NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

INTERVIEW OF: TIM NEESON, PORT ENGINEER

Thursday,
October 8, 2015

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE

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MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB
BRIAN YOUNG, NTSB
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JIM FISKER-ANDERSEN, TOTE Services
PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services
LOUIS O'DONNELL, ABS
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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

(8:50 a.m.)

MR. YOUNG: Okay, we're recording. Good morning, it's 0850 on Thursday, October 8th. This is Brian Young, the Engineering Group Chairman with the National Transportation Safety Board, we're in Jacksonville, Florida.

We are conducting the interview of TOTE Port Engineer Tim Neeson, and we'll go around the room and introduce ourselves all present at the interview.

MR. O'DONNELL: Louis O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Surveyor, ABS Americas.

MR. [redacted] U.S. Coast Guard. I'm with the Engineering Group.

MR. [redacted] U.S. Coast Guard with the Operations Group.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Good morning. Mike Kucharski, NTSB, Group Chairman for Operations.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services with the Operations Group.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard with the Survival Factors Group.

MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa, NTSB, Survival Factors Group.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE

Services, Survival Factors Group.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: Jim Fisker-Andersen of TOTE Services with the Engineering Group.

MR. FELTEL: Gilbert Feltel, Counsel for Mr. Neeson, Tanner Bishop Law Firm.

MR. NEESON: Tim Neeson, Port Engineer for TOTE Services.

MR. YOUNG: And could you just spell your name for the record, please?

MR. NEESON: Timothy Neeson, N-E-E-S-O-N.

MR. SHEPHERD: Al Shepherd with the ABS, American Bureau of Shipping Management Systems Certification.

MR. YOUNG: Okay, very good. Thank you, Tim, for being here today. We appreciate your assistance. If you would just start out the interview and just give us a little bit of your background, your maritime training and experience and how you ended up as the Port Engineer for this company.

MR. NEESON: Well I graduated from California Maritime in 1976. I worked on the Mississippi Queen Riverboat and I worked for Avondale, or not Avondale, but Boland Marine.

I worked for MSC, Military Sealift Command, for four years. I worked out of the hall with MEBA out

of Tacoma/Seattle area. I sailed a lot to the Far East. I sailed steam and motor at my chief, diesel and steam.

I've sailed to motor and steam. I was the permanent chief on the Horizon Lines Hawaii, which was the SeaLand Hawaii originally before they sold two or three times.

I retired in 2005 and I got bored so I went back to work. So I've been with TOTE, SeaStar for two years now, almost two years, since November of two years ago.

So I was a Port Engineer with SeaLand 20 years ago in Tacoma for about a year and that's when they were going through the company transition and they were downsizing and I was the new guy so I went back to sea.

So I decided to go back to port engineering. I liked port engineering. It's a good job. So I threw my resume out there and they called me up and I went to work.

MR. YOUNG: So November of '13 you started?

MR. NEESON: Yes, right.

MR. YOUNG: And as a port engineer for TOTE what are your job responsibilities and description, what's you day-to-day activities?

MR. NEESON: Well my day-to-day is I'm assigned to a ship, or actually two ships, we have the El Faro and the El Yunque, and originally it was the El Morro. The El Morro was scrapped so they broke out the El Faro, and my job is to ensure day-to-day operations, maintenances, regulatory compliance, make sure they get their supplies.

We keep an eye on the budgets, we okay their purchases and make sure they're not ordering anything frivolous. We bring the vendors aboard. If we have repairs we contact whatever vendor is required, electrical, mechanical, welders, whatever is required.

Like on the bridge we get the intake (inaudible), take care of the bridge equipment, make sure they are certified. We deal with ABS on a regular basis to make sure we are in compliance, keep the certifications up to date, and also shipyard periods that we arrange where are the vendors get the seals (inaudible) propellor, and all that, spares for the shipyard ready to go, paints.

So we are a full service for the ship basically. We deal with the captain and the chiefs and the crew. We help them out any way we can within reason.

MR. YOUNG: So are you solely the port

engineer for the El Faro or are you also port engineer for the El Yunque?

MR. NEESON: Well I work with another gentleman, Bill Weinbecker, and Jim was also at one time a port engineer. We would shift the load depending on who was doing what at the time, so we share that, but my primary is the El Faro.

MR. YOUNG: And would you say you've been the primary port engineer for El Faro since you started with TOTE or has that been --

MR. NEESON: Well the El Faro wasn't here when I first got here, like I say the Morro was here. So when the Faro broke out and came to Jacksonville I took over for it, well Jim was with me also on that.

So we shared the load and eventually I was the primary lead on it.

MR. YOUNG: And what's the timeframe on that, when the El Faro came to Jacksonville?

MR. NEESON: March of last year. They were tied up in Baltimore.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: We broke it up. Sorry, this is Jim Fisker-Andersen. We broke it up and took it straight to dry dock from Baltimore.

MR. NEESON: Yes, and that was what, February? February or March something like that.

MR. YOUNG: 2014?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: The last dry dock service was completed in December 2013.

MR. NEESON: Oh, December, okay.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: And we broke it out the end of November, December, from Baltimore.

MR. NEESON: Oh, so -- Okay. So then you went to the shipyard for --

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: Correct. This is Jim Fisker-Andersen.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. So --

MR. NEESON: So since January of '14.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And were you involved with the shipyard in the Bahamas?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: No. Okay, before we get into the ship and the duties and the responsibilities with the ship, we'd like to just focus in on some of the vendors, especially the vendors that were aboard the ship last week before they sailed, the five Polish.

Is there a scope of work for the work that they were performing aboard the ship available?

MR. NEESON: A written scope, I'm not sure. Jim, did you have a written scope or just assist as

directed? We hired welders and electricians basically.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: Correct.

MR. NEESON: I think they had two electricians and five machinist, welders.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: Correct.

MR. NEESON: So their job was to assist our project engineer, it was Jeff Mathias, who is a chief engineer on the Great Land, which was the Tacoma/Alaska run, so he was familiar with the setup for these ships in the Tacoma/Alaska run, which the El Faro was not configured for.

So he was in the process of returning it back to its old configuration. So we were basically returning it back to original condition.

MR. YOUNG: And what does that entail? I mean what's the difference between the ship where it actually sits here in Florida as compared to being on the Alaska run?

MR. NEESON: Well they basically stripped all the Alaska stuff off. They have davits on the main deck, forward, port, and starboard, up by the bough, the big davits they use for lifting the ramps, you guys are familiar with ROW ROW, they pick these large ramps up, they have the huge davits, you had four winches for each set of ramps to actually, two for lifting the ramp

and two for tightening it in and pulling it into place.

So you had two forward, there's one on the second deck which is more like outriggers, it's not really a davit, and then on the port side center there was a full-size davit up on the spar deck, but the spar deck was removed in a conversion. Was that in 2006, the conversion?

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: I don't know.

MR. NEESON: Anyway, the spar deck was removed so we just had the bane deck (phonetic) only, so we davit on the port center, foundations would have to be re-engineered, which we had Herbert Engineering as our naval architects working on those drawings for reconfiguring the foundations, supports for the davits, and the winches.

In the main deck they put container supports all the way across the main deck, there's like 130 beams going across which distribute the load in the container stacks, which we have to remove in order to make it ROW ROW.

So right now the ship was configured as, the main deck was load-on/load-off with container cranes where they stack the boxes. The second deck and below were configured for roll-on/roll-off and they would just use the aft or starboard ramp to bring the boxes

on and off with the trucks, and automobiles would go down below.

So all the material on the main deck would have to be removed. They had breezeways, we had boxes in there that the crew were using for storage, those would've had to been removed, all the steel on the main deck would be scraped off to flush so the trucks could drive.

All the refer outlets, they were on the main deck set up for -- Each hatch would have to be moved because it would be in the way of the trucks, so they would be moved.

We'd need a couple more winches on the port side for the Alaska run on the main deck for, they call them ice winches since they get along side the dock up there and the ice builds up, starts pushing the ship away from the dock, so we ordered one new winch and we were reconditioning an older winch to fill in those positions.

Then all the de-icing systems that were previously installed, half of it was removed. A lot of the piping was on the spar deck supplying a glycol system where they would heat the glycol and they had the radiator plates, titanium plates that would be under the deck all the way up to the bough where they

would heat the deck so the trucks wouldn't slide around.

We also would have to open up the ramps. We had ramps going down to the second deck from the main deck in the forward center section of the main deck. That was all that -- It had a hatch over that, that was covered up, and then the containers now sit on there.

And there was also one just after the house, somewhat on the port side center (inaudible) ROW ROW. So we'd have to open that hatch, cover up, too, that was covered over, plated over, so the main deck was solid all the way across the top.

And down in the engine room they had removed the Butterworth heater, which keeps the seawater for pumping hot water into the condenser during ice conditions and all the sea chest steam piping had been removed, so we were in the process of re-hooking that up.

So it was a lot of little things. I don't see my worksheet to remember it all. It's a long list. But the intake guys they were pulling a lot of wiring at this stage in the game.

We had to run a new power supply for the winches. We had four winches on the starboard center, four winches starboard forward, four winches starboard

port, and four winches center port.

So there was power feeders running to all those winches. The controllers would have to be hooked up and then they were also running new refer power supplies, cables, to new locations, which we have an ABS-approved drawing for (inaudible) run and were in the process of starting that.

And then anytime when the weather was questionable they would work down in the engine room hooking up piping for the glycol system and the Butterworth heater, the main steam lines were all missing, so they were targeting new steam piping.

And they also did a lot of little steel work around the ship. I noticed they were doing some of the handrails on the outside of the house that were looking a little weak and our project manager, Jeff Mathias, thought it would be prudent to renew these and we also did the port running light.

The foundation was looking a little weak so they, when things were a little slow they would fix that. So they were putting in 12-hour days everyday at sea. And to accommodate these guys working on the second deck, most of this work was done on the second deck, and the cargo operations would actually open up slots for us, they would leave lanes open and we had

man lifts.

At one time we had three man lifts so these guys could run cable and weld in the wire run stays. But you need a man lift to get up in the overhead to pull the stuff.

These cables are like an inch and a half in diameter and they are thick, heavy, so you need a man lift to get up there, a couple man lifts with guys physically pushing this stuff. It's a lot of physical work.

So that took quite a bit of time just running cable and that's the gist of it, in other words, just trying to convert the ship back to the Alaska run and we were making pretty good progress I thought.

MR. YOUNG: You've given us a very broad picture, a very good description of what the extent of the work, is there any sort of guidance or documentation spelling all this out this out, to return the ship back to Alaska service, any document or --

MR. NEESON: I have a work list.

MR. YOUNG: A work list. Because that's something we would like to have brought to us (inaudible) a work list.

MR. NEESON: I've got my computer in my car

if we need it or you want to worry about that later?

MR. YOUNG: We'll request that document.

MR. NEESON: That's fine.

MR. YOUNG: Yes. During all this work, I know you've given us a lot, can you narrow it down to what actual work was ongoing when the ship departed Jacksonville on the 29th by the riding gang?

MR. NEESON: Well they had sent two electricians home because they figured they ran as much wire as they could at the time, so they were working in the engine room targeting steam lines for the Butterworth heater, that was their project.

They had just put the Butterworth heater in place and just finished doing the foundation on it so they were getting in the process of targeting steam lines for the Butterworth heater and drain lines for the condensate returns.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And do you know what that 5-man crew consisted of? You said two electricians went home, so --

MR. NEESON: Well these were all either machinists or welders. I'm not sure exactly if there was the three welders or two welders, I'm not sure. I know they asked for at least two certified welders.

MR. YOUNG: And did you communicate recently

with the project manager, Jeff Mathias, about their progress or about a day-to-day recap or what kind of, you know --

MR. NEESON: He would send a weekly recap.

MR. YOUNG: A weekly recap?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: And do you still have these in your emails?

MR. NEESON: Yes, yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. So we would like to -- Again, we're trying to figure out exactly what they were doing and the progress they were making.

MR. NEESON: Sure.

MR. YOUNG: And to your knowledge were they doing any repairs or any modifications or any work on any of the propulsion systems, such as the main boilers, the main turbines, the turbo generators, or the reduction gear?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: I'm going to go around the table, if there are any questions from the group on the riding gang, if anyone while we have this thought going on, starting on to the left, riding gang questions or Alaska modification, that's what we were just talking about.

MR. O'DONNELL: Yes, I think he summed it up very well.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell with ABS.

MR. [redacted] So on this voyage they were working in the engine room, they weren't doing any work in any of the cargo holds or would they have reason to be in any of the cargo holds or enter them during the voyage?

MR. NEESON: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. [redacted] So none of their cable runs were being worked on or anything? Did any of the runs or anything they were working on or welding on have anything to do with any of the water (inaudible) bulk heads, (inaudible) bulk heads or anything like that?

MR. NEESON: No. Second deck is a big open deck.

MR. [redacted] Right, I understand.

MR. NEESON: You can see aft all the way forward to the boatswain's locker, to the forward focsle, so that's all open space. There is no --

MR. [redacted] All right. So they would have had no reason to be transiting through the hatches into the holds, cargo holds, or anything like that that in there?

MR. NEESON: No, no, no.

MR. [redacted] The welders on board they were working in the engine room, were they doing any of the steel work on the second deck to remove the plating for the ramps or prep for the foundations or anything up there?

MR. NEESON: No, no.

MR. [redacted] All right.

MR. NEESON: Any of the work they were doing was -- No structure work on the ship whatsoever. We were saving that sort of stuff for the shipyards or the lay period.

Eventually, like hooking up the Butterworth heater they would have to tap into the steam system.

MR. [redacted] Right. But they had not done that, they were --

MR. NEESON: No. Well that would have been blanked off and it stays blanked. They were just getting piping configured and then we got there we'd have to have the certified welder do it and have the ABS do an NED testing on it of some sort, whether they x-rayed it or mag particle test it or whatever.

But whatever they wanted we would've hydro'd it for them, but no work on the vessel systems whatsoever as far as --

MR. [redacted] Thank you.

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. [redacted] I don't have any additional questions.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski, NTSB. As far as the work assignments go, the project engineer, Mr. Mathias, is it?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. Could he assign other work to them besides the scope of work that was actually --

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: He could, okay. And would that go through the chief engineer? Would he ask them to do work if they needed it for the (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: Possibly.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Were there any penetrations whatsoever from the second deck into the hold that is associated with this project, any penetrations that they were doing or planning on doing?

MR. NEESON: No, I don't believe so.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you keep any lanes open on the second deck where any (inaudible) for this on this voyage?

MR. NEESON: On this voyage?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

MR. NEESON: I'd have to check. I'm not sure.

MR. KUCHARSKI: For the benefit of the group the lane is open so they don't stow cargo along that side, okay.

MR. NEESON: As far as I know they weren't going to do any, it was all going to be engine room work this trip. We can check on that with our cargo guys though.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. And steel and any winches or anything like that, the equipment that they needed, was any of it stowed on board?

MR. NEESON: Yes, we did have eight of our old winches.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And where were they stowed?

MR. NEESON: They were actually mounted on the original foundations, so they were bolted down in their original foundations.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So they're on the main deck somewhere?

MR. NEESON: Second deck.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Second deck, okay. So the original winches were never taken off, they were still there?

MR. NEESON: We brought them back from the warehouse.

MR. KUCHARSKI: I see.

MR. NEESON: The only thing they didn't do is flush the foundations off. They left the foundation, they unbolted them, took them ashore, but they didn't flush the steel.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, thank you.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services. At the time do you remember how many man lifts or extra equipment they had on the second deck?

MR. NEESON: We had one man lift.

MR. STITH: Just one man lift. I think that's all the questions I had.

MR. NEESON: At one time we did have three man lifts on there, but we got one to one since they were making good progress on the cable pulling.

MR. STITH: Thank you.

MR. NEESON: Okay.

MR. [redacted] I don't have any.

MR. FURUKAWA: Hi. John Furukawa, NTSB. So the riding gang, was it in their work project going up to Alaska to upgrade the open lifeboats, I guess one had (inaudible) manually operated and the other was a diesel operated lifeboat?

MR. NEESON: They had nothing to do with the lifeboats.

MR. FURUKAWA: Was it going be a part of the (inaudible) project?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. FURUKAWA: Not at all, okay. That's all I have.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: I don't have any questions.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: No questions.

MR. SHEPHERD: No questions, thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And just before we move off of that subject do you have anything else you want to add with the whole Alaska run update, change, anything else, any more information you could volunteer to us?

MR. NEESON: Not at this time.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. NEESON: A lot going through my mind.

MR. YOUNG: Yes, I'm sure. So just to review and recap what we will request is the work list, that scope of work, as well as the weekly emails from your project manager, okay. So we'll send an email --

MR. [redacted] from the Coast Guard. You had mentioned, I'm sorry, some plans that were

being approved or developed by (inaudible) or --

MR. NEESON: Herbert Engineering, yes.

MR. [redacted] Engineering, and also ABS?

MR. NEESON: Well they go through Houston. The plans are sent to Houston and they review them.

MR. [redacted] What would be the percentage of completion they would have on those plans? Are they complete or are they --

MR. NEESON: The electrical ones are complete, yes.

MR. [redacted] All right. Would that be something that we could get?

MR. YOUNG: Yes, absolutely. We'll put a request in for that as well. Herbert Engineering?

MR. NEESON: Herbert, yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. STITH: I've got one more question. Kevin Stith with TOTE. Tim, at any time did you receive any communications from the Chief or Jeff Mathias or the Captain regarding the intended voyage from Jacksonville to San Juan?

(No audible answer)

MR. STITH: Any concerns or anything?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. NEESON: No, I had dinner with them that night before they sailed.

MR. STITH: Okay.

MR. NEESON: They sailed at 2000 and we eat at 1730 and no concerns.

MR. STITH: Okay, thank you.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard, one follow-up question. Were you aware of any means that the riders had to communicate with their company, did they have their own SAT phone or any means of communication?

MR. NEESON: I don't believe so. I think they used the Captain's email if they needed it.

MR. [redacted] Okay.

MR. NEESON: As far as I know they weren't doing any communicating until they got into port, either Jacksonville or San Juan, but I can't verify that.

MR. [redacted] Thank you.

MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa, one follow-up. The English of the riding gang, they were Polish citizens --

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: How was their English ability?

MR. NEESON: One was very good and the others were kind of weak, so basically you had one translator. The other guys knew a little bit.

MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: All set with the riding gang, okay. We'd like to now focus more into your role as the port engineer, your relationship with the chief, and your overall kind of interaction with the ship.

So you've already answered one of our questions, that you had dinner with them the night before they sailed, but how frequently do you communicate with the ship and how frequently do you go aboard the ship?

MR. NEESON: Well I go aboard the ship every week. They come into port either Monday night or Tuesday and I go aboard and sit down with the chief and we go over business, whatever his concerns are, if he needs repairs or something is coming up, he needs to water wash the boiler or some other repair, steel work.

If he needs a vendor, you know, I arrange that for him. So we just, we sit there for probably at least a half hour every port stay just to discuss business and then I go up and I see the Captain also, check with him and see if he any concerns about anything.

And I usually run into the chief mate and talk to him and see if there is anything like lifesaving equipment that needs to be checked out or purchased or serviced, things like that. So I always see them every week.

MR. YOUNG: The chief that you deal with, chief engineer, and, of course, I am asking most questions about engineering, we understand he has been aboard the ship since August and if you've seen him every week, were any issues with propulsion systems brought to your attention that there was any concern with any sort of problems with the boilers or the main engines?

MR. NEESON: The main engines are fine, the boilers are, they've been water washing them, which is fine. We did have a problem with the port boiler economizer where they had to put jumpers in.

When the tubes get real thin at the top they start leaking and they end up, one took out another and another, so we ended up putting seven jumpers in the economizer on the port boiler about a month ago.

And we brought down Wallischeck Engineering, who does boiler work, to do a survey before the dry dock period so we could do boiler work in the dry dock and some of the water wall tubes were starting to bow

just a little bit and our surveyor had no major concerns about that.

He said we could run that way for awhile, but eventually we would have to change it out but there was no immediate concern with that. We were planning on changing those out in the shipyard or the lay period after the shipyard.

MR. YOUNG: Do you recall when this survey was done of the boiler?

MR. NEESON: About a month ago.

MR. YOUNG: About a month ago, okay. Was there a written report?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell from ABS, just a clarification. Was that the Wallischeck surveyor ABS surveyor?

MR. NEESON: Wallischeck.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay, thank you.

MR. NEESON: We did have ABS come down and inspect the, do the hydro on the economizer, so they saw that it was tight, you know.

MR. O'DONNELL: Yes, okay.

MR. NEESON: So that was Jamie (phonetic).

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay.

MR. YOUNG: And could you just describe for everybody what is entailed with water washing a boiler?

MR. NEESON: Now first of all definitely you have to secure it, cool it down. They take out the air registers so they can get inside the furnace.

I didn't actually watch them, how they do it, but you can pressure wash it. You blast the carbon off the screen tubes basically and the super heater bank and make sure it's clear.

They could also do the economizer. You can open up the access door to the economizer and wash it down and then they drain it out and we have a company that has a vacuum truck and they suck out the wastewater and have it processed ashore.

MR. YOUNG: And how frequently is that?

MR. NEESON: About every three months it seems like they would do that. We were doing that, leaving San Juan, where they enter San Juan, secure one boiler, has permission from the Coast Guard to leave on one boiler so they could water wash, because they didn't need full speed coming north because of the schedule so they could maneuver out on one boiler.

They would have two tugs, you know, and one tug backup to ensure safety in the harbor and once it got out they'd have it water washed and then they'd

button it up and fire it up and put it online.

So that was a normal thing for both ships. The Yunque and the Faro.

MR. YOUNG: What kind of speed can the ship make on one boiler?

MR. NEESON: I'm not sure. Sixteen?

MR. STITH: Sixteen. Kevin Stith, 16 knots.

MR. NEESON: Yes, I was thinking 16.

MR. STITH: It's like full ahead, you know what I mean.

MR. YOUNG: Was there any work being done on the boilers during the stay in Jacksonville?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. The ship left with two boilers operational?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Do you receive the boiler water chemistry reports that are completed on the ship?

MR. NEESON: They're on the daily log down in the corner of the log sheet, yes.

MR. YOUNG: And is that sent into the office every day?

MR. NEESON: Not every day, no.

MR. YOUNG: Every week?

MR. NEESON: Every month.

MR. YOUNG: Every month?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. NEESON: We're making copies of the daily log right now.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. So that's the normal engineer's daily log that they keep and at the end of the month they send it into you?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Or probably walk it over, right, in Jacksonville?

MR. NEESON: Yes. Well I pick it up when I go see the chief.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. NEESON: We get the yellow sheet, the carbon copy of the main engineering log. We keep that on record.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Trying to stick with the boiler, any questions about the boiler, we can go around the room now if anyone else has any boiler questions.

MR. O'DONNELL: No further questions here.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. Just to be clear there was, on this departure, or the departure from Jacksonville or from Puerto Rico there

were no issues at all stated with either one of the boilers?

MR. NEESON: No, none.

MR. [redacted] They were 100 percent. And historically was there any loss of propulsion or loss of the boiler plant at any time in the last, in the history --

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. [redacted] -- that you know of at sea that they had a loss at all ever?

MR. NEESON: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. [redacted] Okay.

MR. NEESON: I'm surprised there hasn't been actually, you know, because steamships are not really meant to do these little short runs on and off all the time, it's tough on boilers.

But these plants were very well maintained. I don't know if you guys have been aboard, but the engine room was very well maintained. It's beautiful for an old ship like that, it was like impressive. So it --

MR. [redacted] Was there any time at sea when they needed to shut down the boilers for maintenance, do like a, had alarms or any type of --

MR. NEESON: Where they lost a boiler?

MR. [redacted] Right.

MR. NEESON: Not that I am aware of.

MR. [redacted] Or they needed to do a controlled shutdown or anything to do any type of maintenance (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: The only shutdowns that I know of due to hand hole gasket leaks and stuff, they would do that in port.

MR. [redacted] All right.

MR. NEESON: Nothing at sea.

MR. [redacted] What type of automation did they have with these boilers? What were the (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: That's a good question. It's a combination of --

MR. PETERSON (phonetic): Was that the -- Norris's.

MR. NEESON: Dick Norris's.

MR. PETERSON: That was Norris's (inaudible).

MR. NEESON: Yes, this is --

MR. PETERSON: Nortech?

MR. NEESON: Norcom.

MR. PETERSON: Well that's what he is now, but I think it was Nortech at that time.

MR. NEESON: Oh, maybe.

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MR. NEESON: And we have, our electrical guru, his name is Dick Norris. He built the board, its automation.

MR. [redacted] And was there a history of alarms or logs or how was that recorded in the engine room when they had any type of alarm, anywhere in the engine room, not just the boiler, but if they had any alarms was there a --

MR. NEESON: Well they don't have an automated alarm sheet like probably the newer ships where they have a daily --

MR. [redacted] All right, nothing like that.

MR. NEESON: No. The engineers would keep, any kind of a questionable alarm would go in the log book on a --

(Simultaneous speaking)

MR. NEESON: The watchstanders would write it down if there was something that was, you know, out of the ordinary.

MR. [redacted] So outside of what's in the log book there would be no way to electronically capture an alarm (inaudible) anything on the ship?

MR. NEESON: No, no, no.

MR. [redacted] All right. That's all I have.

Thank you.

MR. [redacted] (Inaudible) questions.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you cover the saltwater type of systems separately from the (inaudible)?

(No audible answer)

MR. STITH: No questions.

MR. [redacted] No questions.

MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa, NTSB. So were there any safety concerns with the boiler?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. FURUKAWA: Not for the El Faro, okay. How long was the El Faro laid up when the boilers buttoned up and all that before, you know, she came back in service?

MR. NEESON: I'm not sure of the exact date, but it's like two years.

MR. FURUKAWA: Two years. And where was she?

MR. NEESON: Up at Baltimore.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And she came back in service in December?

MR. NEESON: Of '13, yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: December of '13, all right. Thank you.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No questions.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: No questions.

MR. SHEPHERD: No questions, thank you.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard, one follow-up question, please. Were you present at the last hydro when they did the boiler, watered the hydro?

MR. NEESON: No, I wasn't.

MR. [redacted] You weren't.

(Simultaneous speaking)

MR. NEESON: For the economizer?

MR. [redacted] Not for the economizer, for the main boiler for the tubes, the hydro (inaudible) system?

MR. NEESON: No, no. They wouldn't do that in the yard most likely.

MR. [redacted] So you weren't there for that?

MR. NEESON: I was not.

MR. [redacted] And do you know when that took place?

MR. NEESON: No, I don't.

MR. [redacted] All right. Or if there were any issues as a result of the hydro?

MR. NEESON: If there were issued they'd be resolved.

MR. [redacted] Right. Was there any as a result

to the hydro?

MR. NEESON: I'm not aware of any.

MR. [redacted] You're not aware of any, okay.

MR. NEESON: That I recall.

MR. [redacted] Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Okay, it's Brian Young with the NTSB again. Going into the boiler operation, are you familiar with the automation that Dick Norris built as it comes to shut downs and safety features and what will shut that boiler down?

MR. NEESON: Well it would be high water, or high, high water, low, low water, loss of force draft fan, loss of fuel pressure.

MR. PETERSON: Flame scanner.

MR. NEESON: Flame scanner, yes, loss of flame. That's about it.

MR. YOUNG: Do you know on the high, high and the low, low is there a time delay or what the time delay is?

MR. NEESON: There might be a five or ten second for rolling purposes. I'm not sure. I don't know that answer.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. NEESON: But normally you get a little delay in there due to if the ship's rolling that way

it'll compensate for that roll.

MR. YOUNG: Right, right. Is Dick Norris a TOTE employee?

MR. NEESON: No, he's a vendor.

MR. YOUNG: He's a vendor, okay. And when was the last time that this system was tested, all the shutdowns?

MR. NEESON: We did that in San Juan for the ABS. It was for one of the continuous machinery surveys like 12 months ago. I can't remember the date.

MR. YOUNG: Any issues, any failures?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: No?

MR. NEESON: No. No, they go through the shutdowns and check everything.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Again, I was kind of going through some of the critical pieces of machinery in the engine room to try to get a history of it and see if we can kind of narrow it down, what propulsion failure there was out there.

Moving to the turbine set and reduction gear, any issues, any reports of any failures over the last, during your time as port engineer with the main engines of the El Faro?

MR. NEESON: None, none.

MR. YOUNG: None. Does your company conduct oil analysis of the lube oil in the reduction gear?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Any issues?

MR. NEESON: No, actually it's good.

MR. YOUNG: It's good.

MR. NEESON: It's clean.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. How often are those samples taken?

MR. NEESON: I'm not sure exactly, what, every three months, six months?

MR. PETERSON: Well we have a 3-month cycle and a 6-month cycle and I believe those are on the 3-month, yes.

MR. NEESON: Three months, yes.

MR. YOUNG: And are you aware of any shutdown systems for the reduction gear set that were tested recently?

MR. NEESON: There is no shutdowns for the reduction gear itself.

MR. YOUNG: Lube oil system, I'm sorry, (inaudible) lube oil system.

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: No, okay. Turbo generators, again, over speed trips, any concerns with their

operation, testing, if you can give us any background on maintenance performed or any issues again with the generation of the electrical power?

MR. NEESON: Well the generators were tripped when they did the automation testing for the boiler controls. They go through the main switchboard to do the reverse power relay test, over speed on the generators, and all that passed. So there's no problems that I am aware of.

MR. YOUNG: All right. Is there a backup diesel generator aboard or only the emergency generator?

MR. NEESON: Just the emergency generator.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. How is that started, battery, hydraulic?

MR. NEESON: Battery.

MR. YOUNG: Battery. Do you get a record of the battery reports in AMOS?

MR. NEESON: I don't know. I've never looked at it.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And are you aware of any issues with the emergency generator maintenance wise?

MR. NEESON: No. Actually we do a monthly test and it's been fine. There was a little leak on the cooling manifold on the exhaust manifold that the

chief had fixed, put new gaskets in that was all, just very simple.

MR. YOUNG: An exhaust leak?

MR. NEESON: A little coolant leak, very small, but it was noticeable.

MR. YOUNG: All right.

MR. NEESON: So he had ordered the gaskets and replaced those.

MR. YOUNG: What's the timeframe on that?

MR. NEESON: That would be about two months ago.

MR. YOUNG: Were there any other vendors aboard this ship the day of departure or day before while they were in Jacksonville doing any other maintenance other than the Polish riding crew?

MR. NEESON: Well there was Jeff Mathias, their project supervisor, but, no.

MR. YOUNG: Nobody else?

MR. NEESON: I think we had Harding on board. Harding, they are the representatives for the lifeboat davits. They were doing the clutches.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. No vendors working in the engine room?

MR. NEESON: No, not in the engine room.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. All right, I'm going to

pass around for machinery questions, such as we were just talking about with the generator sets, the emergency generator. Anybody?

MR. O'DONNELL: No further questions on the machine, just on the lifeboats. You had Chad Harding onboard?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Were the clutches for the winches or --

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Okay, thank you.

MR. NEESON: In their previous survey they said they were a little bit noisy. They still functioned, but --

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay.

MR. NEESON: So we went ahead in the interest of safety ordered new ones and we had them installed.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. So Lou O'Donnell, again, from ABS. So clutches and brake pads were (inaudible) the winches?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay, thank you.

MR. NEESON: So those were renewed and tested.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay, thank you. No further questions.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. On the Chad Harding they would've provided you a report for that, installing the clutches?

MR. NEESON: I think so, yes. I don't know if I have it, but they should have it.

MR. [redacted] Was it onboard the ship or was that done (inaudible), would there be a breaker --

MR. NEESON: I think it was on the ship. I don't know. I'd have them --

MR. [redacted] Chad Harding would have them?

MR. NEESON: They would have it, yes.

MR. [redacted] All right, thank you. So was there anything you would consider a hazardous condition in the engine room recently?

MR. NEESON: No. I can't think of anything, no.

MR. [redacted] All right.

MR. [redacted] You had stated that you do a monthly test on the emergency generator, can you describe the scope of that test to us?

MR. NEESON: It's actually quite simple. The chief engineer goes in the emergency generator room and calls down at the engine room and has them trip the

feeder to the emergency switchboard and that senses the loss of power and it takes about 15 seconds, fires up, and is on the line and then they run it for two hours and then they reverse the situation and trip it offline and put the main power back on, on the emergency.

MR. [redacted] So during this test is it under a low, an electrical --

MR. NEESON: Yes, it has the, the emergency circuits are on the generator.

MR. [redacted] And on those circuits are you ever running the equipment that's on the circuit, for example, the power pump?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. [redacted] You actually run the power pump while --

MR. NEESON: Well we don't put any additional equipment on it, but it does -- Like the lube oil pumps and so forth and the fuel pumps are on the emergency circuit.

MR. [redacted] And running while the test is being performed?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. [redacted] Okay. Thank you.

MR. [redacted] Nothing further.

MR. KUCHARSKI: No.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE, one question. Do you know if Chad Harding was working on both davits or just one?

MR. NEESON: Both.

MR. STITH: Okay. Very good, that's all.

MR. [redacted] No questions.

MR. FURUKAWA: No questions.

(Off microphone comments)

MR. YOUNG: Okay, change gears a little bit. Brian Young with the NTSB again. Your relationship with the chief, how long have you worked with this chief engineer who was aboard the ship?

MR. NEESON: I guess Rich was on there when they first came around, right?

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: I don't remember.

MR. NEESON: I think he was --

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: This is Jim Fisker-Andersen. I don't remember.

MR. NEESON: I think he had been there since the ship broke out.

MR. PETERSON: Rich had been there since the --

MR. NEESON: Ship broke out.

MR. YOUNG: So he's been a permanent chief engineer?

MR. NEESON: Yes, he's --

MR. PETERSON: No, as chief. He started out as the first.

MR. NEESON: First.

MR. PETERSON: Yes, first.

MR. YOUNG: So how many trips has he made as chief?

MR. PETERSON: I'm not sure. It's been -- He's got a lot of time under his belt though.

MR. NEESON: I'd say at least a year, right?

MR. PETERSON: Yes, at least a year.

MR. YOUNG: So when the ship left Baltimore after the lay up he was first and then at some point was promoted to chief?

MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson. I'm not sure. We'd have to look back on the personnel files to verify that.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: And that's something you're going to want?

MR. YOUNG: Yes, we'll get from HR I guess. I just --

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: How frequently do you communicate with the chief on email?

MR. NEESON: Normally he would send me a request for something, but I don't actually go out to him unless -- It was normally he contacts me that he requires some service or something done.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Had you received any email communication from the chief after departure on the 29th?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: Phone calls from him?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. The chief before him when they changed out in August, was he a regular chief or --

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: He was. Which chief has more experience?

MR. NEESON: Jim Robinson (phonetic).

MR. YOUNG: He's the?

MR. NEESON: The other chief.

MR. YOUNG: The other chief.

MR. NEESON: He was on vacation.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And so you have a senior chief and say a secondary chief who would be the senior?

MR. NEESON: Well we don't use that A Team,

B Team thing, but Jim Robinson has more experience.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. More experience, okay. Who evaluates the chief engineers in your office?

MR. NEESON: It would be me.

MR. YOUNG: You. Have you ever evaluated the chief -- What's the chief's name who is aboard the chief now?

MR. NEESON: Rich.

MR. YOUNG: Rich?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: And his last name?

MR. NEESON: Pusatere.

MR. YOUNG: What's that?

MR. NEESON: Pusatere.

MR. YOUNG: Pusatere?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: In your last evaluation of Chief Pusatere what was his overall rating?

MR. NEESON: It was good. We don't have a written evaluation.

MR. YOUNG: There's no written evaluation?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: Would you classify him as competent?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Yes. Have you ever had any issues with the chief in terms of performance or communication?

MR. NEESON: No, he's been very good.

MR. YOUNG: All right. Any other questions, going around the room, about the chief engineer as seen to the port engineer?

MR. O'DONNELL: None.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. You stated that you had emailed communication with the chief engineer on the voyage, was there anybody else on the ship that you had communication with, the master or (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: No, it was actually quiet, nothing.

MR. [redacted] Okay. And for work and maintenance on the boiler did the chief engineer normally supervise that? Was it done by third parties or was it done by the crew? What was most of the maintenance --

MR. NEESON: Most of it was done by the crew.

MR. [redacted] By the crew?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. [redacted] Were there third parties that

worked in the engine room? I mean, obviously, there is, but I mean who were they and were there --

MR. NEESON: The only --

MR. [redacted] -- any recent third-party work that took place in the --

MR. NEESON: On the boilers?

MR. [redacted] On the boilers or any other equipment, the permanent reduction or anything?

MR. NEESON: Well the only work that was done was the jumpers put on the economizer. That was done by a local company here, Jacksonville Machine and Repair. They have the certified welders and they're good all around mechanics and fitters. So they did the work on that, but that's it though, no main engine work.

MR. [redacted] No other work on the (inaudible) equipment or anything?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. [redacted] No. Thank you.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. So you said that you didn't hear from the chief engineer while underway on this particular voyage. Is it common for you to get email traffic or anything from them while they're underway --

MR. NEESON: Not really. Not really.

MR. [redacted] -- or do you handle it all when they come into port?

MR. NEESON: Normally, yes. On occasion there is something that he requires, but very little. They're pretty self-sufficient.

MR. [redacted] Right. And do you have a counterpart in San Juan that interacts with them while they are there?

MR. NEESON: No. No.

MR. [redacted] They wait until they come back to Jacksonville (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: Right. They'll communicate with me. Now the other chief engineer he'll call me on a cell phone and just give me a heads up on what's going on, just to let me know, just checking in.

MR. [redacted] But not while underway?

MR. NEESON: Not underway, no.

MR. [redacted] When they get back in --

MR. NEESON: They get in cell phone range -- No, no real, no communications. Very little.

MR. [redacted] Okay. Thank you.

MR. NEESON: You know, once a week I ask for fuel oil requests for the, you know, bunkers, how much bunkers they need, stuff like that.

MR. KUCHARSKI: No questions.

MR. STITH: No questions.

MR. [redacted] No questions.

MR. FURUKAWA: Hi. John Furukawa, NTSB. You said there were no written evaluations for the chief engineer?

MR. NEESON: Right.

MR. FURUKAWA: Does anybody in the company do a written evaluation for the chief engineer?

MR. NEESON: Not that I am aware of.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. But if someone in the company did do one would it be you or --

MR. NEESON: It would probably be me, yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Have any like chief engineers been removed for cause or fired before?

MR. NEESON: Not that I am aware of, not since I've been with the company.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Because is there any company requirement for a paper trail for (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: Well if there was you'd have the, you know, the verbal, the written, the final, and then the termination.

MR. FURUKAWA: Yes.

MR. NEESON: So that's pretty standard through all industry.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So if the chief

engineers do fine it's all verbal, it's only when there is problems that (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: Well I mean if there is a cause for a verbal, I mean it's, but there hasn't been any verbal or written that I am aware of. I haven't seen any problem with these guys. They're good.

MR. FURUKAWA: Free of the chief engineer, any other system engineers?

MR. NEESON: No, they're all, they've been fine.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, thank you.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No questions.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: No questions.

MR. SHEPHERD: No questions, thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Brian Young with the NTSB, just following up. Was this Chief Pusatere's first trip as chief or had he made other trips before as chief?

MR. NEESON: Well he's made many trips as chief.

MR. YOUNG: Many trips, okay. And how often was a second chief aboard to run the riding gang, is that a normal procedure or is that --

MR. NEESON: No, this was strictly for the conversion.

MR. YOUNG: For the conversion, okay.

MR. NEESON: The other chief, Jeff Mathias, had the experience and the ship's setup knowledge to do the project.

He knew where the old piping was, all the stuff that was removed he knew what belonged where, where we don't have that experience, we didn't know, so he was the right man for the job.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: I can add on that. Jeff had sailed the ships up to Alaska, so he had a -- He wasn't currently working for our company, but he was brought on as a contract.

MR. YOUNG: Oh, okay. A (inaudible)?

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: Is that right?

MR. NEESON: Correct.

MR. YOUNG: So while we are focusing down on the engine room, we've talked about the boiler, the TG's, the emergency generator. We understand no one was aboard the ship doing any, any vendors doing any maintenance.

Any of the auxiliary machinery, are you aware of any issues or problems or reports of any

failures or any concern with any of the other systems throughout the engine spaces?

MR. NEESON: None. None.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. When it comes to the maintenance and the preventative maintenance system we understand you run AMOS?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: And there should be daily, weekly, monthly jobs, work orders as they call them?

MR. NEESON: Right.

MR. YOUNG: Are there any jobs in there that are outstanding that would affect the ability for the ship to carry out her --

MR. NEESON: Not that I am aware of.

MR. YOUNG: Do you as a port engineer do any, my company used to call it a QMR, quarterly maintenance check, do you do a check on the status of the work orders to see which are complete and which are outstanding?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. YOUNG: No. Do you know if there are any outstanding jobs that have not yet been completed, work orders?

MR. NEESON: I'm not aware of it.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. For the chief engineer --

Who orders parts on the ship, is it the chief or the first?

MR. NEESON: The chief.

MR. YOUNG: Chief. Do the purchase requisitions go through you?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: You. After they go through you what is the next evolution in ordering parts?

MR. NEESON: I forward it to our purchasing department and put out a request for quote and they go through the vendors and find out what's the best price and then they get a price and they send it back to me for approval, I approve it, and then they go ahead and purchase it and deliver it to the ship.

MR. YOUNG: We have requested the list of purchase orders, purchase req's, just to kind of get a sense as to what the ship has been ordering and what parts they're looking for.

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay, just so you know. In the purchase orders, to your recollection, do you remember any parts ordered for critical machinery that were ordered to effect any repairs, again, on the boilers, the engines, the TG's, we're looking to sort of track what kind of parts the ship has been ordering?

MR. NEESON: No, I can't think of anything.

MR. YOUNG: No. What are most of the purchase orders ordered for from the engine department?

MR. NEESON: Usually it's consumables, just day-to-day stuff, wrenches, rags, lube oil, and WD-40, that kind of stuff.

MR. YOUNG: Is there a process if there are critical machinery parts needed that these purchase req's could be identified and expedited?

MR. NEESON: Yes. We have a request for quote and then we also have an urgent request for quote. So I puts out the flag to purchasing that let's get this right away.

And then I can do a follow-up call, I mean if we need it like tomorrow or tonight I can call them. I can go right to the vendor, circumvent our purchasing a little bit if need be to get it going. We got to get the ship out and we get her out, you know.

MR. YOUNG: So no issues with the whole purchasing system? If you need something quickly you can get it?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. When it comes to the maintenance side of the house if there is a work order out for any of the engineers aboard the ship do they

have the ability to defer the work order if they can't complete the project in AMOS?

MR. NEESON: I don't think so. No, there's a set date there.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: I don't know.

MR. NEESON: Okay.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: This is Jim Fisker-Andersen.

MR. YOUNG: I'm sorry?

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: This is Jim Fisker-Andersen. I don't know the answer either.

MR. NEESON: I don't believe so, but I'm not an expert at AMOS.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Is AMOS a new system relative to your company or has it been here for awhile?

MR. PETERSON: AMOS was brought on to the company just for the purchasing module in 2011. They ran both the AMOS for purchasing and the MMS for the maintenance side of it.

But the EL Faro had AMOS put on while she was out on the, I'm kind of going back now, remember she had AMOS put her when was the Northern Lights, so she has had the system on her for many years, whenever they first initiated it back there.

So for the whole life that she's been with SeaStar she's had AMOS.

MR. YOUNG: Can you give me the ballpark date as to how far back that would be?

MR. PETERSON: Well when did they bring it around?

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: I have no idea.

MR. NEESON: When it was converted?

MR. PETERSON: No, when it was brought around. Yes, when it was converted, when it was brought around to the (inaudible).

MR. NEESON: Was that like in Mobile or --

MR. PETERSON: Yes, (inaudible) --

MR. NEESON: Was that 2006?

MR. PETERSON: That sounds about right.

MR. NEESON: 2006, we got stretched.

MR. PETERSON: Yes, well, no, no, no, the stretch --

MR. NEESON: When we converted.

MR. PETERSON: -- for the taking off the spar deck.

MR. NEESON: Yes, I think that was '06.

MR. YOUNG: So the maintenance of the ship should have been recorded in AMOS since about 2006?

MR. PETERSON: Yes, but we can verify that,

but I'm not sure about that date. It may have been within a couple years of that (inaudible).

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. NEESON: Yes, been there a while.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. So going around the room, AMOS questions, purchasing, and maintenance, preventative maintenance systems.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. Was there at the -- Currently is there anything deferred on any of the critical equipment as far as preventative maintenance goes, you guys are going in the shipyard next month or something?

MR. NEESON: Not that I am aware of, no.

MR. [redacted] Nothing deferred on --

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. [redacted] Any overdue maintenance in AMOS that you are aware of?

MR. NEESON: Not that I'm aware, no.

MR. [redacted] That's all I have.

MR. [redacted] No questions.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski, NTSB. Did the deck department repairs, maintenance, AMOS-related items, and also requisitioning go through you?

MR. NEESON: Some of it, yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: What some?

MR. NEESON: Well all of it I guess, yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Just to be clear, so all the --

MR. NEESON: Because I hire the vendors for them, they're purchasing goes through me.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So that includes both the vendors for repairs and --

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

MR. STITH: No questions.

MR. [redacted] No questions.

MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa, NTSB. For the parts ordered can you recollect any survival or safety gear?

MR. NEESON: Well we did order the clutches for the davits with Harding, it's now Harding and not Chad Harding anymore, so they changed, but we had the CO2 system and on the firefighter equipment which was done near a month ago for their annual.

You know, they go through everything, smoke detectors and CO2 bottles and CO2 banks, and that's all up to date.

MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No questions.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: One comment. This is

Jim Fisker-Andersen. I just received confirmation that we have all the data from AMOS pulled in a file and we're passing that up through to you (inaudible) shortly.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

MR. STITH: I do have one question. This is Kevin Stith from TOTE, just because I was chief mate there. Do you know if they received the lifeboat drain balls that were ordered?

MR. NEESON: I don't know.

MR. STITH: Oh, okay.

MR. YOUNG: While we have not only the port engineer, but some of the other marine folks in here, this is Brian Young again with the NTSB, if we could get a little bit of a background on two major events throughout the ship's history, one is the stretch and one is the convert.

It seems like we have been referring to these two issues awhile ago. Can someone, either Tim or Lee, explain the stretch and also the convert and then maybe a chronological which happened first and when it happened?

MR. PETERSON: I'm going to have to (inaudible) off on exact dates, and I can get those for you.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: But when Totem Ocean Trailer Express, they had two ships in service up there, they brought the Northern Lights, which used to be the San Juan, I think, excuse me, it was on the Puerto Rico service, and their other ships had, the Great Land had been stretched.

The Westward Venture came out at that size, but this one had to be stretched to match those ships and these ships originally had a spar deck on them, which is an additional deck above the main deck that we see today.

So they removed the spar deck. I'm sorry, not for this stretch. So that was, as part of that, cut the ship in half, float it out, put a mid-section in, and that was pretty much it for this stretch before it went into service for Totem (inaudible).

The ships that SeaStar had originally, the El Morro and the El Yunque, which is the one we are going to see tomorrow.

MR. YOUNG: Go ahead and speak up.

MR. PETERSON: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell with ABS. To confirm your dates --

MR. PETERSON: Yes?

MR. O'DONNELL: The stretch was completed on 1 May 1993.

MR. PETERSON: That sounds right.

MR. O'DONNELL: And that was in Mobile.

MR. PETERSON: Mobile, Alabama, right.

MR. O'DONNELL: And give me just a moment. The last major mod, 27 February 2006 I think it was completed.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: That sounds right. Are you able to comment on those?

MR. NEESON: I'm going to make a point of clarification, too. I believe the ship was the Puerto Rico and they also put the spar deck on in Mobile at the stretch.

MALE PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MR. PETERSON: Okay.

MR. NEESON: Did you --

MR. PETERSON: Yes, I'm thinking they already had -- We can pull up pictures of that.

MR. NEESON: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: I don't know if it was included with that. But in any event so then in 2006 to match the other ships, the other two ships originally had spar decks on them and when Matson took them over they removed the spar decks and turned them

into the roll con configuration that we have now to put the containers on main deck.

So 2006 it was when the Northern Light was brought around to become the El Faro. She was converted to match those other ships to the same service.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. So to recap, in '93 you cut her in half and stretched her. Do you know where about in the ship it was actually cut?

MR. PETERSON: Mid-ship.

MR. YOUNG: Mid-ship?

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And then they added a spar deck at that point as well?

MR. PETERSON: We've got to clarify that.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: If [redacted] remembers if that's the case.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Sorry, I was -- No.

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes, but we'll let you clarify that.

MR. PETERSON: Yes. Well I found pictures of it, so we can just take a look at it and see (inaudible).

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And then in '06 was a major conversion, removed the spar deck and then it changed names to the El Faro?

MR. PETERSON: Right.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Just for clarification.

MR. PETERSON: And that was when all the, what do you call the cross beams?

MR. NEESON: Transverse beams.

MR. PETERSON: The transverse beams were added on to the main deck to hold the containers.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: You can see those on the El Yunque tomorrow.

MR. YOUNG: Okay.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: I think they're identical.

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay, great. We appreciate all your help in explaining a lot of these issues. A lot of the reports we see are saying that the ship lost propulsion out there and from what we understand everything was in decent shape.

We don't know whether the weather caused that or it didn't make it through based on her speed to get through the weather.

Do you have any ideas, and I know I'm asking

you for your opinion, but any ideas of any sort of machinery failure that could've affected the vessel or any ideas just running through your mind?

MR. NEESON: Well the only thing I can think of is if the ship was in severe weather and it was pounding and getting knocked around hard by the waves it may have tripped maybe a main breaker or knocked a pump out.

The boilers could've tripped out due to high, low water just sloshing around. Now that's severe rolling though, that's an extreme condition. There's a lot of ways to lose the plant, so you could speculate all day.

MR. YOUNG: Right.

MR. NEESON: I mean just pick a system and say it went down and then it took everything else with it. And it's a balanced plant, so you lose one item you could end up losing the whole thing quickly.

So to me it sounded like it happened pretty quickly, but I really don't know. I just don't know. There's no clue from the message the Captain sent.

MR. YOUNG: Do you know the angle that the emergency generator is able to run, what the list, what the maximum list angle is?

MR. NEESON: No, I don't. But I've been on

ships that rolled 35 degrees and the generator still ran. I don't know what the severe angle is for that.

MR. YOUNG: What's the make of that emergency generator?

MR. NEESON: Detroit Diesel. I don't what the (inaudible) is?

MALE PARTICIPANT: I think it's GE.

MR. NEESON: Yes, I think so. Yes, you're right, GE.

MR. YOUNG: And for the setup of this ship were there two turbo generators?

MR. NEESON: Yes, Terry Turbine.

MR. YOUNG: And the boilers, two boilers, how many burners were in each boiler?

MR. NEESON: Three.

MR. YOUNG: And were they automated somewhat, where they were lighting off each other or did you have a fireman standing by?

MR. NEESON: They have ignitors.

MR. YOUNG: They do have ignitors.

MR. NEESON: Retractable ignitors.

MR. PETERSON: They have an automated system for the purge and if you hit the button then it takes it to the purge cycle and (inaudible).

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And what was the pressure they were running on the boilers?

MR. NEESON: Nine hundred.

MR. YOUNG: Nine hundred psi.

MR. O'DONNELL: One quick question, Lou O'Donnell with ABS. This is a cross compound at double reduction main propulsion system?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay, thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Let's go around the room with any general questions if anyone has anything.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. Just to kind of close the loop on all the machinery and everything, there was nothing that you know of wrong with the steering system, (inaudible) steering compartments or any ongoing or compartments outside of the engine room, is there any issues?

MR. NEESON: No. Everything was in good shape that I'm aware of. It's well maintained.

MR. [redacted] Okay.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski, NTSB. Did you work with the chief mate at all on the El Faro? I mean do you have any relationship, a working relationship?

MR. NEESON: Well I would sit there and talk

to him maybe five minutes during their port stay if he had concerns about whatever. Like, you know, if they -- -

MR. KUCHARSKI: How long did you know the chief mate?

MR. NEESON: Not very long. He was the relief guy.

MR. KUCHARSKI: I'm sorry?

MR. NEESON: He was relief chief mate.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Relief chief mate, okay.

MR. NEESON: I've seen him sail on the ship before, you know, just casual conversations. I didn't really know him that well.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So you don't know how long he had been on the ship?

MR. NEESON: Well I think he had been there two weeks aboard this cycle.

MR. KUCHARSKI: About two weeks on the ship. For the cycle, so has he been with TOTE before?

MR. NEESON: Yes. I've seen him on that ship months ago as a relief and he was sitting relief again.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Did TOTE have an engineering SOP or anything in the SMS about engine room setup in heavy weather, anything different from heavy weather

than normal operation?

MR. NEESON: No, not that I'm aware of.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Are you aware of any loss of propulsion at all from the lube oil system to the main reduction gear?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: The (inaudible) alarms to the holes, did anybody talk about that?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And if they got an alarm function that was just put in log book if they did?

MR. NEESON: I would believe so. They should.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Did you review their log sheets when they came to shore?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Who reviewed their log sheets, anybody?

MR. NEESON: No. I would sit and talk with the chief. If he had any questionable items we would go over that whenever --

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So you're not aware of any safety ISM audits or anything looking over log books or anything like that?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Did Intech, and did I get that right, I-N tech?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Do they do all of the electronic and communication gear on the bridge or did you have a separate contractor?

MR. NEESON: Well their only communications would be through the captain with emails to their company. There wouldn't be any --

MR. KUCHARSKI: No, repairs, too? I mean did you have a provider for doing any of the electronic work if you needed work on one of the, or to change out a piece of equipment, GMDSS Suite or anything like that?

MR. NEESON: Oh. We would use IMTECH, I-M --

MR. KUCHARSKI: I-M, okay.

MR. NEESON: They are like Radio Holland.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: They were Radio Holland.

MR. NEESON: They are Radio Holland.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: This is Jim Fisker-Andersen.

(Simultaneous speaking)

MR. KUCHARSKI: As opposed to INTECH?

MR. NEESON: INTECH was the laborers, the Polish laborers.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, correct, I-N. So they took care of all the electronics and communication gear of the, bridge related?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Any many condenser problems?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: No re-tubing or anything like that?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Was there any access to your recollection from the hold anywhere into the engine room, a watertight door where you could go in from --

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: What deck was that on, do you remember?

MR. NEESON: Third deck, port side. Was it the third deck or -- Yes.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: It was the control flat in the engine room I believe.

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So we've got the second deck and then the third deck, next deck down?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: Correct.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And can we ask --

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: Sorry, this is Jim Fisker-Andersen for clarification.

MR. KUCHARSKI: That's all right. Could we also get a paper copy of the GA (phonetic) plans for future interviews so we could just, a general arrangement maybe we could show (inaudible)?

Was there also an access from the Number 2 deck aft, into aft to steering?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And there's a watertight door there?

MR. NEESON: Yes, there's like a man shack, a watertight door and then you can walk down.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, thank you. Did you regular interface with the master of the vessel? When the vessel came in did you sit down, have any kind of a meeting, a short meeting with the master?

MR. NEESON: Every time, yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Every time you did?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And can you recollect your discussion with Captain Davidson on the --

MR. NEESON: Actually, we didn't have much

to discuss. It was mostly about he payroll. He would discuss payroll and I'd ask him if he had anything coming up and he didn't have any concerns about --

MR. KUCHARSKI: And so you spoke to him also at dinnertime, you had dinner?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: No discussion about the weather or anything like that?

MR. NEESON: None.

MR. KUCHARSKI: If he had concerns about the weather or leaving, or leaving late, would he come to you with those or if not who would he go to?

MR. NEESON: Well he could -- That's a good question, yes. Normally he would come to me, but when he sent out his message I was not copied in on his message, so I don't know why he went that direction.

Well we do have an emergency condition plan and I don't know why I'm not on that list, but --

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So I understand, there is a port captain for SeaStar also that interfaces on re-operations type [redacted]

MR. NEESON: Yes. His name is Don [redacted] He does the cargo loading and he interfaces with the captain as far as, you know, loading of the ship, stresses, GM.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So if there were weather concerns for a particular trip would he just discuss that -- Well, irrespective of the cargo, say scheduling, if you were scheduling leaving on time or delaying or anything like that, would he normally go through you or would he go through Don [redacted]

MR. NEESON: He would go through Don [redacted]

MR. KUCHARSKI: The deck log, the carbon copies, you mentioned the engine room had a log book and the carbon copies went ashore.

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Did the deck log carbon copies go ashore also?

MR. NEESON: I didn't deal with those, I don't know.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Who would've dealt with those?

MR. NEESON: I don't know.

MR. STITH: This is Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. The second mate separates the deck log and he passes it around to the captain which he sends them ashore at the end of the month, usually the following month.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

MR. STITH: They usually give about a week after the month is over to make sure all entries have been properly made and then after that, so probably around mid-month the deck log gets submitted to the office.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, Kevin, do you know who they went to?

MR. STITH: We use a form, a transmittal cover letter to track that, and those go to the Operations Department.

MR. KUCHARSKI: That's it. Thank you.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. The access hatch, the personnel access hatch on the second deck that leads down, that also leads to a common girder or alleyway, does that also lead to the engine room that other way?

It leads to a flat where you can either go into the steering gear room or --

MR. NEESON: Oh, along the -- Yes. Yes, there is a --

MR. STITH: So the access hatch not only leads to the steering gear room --

MR. NEESON: It goes (inaudible) cargo hold.

MR. STITH: Okay.

MR. NEESON: And parallels, it's along the

skin of the ship.

MR. STITH: Okay.

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. STITH: That's all I have.

MR. [redacted] Coast Guard. Do you know how many groups (phonetic) they had onboard the ship?

MR. NEESON: As far as I know they had one on each side of the bridge wing.

MALE PARTICIPANT: No.

MR. NEESON: No, there's just one?

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services. Just one, 406 megahertz EPIRB. They had two search and rescue rescue responders.

MR. NEESON: Oh, search, okay, that's right.

MR. [redacted] Are these GPS enabled, do you know?

MR. STITH: As far as I know they transmit the name of the ship and I'm not sure if they transmit its location.

MR. [redacted] They're not enacted with the GPS?

MR. STITH: No.

MR. [redacted] Okay. So one (inaudible)?

MR. STITH: Yes.

MR. NEESON: And the life raft and boats

should have one also, right?

MR. STITH: No.

MR. NEESON: They don't have EPIRBs?

MR. STITH: No, just one 406 megahertz EPIRB.

MR. NEESON: Okay.

MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa, NTSB, just general questions. Okay, let's see. You mentioned that the chief mate would let you know if he had any requests concerning lifesaving equipment.

Was there any concern that you can recollect from the chief mate or any other chief mate on the El Faro?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. FURUKAWA: No.

MR. NEESON: The only thing we talked about in the last conversations was general maintenance things.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And you mentioned that the clutches were done for the gravity davits, the lifeboat?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: Can you talk to me about that again, what was done and why?

MR. NEESON: The clutches are made to

maintain the speed of the boat as they are lowering the boat by gravity. The brake band fits around it and -- Well, in a survey done by Harding at our annual inspection, they said they were kind of noisy.

So in order to not take any chances with the boats we purchased new ones and had them installed. So Harding installed them and did the checks on them. The inboard, the starboard boat was done, I think right as they dropped the boat the crew tested it as they were leaving Jacksonville, because you want to do that, they didn't want to drop it on the dock.

In case you have a failure you don't want to drop your $200,000 lifeboat on the dock, so you drop it over the water and it worked fine. So that should be logged as tested.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And when was that?

MR. NEESON: That was a week ago I believe, ten days ago.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And that was the starboard lifeboat.

MR. NEESON: So that would be, what, the 31st or the -- The starboard lifeboat, yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Was any work done on the port side?

MR. NEESON: Yes, they did the same thing on

the port, but that was boat was tested at the dock because you're outboard in the river.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So both had their clutches replaced on the gravity davits. Anything done to the brakes?

MR. NEESON: They had brake band material with them. I don't know if they replaced them or not. They may not have needed, but they did have brake band material with them, I did see that.

MR. FURUKAWA: And that's something they could do onboard themselves?

MR. NEESON: Well they had Harding do it.

MR. FURUKAWA: And who is Harding?

MR. NEESON: Chad Harding, they are the, they do all the services for the lifeboats and the davits. They are standard throughout the industry.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Was the stretch, was the cut made around Number 3 hole?

MR. NEESON: Could be. I'd have to have the ship's drawing to verify that, I don't know.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. In the designated person ashore's interview it was mentioned that a scuttle had popped open on Number 2 deck, the first time, and the second time he said the scuttle had blown open.

Is there any explanation of how a scuttle could, you know, pop open or be blown with them?

MR. NEESON: I can't think of any. I mean it's a pretty heavy manhole cover. To have it pop up would take a lot of pressure, a lot of pressure.

MR. FURUKAWA: There is a scuttle status forward in the main passageway, any issues with them?

MR. NEESON: Not that I am aware of.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services. That was the watertight door --

MR. FURUKAWA: Oh, the watertight one.

MR. STITH: -- aboard, not for the scuttles. Only for the cargo watertight doors.

MR. FURUKAWA: Is there any status for the scuttles that you know?

MR. STITH: No, status board for that.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And the status for the scuttles would be, you know --

MR. STITH: There is an indicator light. I believe on that light it was either illuminated or not illuminated as opposed to having an open or a closed (inaudible).

MR. FURUKAWA: That's for the watertight doors?

MR. STITH: Yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: But for the scuttles anything that you know other than the signs?

MR. STITH: None. Nothing other than the signs.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And the signs I am referring to was the (inaudible).

MR. STITH: Yes, either personnel, you know, or no personnel.

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No questions.

MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: No questions.

MR. SHEPHERD: I have a question about the riding crew, is it a good time --

MR. YOUNG: Introduce yourself.

MR. SHEPHERD: Oh, I'm sorry, Al Shepherd, American Bureau of Shipping Management Systems Certification. Is this the proper time to ask about the riding crew? (Inaudible) so far, sorry.

MR. YOUNG: Sure, go ahead.

MR. SHEPHERD: (Inaudible). So you had the riding crew on board, obviously, as related to this preparation (inaudible) I mean for the Alaska run?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: And when you have a riding

crew onboard that's mostly run through you?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: (Inaudible) the riding crew onboard?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: So you had the riding crew onboard for this time, but did you have riding crew's onboard commonly or is it just related to this?

MR. NEESON: I have had riding crews on previous occasions for repairs that were beyond the scope of the crew, like if we needed any certified welder or something that they would --

MR. SHEPHERD: All right. So it's not a new thing to have a --

MR. NEESON: Well it's not uncommon. We don't normally do it, but on occasion we do.

MR. SHEPHERD: Right. Now you might not be the right person for this question, but what precautions, because the riding crews go through you is why I'm asking you, but what precautions or what measures are in place when you have a riding crew onboard, what type of precautions do you have to take as far as -- You're not understanding the question, right?

MR. NEESON: Your question is as far as --

MR. SHEPHERD: Yes, what --

MR. NEESON: -- instructions to the riders?

MR. SHEPHERD: Right, right.

MR. NEESON: We have an instruction, a safety instruction booklet where they review --

MR. SHEPHERD: Okay. Okay, so you have a published document?

MR. NEESON: Yes. The chief engineer goes through all the safety things to --

MR. SHEPHERD: Okay. And then their assignments for --

MR. NEESON: When they get their lifeboat assignments or life raft assignments they get their life jacket and survival suit.

MR. SHEPHERD: Right.

MR. NEESON: And that's all assigned and the captain or the mate would go through that with them, so they become a crew member basically.

MR. SHEPHERD: All right. So how long were they onboard?

MR. NEESON: These guys have been onboard for a couple of months.

MR. SHEPHERD: Oh, okay. So -- Okay.

MR. NEESON: So they were familiar with the ship.

MR. SHEPHERD: Okay, very good. Thank you.

MR. NEESON: Sure.

MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell, one more quick question. The watertight door you referred to on third deck port to the engine room or engine control (inaudible), is that a quick acting door on hinges or is a sliding watertight door?

MR. NEESON: I think it's a hinged door, I believe.

MR. STITH: I think it's got two dogs, you know, hinged on one side. Kevin Stith with TOTE Services. Hinged on one side and like two dogs on the other.

MR. NEESON: Individual dogs.

MR. STITH: Yes, it's something like that.

MR. O'DONNELL: Does it have an operator and wheel?

MALE PARTICIPANT: Is it a quick acting or --

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. STITH: It is not quick acting.

MR. O'DONNELL: It's just a lever?

MR. STITH: It's manual dogs. We'll see on the El Yunque.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski, one follow-up question. I saw on eagle.com the class ABS classification society website that there were two notations for reduced scantlings on the vessel.

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Are you familiar with those and can you elaborate?

MR. NEESON: About the 500,000 load bearing is that what you are talking about?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Well it just says "reduce scantlings." There were two notations, one for a deck and one for, I'm not sure if it's a hull or what the item is.

MR. NEESON: I'm not quite sure where. That can be verified here.

MR. O'DONNELL: Lou O'Donnell with ABS. We're going to provide information to the NTSB. That information is contained on mid-ship's drawings and the actual notation is a record comment as we call it at ABS.

It's reduce scantlings based on conversion control and it was reduce scantlings in certain areas in the construction of the vessel.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And so --

MR. O'DONNELL: We will provide, those

details will be in the mid-ship drawing, which we'll get to you today.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Mid-ship, okay.

MR. O'DONNELL: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So it's in the mid-ship area?

MR. O'DONNELL: Yes, yes, yes. Also there was scantling reassessments and those also will be provided to you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. Do you know after they renewed the clutches on the lifeboat davit winches the test method that they used?

Did they just lower the -- Was it an operational test or do you know if they did like a dynamic winch brake, you know, lower and drop the brake?

MR. NEESON: I think they used the three drop method.

MR. STITH: Okay. Very good, thanks.

MR. NEESON: They lower it ten feet, they'd slam the brake on, lower it another ten feet, slam the brake on.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. During that test would they have added any additional

weight to the boats to simulate a full lifeboat?

MR. NEESON: We did that test when we did the steel work on the davit where they actually replaced the steel, which was just done a month before.

MR. [redacted] So that was before or after the brake work?

MR. NEESON: Before.

MR. [redacted] Before the brake. After the brake work they just did a --

MR. NEESON: An operational test, yes.

MR. [redacted] Operational test, okay. A couple of follow-up things, can you just describe to us in your words or characterize what you believe the safety culture is like at TOTE throughout the organization?

MR. NEESON: What I see it's very good. I mean we keep up with it. The latest safety devices we buy. There is the man overboard on a device that picks up men that fell over the side and for a lifeboat retrieval.

There is an expensive little gizmo that somebody came up to make it pull, you know, lift a body up onto the boat. Now we had, you know, we go ahead and purchased that so we have it. I mean it's -- We stay up with it and all the equipment is good equipment.

I don't see any problems with the safety philosophy of the company whatsoever. They are very safe.

MR. [redacted] And to follow along with that, can you also characterize how you feel what the relationship is between the crews of the ships and the management? Is that a good working relationship between the two?

MR. NEESON: I would say so. I mean SIU, which is the unlicensed people, you know, if they have any problems they'll bring their agent in, their SIU agent, branch representative, if they have any beefs about something.

But as far as beefs on the ship they go to the captain or the mate and very little problems. It's usually about money, payroll. Other than that they are pretty good.

MR. [redacted] Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: So what we're going to do is review all the documents, and I know we hit you with a lot of questions, but a lot of our information and further questions will result of us looking through the AMOS system, the maintenance, the purchasing, the -- Oh, one last question pertaining to the document is do you receive the turnover notes from the engineers as

they swap out?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. YOUNG: You do?

MR. NEESON: I get an email.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. This is something we'll be looking at, too, is to see what the engineers do and record in their notes. Is it a standard form?

MR. NEESON: No, just a letter.

MR. YOUNG: No, just a letter.

MR. NEESON: Just a handwritten letter by the chief, or an emailed letter.

MR. YOUNG: And will it describe what transpired throughout his rotation?

MR. NEESON: Well anything that comes to, out of the ordinary that needs the next chief's attention.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. And, again, after we look through all this we'll have a much better handle on the operation of the ship from the engine department and we may wish to sit down again after we're a little further educated on your operation.

But we appreciate all of your information. Is there anything you feel that we haven't asked you.

MR. O'DONNELL: Brian, are we going around?

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Go around, I'm sorry. I

guess we're not done yet.

MR. O'DONNELL: The watertight door that goes from the Number 3 hole to the engine room you said it's not a hydraulic door it's a --

MR. NEESON: A manual.

MR. O'DONNELL: Manual. When that's open and closed is that indicated on the passageway in the --

MR. NEESON: No. No.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Was that an add-on? Was that original, built that way, or was that added on at some time?

MR. NEESON: I have no idea.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: I'm sorry, I was (inaudible), what --

MR. O'DONNELL: There is a watertight door that goes from Number 3 hole into the engine room, it's not a hydraulic door, it's a --

MR. PETERSON: Yes, I know what you're talking about.

MR. O'DONNELL: Right.

MR. PETERSON: It's been there as long as I remember.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay.

MR. PETERSON: I don't know, but that's not much of an answer for you, but I don't know if that was an add-on or not?

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Are there any other doors, watertight doors, that are not indicated on that status board?

MR. NEESON: I would think the forward focsle --

MR. YOUNG: Can you say your name, Lee?

MR. PETERSON: Yes, Lee Peterson.

MR. NEESON: I think the access door to the forward focsle there is no indicator light on that.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. And is that also a manual one?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Were there any plans to put a status light?

MR. NEESON: No.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. I just heard you say something about steel work being done on the davit, can you describe what kind of, why, and what was done?

MR. NEESON: Sure. The davit has a big c-shaped arm basically and when the boat comes down on rollers it sits on these little flat bar pads and the flat bar pads were getting thinned out from age and

weather and the Coast Guard and ABS felt they were, needed to be replaced, so they replaced them, inserted them.

And there was some pitting along the big c-channel that the rollers roll in on the davit, it was a little thin, so those were repaired also. Structurally it didn't bother the structure, but it just, it needed to be changed out.

It was beyond -- They have limits of how much steel wastage is allowable and it was beyond the allowable limit, so we replaced it.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. And I understand you are retired? You are a retired merchant mariner, correct?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. How many years did you sail them?

MR. NEESON: Twenty-eight.

MR. O'DONNELL: Twenty-eight. And you sailed as chief engineer?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Were you sailing vessels with open lifeboats like this one?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Have you also sailed on

vessels with enclosed lifeboats?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Can you describe the difference between the two, the two boats and (inaudible)?

MR. NEESON: Well they're basically the same except the enclosed boat has a fiberglass shell over the top of it to keep the sailors out of the weather and it has windows, a few little windows, an access door, but other than that the hull of the boat is the same.

MR. O'DONNELL: Okay. Thank you.

MR. NEESON: And the boat I was familiar with was launched by davits. It was not one of the stern launched ones. It was --

MR. O'DONNELL: One of the audible launch -- (inaudible).

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. O'DONNELL: Yes.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard. Chief, on the Number 3 hold as you know they had stated they had taken on some water in that hold, how would they de-water that hold --

MR. NEESON: Was it that hold? Or do we know what hold it was?

MR. [redacted] Number 3 hold is what we think --
MR. NEESON: Okay.
MR. [redacted] Any of the holds --
MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: This is Jeff Fisker-Andersen. That was on the --
MR. NEESON: On the referral for --
MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: -- call from the captain I believe --
(Simultaneous speaking)
MR. NEESON: I never saw the transcript.
MR. FISKER-ANDERSEN: -- water in the three hold.
MR. [redacted] Yes, he stated he water in the Number 3 hold.
MR. NEESON: Okay.
MR. [redacted] How would he de-water, what method would they use to de-water that hold and any pumps that were used to de-water that hold can you tell us what the rate or the capacity of it would be?
MR. NEESON: I don't know the exact rate offhand, but they are, what, 25 gallons a minute.
MR. STITH: This is Kevin Stith with TOTE Services.
MR. NEESON: I don't know.
MR. STITH: I got to asked a question on the

El Yunque and the two bilge and ballast pumps that we have on the El Yunque have an 850 gallon per minute capacity.

MALE PARTICIPANT: Eight?

MR. STITH: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: I'm going to ask a follow-on question. Are they on an emergency switchboard?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: The bilge and ballast pumps are?

MR. NEESON: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Sorry, Mike Kucharski.

MR. NEESON: Now in the cargo holds they have what you call a rose box and you have a float switch in the rose box that indicates that you have water in there. So once that alarm goes off they know to get the pumps going.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So generally speaking are the cargo holds kept clean and free of dunnage and you think that could have --

MR. NEESON: Yes, yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: -- clogged up that rose box?

MR. NEESON: Well those particular holds had automobiles in it, so there was no debris.

MR. PETERSON: Nothing.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And does the use of those pumps require any type of manual spool piece or a cross connect or anything in the engine room in order for them to operate those pumps simultaneously?

MR. NEESON: No, they're ready to go. They just open the valve and push the start button.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. On the second deck do you know of any other watertight openings to the engine room, other than the hatches that lead down into the, towards the steering gear?

MR. NEESON: Well you have the house access, fore and aft. We have a ladder that goes up.

MR. STITH: Is there anything else on that deck that leads directly into the engine room?

MR. NEESON: There is an access for the Butterworth heater, a little soft patch, but that's not a --

MR. STITH: Okay.

MR. NEESON: That's buttoned up, that's semi-permanent.

MR. STITH: Okay, thank you.

MR. YOUNG: So, again, we appreciate your time. We will look through all the documentation.

It's just after 10:30 and we'll go off record, but thank you so much for coming in and answering all our questions and we appreciate your help.

MR. NEESON: Okay.

-END OF AUDIO FILE-

C E R T I F I C A T E

[redacted] El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of Tim Neeson
Jacksonville, FL

DATE: 10-08-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 110 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.

-[redacted]-

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

TIMOTHY NEESON
TAKEN ON
OCTOBER 8, 2015

Page Number	Line Number	Current Wording	Corrected Wording
4	1	at my	as
6	21, 21	up	out
8	21	bough	bow
8	23	ROW ROW	ro ro
9	10	bane	main
9	20	ROW ROW	ro ro
10	25	bough	bow
11	9	ROW ROW	ro ro
12	12	targeting	targeting
25	22	Wallischeck	Walashek
26	16, 18	Wallischeck	Walashek
31	7	hand hole	handhole
69	8	holes	holds
71	7	Any many	Any
72	17	regular	regularly
73	21	re-operations	operational
76	6	groups	Epirbs
94	21	25	25
96	19	a--	Normally used access

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

TIMOTHY NEESON
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[redacted]
Signature of Person providing the above information

11/10/15
Date

46810.doc