

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND *

SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD TOWING *

ACCIDENT MAY 3, 2017 *

Accident No.: DCA17PM012

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* * * * *

Interview of: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

U.S. Coast Guard Facilities
New Orleans, Louisiana

Tuesday,
May 9, 2017

APPEARANCES:

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

█ █ █ Sector New Orleans, Investigations
United States Coast Guard

█ █ █ District 8 Legal
United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Good afternoon. My name is Luke Wisniewski
3 from the National Transportation Safety Board. I am here at
4 Station New Orleans with [REDACTED] Mate Second Class [REDACTED]

5 Could you go through and for the transcription, spell your
6 name out or say your name and then spell it?

7 BM2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir. It's BM2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
8 spelled [REDACTED], [REDACTED] spelled [REDACTED]

9 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. We'll go around table in -- that's
10 here for the interview.

11 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast Guard Sector New
12 Orleans, Investigations.

13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] District 8, Legal.

14 MR. WISNIEWSKI: And myself, Luke Wisniewski, NTSB.

15 We're here -- NTSB is here to conduct an independent -- we're
16 a federal agency here to -- charged with determining the probable
17 causes of this accident. So we put together probable most
18 contributing factors. We are not part of the Coast Guard or
19 Department of Transportation. NTSB has no regulatory or
20 enforcement powers.

21 The purpose of our investigation today is to increase safety.
22 It's not to assign fault, blame or liability. However, NTSB
23 cannot offer or guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from
24 legal or license actions.

25 We would like to record this interview. Is it okay to

1 record?

2 BM2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

3 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Thank you. Are you aware that you're
4 entitled to a representative --

5 BM2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

6 MR. WISNIEWSKI: -- here? And you've chose not to have a
7 representative present, and that's okay with you?

8 BM2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

9 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Thank you. We'll go through the day
10 of May 2nd and we'll talk about you -- you just go from the start
11 when you arrived to the -- all the incidents or actions that
12 you've taken and who you called and discussed with during the
13 incident between the CG 29113 and the Sailing Vessel *Vanguard*.

14 If you have any questions or we bring up questions that's not
15 clear, just ask us, you know, can you restate that? I'm not sure
16 what you're asking, and if you realize something at a later time
17 that you want to correct something in your statement or what you
18 said previously, any time just say, hey, you know what? I said
19 port and I meant to say it was the starboard bow. So there's, you
20 know, just to clarify things. We want to make sure we get the
21 facts correct.

22 INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

23 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

24 Q. All right. So with that being said, take it away. You
25 arrived at the Station on May 2nd.

1 A. May 2nd. I believe it was May 3rd that the incident took
2 place. It was Monday or that Wednesday, correct?

3 Q. No, we have May 2nd as the date of the incident. It was on a
4 Tuesday, a week.

5 [REDACTED] That's what I have in my paperwork.

6 BM2 [REDACTED] Okay. I see where we're at with that. All
7 right. Just for clarification, May 2nd, I was -- on that Tuesday,
8 I was not on duty.

9 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. That Tuesday, I was on liberty at home. I came in on that
12 Wednesday morning at -- I got here about 0630 and I came in and
13 began my OD relief process, starting with armory, check in, de-
14 gunning, all my -- all the crewmembers, all the off duty section,
15 getting all their LE gear checked in, placed back into the armory
16 and doing counts. It takes about 30 minutes.

17 And then I went to the communications watchstander Station
18 with the watch board, cleared the names that were on there and
19 started placing my section onto there. Watchstanders, primary
20 boat crew, secondary boat crew and the daily ops for that day
21 which on that day, the daily ops were supposed to be -- we were
22 supposed to have two patrols, LE patrols, one in Tchefuncte River,
23 and one at Highway 11. That was supposed to take place around
24 12:30 that day.

25 However, the weather was pretty bad that day from what I

1 remember. Anyways, after the watch board was complete, got on the
2 computer, checked ALMIS (ph.), made sure all the boats were signed
3 in. I can't remember the boat status off the top of my head for
4 right now, but made sure all the boats were signed in, checked the
5 status, preadmissions and all that. So those were good.

6 And after that, it was probably around -- I don't know. The
7 guys were down there doing boat checks, engineering checks and all
8 that. Breakfast is at 0800.

9 I'll back up a little bit. On the computer, I checked the
10 message system, C20IX.

11 After breakfast, checked the (indiscernible) of the day. We
12 had that -- we had the case involving the sailboat, spoke to the
13 off going break in OD who had just woken up at the time. He said
14 that they had originally got called for a sailboat that was
15 aground and that they were requesting assistance but didn't want
16 commercial assistance.

17 So Sector had us go out there. He said that we weren't going
18 to tow them. Not him personally, but the coxon said we weren't
19 going to tow them but we'll take them off and they said we don't
20 want assistance.

21 And then he said after that, they got diverted to a
22 lifejacket that they saw floating in the water, and they did a
23 couple of search patterns, called it good.

24 And then he said later or earlier that morning, he got a call
25 saying the sailboat -- the guys -- the two people on the sailboat

1 wanted to come off. So they went out there and got them. I think
2 he said he took them to the dock in Slidell and he said that the
3 coxon and his crew were still sleeping (indiscernible) morning.
4 So they were still sleeping.

5 Anyways, so I made sure all the MISLE was done and all that.
6 The case packaged and all that was done.

7 Following that, we did our OD reliefs with our -- with BM1
8 [REDACTED] It was myself, BM3 Bethel (ph.), BM1 Sheeler (ph.) and
9 BM1 [REDACTED] She did our OD release. Went down the log, made sure
10 everything was good, made sure I understood the boat statuses.
11 Everything was accounted for. All the cleanups were done and
12 good. All the boats were good and once that was all set, I took
13 the OD.

14 From there, we -- I know we canceled our patrols. Everything
15 was pretty normal. We canceled our patrols due to the weather. I
16 know we had at times in the morning, we were looking probably
17 about 15, 20 knots and the lake was choppy. I mean it was like 4
18 foot at the time around noon or so, around 10:30, whatever it was.
19 And so we just kind of watched the weather all day.

20 Normal workday, people working until about 1500. I think
21 that's pretty much it for the workday, just normal stuff.

22 And then let's see what time it was. I think it was about
23 3:00, 3:30 -- 1530 in the afternoon, and we got a call. I got
24 called into comms by the watchstander, and he said that we had a
25 sailboat adrift and so my -- and he said it was around Rigolets

1 (ph.), I-10. So my first question was, was it the one from last
2 night? He said we don't know. We think so. He asked if I had
3 the LA numbers or, excuse me, the state numbering for that
4 sailboat. I told him to give me a second, and I'll look, and I
5 couldn't -- I couldn't find them. I don't think they took them
6 down which they ended up being Florida State numbering.

7 So I passed the phone number to Sector of the case file that
8 we had for the -- I can't remember her name. It was the lady that
9 was on board. They said, yeah, it's the one we've been trying to
10 call. They're not answering.

11 So I said, well, I don't have a picture of the state number.
12 And I could tell he was a little upset with that which, you know,
13 but we didn't have the state number for that boat. So I couldn't
14 tell him that's the one or that's not the one, even though, you
15 know, we both believed it to be.

16 So he gave me the tasking to send a boat crew out there and
17 get pictures and verify the state numbering which he had passed
18 the state numbering which he believed it to be which was a Florida
19 number. I can't remember it off the top of my head.

20 So we got a boat crew ready and I had a brand new coxon and
21 it seemed pretty cut and dry. The weather had calmed down quite a
22 bit, and they said, you know, they wanted to verified picture. So
23 I said in my mind I thought it was a great time to go out there
24 and take your boat out for the first time. So I put BM3
25 [REDACTED] on there. It wasn't an urgent SAR. So we took our

1 time, put BM3 [REDACTED] on there, told her the plan and all
2 that. The crewmembers were already gunned up and everything for
3 that. So we got them all gunned up, showed the position on the
4 chart, the area, and within I think it was 25 minutes we were
5 trailered with the 29. We were trailered up to Rigolets.

6 They asked if we could -- Sector asked if could run across
7 the lake because our ETA with going to the Rigolets at that time
8 would probably be about an hour and 15 which I think it was pretty
9 dang close to an hour to get over there on truck and trailer due
10 to rush hour. But I didn't want to transit that way. I couldn't
11 do in 24 where we were at right here. It would just be way too
12 rough a ride, and the 45, I looked at a chart, and I said, well,
13 it might be too shallow. So I didn't do the 45. So the 29
14 trailer into Rigolets kind of felt like the right thing to do.

15 I talked to the CDO, told him I got a plan. I told him I
16 wanted to send BM3 [REDACTED] and he was kind of hesitant at
17 first and, you know, he ended up agreeing with it.

18 So we ended up sending her and the crew about 3:30. 3:50 I
19 think is actually when they like left mobile, around that
20 timeline. Went to the Rigolets Marina, launched from the Rigolets
21 Marina. They said the GAR score was 2-1. Went out to Rigolets.

22 And let me backed up a little bit. In between the timeframe
23 from them leaving the Station to actually getting to the --
24 getting to the Rigolets, I know we had some calls with Sector. I
25 can't remember exactly what they said. We went over the tasking

1 again, just to get pictures and all that and I know -- I believe
2 it was Mr. [REDACTED] (ph.) who called and said that the boat had
3 drifted from the Rigolets to under I-10. I believe there was a
4 second occasion where he said it's drifting towards Highway 11.

5 So [REDACTED] she launched, and then I actually -- I
6 handed the phone to my break in OD, BM3 O'Connor. She's been here
7 for quite a bit of time. So I handed her the phone. I just did
8 my work and she was working on here morale minutes and she was
9 giving me -- I know they had a couple of phone calls where -- I
10 remember comms telling her, hey, they're on the scene, said the
11 weather was 5 to 10 knots, 1 to 2 feet. So in my mind, I thought
12 that was pretty good.

13 And then I remember [REDACTED] calling the OD and saying or
14 calling the OD phone and saying, hey, this boat's, you know,
15 approximately 100 -- I think he said 175 feet away from the
16 bridge. So immediately after that, I know [REDACTED] (ph.), I think
17 [REDACTED] she said that you may have to get ready for a tow. So
18 just be ready. And then she called Sector, told them, you know,
19 the situation, passing numbers and all that, talked to Sector and
20 the way she said it, is they said if you can hook up to tow, do
21 it. So I said, well, if they can hook up to the tow, do it if
22 it's safe.

23 And so called [REDACTED] passed what they said. She said she
24 thinks she could do it. So if she did it -- at the time I found
25 this out that it was actually dang close to the bridge, a little

1 bit closer than 175 feet. Maybe not at the time. Maybe it was
2 175 feet but it ended up being pretty dang close to the bridge
3 when they actually hooked up the tow.

4 So they said they got the tow hooked up. They were going to
5 start heading back to -- originally we were thinking Rigolets but
6 we determined the safest -- the closest safe haven to be Oak
7 Harbor. So [REDACTED] my break in OD called Oak Harbor to confirm
8 that we could moor up the sailboat there, and they said that would
9 be fine. So that was all good. I'm thinking, okay, normal tow,
10 get it in there.

11 And then I believe the next time that they called was when --
12 I remember -- I remember them calling describing the way they were
13 towing and that it was possibly taking on water, and they told us
14 that they did a stern tow which in my mind I thought was odd
15 obviously because, you know, towing from stern to stern is a
16 little odd. He explained why. He said that they didn't have --
17 they couldn't get to the front bit because the sail was down at
18 the jig. So they wanted to get the boat away from the bridge
19 which in my mind makes sense, okay, pull the boat off.

20 So I was right with [REDACTED] She said if it's safe,
21 transition your tow to where you can get a safe -- in a safer
22 spot. And then she told me -- and then regarding them saying
23 taking on water, she said, we're going to call Sector. I said
24 they're going to have to ask how it's taking on water and how do
25 you know, and what do you think it's taking on water from. So she

1 called them back and she said, well, they couldn't tell because it
2 wasn't safe to get over -- get people over.

3 So I know that she called Sector and she asked for like
4 tasking or just told them that it was taking on water, and they
5 said, if you feel like it's unsafe, you can break tow. If it's
6 safe to continue going about it, go about it.

7 We did an update on that. The last guy we got said, hey,
8 we're going to try to transition and all that. I said, all right,
9 cool.

10 And then the next phone call we received was after everything
11 had pretty much gone south and that's when -- so [REDACTED] comes
12 into the -- well, actually I had gone out of the room for a second
13 because I had to use the head, and she comes into the room and she
14 opens the door and she said, JP, it just -- it just went south.
15 And so I was like, okay.

16 So I took the phone and she was trying to explain to me what
17 was going on and she said it was kind of -- I couldn't really
18 understand what they were saying. They lost their engines.
19 That's all I really know, and they tried to break the towline.
20 They tried to cut the towline. I was like, all right.

21 So I took the phone. I called [REDACTED] I can't remember if
22 she answered the first time or not. It didn't really matter
23 because when she did answer, she did eventually answer and it was
24 like I was on speakerphone. Not even on speaker, but sat down
25 right on the dash or something, and I was just hearing everything

1 that was going on in the background. A lot of yelling. I
2 couldn't really make anything out. At one point, she said, JP, I
3 lost the engines. All right. I said where are you at? She said
4 Highway 11. I didn't even -- at the moment, I didn't even think
5 -- didn't even know they were under the bridge, just kept hearing
6 the background for like 30 seconds and then the phone call -- I
7 don't know if they hung up or I got lost.

8 I immediately called CDO and told them, hey, I don't know
9 exactly what just happened. I do know our boat's lost its engines
10 and they tried to cut the towline and BM1 [REDACTED] was just like,
11 how did they lose their engines? What's going on? Take a deep
12 breath, and get the answers.

13 So I didn't know how they lost the engines. I didn't know
14 exactly the whole realm of the situation. So I called back.
15 Again, it was in the background. I heard -- but this time [REDACTED]
16 was able to talk to me for a second, and she said in a phrase
17 like, we're under water -- we're by the bridge. We can't get our
18 engines started and I -- I f'ed up the boat.

19 So I said do you want me to come -- send somebody out there.
20 She said, yeah. I was like all right. So I got a 45 crew ready
21 to go, and during the incident, she told me they ran over the
22 towline and they lost their engines. So I said, all right. I'm
23 going to send somebody out there. I've got a 45 getting ready to
24 go. I talked to [REDACTED] I said, hey, they ran over the towline,
25 lost their engines and then I said I'm getting ready to send a 45

1 out, and in that instant, [REDACTED] called me and said, hey, we got
2 one engine started. We're away from the bridge. [REDACTED] got it
3 started. Oh, my God. We almost died.

4 So then I said let me talk to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was a little
5 bit calmer. He gave me kind of the story. He said, hey, we were
6 trying to -- trying to get rid of the lines from the tow, and the
7 messenger line, basically the double becket, it's kind of
8 connected at, we ended up backing down on it and lost our engines
9 and drifted into the bridge.

10 I said what about the sailboat? He's like that sailboat,
11 that piece of shit's gone. That boat's gone. I said, all right.
12 Are you guys all right? He said, yeah, we're okay. He's like the
13 boat's banged up pretty bad. I said all right. I said where are
14 you guys at right now? Past the -- I said all right. Start
15 heading -- are you guys good on -- they said that they got the
16 other engine when I was on the phone with them. I said are you
17 guys good to start heading back to the boat? He said, yeah. I
18 said, all right. I'm going to call the CDO.

19 I called the CDO. I said, hey, BM1, the sailboat sunk. They
20 backed down over the towline while trying to disconnect the two or
21 transition, disconnect the two, and they were unable to actually
22 break the line or to cut the line. So they tried taking them off,
23 backed down over it, lost the props, drifted into Highway 11 and
24 they said the boat's banged up pretty bad, no injuries. He said
25 before they leave, have them [REDACTED] the position that it went under

1 and tell them to head back to the trailer as soon as they can.

2 So that happened. I called them back. Said [REDACTED] the
3 position, and they texted it to me afterwards. I said start
4 heading back to Rigolets Marina, and then it had to have been
5 maybe 10, 15 -- obviously during -- after I found out the engines
6 were started, I told the 45 to stand down,

7 But it was about 10 -- 10 minutes later I'd say, BM3 [REDACTED]
8 called me back from I think [REDACTED] phone, and said, hey, it's
9 really rough on the other side of I-10, like 6 footers, close to 6
10 footers. He said we all agree that we think the safe -- near safe
11 haven would be Oak Harbor. I said, all right, Roger that. If
12 it's safer, go do it. I said how long do you think it'll be until
13 you're there? And he said probably about 20 minutes. I said,
14 Roger. BM1 [REDACTED] is going to be there. Don't leave until you
15 see him.

16 From there, BM1 said he was going over there, and I said
17 they're going to be at Oak Harbor because the weather got really
18 bad, ended up getting pretty bad up there and they'll meet you
19 there, and then he had me get a couple guys together here at
20 Station, send a GV (ph.) up there to check the boat and eventually
21 go get the truck and trailer and bring it to Oak Harbor.

22 From there, it was probably about, I don't know, 2 hours, I
23 think they ended up trailering it back about 9:00, 9:15, ended up
24 trailering back about 9:00, and got back and at that time I had
25 [REDACTED] Gushay (ph.), or excuse me, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

1 and [REDACTED] Ford come by because they wanted to talk to them,
2 not really. They just wanted to make sure they were okay, and my
3 CO as well as my XPO came in just to make sure the boat crew was
4 all right.

5 Then while they got back, they were soaking wet, drained. I
6 could just tell. They went and changed and then I ended up
7 getting another SAR case. So I got another SAR case for another
8 sailboat 5 miles from the Station. So that's how -- that pretty
9 much ends that time for that case, when I started focusing on
10 other stuff. So.

11 Q. Thank you for that narrative. I'd just like to go through
12 now, just follow up on some questions or things that I've made
13 notes of. You indicated that, you know, the weather was picking
14 up or that it was -- did you -- did you anticipate any weather
15 concern or relay that back to CG 29113, the small boat?

16 A. Right. Well, at the time that they actually launched, it was
17 1 to 2 feet, you know, 5, 10 knots. I know we had a storm pushing
18 in, in an hour and a half or so. I can even tell you the
19 timeframe actually. Because I had BM1 Silva who has always given
20 me weather updates like, hey, there's a storm coming. Do you guys
21 know? I said, yeah, I know. So in my mind, at the time, I was
22 thinking, okay, pictures, we're good and then the boat started
23 drifting towards the bridge, and I looked at how far it was from
24 Oak Harbor, and after all it was -- we can probably do that, a
25 little bit of weather coming in, 30 foot boat. Our boat could tow

1 that. So probably -- yeah -- should have checked on how much that
2 was going to pick up because I ended up saying it after the fact
3 that it's 4 feet. So.

4 Q. And what did -- did you hear any records of the winds at the
5 time?

6 A. Of it actually going down?

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I mean they took a guesstimation of --

9 Q. Was it on the smooth plot (ph.) or anything on an hourly
10 basis of the weather?

11 A. Not an hourly, no. It did -- the first weather report we got
12 was the on scene time.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then it was after the fact of the mishap and that's when
15 they said, you know, it's 4 or 5 feet out here, 15, 20 knots. So.

16 Q. Okay. You indicated early on that it wasn't, you know, you
17 said it was not an urgent SAR case, and you indicated they were
18 just to go out and get pictures and --

19 A. Right. I mean that was the initial tasking. Go get
20 pictures, verify the origin of the sailboat, Roger that.

21 Q. Did you get pictures back?

22 A. No. Sorry to laugh, but we -- we told the crew to take
23 pictures. They didn't. They passed the numbers. They just
24 didn't take the pictures. So we got the numbers back. They just
25 didn't take a picture, and then by the time that we would like to

1 have received those pictures, it was already close to Highway 11,
2 you know, it went into the tow. So.

3 Q. And you were speaking the whole time with the coxon as far as
4 the pictures and the initial --

5 A. We had text messages. I mean --

6 Q. Oh, you were doing text messaging?

7 A. Right. It was -- so there was a text message from the OD
8 phone to BM3 [REDACTED] and BM3 [REDACTED] to crewmembers, hey, take
9 pictures when you're on scene.

10 Q. And most of the communication was text messaging from the
11 beginning, the initial?

12 A. From the time that -- from the time that the trailer left to
13 there, I think there was one phone call regarding, hey, pass your
14 GAR when you get there, and I know there were at least two text
15 messages sent to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] regarding, hey, when you get on
16 scene, take pictures.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then --

19 Q. And then pretty much everything else was over the phone
20 though?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. All right.

23 A. Other than the one pass lat and long of where the sailboat
24 sunk. That's pretty much the last text message.

25 Q. In the beginning, you indicated there was some hesitation to

1 send a new coxon out with you in your conversation with -- can you
2 repeat who that was with again?

3 A. BM1 [REDACTED]

4 Q. Okay. Can you elaborate a little bit farther on what was
5 that hesitation or just --

6 A. A new coxon. I mean you just get a little nervous inside. I
7 mean she did -- she did well on her checkride and, you know, it's
8 your first time. So you're a little bit hesitant with the OD,
9 like, you know, is she going to do all right. She's got this. I
10 know she can do it but you just question it. I think it's normal.
11 You question like, all right, this is you and she was pumped up.
12 She wanted it. It got me a little bit pumped up, too, this is
13 your first one, you know, it's simple. Not really simple but I
14 was like this is what you've got to do, all right. This is the
15 tasking, this is your crew, and she had a pretty good crew and,
16 you know, but there's a little hesitation especially, you know,
17 for BM1's side like, all right, you know. Do you think she can do
18 it? I said, yeah, I think she can do it. Take pictures, get
19 position. So I felt confident in her that she could do it. I've
20 seen her out there. He was a little more hesitant than me. So I
21 hit it up okay and --

22 Q. Can you -- were you involved in her qualification as far as
23 checking her out for a coxon qualifications?

24 A. Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

25 Q. No issues or anything?

1 A. She's great. She still is. She's absolutely great.

2 Q. That's good. Thank you. Thanks for elaborating on that.

3 Just a couple more here, and I'll pass it over, but you indicated,
4 and I just want to clarify. You said both break the tow and -- or
5 cut the -- and you also mentioned later on cut the towline.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Which one did you hear --

8 A. The first one, when I was talking -- when I had gone to my
9 room for that instant, and then the next conversation I had with
10 [REDACTED] was that it just went south. She said, hey, they just
11 tried to cut the towline. She said that they tried to cut it.
12 When I had spoken to [REDACTED] after they had gotten away from
13 Highway 11, he said, yeah, we tried to cut it. We couldn't. So
14 we ended up getting rid of the mooring lines at the double becket
15 point. So they had backed down -- from what I understanding, they
16 had backed down and tried to get rid of the mooring lines and then
17 the messenger line had gotten tangled in the props. So the
18 actually never got cut with a knife from my understanding.

19 Q. Can you share a little bit more on -- did you try to get
20 ahold of the owner? Obviously you had the SAR.

21 A. I didn't.

22 Q. You had the information from last night.

23 A. I --

24 Q. Was there anyone on board?

25 A. Nobody on board.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I had the phone number to the lady and I passed that number
3 to Sector. They said, yeah, that's the one I've got. We've been
4 calling them. We've been calling them.

5 Q. Okay. So Sector was the one that was trying --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- to make the calls to the owner.

8 A. Sector had been calling them --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- and then at one point, it might have been after the fact,
11 they said that they're trying to get a unit over to the house to
12 see if they're awake. I think it was around 4:30 maybe. So they
13 were going to try to get a JPSO officer to the unit or over to
14 their last address.

15 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. That's all I have at this time. I'll
16 pass it over. [REDACTED]

17 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

18 BY [REDACTED]

19 Q. When did you report to Station?

20 A. 2014, August 2014.

21 Q. Okay. And -- so were you (indiscernible) in a prior unit?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. So you --

24 A. Came from A school.

25 Q. You came from A school.

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Made it second year?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. And you're fully qualified?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. And when did you become an OD?

7 A. I became an OD June of '16.

8 Q. Is there a PQS for that?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. Is it -- it's a local PQS?

11 A. Yes. We've evolved it. So --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- it was my old command's PQS.

14 Q. Okay. Can you tell me your understanding of the Coast Guard
15 salvage policy?

16 A. INSIP (ph.). I mean I know that we can't, you know, take
17 over for -- we don't want to intrude on commercial enterprise.

18 Q. This would be more for like --

19 A. For salvage?

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. If it's -- I mean it's our discretion. We're not -- we're
22 primarily a lifesaving unit but if we can save property safely and
23 effectively, we can. If you're going to pull something off, seek
24 advice. That way you're not reliable for it. And as far as --

25 Q. Did you have a conversation with either your break in or the

1 CDO about that policy in relation to what, you know, how it
2 changed from taking pictures to we're going to pull this thing
3 off. If we pull it off, we're going to tow it. Did you ever have
4 that --

5 A. Well, the conversation --

6 Q. -- that risk benefit conversation?

7 A. I understand. The conversation we had was this boat's pretty
8 close to the bridge. I mean we know the policy. I don't think we
9 physically talked about it. Use your discretion, you know, and my
10 coxon used her discretion. And so as far as that specific
11 conversation like, hey, this thing is on the bridge. We didn't
12 know it was on the bridge at the time.

13 Q. So what about with Sector? Who did you talk to at Sector in
14 terms of the case in general?

15 A. In terms of the case, Mr. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED] He was the first one.

17 Q. Was he the OU or the CDO?

18 A. He was the OU.

19 Q. Was he breaking in or was he qualified?

20 A. Couldn't tell you. He was working with Mr. [REDACTED]

21 Q. And was he the --

22 A. Mr. [REDACTED] I've worked with quite a bit. I know he's been
23 there for a while.

24 Q. Was he the OU or CDO?

25 A. OU. The CDO was -- I believe it was Mrs. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

1

2 Q. Okay. Okay. I'll ask the same question again. I'm just
3 trying to figure out the whole picture if you will. All right.
4 What about with Sector, any conversations about risk versus gain
5 in terms of -- when you went from, okay, we're just taking
6 pictures, now let's pull it off.

7 A. Right.

8 Q. So let me back up because I think I'm not expressing it the
9 right way. Was it put all on her to make the decision, right,
10 because clearly she's got the final decision. I get that.

11 A. Right, right.

12 Q. Right, but was it put on her? Was there any discussion from
13 the people who are SMC, that kind of stuff --

14 A. Right.

15 Q. -- like, hey, let's talk about risk versus gain.

16 A. Right. The only thing, the risk versus gain was the GAR,
17 that I think of, was the GAR like, you know, reevaluate your GAR.
18 As far as like the actual conversation like the salvage policy,
19 the discussion at the most that it was brought up to was at your
20 best discretion or if you think it's safe, you know. When a
21 boat's taking on water, if you think it's safe continue on. If
22 not, break tow. If you can tow it safely, tow it to the nearest
23 safe haven. That was the (indiscernible) of it. Because during
24 this timeline, it wasn't, you know, it wasn't constant calls back
25 and forth like, hey --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. -- we've got the boat in tow right now. Hey, we think it's
3 taking on water.

4 Q. Did it -- right. Did anybody express that the bridge is in
5 danger or the roadway is in danger? Was that ever talked about
6 that you remember?

7 A. No. I know that it started over the release -- it drifted
8 under I-10. It was getting close to Highway 11 and I know after
9 the fact, they had said that Highway 11 had called to say, hey,
10 that sailboat is getting pretty close to the bridge, had called
11 over to the coxon, to [REDACTED] but we didn't hear that over the
12 radio. We were monitoring 13.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But that's the only fact of it being someone regarding the
15 bridge like, hey, you know.

16 Q. So -- just so I know the comms work, because it's kind of a
17 little bit of a telephone game, right, boat to you to Sector,
18 Sector to you to boat? Is that right?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. That was what it just ended up being.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. I mean I've got a comms watchstander, too.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. He's trying to get them on the radios and everything like

1 that --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. -- but for the most part, after the fact, after the mishap
4 took place, it was a lot of --

5 Q. Do you know if -- were they -- were they -- that a working
6 frequency? Was it 21 Alpha?

7 A. For the boat?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. We use CG 112.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. That's our primary working --

12 Q. Was Sector monitoring that?

13 A. Always.

14 Q. Okay. Do you remember who exactly gave the tasking to take
15 pictures -- who at Sector?

16 A. Mr. [REDACTED]

17 Q. Mr. [REDACTED] Okay. Then do you remember who exactly said --
18 let me back up. Forgive me that it's all -- but take pictures.
19 At some point, the boat had to report back that, you know, from
20 the bridge -- delay at the bridge, and like, hey, it's up against
21 the bridge. Did --

22 A. Was that --

23 Q. Was that you or Conner (sic) who said that back to Sector?

24 A. [REDACTED].

25 Q. [REDACTED].

1 A. That's when BM3 [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] and said, hey, these
2 are the numbers. The bridge is 175 feet roughly away from the
3 bridge. What do you want us to do?

4 Q. [REDACTED].

5 A. [REDACTED] called Sector.

6 Q. And then do you remember who at Sector told O'Connor, okay,
7 see if it's safe to tow it back?

8 A. I believe it was Mr. [REDACTED] We were dealing with Mr. [REDACTED]
9 and Mr. [REDACTED] for the most part --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- throughout the whole thing until -- I know they ended up
12 doing a release at some time around then but as far as the initial
13 hookup and tow, I believe it was Mr. [REDACTED] I'm not 100 percent
14 confident on that answer.

15 Q. Okay. Did the boat pass back to you guys the towing
16 configuration, stern to stern?

17 A. Just over the phone.

18 Q. Over the phone.

19 A. I know they passed it over to the radio that they had the
20 boat in tow but they didn't pass stern to stern --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- until -- until I believe it was after we talked to them
23 and they said the boat might be taking on water.

24 Q. When it was going badly and then -- was it kind of when it
25 was going badly? When it was going badly.

1 A. I wouldn't say badly. I would -- probably where they needed
2 to take a step back and -- this was at the point where [REDACTED] had
3 called and said, hey, I think the boat might be taking on water.
4 We said okay, you know, if you have to, break tow and we called
5 Sector about this all, too, but, you know, if you have to, break
6 tow. She couldn't -- can you figure out where it's taken on water
7 and how much? She said it's not safe to put anybody over. I
8 can't see where it is, but our tow is stern to stern. So we said,
9 okay, maybe if you can make it into a safe -- transition into a
10 safer tow. She said that the bow was kind of dipping under when
11 they were towing stern to stern. So we think water might have
12 been coming in that way but, you know, who knows. It might have
13 been taking on water before we got there.

14 Q. I'm just looking at my notes. Sorry. So do you -- can you
15 -- do you remember how many of these type cases you've handed
16 since you've been here, sort of derelict vessel kind of situations
17 if you can remember approximately?

18 A. Well, obviously nothing specific to this but as far as like
19 are you talking into regards to maybe like salvage or something
20 like that?

21 Q. Yeah, basically, yeah.

22 A. I mean I've done numerous tows but as far as like -- I mean I
23 remember one sailboat --

24 Q. I'll make it simple. Do you remember how many similar cases
25 you had to this one?

1 A. I'm trying to think specific number but --

2 Q. No persons on board.

3 A. I can think of one off the top of my head regarding no
4 persons. Well, I guess I do have two. Because they took pictures
5 before. So.

6 Q. In tow as well?

7 A. Yeah, a lot smaller platform though.

8 Q. Okay. Do you guys -- do you have -- what's your relationship
9 with the Army Corps for this type of stuff?

10 A. For this, I couldn't even tell you.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Army Corps, I use their boat ramp.

13 [REDACTED] Okay. That's all I have, sir.

14 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Luke Wisniewski, NTSB.

15 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

16 Q. Just to follow up with that relationship between the Army
17 Corps of Engineers, when from a station level, and I'm just trying
18 to clarify here, the determination of like do we salvage it, do we
19 put this thing in tow or who would you notify if you decided,
20 okay, we can't tow this thing any more --

21 A. If I couldn't?

22 Q. -- and just let it go, yeah.

23 A. I would just go up my chain. If that was the case, I would
24 be calling Sector right away and say, hey, look. I don't think we
25 can tow this thing. This is where it's at. This is what's

1 happening. This is why.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And it's basically always because we don't determine it to be
4 a safe tow, something like that. From there, Sector takes it.

5 Q. Okay. But you don't reach out to the other government
6 agencies?

7 A. Not regarding that.

8 Q. Can you share a little more activity or based on the MISLE
9 activity from the day before on this vessel?

10 A. Yeah. I've got a little insight on it. I mean I can give
11 you the timeline. Okay. Well, for the most part anyway,
12 summarize it a little bit. But I know that they were out there
13 doing two boat training, and there ended up being a MARS, a marine
14 assistance request broadcast, put over for the sailboat. It was
15 in the vicinity of the Rigolets at the time, and Sector wanted
16 them to -- if no one responded to the MARS, to go get them. And
17 so they said that they -- they broke off from two boat, went over
18 there and said, hey, I'll give you guys a ride to shore. I'm not
19 going to take your boat because it was aground at the time, and
20 the coxon didn't feel comfortable doing it. It was aground. So
21 he didn't want to tow it. So he said, hey, I'll take you guys off
22 because apparently they didn't want commercial salvage, they
23 didn't want a towboat or sea tow. So they didn't want to just
24 leave the boat. So they took off and passed that onto Sector.
25 And then they ended up having a SAR cast for a lifejacket, that

1 they ended up doing some search patterns for, and then later on --
2 I think that one was in the evening, the lifejacket one.

3 Anyways, they had gotten back. They had already hit the rack
4 and they got a call early that morning, couldn't give you the
5 exact timeframe, sometime after midnight, that the people wanted
6 to come off the boat. They were requesting assistance, and they
7 wanted to come off the boat, and I was talking to BM2 Sheeler the
8 next day. He was the coxon and the OD, and he said, yeah, I went
9 and got them. I didn't really want to talk to them because I was
10 a little upset with them on the inside. I said we'll take you to
11 -- we'll take you to the dock. That's where we put in and that's
12 where we'll take you, and it was pretty close to where they were.
13 And he kept saying the lady wanted to go -- wanted me to take her
14 all the way to New Orleans, and he thought that was pretty
15 hysterical but he ended up just taking them to the dock, dropped
16 them off. They had anchored their boat where it was, and RTV
17 (ph.) from there. And they got back, I think, roughly around like
18 5:00 in the morning, something like that, pretty early.

19 Q. And when you say they, who was the one who anchored the boat?
20 The owner.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. No Coast Guard --

23 A. The guys didn't get on board.

24 Q. Okay. Is that recorded in the initial history, like this
25 boat was anchored or was it still aground?

1 A. Well, when I say anchored, they were aground but they tossed
2 the anchor over because they were getting off. That's what we do.
3 I mean if you're going to leave a boat there and it's aground,
4 toss the hook over just in case the water rises up like it
5 eventually did.

6 Q. Right. Yeah, I'm just trying to understand, you know, one,
7 that the anchor went out and you're making that clear, but also
8 the scope and row of the chain, how much was out, you know, if it
9 did get a high tide or good winds to push it off --

10 A. Didn't see the number for that.

11 Q. -- now you just decreased the displacement of the vessel,
12 getting people off, it's higher up in the water. Okay. That's
13 all I have really. Thank you.

14 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Any other questions.

15 BY [REDACTED]

16 Q. Just a quick follow up on that with the previous case. What
17 about the sail? Do you have any information about, you know, was
18 it secured and came undone or --

19 A. Don't know, sir.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. That would be something for BM1 Sheeler.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. He was the coxon and OD for that one. He could tell you. I
24 couldn't.

25 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

1 Q. Okay. Before we conclude, is there anything you'd like to
2 add to this conversation or anything you would like to change from
3 what you said?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Okay. Is there any items that you want to bring up that
6 maybe we didn't question you about but you felt is relevant to
7 this case or this accident?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. Okay. Do you have any recommendations like on how to prevent
10 this again, you know? I know obviously you'll have hot wash and
11 lessons learned with the Station. Is there anything you'd like to
12 share with us as far as, hey, you know, maybe we should do a
13 little more training in weather, whatever it may be? The floor is
14 yours.

15 A. No, sir.

16 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. All right. Well, at this time then
17 we'll conclude the interview. The time is 3:36. Thank you.

18 (Whereupon, at 3:36 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

19

20

21

22

23

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25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND
SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD TOWING
ACCIDENT MAY 3, 2017
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17PM012

PLACE: New Orleans, Louisiana

DATE: May 9, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND *

SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD COLLISION * Accident No.: DCA17PM012

MAY 3, 2017 *

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* * * * *

Interview of: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

U.S. Coast Guard Facilities
New Orleans, Louisiana

Wednesday,
May 10, 2017

APPEARANCES:

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Good afternoon. My name is Luke Wisniewski,
3 National Transportation Safety Board. We are here at Station New
4 Orleans with a follow-up interview with the OOD the night of May
5 2nd or 3rd?

6 MR. [REDACTED] 3rd.

7 MR. WISNIEWSKI: May 3rd. Okay. We'll state, go around the
8 room, everyone introduce themselves who's here present at this
9 interview.

10 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Sector New
11 Orleans.

12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] D-8 Legal.

14 INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

15 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

16 Q. Well, thank you for coming back. We just want to grab what
17 went on the night with the decision to formulate the crew for, to
18 go the sailing vessel *Vanguard* on May 3rd after -- when the
19 tasking came down to take pictures and -- can you just go through
20 that based on the information that you had at the time, the
21 decision you had with the CDO and the OOD to formulate that crew?

22 A. All right, sir. Well, because we didn't have any prior
23 missions that day, they had gotten cancelled. We got the call for
24 that adrift sailing vessel. Officially, if we would have had our
25 patrols scheduled earlier that day, BM3 [REDACTED] would have

1 gone out on a patrol for her first underway experience as a
2 qualified coxon. However, because it got cancelled, when we got
3 this call for an adrift sailing vessel, they were having us stand
4 by for the tasking, but it sounded like that she wanted us to
5 verify. So while that was going on, and I waited for the phone
6 call back, we got a tentative crew together, with consisted of
7 BM3 [REDACTED] BM3 [REDACTED] BM3 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] That
8 crew, in my mind, was efficient enough, and a very good crew to go
9 out in what seemed to be, at the time, a very cut and dry case.

10 Spoke with the CDO. I told him, you know, this is kind of
11 what we got. I'm still waiting on further tasking. But as of
12 right now, this is what I know. And I said this is the crew I
13 want to send. The weather had died down for the moment.

14 We were a little hesitant, just because it was the first one,
15 first mission as a qualified coxon. But a big moment,
16 nonetheless. So, I mean, she wanted to go. She told me she
17 wanted to go. And in my mind, and in agreement with CDO, we
18 believed that she could do this one.

19 So ended up getting my tasking from Sector, just to go verify
20 that state numbering, since I didn't have the state numbering
21 written down from the previous two cases. They said they were
22 going to try to call and verify, call one of the ladies that was
23 on the vessel the night before, call and see if it was theirs.
24 So, unfortunately, they said they weren't able to get ahold. So
25 they had a JPSO officer go on there.

1 As far as that, we understood that it was a non-distress
2 situation. It did, at first, want me to take a 45 across the
3 lake, or if I could take another asset to get there quicker, so
4 trailering the 29. Told them my decision, and my reason for it.
5 Took the 29, because I didn't think the 45 -- they said that the
6 vessel was going to be by the bridges. In my mind I pictured
7 Highway 11, really low part of 11. I didn't want to get a 45 up
8 close to it, and I've been there with 45s, and you get the draft
9 alarm all the time, the depth alarm as you get further north. So
10 I knocked the 45 out.

11 24 wasn't going to happen. Just didn't make sense with a 32-
12 foot sailing boat. So 29, had it on the trailer, it was ready to
13 go, it was hooked up. I had a guy on the crew that could already
14 drive the trailer in BM3 [REDACTED] 29's the asset that BM3
15 [REDACTED] had practiced the most on anyway. Seemed like a
16 perfect fit.

17 Sent them to Rigolet's Marina, approximately 28 minutes after
18 the call, did the GAR score, all that.

19 Do you want me to keep continuing on with --

20 Q. Well, I'd like to just stop you there. Because I think we
21 have some questions with that part. So let's just kind of focus
22 it in there.

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. Well, drill down a little bit more. As far as when you
25 formulated the crew, did you know there was a daylight restriction

1 with the coxon that you've selected?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Was there any other restrictions that you're aware of, or
4 any --

5 A. Daylight restriction.

6 Q. That's it?

7 A. She can operate a boat from sunrise to sunset. And if she
8 was operating at night, she had to be with another qualified
9 coxon.

10 Q. And you indicated that there was, you know, the case, and you
11 were still waiting further tasking, even though you assembled this
12 crew. When that tasking changed, or that tasking now elevated,
13 was there any, you know, into the two --

14 A. Right. That tasking didn't elevate until we were already out
15 there on scene. You know, we had an idea it may be a possible
16 tow. But, again, towing is what we practice the most. So as far
17 as formulating a crew for that, she could do it.

18 And, you know, so as far as like the mission changing, the
19 mission changed when we got there. We received from Sector head
20 this is what we may need you to do. And there was three phone
21 calls in between there trying to verify the numbers via phone so
22 we didn't have to go. All right. And the non-distress ended up
23 turning into a different type of thing. But -- she could do it.
24 And it just happened. So --

25 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. I'll pass the floor.

1 BY [REDACTED]

2 Q. Okay. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Couple of
3 questions that I have.

4 Were you given a brief from the previous day as to the
5 condition of the sailboat from either the CDO, the off-going OOD
6 or the off-going coxon?

7 A. No, sir. The off-going OOD and the off-going coxon was the
8 same person, BM3 Sheeler. The brief that I had received was from
9 the OOD pass-down log, and from our pass-down with our CDO. We
10 had talked about the case. And I had to verify the mission was
11 done, too. Talked about the case and how it was aground at one
12 point. How the people at first refused service. And then later
13 on that evening, or earlier the next morning, wanted to come off.

14 There wasn't, I know, they didn't, we didn't, I didn't even
15 ask them for it, what the actual condition was of the sailboat. I
16 did call them in between getting the call from Sector to launching
17 to say, hey, do you have the state numbers, do you remember? I
18 said all I know is it was a Florida. I didn't get a picture of
19 the numbers.

20 So I didn't know the condition, no, sir. I know that it was
21 aground at one point.

22 Q. Was there, to your knowledge, was there a post-SAR boarding
23 done the night before?

24 A. There was no 4100 performed in the initial packet.

25 Q. Fast forward. You're on duty. Was there any conversation

1 between you and the CDO as to the possibility of, hey, we're going
2 to have to take this boat in tow?

3 A. We had discussed it prior to, like, a possibility of what if
4 this turns into a two. And it came down to the comfort level. Do
5 we send this crew out. And we were both comfortable, because the
6 weather had died down, that she was more than capable of doing it
7 if it came down to that.

8 He understood our initial tasking. And our only current
9 tasking from Sector was go verify state numbering, and let's
10 verify the origin of this boat.

11 Q. But there was some discussion between you and the CDO that
12 this could turn into a possible tow? Okay.

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Would you have -- was this -- okay, let's talk about when
15 BM3 got on scene. She got on scene. What was relayed to you?

16 A. Yes, sir. So they passed the on-scene weather, 5, 10 knots,
17 1 to 2 feet. And we were told that the -- and they passed the
18 state numbering.

19 We were also told that the boat was approximately 175 feet
20 away from Highway 11. So at that time, we told them, okay,
21 possibly let's set up for a tow. Conditions seemed okay. Said is
22 it drifting towards the bridge, they said yeah. All right. Stand
23 by. We're going to call Sector.

24 We called Sector, said, hey, we got the state numbering for
25 this. That boat's 175 feet away from the bridge; what would you

1 like us to do? And they said if you can safely do it, let's tow
2 it into the nearest safe haven.

3 Q. Who did you have that conversation with at Sector?

4 A. This wasn't me that personally had the conversation. I was
5 with BM3 [REDACTED]. She was on the phone.

6 Q. Who was she on the phone with? Do you know?

7 A. I believe it was Mr. [REDACTED]. That's who I had had the
8 conversations with prior to. Mr. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] were the
9 OU at the time of the case beginning for us.

10 Q. Is Mr. [REDACTED] a breakin?

11 A. I believe so, sir. I've talked to Mr. [REDACTED] on numerous
12 times as the OU. Mr. [REDACTED] I've talked to once before, and
13 there's always another OU there with him, so --

14 Q. Do you put them on the -- so describe -- as you as the
15 qualified OOD, do you put them on speaker phone so you can hear
16 the conversation? Or are you just getting that -- or are you just
17 standing in the same room?

18 A. I'm getting relayed from [REDACTED].

19 Q. From [REDACTED]?

20 A. Yep.

21 Q. Had you ever worked with [REDACTED] before?

22 A. Many times, sir.

23 Q. Many times? [REDACTED] indicated that she hadn't. But were
24 you on her check rides, or -- which check rides were you on?

25 A. I was on her coxon check ride, her first one. And I had been

1 under numerous two-boat transitions, patrols. I had been underway
2 with BM3 [REDACTED] on at least ten missions.

3 Q. How about the other crew members?

4 A. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I've had for a long time. He's acted as my 45
5 engineer. He's acted as my crew member numerous times.

6 BM3 [REDACTED] he's been in my section many times, patrols, two-
7 boat, check ride, boat view check ride I'm pretty sure for all
8 four of them.

9 BM3 [REDACTED] I had just gotten him in my section it's two
10 months ago. I've done at least three two-boat missions with him,
11 and a patrol.

12 Q. What was your understanding of that crew makeup, you had a
13 qualified coxon. Were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were they breakin coxons?
14 What was their role for that sortie, for that mission?

15 A. Their role for that mission was crew member.

16 Q. Crew member only. Okay. Were they gunned up?

17 A. Absolutely. We gun everybody up that has a gun
18 (indiscernible), sir.

19 Q. Did when the coxon arrived on scene, did the coxon describe
20 what -- did the coxon update a GAR?

21 A. I don't believe so, sir. It wasn't passed that the GAR had
22 been up to -- from I understand, 21 is the GAR score.

23 Q. What would be the highest category?

24 A. The highest was in environment.

25 Q. Coxon gets on scene. Was it ever relayed to you that -- the

1 condition of the sailboat when she got on scene?

2 A. Not on scene. What was relayed was that it was drifting
3 towards the Highway 11. And then later, after we had had a
4 conversation with Sector, and when the tow was taking place, I
5 found out the jig sail covering, forward mast, or forward bit had
6 to tow from stern. And then it was later realized it might be
7 taking on water.

8 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] No further questions right now.

9 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

10 Q. Luke with NTSB. Just want to go, touch on weather. We
11 talked about how the weather conditions were changing, and rapidly
12 changing toward that. Was anything relayed to you from the coxon,
13 back to you?

14 A. Not on coms, until after the fact, until after the mishap had
15 occurred, they had said that the winds and weather had picked up.

16 I was aware of incoming weather, courtesy of my immediate
17 supervisor, being [REDACTED] [REDACTED], who gives me constant updates on
18 weather. He said weather's going to be rolling in in about an
19 hour and a half. So I was aware of weather incoming. I wasn't
20 aware that the lake where they were at had picked up that
21 dramatically.

22 Q. Go through BM1 [REDACTED], like what type of information? Is it
23 an email? Is it a image of the weather as it rolls in? What are
24 you getting?

25 A. I follow my radar on my phone. And I follow the NOAA links

1 that I have on my computer. And he sends me text updates. So --

2 Q. And was any of this information relayed to the vessel, hey,
3 what are you seeing on scene?

4 A. He was -- no. Because when this happened, when I was getting
5 my updates and all that was during the two. And then I had it,
6 and then it all busted loose. And then, hey, these 4- or 5-
7 footers out here. So when I got the update to where this had
8 happened there wasn't a time where I called and said hey, you
9 know, weather picking up, or in return, hey, our weather's picking
10 up out here.

11 Q. But, I mean, having [REDACTED]s --

12 A. BM1 Silva.

13 Q. BM1 Silva's weather has helped in the past, where have you
14 ever broke tow, or said hey --

15 A. No.

16 Q. No?

17 A. He does it, he sends it to me mostly when I'm the OOD. Like,
18 hey, because he's also a CDO as well. And so he just wants to
19 make sure that my station's getting hunkered up, or double up
20 lines. He's just looking out for the whole station, like, hey,
21 weather's coming in.

22 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Understood. That's all I have right now.

23 BY [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

24 Q. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Coast Guard. So thanks again for your
25 narrative and coming back in. Appreciate that. I know it can be

1 a challenge.

2 So my question was in with respect to your interaction with
3 the Sector. Do you feel, as you've worked with Mr. [REDACTED] you
4 said, and the various OODs and SMCs, do you feel that you have the
5 ability to stop or change an evolution if Sector wants you to do
6 something that is outside of maybe the boundaries of what you've
7 previously been able to do?

8 A. I mean, I've had trouble in the past. I can't really think
9 of any, like, normal instance. Just phone calls over the almost a
10 year that I've been an OOD, I've had times where I've been able to
11 get a mission stopped, or altered something. And for the most
12 part, they'll take in, what do you think we should do? Some of
13 them are no BS guys, listen, this is what we need; can you do it?
14 Or can we get this done, you know? Sometimes a little harder than
15 normal. But I've been able to, in the past, yes. And other times
16 no.

17 Q. Do you feel like during this incident that you would have
18 made a different decision?

19 A. Well, I was trying not to get us to go out there for the --
20 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Real quick. I don't want to go into
21 hypotheticals if we can.

22 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

23 MR. WISNIEWSKI: It's kind of an open-ended question.

24 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay. All right.

25 BY [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

1 Q. Did you try to make a recommendation other than what you guys
2 were doing?

3 A. All I tried to do was not get us to go out there for the sake
4 of they wanted to verify the origin. So I had may calls to my
5 prior coxon and OOD, and the prior breakin coxon, who was on the
6 last part of it. Do you guys have the state number. And all
7 they -- they couldn't verify the numbers. They could verify
8 Florida. That was it, I passed that.

9 Q. Thanks.

10 BY [REDACTED]

11 Q. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again. So I just
12 want to clear this up. You had no idea that the coxon had placed
13 the sailboat in, we'll call it an unorthodox towing configuration?

14 A. At the time?

15 Q. Right.

16 A. No.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. I did -- when they did call, they did call, and end up
19 saying, hey, we're towing this boat from the stern. And they
20 explained, hey, the forward bit was covered up.

21 So in my recollection of the whole event of the sailboat
22 being pushed on, and trying to get the sailboat away, the aft
23 cleat, trying to pull it out, okay, it makes sense. And they said
24 that they didn't feel comfortable sending over somebody to uncover
25 the forward bit.

1 Q. At that same time, so now they've just relayed to you that,
2 okay, they've done this unorthodox tow, have you ever towed a
3 sailboat from the stern before?

4 [REDACTED] Real quick, sir. Going into other instances, I
5 think, outside of the facts of this case regarding his -- I
6 mean --

7 [REDACTED] That's fine.

8 [REDACTED] I mean, if you can relate it back to what happened
9 here, during this, but I don't think it's relevant for this case.

10 [REDACTED] That's fine. We'll skip that question, then.

11 BY [REDACTED]

12 Q. Were you aware that the on-scene weather had changed, had
13 picked up?

14 A. The only time that I was aware that the on-scene weather had
15 changed is when they said that the boat might be taking on water,
16 and it might be from the waves crashing over the bow.

17 Q. Was it articulated to you that the coxon felt that -- upon
18 hooking up the tow, that the tow was not towing normally, it was
19 sluggish?

20 A. It wasn't passed to me. It was after the fact, at least for
21 me, getting information, it was after the fact when they realized
22 that the sail was still up, and pushing them back when the wind
23 picked up.

24 Q. I just want to clarify. You were later informed that the
25 sail was up, and the wind was pushing it backwards?

1 A. Right. After they were trying to transition their tow to
2 make it a better ride.

3 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] No further questions.

4 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

5 Q. Luke, NTSB. Follow up with the sailboat towing. How many
6 sailboats have you towed to stern in your time here at the
7 station?

8 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm going to have to ask for a break on that one,
9 if we want an answer to that, because I need to know how that's
10 relevant to this instance when he's not out on the water.

11 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Well, it, I'm just asking for his --

12 Sure, I'll go, we'll pause.

13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Why don't we take a break.

14 Can you step out for a second, please?

15 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

16 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Thanks, man.

17 (Off the record.)

18 (On the record.)

19 MR. WISNIEWSKI: The time is 4:04 p.m. And we're reconvening
20 the interview with Petty [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

21 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

22 Q. Can we just go through again, we just have a couple more. We
23 had a lot of discussion internally here. But what we wanted to
24 get at, and what we were trying to grab was the fact that I was
25 trying to assess -- you said you indicated you trained the coxon

1 on the day, right now --

2 A. [REDACTED]

3 Q. [REDACTED] Thank you. And during that training, was
4 there any time that you trained for the vessel to be towed astern?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. And with that training, is there any time that you trained
7 other coxons to train, to tow a vessel astern?

8 A. Towing astern isn't normal. We teach our coxons to think
9 outside the box. If you can't get to that front bit, and you need
10 to get away from an obstacle, what can you do. That's the
11 training, and every coxon has had that training.

12 It would seem on BM3 [REDACTED]'s check ride where it wasn't the
13 right -- what happened was, you know, too close of an ostacle.
14 This is what you could have done. And we talked about outside the
15 box. It's all outside the box.

16 You're taught to tow a normal tow. An alongside tow. A tow
17 from stern to bow. We don't teach a stern tow. But
18 possibilities, what can you do, and how can you do it. It is a
19 possibility.

20 Q. That's all I have.

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Anyone, other questions? Okay.

22 This concludes it. Time is 4:05 p.m.

23 (Whereupon, at 4:05 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND
SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD COLLISION
MAY 3, 2017
Interview of Unidentified Person

ACCIDENT NUMBER: DCA17PM012

PLACE: New Orleans, LA

DATE: May 10, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Karen Coen Brooks
Transcriber