weather deck, you know, above the main deck  
10 or were they --

11                   MR. ROBINSON: No, it was underneath.  
12 You've got your second deck in your overhead.

13                   MR. MILLAR: Okay.

14                   MR. ROBINSON: You've got the fore and aft  
15 structures, whether they would pick an empty one and  
16 run --

17                   MR. MILLAR: So these were cable transits  
18 coming from, like, the engine room into the cargo hold?

19                   MR. ROBINSON: We only had one, not going  
20 into the cargo hold. We had one water tight  
21 penetration coming from the engine room up to the  
22 second deck. But the rest of them was all tied from  
23 the second deck, tying from existing refer cables that  
24 were going to be eliminated in the shipyard and  
25 relocated. So we junction box and just run the wires

1 from there.

2 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

3 MR. ROBINSON: So as far as penetrations in  
4 the cargo holds or anything, there wasn't --

5 MR. MILLAR: No changes?

6 MR. ROBINSON: No.

7 MR. MILLAR: And when you say pulling  
8 cables, were you pulling new cables or were you --

9 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

10 MR. MILLAR: -- pulling old ones out?

11 MR. ROBINSON: There was a couple places  
12 that the wires were discontinued, that's what we did.  
13 They were still there for some reason, and we pulled  
14 the old wires out to make room for the new cable to go  
15 in its spot.

16 MR. MILLAR: All right. Would there have  
17 been any situation where you might have pulled that old  
18 cable and not plugged the transit?

19 MR. ROBINSON: No, nothing's penetrating the  
20 cargo hold.

21 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

22 MR. ROBINSON: Nothing was going down  
23 through the weather deck. Everything was on the  
24 overhead on the second deck.

25 MR. MILLAR: Okay, so if you had pulled any

1 of those cables, I don't know whether you did, but if  
2 you did pull those cables and the transit was refilled  
3 with the new cable, or were there any that were just --

4 MR. ROBINSON: We didn't make any  
5 penetrations up through the main deck or down through  
6 into the cargo hold.

7 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

8 MR. ROBINSON: Everything was all from  
9 existing power panels on the second deck. You just ran  
10 it up in an overhead back to wherever the winches were  
11 going to be mounted.

12 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, there was no  
14 penetrations into the water tight cargo holds or --

15 MR. MILLAR: Okay. I'm just thinking about  
16 the old kick pipe, you know, and you pulled out the old  
17 cable and there's the kick pipe.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, no.

19 MR. MILLAR: And you fill the kick pipe with  
20 a cork.

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, no. There was no  
22 penetrations because all the other wires were going to  
23 be terminated going from the second deck to the main  
24 deck. So everything from the watertight, there was  
25 nothing addressed.

1 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

2 MR. YOUNG: Anyone else for the riding gang?

3 So back with Brian Young from the NTSB. All right, so  
4 what we like to do is maybe focus more on some of the  
5 operations, parameters of some of the equipment in  
6 rough weather. All right, and the first thing I would  
7 like to kind of focus on is the fuel system.

8 We understand you bunker every week and  
9 typically ride in good weather. And when the ship is  
10 suspect to rough, rough weather, the fuel gets bounced  
11 around and maybe could develop some more junk in the  
12 strainers. Do you guys ever have any reports of bad  
13 fuel or any clogged strainers in the fuel system even  
14 in good weather, bad batches of fuel?

15 MR. ROBINSON: It's standard when you done  
16 fueling, you know, just the new fuel going into there  
17 you, I mean, you always, before you leave port they  
18 swap over the suction discharge strainer. It's just  
19 like putting in new burners in the boiler. You want  
20 boilers ready, fuel ready.

21 So there's no, I mean, some days you change  
22 it once a watch, sometimes you did it a couple of times  
23 a watch. But it's just some fuel, I mean, we haven't  
24 had, if you're saying a bad batch of fuel that we've  
25 had to be up all night or anything like that, no.



1 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

2 MR. ROBINSON: It's the standard one two,  
3 you know, guy comes down first thing and he's got to  
4 easily check it and change it from the first initial  
5 round. But it's standard each watch they pull it and  
6 clean it so it's ready to go for the next watch.

7 So in rough weather, I mean, yes we change  
8 it up a couple times, a few times. I mean, it's hit or  
9 miss. I can't say it's going to foul ten times in one  
10 watch. But some days you do have to change it a couple  
11 times. But it's just regular, routine, you know, they  
12 just automatically.

13 MR. YOUNG: And just to make sure we're  
14 verifying what we had received information before is  
15 there's one fuel (inaudible) over a high and a low  
16 suction. Correct?

17 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

18 MR. YOUNG: There's not two? And do you  
19 typically burn off the low suction?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

22 MR. ROBINSON: Mike told me, he said I open  
23 my mouth and didn't think of it.

24 (Simultaneous speaking)

25 MR. ROBINSON: As soon as he said it it's

1 like can I take that back.

2 MR. YOUNG: Okay, so you typically burn off  
3 the low suction?

4 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

5 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

6 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, in all the years on the  
7 ship I've never, the only time those get exercised  
8 monthly, greased, lubed up and I've never had to go  
9 from the low to the high because I was having issues.

10 MR. YOUNG: Okay. You've said you've never  
11 had to switch to high, right, in all the years?

12 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, in all the years I  
13 haven't. It just, those valves get secured when the  
14 ship was laid up, and regular monthly maintenance. The  
15 retrods get checked, knuckles greased. That's the only  
16 time we do go to the high. He'll open the high all the  
17 way up, shut the low, and then flip flop. That's  
18 monthly exercise.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay, great. But no reports of  
20 any bad fuel, any issues with any of the fuel you've  
21 received, right?

22 MR. ROBINSON: No.

23 MR. YOUNG: Okay, especially as of late, in  
24 the last few trips?

25 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, no. They've been

1 fueling in San Juan and in Jacksonville. And, you  
2 know, the month I was on there there was nothing out of  
3 the ordinary. And when I was on there, my regular  
4 rotation, nothing was, you know, couple strainers here  
5 and there but nothing out of the ordinary.

6 MR. YOUNG: Okay, great. Fuel questions,  
7 anyone?

8 PARTICIPANT: No, none.

9 PARTICIPANT: I like you. No, next.

10 PARTICIPANT: I'm good. I think we hammered  
11 that to death with the other two crew members.

12 MR. YOUNG: Yes, exactly. That's why we  
13 don't want to keep beating a dead horse with that. And  
14 then coming to the boilers now. If you could, we have  
15 got a pretty good description of how the boilers  
16 operate.

17 But maybe you could just review some of the  
18 shutdowns and some of the weather related shutdowns  
19 that could possibly be affected by rough weather such  
20 as say water level. Give us a little description on  
21 the shutdowns. And in your experience, have you had  
22 any of these alarms triggered, either properly or  
23 falsely.

24 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, the shutdown alarms is  
25 the only thing at low, low. You're high, high, all

1 that does is lock your throttle up. Then you can  
2 manually override it if you had to. But as far as when  
3 you're rocking and rolling, you may, but there's a  
4 delay on that.

5 So that's what your pressure, or your level  
6 indicator or transmitter, you know, they've got a time  
7 delay in the (inaudible). So yes, if you roll and that  
8 thing goes up to plus three or whatever, and then you  
9 go the other way, you got that time delay so you don't  
10 get the alarm all the time.

11 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

12 MR. ROBINSON: But if it gets to the point  
13 that it stays there for more than, I don't know, the  
14 different alarms are set up different times. You know,  
15 it could be a five second delay, it could be a 15  
16 second. But if it got to the point. But as far as  
17 getting to a low, low water, you're not, I mean,  
18 rocking and rolling you're not going to get that alarm.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So in the roughest  
20 weather you've seen on this ship in your experience,  
21 you've never gotten to the point where you've hit the  
22 low, low on rough weather?

23 MR. ROBINSON: No.

24 MR. YOUNG: No?

25 MR. ROBINSON: No. The only time I've ever

1 got the low, low is when I lost a feed pump.

2 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

3 MR. ROBINSON: Boy are you tested, you know?  
4 Your boiler automation, you've got a ABS approved  
5 automation test procedure. Every year before, we'll go  
6 through, like, if we shot down to a bottom blow, okay  
7 let's test the four (inaudible) fan trip or try to  
8 piece through that.

9 And then we carry that out throughout the  
10 year and trip the boiler a different way. And so that  
11 way you're completing your yearly inspection and you  
12 have it on record. So when they come in for the ABS  
13 audit, it's like yes, here's the self inspection, US  
14 Coast Guard ABS improved. And then they'll look  
15 through that, see that it's been done and they'll just  
16 say okay, do this one, do this one, and spot check it  
17 and always good to go.

18 MR. YOUNG: And that was passed on to us how  
19 well prepared your crew is before the inspections and  
20 surveys with the pre-testing.

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, it's not very good when  
22 you've got the ABS inspector there and you're fumbling  
23 around. You kind of, it doesn't look very good.

24 MR. YOUNG: And in your time on the ship, I  
25 know you've been there a while, have you had any

1 concerns or any failures of any of the automation on  
2 the boiler that could shut her down?

3 MR. ROBINSON: No, I mean for as old as  
4 these ships are, I mean, we've got a NORCOM that was  
5 different than the other two ships. They had all TMS.  
6 But I mean, besides losing a fire eye here and there  
7 when you have a standard shutdown, we haven't had any  
8 issues with this stuff.

9 You know, lighting off a dead plant when it  
10 come on to the scrap layup yard. Well when it was  
11 (inaudible) it was scrap. But you know, you have your  
12 certain issues from being down, power supplies. But  
13 underway, I haven't had any failures that shut me down.

14 MR. YOUNG: If you did lose electrical power  
15 and you want them to relight off the boiler, would it  
16 be absolutely necessary to have the emergency generator  
17 running in order to relight the boiler?

18 MR. ROBINSON: If you lost the main  
19 generator.

20 MR. YOUNG: Yes, if you lost your generators  
21 and you're in the black.

22 MR. ROBINSON: Well, if you had, see  
23 southbound we run both generators. You've got a small  
24 window there if one of them tripped or both of them  
25 tripped, if you can get that breaker closed again, you

1 can relight off your boilers. But you don't have much  
2 time.

3 But yes, if there's no way to reestablish  
4 one of those generators back on the board, you just  
5 shut the throttle, bottle the boilers up. You got to  
6 swing the plant over to the emergency plant. You got  
7 to backfeed your emergency generators, you got to strip  
8 your main board, make room to light off.

9 You know, so it's not, if you've got to  
10 swing the plant, it's not a five minute, you know, like  
11 a diesel ship you can just go over there and boom. It  
12 gets hot quick.

13 MR. YOUNG: If the emergency generator  
14 didn't start, it wasn't running, is there any way to  
15 get a fire to the boiler without emergency power or  
16 turbo generator power? Could it be done?

17 MR. ROBINSON: No, if you don't have power  
18 you don't have any --

19 MR. YOUNG: No fuel pressure?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. You don't have any fuel  
21 pumps, nothing.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Okay, boiler questions?  
23 That's all I got.

24 MR. O'DONNELL: All right, James, I got a  
25 couple. Lou O'Donnell, ABS. You mentioned the high

1 high water alarm. It locks out the throttles, it's set  
2 up to lock out the throttles instead of shutting down  
3 the throttles?

4 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, it will limit the  
5 throttles. Throttle limiting it's called. Yes.

6 MR. O'DONNELL: Throttle limiting, okay,  
7 okay.

8 MR. ROBINSON: That way you don't get carry  
9 over into your --

10 MR. O'DONNELL: Yes, that was going to be my  
11 next question. Thank you. All right, you never  
12 experienced a problem when you had high high water bad  
13 enough that it started locking you out of the  
14 throttles, or you never had any carry over to the  
15 turbines on any of these ships?

16 MR. ROBINSON: I've been fortunate. When I  
17 bring a boiler on line after service, I bring that  
18 throttle rate to shot. I mean, yes your lowest point's  
19 your feed pumps.

20 MR. O'DONNELL: Yes.

21 MR. ROBINSON: But I don't even take the  
22 chance. I shut everything off.

23 MR. O'DONNELL: Now I just wanted to ask, I  
24 asked both your engineers before, when you second, when  
25 you have them do a good bottom blow, I mean, really



1 give the boiler a good cleaning out, he said he did go  
2 down to low, but he didn't go to low low. Do you  
3 usually do that every time, or maybe just quarterly for  
4 your PMs or for AMOS?

5 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. It's not every time. I  
6 mean --

7 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay.

8 MR. ROBINSON: -- it takes a --

9 MR. O'DONNELL: Forever, yes I know.

10 MR. ROBINSON: It takes forever, you know  
11 what I mean?

12 MR. O'DONNELL: Yes. And it's a waste of a  
13 lot of good water.

14 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, yes. You're dumping out  
15 five, six ton of water out of that. But you know, it  
16 would get tested usually, you know, within a month or  
17 at least once a tour that you're on there.

18 MR. O'DONNELL: And asking you, but maybe  
19 indirectly asking Lee, and you mentioned the ABS  
20 approved boiler automation test procedure. Do you have  
21 that? Lee, you wouldn't happen to probably have a copy  
22 of that, would you, in the office?

23 MR. PETERSON: We --

24 MR. O'DONNELL: Might?

25 MR. PETERSON: -- might. And if we don't,

1 we can get it off the (inaudible) tomorrow.

2 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. We'll look at that.

3 PARTICIPANT: Yes, but they've got a  
4 different --

5 MR. PETERSON: Oh, that's right, they --

6 PARTICIPANT: There's no TMS. You can get  
7 Dick got it off his --

8 MR. PETERSON: I think we might have it. We  
9 know the guy who built the thing, so we can probably  
10 get it from him if you need it.

11 MR. O'DONNELL: That's all I got. [REDACTED]  
12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast Guard. You had  
13 mentioned you lost the feed pump before. Can you just  
14 tell us when that was and what happened there?

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. We had spent our lube  
16 oil filters, Baldwins. And the older style was the  
17 canister with an insert filter element. Well, within  
18 the run of a month, they bought in a brand new filter  
19 cracked. I don't know if Baldwin came out with a bad  
20 batch or what it was, I don't know.

21 But the feed pump, you know, when you have a  
22 crack in the lube oil filter, we didn't lose it. We  
23 made a hell of a mess and fired up the other one. But  
24 by the time -- see the other two ships have an  
25 electric, or had an electric feed pump. So that was a

1 lifesaver.

2 So if you lost a feed pump while you're  
3 trying to get the other one, you're slowing down. You  
4 hit that electric one while you're getting the steam  
5 lined up to your, you know, other feed pump. But yes,  
6 it was just something simple like that.

7 There was a faulty Baldwin filter and, you  
8 know, to get it swapped over, the other guy, that one  
9 tripped out and we got the other one up. So we got a  
10 low water alarm, but we didn't lose a plant or  
11 anything.

12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay. There was an earlier  
13 mention of some third party work that was going to be  
14 performed on the boilers. Are you aware of that and  
15 can you tell us about what was going on? What was the  
16 name of the organization?

17 MR. ROBINSON: Walashek.

18 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Walashek, right.

19 MR. ROBINSON: Boiler, yes we were due to go  
20 to the shipyard the end of October, first of November.  
21 So they flew in, Luke, a boiler tech from Walashek just  
22 to go in and see what the work scope had to be. You  
23 know, usually a standard package, you replace the  
24 throats, refractory, patch up the fire stops. I mean,  
25 it was nothing major that they were looking at.

1                   But he just came on when I was on there and  
2 inspected the, started the boiler when I was there. I  
3 don't know what he wrote up in his report. I did not  
4 see his report. And then I don't know if they got to  
5 the port boiler. There was schedule on that, but I  
6 don't know how far they went on that.

7                   ██████████ So they only did the starboard  
8 one?

9                   MR. ROBINSON: While I was there, yes. I  
10 don't know.

11                  ██████████ That's it from me, I'm good.

12                  ██████████ Okay. Lieutenant  
13 Commander ██████████ from the Coast Guard. We  
14 were talking about the low low. And in particular you  
15 mentioned the delay and how that's usually how, you  
16 know, it's not going to get off when you're rocking and  
17 rolling.

18                  Would you happen to know the positioning of  
19 the low low and then boiler in times of, like, if you  
20 did have a sustained list, what --

21                  MR. ROBINSON: Well, you're looking at your  
22 low goes off at minus nine, I'm sorry, minus six  
23 inches, which you're still in the sight gauge glass.  
24 And minus nine is your low low.

25                  ██████████ And is it located all the

1 way at the outsides of the boiler? Like, where's the  
2 actual --

3 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, you've got your right on  
4 the, in the, yes, boiler side. Trying to picture.

5 [REDACTED] I'm just trying to picture  
6 from, like, if the ship --

7 MR. ROBINSON: You're in the whole scope of  
8 the boiler. I mean, the drum. So you're going from  
9 the top to the bottom on the inboard side. And I'm  
10 pretty sure, yes. Anyway, but the rocking and rolling,  
11 you know, that's a big boiler. You know, the freak  
12 surface area, maybe if you were listed over or  
13 something you may have a high --

14 [REDACTED] Right. You would have to  
15 drop the water line, like, six inches over the course  
16 of a big --

17 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, to get your low you  
18 would have to be losing water somewhere.

19 [REDACTED] If you did get that  
20 shutdown though, like, if that happened, would an  
21 actual list on the ship, I know it hasn't happened to  
22 you. But if that did happen to you, what would you do  
23 if you wanted to keep things running.

24 MR. ROBINSON: Well, the only reason you're  
25 going to get a low low, you're not going get it from a

1 list. Your feed water valve, well it fails open so  
2 that's not going to matter anyway. That's going to put  
3 more water in.

4 [REDACTED] Okay.

5 MR. ROBINSON: So the only way I've ever got  
6 the low low alarm is when I lost a feed pump. And by  
7 the time, you know, you get the other one rolling,  
8 she's down there and then you're just sitting there,  
9 come on, come on, come on now.

10 It seems like a lifetime when it's only a  
11 matter of minutes, you know seconds. And you can't  
12 light off because you don't have --

13 [REDACTED] A couple more small  
14 questions. Also I know this probably hasn't happened,  
15 but, like, in terms of the fire in the boiler going  
16 out, have you had anything ever happened where you got  
17 a little water in the fuel line?

18 I know we talked about bad fuel. Like, you  
19 never got any bad fuel, but have you ever had it happen  
20 where you actually did get water in the fuel through  
21 some other means once you got good fuel?

22 MR. ROBINSON: I have not. The only issue  
23 I've ever heard of was with one of my reliefs on the El  
24 Moro. You don't have make up feed meter, so he ended  
25 up using a little more make up, and it was one of the

1 tube bundles, I mean the tube, the heaters inside the  
2 fuel tanks. So they were transferring and then, yes,  
3 that was the only, but that was --

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] How could you get water in  
5 those fuel tanks that you use? Like, I mean, what  
6 would be the --

7 MR. ROBINSON: You got steam coils that  
8 comes off the contamination system. So if something  
9 happened with that. But you would notice with your  
10 make up because on this ship it would come on after.  
11 So if you have a high consumption of water, you've got  
12 either an issue with your boiler or you're  
13 contaminated.

14 So each day at lunchtime, the chief engineer  
15 does his noon slip, or when you first go down in the  
16 morning you do a quick glance before you do your round.  
17 And it's like okay, 2.2, everything's normal for a  
18 watch. So it's just something that's monitoring so that  
19 that problem can't happen.

20 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Just one more question.  
21 As far as the, have you ever experienced any issues  
22 with the steam leaving the boiler in terms of it being  
23 too wet or something like that?

24 MR. ROBINSON: No.

25 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Do you ever hear of a

1 problem like that, or you know --

2 MR. ROBINSON: No because once you have  
3 steam flow, I mean, the only time you do get any  
4 condensate is when you're bringing a boiler online.  
5 You know? That's why, I mean, your feed pump's at your  
6 lowest point in it. So you float it on with the  
7 (inaudible) try to get the temperature up there.

8 And then yes, you're supposed to, you want a  
9 stop check time. Pop quick, but it's been working  
10 fine. You know, you get that little bit of a hit, but  
11 if that stop check's all the way open and you get that  
12 one initial bit of condensate, she bogs the feed pumps  
13 down pretty good.

14 But that's just bringing a boiler on. As  
15 far as once you get a boiler on line, you got  
16 superheated steam, steam flow. She's, no way you get  
17 water in there.

18 [REDACTED] Okay.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay?

20 MR. MILLAR: Mike, ABS. Mike Millar with  
21 ABS. We talked about the boilers and you mentioned  
22 about the turbo generators and loss of power. And have  
23 you had any experiences with that occurring and having  
24 to bring them back online quickly?

25 And what sort of time frame would it take to



1 bring it online if you could catch it in time? And is  
2 this something that was normally done as part of  
3 training? Was there part of the emergency drills for  
4 the other engineers under those type of circumstances,  
5 would they have something like that?

6 MR. ROBINSON: Well, as far as that was part  
7 of the monthly or quarterly status quo, or was, you  
8 know, was blackout recovery. You know, to sit there  
9 and talk to a room full of unlicensed people and give,  
10 you know, we talk about it with the engineers. It's  
11 like hey, if you lose power, what is the first thing  
12 you got to do?

13 But during the training with the whole crew,  
14 you just do the, you know, okay you lose the generator,  
15 you're going to lose lights, emergency power comes on.  
16 You know, you don't get into details because to explain  
17 it to an unlicensed guy that doesn't --

18 MR. MILLAR: That I understand. They're  
19 probably not going to be the ones that's going to do  
20 it.

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

22 MR. MILLAR: It's going to be the second or  
23 the thirds that are independent. The chief's going to  
24 have my head if I don't get this back on line.

25 MR. ROBINSON: It's nothing they would do.

1 By the time, if that plant goes, if you're full steam  
2 ahead and you black out, by the time I and the first  
3 get down there, their primary concern is shut that  
4 throttle off because even though it's steam, you're not  
5 going to get --

6 MR. MILLAR: Right.

7 MR. ROBINSON: The more steam you lose, the  
8 longer it's going to take.

9 MR. MILLAR: You got to kill the throttle  
10 and, you know, save what you got and get over there.

11 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

12 MR. MILLAR: Have you had that happen?

13 MR. ROBINSON: When I was on the El Yunque,  
14 one of the wires came off. You know, we were on one  
15 generator. And just steam there.

16 MR. MILLAR: I guess that was on a  
17 northbound trip?

18 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. One of the connectors  
19 broke free and all the lights out.

20 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

21 MR. ROBINSON: And there was nothing else  
22 running, so there was no way you could, you know, try  
23 closing the other one. So yes, that was just, you  
24 know, call the bridge, they already know we lost power.  
25 Say hey, we lost the generator.

1                   You know, we got to swap the plant over. I  
2 can do it pretty quick, but I can't give you a time  
3 because it gets damn hot down there and you don't want  
4 to be screwing around even when you have to. But I  
5 can't give you a time frame, it's all a matter of, you  
6 know, how quick you can swing the valves, get the  
7 boilers lit back off.

8                   MR. MILLAR: But it's going to take a minute  
9 or two for sure.

10                  MR. ROBINSON: Oh, you're looking at over an  
11 hour.

12                  MR. MILLAR: Yes.

13                  MR. ROBINSON: Yes, you're not, if you're  
14 lucking out. There's a lot of work involved.

15                  ██████████ Okay. Thanks, Brian. ██████████  
16 with the Coast Guard for for one follow on question.  
17 With regards to the boiler, since they brought it out  
18 of the yard and you've been on board, has there been  
19 any hydrostatic testing that you've seen or witnessed  
20 of the boiler in either of the systems?

21                  MR. ROBINSON: We just, well we had to test  
22 safeties at, you know, shipyard. But as far as any of  
23 the piping, no hydrostatic testing, no.

24                  ██████████ Nothing on the tubes?

25                  MR. ROBINSON: No.

1                   ██████████   ██████████   Okay, thank you.

2                   MR. YOUNG:   Brian Young with the NTSB.   We  
3                   went over to the turbo generators, we started that  
4                   discussion already.   Again, looking at weather and  
5                   rolling and pitching, is there anything that you can  
6                   think of on the turbo generators that may have caused  
7                   those generators to trip in terms of lube oil suction?

8                   MR. ROBINSON:   I mean, that's sump's, you  
9                   know, purified a couple times a month.   So I mean,  
10                  there's lube oil samples that go out, whatever the  
11                  scheduling, at least twice a year on each one of them.  
12                  So those sumps are clean.

13                  So as far as strainers fouling, the third  
14                  engineer changes the strainers over.   Well, if they  
15                  needed to, but lube oil sides never, you know, you may  
16                  find a little bit of silicone every now and then.   But  
17                  as far as never had any issues.

18                  And there's nothing that I can think of or  
19                  has ever happened to me that, I mean, those old girls  
20                  are tough, tough generators and I've never had any  
21                  issues besides, like, the wire breaking.   But as far as  
22                  the turbine side of it, I haven't had any issues.

23                  MR. YOUNG:   Okay.   And as we had heard  
24                  before, the over speed trips and reverse power relays  
25                  have all been tested?

1 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

2 MR. YOUNG: As of recent as well? Any  
3 issues with that?

4 MR. ROBINSON: No.

5 MR. YOUNG: Okay. That's all I've got for  
6 TGs.

7 PARTICIPANT: No further questions.

8 PARTICIPANT: Nothing further.

9 PARTICIPANT: I guess I have one. Just how  
10 deep are the lube oil sumps? Do you have any idea on  
11 that? Like, I know that might be a hard question.

12 MR. ROBINSON: No, as far as your generator  
13 sumps?

14 PARTICIPANT: Yes.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Those are self-contained.  
16 They're only about 14 inches.

17 PARTICIPANT: About 14 inches?

18 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. They're all, each unit  
19 has got it's own sump. I can't remember the quantity  
20 in there.

21 MR. ROBINSON: It would be the same as the  
22 sister ship, El Yunque, or similar?

23 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

24 MR. YOUNG: Okay, so we could look at that  
25 tomorrow.

1 MR. ROBINSON: The capacity, I can't  
2 remember that number right off my hand. It was all  
3 written down on a lube oil sheet.

4 PARTICIPANT: But you suspect that they're  
5 deep enough and substantial enough that no matter what  
6 sea conditions --

7 (Simultaneous speaking)

8 MR. ROBINSON: Oh yes. I mean, as far as  
9 when we went on the west coast run, I mean, when I was  
10 running across seas, that's what we had to discuss  
11 because they couldn't load the whole ship at once. So  
12 they would load the ship to a 10 degree list, have to  
13 take the ship and turn it around and lower it back  
14 straight. So never had any issues with --

15 PARTICIPANT: Yes. Thanks.

16 MR. YOUNG: Anything turbo generator wise?

17 MR. MILLAR: This is Mike Millar with ABS.  
18 What kind of governors do they have on there?

19 MR. ROBINSON: Woodward.

20 MR. MILLAR: They're all Woodward governors?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

22 MR. MILLAR: And any issues, history with  
23 the Woodward governors?

24 MR. ROBINSON: No. We went on a, he's our  
25 turbine, was our turbine man until he got moved up in

1 the world. But no, we went into a two year, or a two  
2 to three year change out on them.

3 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

4 MR. ROBINSON: But, you know, these ones  
5 here were changed out when I first got back.

6 MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson. Yes, I  
7 was the turbine guy on those units from 2000 until  
8 about 2012 actually, I was still doing (inaudible).  
9 But they're terry turbines which are kind of unusual  
10 for a turbine generator. And we did a lot of work on  
11 those things initially.

12 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, over the years.

13 MR. PETERSON: But they've been rock solid.  
14 Watch the linkage on them, you know, that's one of  
15 those things. But these guys are very quick to let you  
16 know if there's any issues with them.

17 MR. MILLAR: No any, like, speed sensing and  
18 the --

19 MR. PETERSON: It actually had a modified  
20 drip system on it. It's the same guy that NORCOM  
21 system where they used to be a mechanical trip, which  
22 you guys are familiar with as far as just the plunger  
23 that always works the second time. These are, they've  
24 got a speed pick up on them.

25 MR. MILLAR: So they switched over.

1 MR. PETERSON: Yes.

2 MR. MILLAR: That was going to be --

3 (Simultaneous speaking)

4 MR. PETERSON: There's a different system.

5 So that kind of also goes with the old Navy one, you  
6 know, with the heavy weather and everything. If you  
7 have a lot of pounding, you could actually trip the  
8 plunger type. And these systems have a, they have a  
9 backup on them also. So it's a good system.

10 MR. MILLAR: Did you have to change the oil  
11 on the governors frequently?

12 MR. ROBINSON: No, it was, like, the  
13 frequency was like a three month scheduling.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay. It's Brian Young with the  
15 NTSB again. Now we look at the main unit and the  
16 reduction gear set. And one thing we were thinking of  
17 is maybe with the pitching, maybe the prop was coming  
18 out of the water a bit. Is there any sort of over  
19 speed, over protection device on there or a speed  
20 limiter that you're aware of that maybe limited the  
21 speed or shut down the throttle?

22 MR. ROBINSON: Being loaded to the gills  
23 like that, I mean, that prop, you're 34 feet, 33 feet  
24 down at the stern. But yes, there are, it is an over  
25 speed trip there. It's you test those monthly just to



1 keep the lube oil flowing through it.

2 But as far as in heavy seas the prop coming  
3 out of the water, I mean, I went across seas and we hit  
4 the Straits of Gibraltar and we were 50 feet, you know,  
5 40 footers coming right through the strait in the air,  
6 and we never had any issues. But I can't see how it  
7 would be, but I don't know.

8 MR. YOUNG: And the speed limiter, how would  
9 that be activated?

10 MR. ROBINSON: Well, if you broke the  
11 turbine, I mean, if something, prop falls off.

12 (Simultaneous speaking)

13 MR. PETERSON: Yes, the only time we've seen  
14 that, like I mentioned before, was when the Matsonia,  
15 the torque tube let loose on these. And that is, it's  
16 a little bit unique design on these ships compared to  
17 other ships that have a strut.

18 This ship actually has, they call it a  
19 torque tube, but it's the intermediate shaft going from  
20 the stern tube shaft to the propeller shaft. And on  
21 these ships, it's actually rolled steel. So it's a  
22 casting at each end and rolled steel of, what do you  
23 think, three foot diameter?

24 MR. ROBINSON: Oh, at least. Yes.

25 MR. PETERSON: At least, at least. So it's

1 just a heavy plate that they rolled and welded up. So  
2 there have been incidents where we've had cracks in  
3 these. So that's something that they, and we do a  
4 spark test on these things every time, they're  
5 fiberglass coated.

6 But they do a spark test on these things at  
7 every shipyard period just to make sure there's no  
8 breakthroughs in the coating, the fiberglass coating.  
9 And then if you do have a break through the fiberglass  
10 coating, then you're going to clean things out and look  
11 to make sure there's no damage to the shaft itself.

12 But that's what happened on the Matsonia is  
13 that shaft broke. And they were about 600 miles off of  
14 Hawaii, and the shaft actually broke. They figured it  
15 did a couple rotations because it holed the hull back  
16 there.

17 And it actually sucked all the coupling  
18 bolts on the part that was still connected, and you  
19 know, the taper coupling bolts, it sucked them right  
20 through. But it's something that they're aware of, and  
21 they look at every shipyard period on these things.  
22 They do a very careful inspection.

23 And they're foam filled, but they have, if  
24 you take these shafts off they actually have, like, an  
25 access plate in the coupling itself. So you'll take

1 that off and you can go in there and then you do a core  
2 sample of the foam just to make sure there's no water  
3 in it.

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard.  
5 In the past, has there ever been a time when you found  
6 any corrosion on that shaft or had to do repairs?

7 MR. PETERSON: I believe so. You know,  
8 you'll get something that, mechanical damage. But then  
9 that's when you'll remove the fiberglass in that area  
10 and really get down and take a look at it. And you may  
11 do a mag particle test on it or the penetrates to make  
12 sure you don't have any issues.

13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Do you guys have cracks in that?

14 MR. PETERSON: Not cracks. Actually they  
15 have, I don't know which ship it was on, but I have  
16 heard of them finding a crack in the torque tubes  
17 before.

18 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] But not on the El Faro that you  
19 know of?

20 MR. PETERSON: No, no.

21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Thank you.

22 MR. ROBINSON: No, just repairing the  
23 fiberglass, that's all I've ever come across.

24 MR. YOUNG: Brian Young with the NTSB. Any  
25 issues within the reduction gear set and the lube oil

1 analysis with any results of the oil analysis?

2 MR. ROBINSON: No, that's pretty rare.  
3 That's monitored close, you know, because there is a  
4 history in the past with ships way back when. But they  
5 never wanted it to happen again, so I mean, it's an act  
6 of Congress to get new oil because you got to send out  
7 samples. So your main lube oil is, you know, tested  
8 heavy.

9 MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson again.  
10 Let me just, what he's talking about is there was a  
11 hydraulic oil contamination on this particular ship way  
12 back when it was still a tow ship. And that's why now,  
13 and the contamination turned out to be that the  
14 supplier used the same tote tanks for the lube oil that  
15 they had had hydraulic oil in.

16 And it did damage to the (inaudible) gear  
17 bearings. So they had to be machined in place and put  
18 back in. So that's why this company is extremely  
19 sensitive to making sure that that oil has gone through  
20 numerous tests.

21 MR. YOUNG: Wow. And we had understood part  
22 of their reduction gear set is monitored by vibration  
23 analysis. Do you know who the company is that does  
24 that?

25 MR. ROBINSON: No, no.

1                   MR. PETERSON: Condition? No, that's not  
2 Condition. Balance.

3                   MR. ROBINSON: Yes, something --

4                   MR. PETERSON: I have to look it up. You  
5 want that?

6                   MR. YOUNG: We'll add it to the list. Yes,  
7 just the last report. And so the name isn't that  
8 important. Lee will figure it out. But alarming  
9 results as a result of any of the vibration analysis  
10 especially around the main unit that were brought to  
11 your attention?

12                   MR. ROBINSON: No. There was one issue on  
13 the forward pinion. And Dan McDonald (phonetic) is the  
14 other, was, well he was in partners with them. It was  
15 a turbine wrap. So it was written up as, you know,  
16 elevated reading.

17                   And I submitted the report to Dan McDonald.  
18 He analyzed it and come back and basically it was, you  
19 know, reduction heaters are hard to do a true test on  
20 it. And a new guy will pick up noise or whatever. I'm  
21 not a vibration guy. Peaks and prods, that's all I  
22 see. But if I needed that it's, like, call Lee. But -  
23 -

24                   MR. PETERSON: I used to do the vibration  
25 analysis on the ships until about two years ago.

1 MR. YOUNG: But nothing out of the ordinary.  
2 No big alarms as of late? I mean --

3 MR. ROBINSON: No.

4 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And do you, or have you  
5 ever tested any of the over speed trips? Are they  
6 tested frequently on the main unit?

7 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. I mean, it's a monthly  
8 deal on it. But, I mean, southbound is when you've got  
9 to test it because you're up higher RPMs. You've got  
10 your lube oil flow. You just go over there an step on  
11 it and you see the throttle close and then open back  
12 up. So you're just keeping the oil flowing through the  
13 piston in there.

14 MR. YOUNG: And is that a PMS job in AMOS by  
15 any chance?

16 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, it is.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay. All set with my main  
18 engine questions.

19 MR. O'DONNELL: So you confirmed you've been  
20 in heavy head sea weather. Have you ever been, I'm  
21 sorry, Lou O'Donnell with ABS. Have you ever been in  
22 heavy rocking and rolling weather on this class of  
23 ships?

24 MR. ROBINSON: I've been fortunate over the  
25 years.

1 (Simultaneous speaking)

2 MR. ROBINSON: You know.

3 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Well, you've never  
4 had any problems with lube oil suction in the rough  
5 weather you were in?

6 MR. ROBINSON: No.

7 MR. O'DONNELL: No? Okay. And then coming  
8 back to the speed limiting trip for the throttle, for  
9 your over speed, essentially speed limiting. So when  
10 you go and hit that trip, you're essentially tide rock  
11 actuating, you're closing down on the throttle,  
12 basically cutting off your steam supply.

13 MR. ROBINSON: You're dumping the lube oil  
14 that you're throwing.

15 MR. O'DONNELL: And you're dumping the lube  
16 oil. Like you said, hydraulically actuating. You're  
17 dumping lube oil. Is El Yunque the same set up as  
18 this?

19 MR. PETERSON: Yes. It's the same set up  
20 with all this class of ships.

21 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay.

22 MR. PETERSON: And so it was hard to get  
23 these guys to do it the first time because it does, you  
24 hit that and your throttle starts closing, it was like  
25 open back up.

1 MR. ROBINSON: Well that was back when I  
2 first, Dan came on because I don't know if it was that  
3 same ship but they didn't do it.

4 MR. PETERSON: Yes, that's what it started  
5 with.

6 MR. ROBINSON: So Dan came on and ripped  
7 them all down, made sure they're all clean. Or you  
8 did.

9 MR. PETERSON: I did.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Dan inspected. He was  
11 overseeing it so you didn't screw it up.

12 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Just one last  
13 question, emergency maneuvering. Did you ever do any  
14 emergency maneuvering drills with your engineers, or do  
15 you guys have anything in your SMS for emergency  
16 maneuvering drills? Like, a major casualty with the  
17 main unit possibly losing a lube oil line on the  
18 reduction gear or main turbine. And would your crew be  
19 prepared to deal with something like that?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Oh yes.

21 MR. O'DONNELL: I mean, from what I've heard  
22 they sound very competent.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Oh yes. Anything that goes  
24 on that, they know, you know, main thing you got to  
25 shut that frigging steam. If you lost lube oil or



1 whatever and you still got steam, they know get that  
2 shaft stopped no matter what you got to do.

3 Just keep, you know, a little bit of a stern  
4 on it and just make sure she stopped. You know, the  
5 crew knows that. We talk about it. That's another  
6 part of when a new guy comes on or, you know, if I see  
7 him sitting at the log desk, I'm usually going to,  
8 never mind, put a boot in their butt.

9 But you know, all right you're sitting here.  
10 If this happens, what are you going to do? You know,  
11 so I'm always throwing different scenarios out to them  
12 just so they keep the brain working and don't get  
13 complacent, you know, on the ship. So you get used to  
14 it and, you know, I don't want them to do that.

15 MR. O'DONNELL: I'm good. [REDACTED]

16 PARTICIPANT: I think everything I've got  
17 has been answered by the previous interviews. So I  
18 think I'm good. [REDACTED]

19 PARTICIPANT: There's too many [REDACTED] in  
20 here.

21 MR. YOUNG: Two more questions and then  
22 we'll get you out of here. What would you say your  
23 relationship is with the Captain as Chief and  
24 particularly Captain Davidson. Do you guys work  
25 together on a --

1                   MR. ROBINSON: This is the most I've sailed  
2 with Mike. And the only reason because, you know, he  
3 was always, I would have maybe two, three weeks with  
4 him. But I mean, my, what do I want to say,  
5 interaction with the Captain, he'll stop down before I  
6 go to (inaudible) when he's on the way to breakfast,  
7 see if there's anything going on, anything he should  
8 know.

9                   I mean, basically just have a little chat  
10 real quick and then, you know, go on about the day.  
11 But the communication, I mean, if there was anything I  
12 would always inform him, keep him up to, inform him on  
13 a regular shutdown or whatever, maintenance shutdown.

14                   You know, and then when we get the boilers  
15 back on or whatever we were doing, he was always  
16 informed. So there was communication between the chief  
17 and the captain, you know, without any friction or  
18 anything like that.

19                   MR. YOUNG: Okay. All right, here's the  
20 hardest question of the night. So what we understand  
21 when the guys are out there is that they had a 15  
22 degree port list, they were in high winds, and they had  
23 water in three hold that they were pumping out.

24                   And he said we have no main engine. That  
25 was the report that we have. We are trying to get any

1 more information, but that's just based on a message  
2 that was received.

3 MR. ROBINSON: That's the problem there. I  
4 mean, I ran scenarios ever since this happened.

5 PARTICIPANT: I'm sure.

6 MR. ROBINSON: And until I did the interview  
7 with your partner there, they played me the recorded  
8 phone conversation and then there was an email or  
9 something like that. But I was assuming that they were  
10 in 40, 50 foot seas. So it's like now, 14 foot seas,  
11 scuttle open, how did the water get, I mean, you're  
12 lower to the water.

13 But I mean, how much water, I can't even  
14 think of how that, I mean, 14 foot seas are nothing. I  
15 mean, that's just a walk in the park.

16 MR. YOUNG: Right.

17 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Coast Guard.  
18 Knowing the captain, he used the word considerable  
19 amount of water. Knowing him, we don't know him, how  
20 do you think he would define that?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Well, in order for it to give  
22 a 15 degree list, she's got to be, I mean, but then  
23 again they lost propulsion too so that's their now in  
24 the -- so yes, it could have been a little bit of  
25 water. But you know, it's one of those things that I

1 don't understand it with the weather they were in.

2 And the way his conversation was, there was  
3 no, you know, if I'm calling up and it's an emergency,  
4 you're going to, I'm going to talk as quick as I can  
5 because, well or the captain is because I don't have  
6 time to, you know? But he was calm and collective.

7 MR. YOUNG: Yes.

8 MR. ROBINSON: So I mean, I don't know why  
9 he didn't divulge more. I mean, because as (inaudible)  
10 said, it wasn't water was contained. It doesn't, I  
11 can't remember the actual wording. But no, now I just,  
12 I cannot for the life of me think of what happened or  
13 how the water got down there with that light of seas.  
14 I don't know.

15 MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson. I  
16 don't, where did we come up with the 14 foot seas?

17 MR. YOUNG: These are the notes that --  
18 (Simultaneous speaking)

19 MR. YOUNG: Ten to twelve foot swells.

20 PARTICIPANT: Ten to twelve foot swells.

21 (Off microphone comment)

22 MR. ROBINSON: That was from his  
23 conversation, one of them with Lauren (phonetic). So  
24 whatever it's from.

25 MR. YOUNG: This was a follow up phone call

1 between the captain and John (inaudible) after the  
2 message.

3 PARTICIPANT: Right. I didn't catch that  
4 part, 14 foot. It's just that --

5 MR. YOUNG: Well, 10 to 12. There was no  
6 real 14. But 10 to 12 foot swells is what John had  
7 written down.

8 PARTICIPANT: It's kind of hard to believe  
9 where they were in relation to that.

10 PARTICIPANT: They would have done that when  
11 we were thinking they were in the eye.

12 PARTICIPANT: In the eye?

13 PARTICIPANT: Possibly.

14 MR. O'DONNELL: This is Lou O'Donnell, ABS.  
15 I know you know Captain Davidson pretty well. And from  
16 everything we've heard, he sounded like he and his  
17 bridge watch were very calm, cool, and collected. He  
18 doesn't seem like a guy that would be rattled very  
19 easy. And would that be a fair statement to say?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Oh, yes. I mean, like I  
21 said, I've never been in an emergency situation with  
22 him. But he was, I mean, if I went into his office and  
23 moved that on him, I mean, he had everything -- yes I  
24 would.

25 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay, you --

1 MR. ROBINSON: No he was, I mean, he had  
2 everything, it had to be a certain way or whatever. He  
3 was very organized.

4 PARTICIPANT: Very regimented.

5 MR. O'DONNELL: I think you fairly answered  
6 my question. No, I'm going to reserve any more  
7 questions until tomorrow. Maybe when we're on the ship  
8 I may have a few questions. That's all I have.

9 PARTICIPANT: I'll save everything for  
10 tomorrow when we're on the ship.

11 [REDACTED] I guess I have one.  
12 Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] again, Coast Guard. As  
13 far as general crew practice, from your awareness when  
14 you've been out with them, the water (inaudible), you  
15 know, some of the pass throughs and things like that,  
16 especially the ones that are more inconvenient with the  
17 multiple dogs and so forth. Have you noticed, did  
18 people dog them all the way? You know, what has been  
19 the practice?

20 MR. ROBINSON: The practice is that when  
21 they do their stow away search after cargo, they walk  
22 the decks or whatever, make sure, you know, yes the  
23 engine room, little water tight door we leave open  
24 there.

25 But if it comes down to a situation, we know

1 we're going to go into the weather, everything's dogged  
2 down. But as far as your hatches going into the cargo  
3 hold, those are just a twist, three quarter turn, four  
4 arms, dogs come down.

5 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] But if you didn't, like,  
6 say you weren't, let's say you didn't think you were  
7 going into weather, you're just going on your regular  
8 trip. You know, are all the dogs --

9 MR. ROBINSON: At night time or whenever you  
10 come out of the cargo hold, it's standard procedure to  
11 shut it. Have I come around and seen them open? Yes.  
12 Then you got to climb down in and make sure nobody's  
13 down in there because the man sign's still showing  
14 personnel inside, do not shut. But it wouldn't matter  
15 even if you did shut it, you can still open those from  
16 underneath.

17 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And what about, like, the  
18 larger hydraulic doors and things like that, are those  
19 customarily closed all the time, or are they --

20 MR. ROBINSON: Oh yes. Those, as soon as  
21 they're done loading cargo, boom, boom, boom, the doors  
22 are closed, cargo's backed up to it. But at sea, if  
23 you have to open one of the big doors, A, it's not  
24 going to be rough or whatever, but yes, you notify the  
25 bridge you're going to have it open for whatever. But

1 you never leave them open overnight or over lunch.  
2 It's always while you're doing whatever you have to do  
3 and then they're closed back up.

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] So you think there's very  
5 little chance that there would have been doors  
6 obviously open when something happened?

7 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, no. I mean, that's  
8 standard. With a loaded ship, as much cargo, as soon  
9 as that door shut they're backing up cargo right up to  
10 it. So the mains are right on top of that because along  
11 shore I'm going to push them to get cargo in.

12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right, thanks.

13 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. I just have a  
14 question. You mentioned when you listened to the  
15 voicemail that the captain seemed calm and collected.  
16 If you had an emergency in the engine room, how much  
17 information would you give the captain if you were in a  
18 serious emergency?

19 MR. ROBINSON: He gets about a ten second  
20 call and then it's I'll call you when I've got  
21 something or if I get time I'll have one of my guys  
22 give him an update. But I'll pick up the phone, there's  
23 nothing I can do, we lost whatever it is.

24 I give him as much of a detailed  
25 description, and then as it progresses and we're out



1 and we're not going to go any further, you know, it's  
2 like hey captain, we're going to be slowed down for 20  
3 more minutes and then. You know, so I give him, I  
4 mean, depends on the situation but yes. Like, okay  
5 just let me know because they know we're down there  
6 trying to get whatever it is corrected.

7 MS. BELL: So he might not have had enough  
8 information, I mean, to give them anything more than  
9 what he gave?

10 MR. ROBINSON: Without that being recorded,  
11 you're talking on a satellite phone. There's overlap  
12 and, you know, you miss bits and pieces. You've got to  
13 say things twice. It's a hard way to communicate. So  
14 whether --

15 MS. BELL: You mean from the engine room to  
16 the --

17 MR. ROBINSON: No, no. I'm talking as far  
18 as from, like, the captain to John Lawrence.

19 MS. BELL: Okay, okay. Just wanted to  
20 clarify that.

21 MR. ROBINSON: So if that wasn't, I mean,  
22 why it, you know, what was said, if there was something  
23 miscommunication, loss of power and loss of, you know,  
24 they've, it's happened before. By the time it gets to  
25 third party it's like no, that didn't happen.

1                   But that's why if it's something, I call.  
2                   You know, when the captain gets involved he's only got  
3                   as much quick. And if he jumps the gun to call without  
4                   knowing more, he's done it before.

5                   John Lawrence has misconstrued it and then  
6                   when you get back in the port, and then you got to  
7                   correct it. It's like no, that's not what happened.  
8                   It's like captain, discuss with me before you're  
9                   discussing technical or engine terms to somebody shore  
10                  side because you use the wrong terminology and it's,  
11                  third party is not, you know, second party. I mean,  
12                  it's happened.

13                  MS. BELL: It has happened? Is that  
14                  something that happens just once --

15                  MR. ROBINSON: No, no. It's just, it wasn't  
16                  on a ship, you know, anything to do with propulsion.  
17                  It was just something happened, personnel or something.  
18                  And instead of talking with me before, he just gave  
19                  them a heads up. And it's like I was just blown right  
20                  out of Rome.

21                  It's like, then it's like captain, you don't  
22                  know what you're talking about. Wait until you talk to  
23                  me and then we get it straightened out. It's not a  
24                  hurry to send a message. Just, you know, they jump the  
25                  gun. They like to talk.

1 MS. BELL: Thank you.

2 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. We talked  
3 about, like, the scuttles and a small hatch or an  
4 access into the hold or the engine room from the  
5 weather deck or someplace like that. If there were  
6 problems with those four dog catches not working, would  
7 that normally be repaired by the deck department or  
8 would it be repaired by engineers?

9 MR. ROBINSON: No. Any issues like that,  
10 like when they go around check fire dampers, lube up  
11 the doors or whatever, if there's an issue that  
12 involves more than tightening up a dogging nut or --

13 MR. MILLAR: Dogging nut.

14 MR. ROBINSON: -- adding grease to it, you  
15 know, they'll come to the chief. The chief may, send  
16 the chief up --

17 MR. MILLAR: A note saying hey --

18 MR. ROBINSON: -- written just so that it's  
19 on record. And then it gets --

20 MR. MILLAR: Would that type of, if there  
21 was something done to a hatch or a scuttle, would that  
22 be entered into a repair log in AMOS, something like  
23 that? Or would that be --

24 MR. ROBINSON: That would be in the deck  
25 log, I mean, the first engineer's work log for the day.

1 (Inaudible) if you change, like, you got to put a new  
2 rubber seal in or whatever or change a rim out or power  
3 pack, you know, broken dogs, dog and bolts, I've put  
4 that in on whichever large pipe door it is. But a  
5 scuttle hatch like that, that's not --

6 MR. MILLAR: Do you recall any history of  
7 having to do any significant work on the hatches or  
8 scuttles or anything?

9 MR. ROBINSON: Not at all. I don't  
10 understand how water, I mean, you've got a foot and a  
11 half (inaudible) around it and the water tight door.  
12 You know, with those small of seas, that's why unless  
13 they were (inaudible) I can't see how, I can't even  
14 comment on that.

15 The scuttles aren't in way of your openings  
16 to the second deck. So it's not like you have a, you  
17 know, a ten by ten opening here and we're using it to  
18 come over the side and go in. You're actually forward  
19 or aft of them. So for that to get to up to over that  
20 combing, I can't understand it.

21 MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson. Jim,  
22 remind me of scuttles for going down from second deck  
23 into three, are they only on the starboard side?

24 MR. ROBINSON: No. This ship's got a port  
25 and starboard. The El Moro only had the one side,

1 because this one's got, the port side's got, like, a  
2 three foot diameter, the port's two foot.

3 So you can get an SCBA down through on this  
4 one. On the El Moro they just had the standard one.  
5 So if you did training, it was take the SCBA off.  
6 Somebody would pass it to you and --

7 PARTICIPANT: El Moro was just on the  
8 starboard side. Okay, yes. That's something that was,  
9 wasn't it misinformation for us.

10 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar again with ABS.  
11 Openings between the engine room and the cargo hold,  
12 are there any scuttles or access openings?

13 MR. ROBINSON: No scuttles. You've got  
14 water tight doors going from three hold into the engine  
15 room and then going, any of your penetrations going  
16 into the engine room are all water tight.

17 MR. MILLAR: And would those normally be  
18 left open since they're interior?

19 MR. ROBINSON: Interior, unless we're  
20 expecting weather or everybody's aware that they're  
21 open. But that gives a nice draft down through the  
22 shops when it goes out to the cargo hold. But when we  
23 do drills or whenever we're expecting foul weather,  
24 that's when everything gets lashed down, everything  
25 gets shut. Captains, they were adamant about that.

1 MR. MILLAR: It sounds like Captain [REDACTED] was  
2 the same way?

3 MR. ROBINSON: Oh, yes. Yes, he was.

4 MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson again.  
5 Back to my question. Port and starboard, which were  
6 the, you said, like, three foot?

7 MR. ROBINSON: I don't know the exact.

8 MR. PETERSON: The large one, which side is  
9 that?

10 MR. ROBINSON: The port side's the larger  
11 one.

12 MR. PETERSON: The port side?

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

14 MR. PETERSON: And none of those are spring  
15 loaded or anything?

16 MR. ROBINSON: No. Those are just --

17 MR. PETERSON: You just crank them up?

18 MR. ROBINSON: Boom, boom, pick them up.

19 MR. YOUNG: That's it? I'm sorry. All  
20 right, Brian Young with the NTSB. My last question.  
21 Just going back to this voice message and then the  
22 phone call that was left.

23 If the ship was leaning port 15 degrees,  
24 reported no main engines, and the wind's not too bad,  
25 with water in three hold, he said he was pumping it

1 out. Is it possible to have any pumps on the emergency  
2 bus so that if there was electrical power loss, could  
3 he be pumping and using the emergency generator?

4 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. Your emergency fire  
5 pump comes off of your emergency generator, which  
6 emergency bus.

7 MR. YOUNG: And that could be used to pump  
8 three hold?

9 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

10 MR. YOUNG: It is able?

11 MR. ROBINSON: Oh no, no. Forget it. No,  
12 these are the ballast pumps.

13 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

14 MR. ROBINSON: You can't use the fire pump.  
15 I don't know why I said, no. Your fire pump is not  
16 used for pumping out the cargo holds.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

18 MR. ROBINSON: And the engine room, it's set  
19 up you can go over to the ballast. There's an  
20 emergency suction there if something happened to your  
21 ballast pumps.

22 MR. YOUNG: So in order to be pumping at  
23 this time, he still had to have his generator running?

24 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. Yes, because your  
25 ballast pumps are tied off of your main switchboard.

1 MR. YOUNG: Right.

2 PARTICIPANT: You could do your (inaudible).

3 MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell with ABS. Is  
4 there any other salt water pump that he could cross  
5 over besides the bilge ballast, fire GS to pump that  
6 comes from the emergency, besides the emergency fire  
7 pump, Jim?

8 MR. ROBINSON: No.

9 MR. O'DONNELL: No.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Well, emergency fire pump you  
11 can't pump.

12 MR. O'DONNELL: But he can't, there's no  
13 crossover or anything or --

14 (Simultaneous speaking)

15 MR. O'DONNELL: -- he could swing?

16 MR. ROBINSON: No. No, that's tied right to  
17 the sea chest.

18 MR. O'DONNELL: So it's all independent  
19 then?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

21 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Except for the  
22 isolation, okay.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

24 MR. O'DONNELL: All right, yes. Thanks.

25 MR. YOUNG: Because I have sailed with



1 captains before who everything is called the engine  
2 whether we had thrusters, motors, or whatever they say  
3 stop the engine. But the diesel engines on a diesel  
4 electric plant, you know, they always call it the  
5 engine. It's just the way the captain's trained.

6 But for him to say no main engine, with the  
7 ability to still pump the hold, it's telling me more  
8 that he possibly lost the main unit but he still had  
9 steam to run the generators. Generators for power,  
10 power for bilge pump. Would that make sense?

11 MR. ROBINSON: Right.

12 MR. YOUNG: I mean, am I going down the  
13 right road at least?

14 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. I mean, because at that  
15 point they, he had everything under control. So that's  
16 telling me that they still had their power because it  
17 wouldn't have had time to back feed, swing the plant,  
18 back feed and establish power from the main because  
19 you've got to, once you start you've got to shed the  
20 load in order for your generator to, you know, have  
21 room to run your essentials.

22 And so yes, but the time frame or whatever  
23 and he wasn't, they had it contained. So it sounds  
24 like that they still had their SSGG power.

25 MR. YOUNG: Right, right.

1 MR. ROBINSON: But not propulsion. That  
2 don't, not the main engine.

3 MR. YOUNG: Right. Right.

4 MR. ROBINSON: I don't know what that means.

5 MR. YOUNG: Right, thank you.

6 MR. MILLAR: One more question.

7 MR. ROBINSON: Sure.

8 MR. MILLAR: You triggered a memory question  
9 here. Mike Millar, ABS. Is the switchboard fitted  
10 with preferential trips as part of their automation?

11 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. They put, that was part  
12 of the modification where they started holding excess  
13 reefers, NORCOM, Dick Norris set up as per, I can't  
14 remember the outfit that did the ABS drawings for the  
15 modifications. But they had to trip X amount of  
16 reefers to get the load to what ABS wanted.

17 So I can't remember what the actual number,  
18 but there's four or five breakers tied into  
19 preferential trips. If the load gets up too high, it  
20 dumps the load so you don't have the chance of dumping  
21 the generator.

22 MR. MILLAR: Okay. If we're heading  
23 southbound and we've got both generators on line which  
24 is typical with the 240 containers that are on board.

25 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

1 MR. MILLAR: And we've got to kick in both  
2 ballast pumps because we're trying to pump out the  
3 cargo hold.

4 MR. ROBINSON: You've got plenty of room  
5 because on an average, you know, they're 2,000kw  
6 generators. And on a southbound run with 250 reefers,  
7 with both SSTGs on, you're basically a one generator  
8 load. You're 21, 20 on, 200kw, 3,200, 3,300 amps  
9 because you got a 3,200 amp rating on them and you're  
10 usually right at the 3,000 to 2,000kw.

11 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard  
12 also. In earlier interviews you mentioned a third  
13 generator, a container generator that was up on deck  
14 separate from the provider tower.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, that's --

16 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And then you could run all of  
17 them separate from the engine room?

18 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

19 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] So provided power to it?

20 MR. PETERSON: I don't think it provides  
21 power to all of them, Mike.

22 MR. ROBINSON: No, no.

23 (Simultaneous speaking)

24 PARTICIPANT: It provides about --

25 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, this, what 36 plugs on

1 them.

2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay, 34, 36? So it would share  
3 the load also?

4 MR. ROBINSON: That just takes care of those  
5 reefers. That has nothing to do with the ship's power.  
6 That's all separate. They put a power pack up there  
7 and it's self sustained. You know, the electricians  
8 plug the reefers into them.

9 It has nothing to do with ship's power.  
10 That's just the basically modified, that bay used to be  
11 dry boxes because it didn't have reefer plug ability  
12 wired up there.

13 So they had more reefers on board. So they  
14 eliminated that as dry cargo, put the power pack on  
15 there so they had another source of power. But it does  
16 not have anything to do with the ship's power. That's  
17 just a little --

18 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] But the ship's power is  
19 providing the power to the rest of the reefers?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, the ones that are hard  
21 wired on each bay up there. And that's the same system  
22 that they've got the load shedding. And like I said, I  
23 can't give you a number right off my head.

24 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Understood.

25 MR. ROBINSON: But ABS had to improve adding

1 all these refers over here before Mr. Norris did. An  
2 outside guy evaluated it, made up the prints, and ABS  
3 approved it.

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay.

5 MR. YOUNG: All set, [REDACTED]

6 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Yes.

7 MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell. Just one  
8 more question. Well no, go ahead, Brian. Go ahead.

9 MR. YOUNG: I was going to say if there are  
10 any other further questions, we're getting to the end  
11 here.

12 MR. O'DONNELL: No, go ahead. I'll wait  
13 until tomorrow.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay, great. Before we end, do  
15 you have any questions for us? We've been firing  
16 questions at you. But anything for us? And we'll be  
17 onboard the sister ship tomorrow, so if there's any  
18 other opportunities to ask any questions while we're in  
19 the engine room, we would like to --

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes. I'll be available.

21 MR. YOUNG: Great.

22 MR. ROBINSON: Then the other chief that's  
23 on there, I mean, he'll be there to discuss. I mean  
24 that, I can discuss my half or whatever, you know, that  
25 pretty much same equipment. Automation's a little

1 different but, you know --

2 MR. YOUNG: Yes, great.

3 MR. ROBINSON: -- pretty much everything's  
4 the same.

5 MR. YOUNG: Great. Well we very much  
6 appreciate you being here and thank you very much for  
7 all your information. Anything for us?

8 MR. ROBINSON: No.

9 MR. YOUNG: We're all set. Okay, so we'll  
10 conclude the interview, and it's 8:34 p.m., and thank  
11 you again.

12 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-  
13 entitled matter was concluded at 8:34 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident  
Accident No. DCA16MM001  
Interview of James Robinson  
Jacksonville, FL

DATE: 10-08-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 99 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

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**NEAL R. GROSS**

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TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR  
JAMES ROBINSON  
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OCTOBER 8, 2015

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11	24	Neace	Neeson
18	10	excellence	excellents
23	2	latch	lash
26	13	(inaudible)	seapainter
26	13	--	lower boats & release
26	19	flooding gear	flemming gear
27	19	wenches (2x)	winches
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33	15	(inaudible)	settler
34	15	retrods	reach rods
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37	7	four (inaudible)	forced draft
42	15	had spent	changed
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72	10	mains are	mates are
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76	11	(inaudible)	combines
81	24	SSGG	SSTG
83	8	21, 20 on, 200 KW	2000KW and 2100KW
84	17	a little --	a little extra genset
84	25	improve adding	approve adding

If to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED. \_\_\_\_\_

Initials  
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 Printed Name of Person providing the above information

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Person providing the above information

*11/11/15*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date