

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

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CAPSIZE AND SINKING OF STRETCH DUCK 7 \*

ON TABLE ROCK LAKE, BRANSON, MISSOURI, \* Accident No.: DCA18MM028

JULY 19, 2018 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JOE PURMA

Friday,  
July 20, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:17 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. VOLPE: Okay we are going on the record at 11:17 on the  
4 25th of July. My name is John Volpe with the NTSB and we are  
5 beginning our interview. Sir if I could ask you your name and -  
6 excuse me - spell your name?

7 Mr. Purma: Okay, Joe Purma. P-U-R-M-A.

## INTERVIEW OF JOE PURMA

8  
9 BY MR. VOLPE:

10 Q. Ends. What is your position with Ride the ducks?

11 A. Uh basically trainer. I am a Captain/Trainer.

12 Q. And are you actively a captain right now doing tours? This  
13 year?

14 A. I am a captain on board with captains that are in training  
15 that don't have their license.

16 Q. Okay, and who are some of those captains that you're training  
17 currently?

18 A. Uh we have four captains that are waiting for their license  
19 that went through all the training here in Branson the earlier  
20 part of the year, but not have been - but have not been issued  
21 their masters license. So I'm on board with them.

22 Q. Now are you on board just as an additional captain or as the  
23 driver? What is your position?

24 A. I'm on board as the licensee.

25 Q. Licensee. Okay. So you'll have the CDL driver, yourself,

1 and --

2 A. Correct, yes.

3 Q. Okay. Could you explain, tell me the Coast Guard license  
4 that you hold?

5 A. It's a 25 ton.

6 Q. 25 ton.

7 A. 25 ton.

8 Q. Is there any restrictions on the license?

9 A. Uh yes, there's it's restricted to the White River and its  
10 impoundments.

11 Q. Okay. And how did you receive your -- your license, your  
12 Coast Guard license?

13 A. I was licensed in I believe 1999 and I had training here in  
14 Branson as far as the testing at the in St. Louis and I went St.  
15 Louis and took the exam and passed and was issued a license.

16 Q. Now did you take your training for the Coast Guard license  
17 through Ride the Ducks, or was it with another company?

18 A. Through Ride the Ducks.

19 Q. Okay, in your employment history with Ride the Ducks did you  
20 work for the company prior to training as a captain as a -- in  
21 sales or a driver? Or you went straight into captain training?

22 A. I went straight into captain training.

23 Q. Okay. Could you explain the training that Branson supplies  
24 to these new captains -- to yourself and to the new captains?

25 A. Well, it's --

1 Q. The training scheme.

2 A. The training is different now because we actually train and  
3 test in house. Back when I was in training getting my Coast Guard  
4 license as soon as I was good to go to St. Louis to take my test  
5 and be sure that I passed it, I went and then there was a --  
6 additional training and I don't remember how many hours or days  
7 back then, but I do know that today when we train in house and we  
8 test in house it's 290 hours.

9 Q. Okay. Could you explain how -- how the training is taken now  
10 that it's in house and the testing is in house?

11 A. As opposed to when I --

12 Q. As opposed to when you did it, yes.

13 A. Well, different machines. You know back in 199, 99 we had  
14 the original ducks, which were five speed manual, so there was a  
15 lot of that on the water; we didn't have some of the systems that  
16 we have on the ducks that we have today. But basically we  
17 followed this, the code of federal regulations for training.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. It was all laid out to us.

20 Q. But how do you conduct your training? Do you conduct class  
21 room, do you --

22 A. Today?

23 Q. Today, yes.

24 A. Yes. I teach the Coast Guard class for rules of the road,  
25 general deck, all that, and that is approximately 6 to 8 weeks, 5

1 hours a day, Monday through Friday. And when I feel that they  
2 have a good handle on passing both exams, we do an -- an in house  
3 exam. I do not give that exam, it is the general manager, Curtis  
4 Lanham once they pass that exam we start -- basically start the  
5 training process. On water, classroom, on hand type training.

6 Q. Okay. To your knowledge is there an actual training scheme  
7 that -- that you follow? A manual or a book that, okay, I'm  
8 coming to train as a captain for you?

9 A. Um-hum, we have an operations manual that we use and all of  
10 the emergency procedures in that manual are dictated by the CFR's  
11 and the Coast Guard. So we follow that religiously and then  
12 there's other, other parts to that training that, that we have to  
13 address such as weather, medical, that sort of thing. That we --  
14 we try to go over all that. An again it's 290 hours of training  
15 and I've been doing this training for about 8 years or so and I  
16 feel that it's over -- it's too long.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I mean 290 hours of training for - but we do it and it's  
19 documented at times so um. But by the end of our training, and  
20 you just had John Davidson in here, he is one of the trainers and  
21 we have two more gentlemen that you'll meet, and so we - I feel  
22 good about our training team. I think we, between the four of us,  
23 we get it covered.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Well.

1 Q. Now, when you -- how were you approached to become a trainer?

2 A. I was operations manager for 6 years.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And in 2010 I turned 62 and I took early social security so I  
5 dropped out of the operations scheme, which was year round salary,  
6 because I couldn't make that money. And I dropped back to a  
7 captain and they approached me about becoming a trainer. And we  
8 had another gentleman that was the main trainer, he passed away  
9 and I took over the reins on that.

10 Q. When you became the trainer, did you have any -- it's going  
11 to sound strange, but train the trainer training?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And who provided that?

14 A. It was Brian Heirs who was the trainer.

15 Q. And he was, an employee at Ride the Ducks?

16 A. Yes, um-hum.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And I -- they called me a corporate trainer and I had been to  
19 all of our other cities where we had Ride the Ducks and I trained  
20 the trainer and I had some of those gentlemen come to Branson and  
21 it was a week to 2 weeks of train the trainer for them. So we've  
22 had that in place for quite some time.

23 Q. Now have you ever trained Mr. David -- Captain Davidson as  
24 train the trainer? Did you do train the trainer training for  
25 Captain Davidson?



1 A. I think so. I don't quite remember, but I would say so.

2 Q. Would it be documented anywhere?

3 A. It should be.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. It should be.

6 Q. Okay. This is kind of going away from training.

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. Just since -- since you've been with the company for some  
9 time, I'm curious about the handling of the ducks. There's some  
10 discussion in the manual. How did the ducks handle? Between the  
11 old ducks, the new ducks, do you see a difference in their  
12 handling capabilities?

13 A. Very much so.

14 Q. And can you elaborate that?

15 A. Well, the old fleet ducks, the -- their rear points were  
16 going off on the water all the time. Uh and once we stretched out  
17 to our newer du -- newer style duck that very rarely happens. And  
18 they were easier to maneuver on the water. Felt safer on them.  
19 Lot fewer breakdowns. When we drove the old fleet ducks back late  
20 '90s early 2000s we were breaking down all the time. Not  
21 necessarily on water, but on the road.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. And we've cut that way back.

24 Q. Okay. So at -- with the handling of the -- the new -- the  
25 ducks there's like the stretch ducks. How do -- what's the best

1 way of handling a duck inside weather? Would you go explain how  
2 you would go if the seas were head on or if, you know, a boat was  
3 coming by. What's the, I guess how are you training the captains  
4 to take those -- that weather?

5 A. Depending on where you are on the water it is far better to  
6 be going with the wind and the the waves --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Than -- than head on.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Sometimes, depending on where you are, that can't happen.  
11 But yes, we train and if you are going head on 45 degree angle,  
12 not just straight head on.

13 Q. Now you if you take them go with the wind and the waves,  
14 would you get pooped? Normally? Depending on the size of the  
15 waves? Or would she ride better with -- in that general --

16 A. It rides better with the waves.

17 Q. Rides better with the waves. Okay. So who is -- I know  
18 you're -- would you be considered the senior most trainer for the  
19 -- of the four of you?

20 A. I've been doing in the longest.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Again I'm trying to retire, I'm passing it on to John  
23 Davidson, but yes.

24 Q. Okay, and who is in charge of training at the company level  
25 and the management level? Who would you report your training to?

1 A. the operations manager.

2 Q. Which is?

3 A. Matt Sollinger.

4 Q. Matt Sollinger, okay. And just to verify who, how -- how did  
5 they assign training sessions for for the new captains? Like you  
6 said you do new captains, does Captain Davidson do new captains?  
7 Or how -- how does the assignment of duties?

8 A. Well, this year we had five in the class and so again I -- I  
9 teach the classroom for 6 to 8 weeks and once we start on hands  
10 training on water, we split them up. And we like to have it one  
11 or two to one trainer. So there might be three of us training  
12 that same day and we keep a log on what we covered and -- for that  
13 day. And and we meet before we start the day, you know this is  
14 what we probably will do. We like -- we like there to be some  
15 high seas or wind to give them the experience of splashing in and  
16 coming out of the water. So, every day is a little bit different.

17 Q. Okay. Now when you're doing the training with, especially  
18 down in the water training, you're some -- give me some examples  
19 of what you train with the new captains.

20 A. Well, all the emergency procedures. If it's a real windy day  
21 we might just spend all day chasing a life jacket out on the water  
22 to give them a feel for the maneuverability and the breaking in  
23 wind. And that precedes the man overboard that we do later on,  
24 but and if it's a real windy day and we have a cross wind at one  
25 of the ramps we'll just go in and out of the water all day.

1 Rather than at calm water, anybody can take a duck out of the  
2 water, but in the wind. So that sort of dictates what we're going  
3 to do that day.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Uh depending in the weather.

6 Q. And how about, for instance, you mentioned man overboard.  
7 You're teaching them procedures to do man overboard. Is there any  
8 guidelines that you use? That everyone should follow?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And where was that located?

11 A. It's in our operations manual.

12 Q. Okay. Would you have that operations manual with you on the  
13 water?

14 A. Well, in training?

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. Yes, they all have their own and they're required to bring it  
17 every day.

18 Q. Okay. Now speaking with other captains there -- we know that  
19 you do annual training as well.

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Do you personally do annual training with the -- with the  
22 captains that have been with the fleet, or do you designate those  
23 -- that responsibility to someone else?

24 A. I do some of it. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. Just -- I'm just going to look through. Is this the

1 captains and deckhands water training log that you would normally  
2 use?

3 A. Yes, it is.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. For returning captains.

6 Q. For returning captain? Okay. And what's the procedure for  
7 following the same thing say like a man overboard that's number  
8 two on this list. Would you bring the dos manual out with you, or  
9 would this just be procedurally wise, do you have a checklist?  
10 Okay, I'm going over man overboard, we're going to do -- we're --  
11 make sure we hit these -- these numbers.

12 A. With a returning captain we do not review any emergency  
13 procedure on the water. We just say we're going to do a man  
14 overboard and I throw out a throw ring and then he does his  
15 procedure to retrieve it and do everything. Now there are times  
16 when they forget you know part of it.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. And so we stop and I go over, you know this is -- this is  
19 what we do here.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. And at some point during that day we would do it again.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But some of these guys, you have to remember, they -- they  
24 might end their work in the middle of August, or this time of year  
25 and not come back till April of next year. So there's 6, 7, 8

1 months there so rather than going over everything I -- we want to  
2 see where they are.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. You know, and then if they do, in any one of the procedures,  
5 forget something we say, you forgot this, but they do it later on.  
6 We don't do it right again. We'll do some other water drills and  
7 then at some point we'll come back to that before we sign off on  
8 them on that.

9 Q. Okay for just for instance, if you had for my knowledge, say  
10 you had a fire while you were out in the water.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. What in -- you as trainer was training one of the captains  
13 and you had a fire on water. Explain to me how they -- they would  
14 do the procedures and -- and how -- how you would asses their --  
15 their abilities.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. So like a -- the manual says fire on water -- fire on the  
18 boat, this is what I do. Could you explain that to me?

19 A. Yes. We try not to ever shut our engine off on the water.  
20 For a couple of different reasons. So we will do the fire on  
21 water at the shop on land, and the reason for that is we've got to  
22 reset the side vents and that and it takes a special tool, and so  
23 we do the the fire on water on the pad at the shop. And I will  
24 just say you've got black smoke coming out the hood with the  
25 engine running.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. And they go through the shut the engine off, shut both fuel  
3 shut offs, close the hood, close side vents, activate the CO2.

4 Q. Okay. How about it in an instance for like abandon ship?

5 A. We we do that out on the water all the time.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And we just tell them, we say, give them a scenario. You  
8 know, we had a bilge -- a high water bilge alarm go off and we  
9 can't get off the water and we got on -- ongoing down floating.  
10 What are you going to do? And we're either close to the island or  
11 closer to the shore and we have them tell us what they're going to  
12 do.

13 Q. And is it they tell you according to the operations manual?  
14 Do they -- I guess where I'm getting; how far in depth do they go  
15 to the procedures that are in the manual?

16 A. You know, we teach to the manual.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But in real life, if something happened out there, you just  
19 don't know. But we teach to the manual. And that is, everyone  
20 should have their PFDs on. You folks go out this side, you go out  
21 this side, we're going to all together, we're going to swim to the  
22 island, we're going to try to get everybody off in the water,  
23 we're going to take the throw ring with us, we're going to holler  
24 mayday on channel 16, channel 13. But the -- our main objective  
25 is to get everybody off because --

1 Q. So those are the type of things you're looking for him to say  
2 "Don your PFD's."

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Not just, okay, we're going to get off and these are --

5 A. Yep.

6 Q. You -- you're -- you want them to go through a series of  
7 events --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- that -- okay.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. That's what I'm looking for.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay. We heard that you have a -- that you conduct training  
14 monthly in the office.

15 A. Yes, um-hum.

16 Q. Is it the trainers do that training, or who actually conducts  
17 the monthly training?

18 A. It's a -- in that captains meeting there is a series of  
19 speakers. I mean they go over everything. And then there's a  
20 spot for the safety training.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And I did that for years. I'm -- I've passed it off to John  
23 Davidson this year.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. And he picks one or two emergency procedures on the water to



1 review and to go over.

2 Q. And is there a matrix to review to say okay we did man  
3 overboard inside January, now we're going to do fire. Uh to your  
4 knowledge is there any type of training matrix that may tell us.

5 A. No, but I had a -- when I was doing this I had all of the  
6 emergency procedures on the water and I would basically just date  
7 when -- whichever two or three that I picked out, I would date and  
8 then the next month I would pick out two or three more so I didn't  
9 do that same one and --

10 Q. Okay. And who is the chairman of that? Like you said there  
11 -- the trainers would do safety. Who would be the chairman of  
12 that meeting? Who would run the meeting?

13 A. The general manager, Curtis Lanham.

14 Q. Okay. And then he -- would you have to tell him what you  
15 were, or he would just say give you we're going to do training now  
16 and leave it to you to choose what you're going to do.

17 A. Pretty much, yes.

18 Q. Okay. And is there a sign in sheet for this training?

19 A. We have a sign-in sheet for not only to be paid, because we  
20 get paid for being at the meeting, but also for attendance there.

21 Q. Okay. And do you know who keeps these -- the records?

22 A. That should be Matt Sollinger.

23 Q. Okay. Now do you conduct the deck hand -- or the -- I call  
24 them the deck hands. The driver training as well as the captain  
25 the training? For on the water.

1 A. Basically the drive -- the CDL drivers, as part of their  
2 training, go on the water with a trainer for just a couple hours.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. And we basically just use them to assist us. They are not a  
5 deck hand first mate, they're just -- in the past we would pick  
6 somebody out, a passenger to maybe assist us with something, but  
7 now we just use the driver. So we we use them in a man overboard  
8 situation. We use the driver to possibly check and hook up the  
9 auxiliary steering in the back. we let them drive the duck off  
10 the water once or twice, in case the captain is incapacitated, and  
11 we train them to be a look out. And that's basically.

12 Q. Now the -- the four trainer that you spoke of earlier, are  
13 those the ones that do the training? Or do you designate a -- a  
14 captain to do the training?

15 A. We had Captain Scott do that. He -- He was involved with  
16 drivers training and so he would. Now I -- I've taken some out  
17 this year too, on the water, but Scott did some of it and it's  
18 going to be one of our four trainers that would -- that would do  
19 that.

20 Q. Okay. And have you conducted any heavy weather training with  
21 -- with the captains?

22 A. Heavy weather --

23 Q. Or severe weather.

24 A. -- yeah. We go over it, but if we get down to the water and  
25 we're ready to go in the water and the captain deems that the

1 winds are too high or he doesn't feel safe or comfortable, he has  
2 the right to turn around and -- and go home. We, if we pull down  
3 there and we see a big black cloud close by we pick up the radio  
4 and we call the manager on duty, the dispatcher, and we ask about  
5 the weather. And they say either that storm cell that you see is  
6 heading south then you're not going to be anywhere near it, or  
7 hold. He might say hold for 5 or 10 minutes, let's see what  
8 happens. When we're on the water and something hits if the wind  
9 picks up we are -- our wind restriction is 35 miles an hour.  
10 That's pretty darn windy. Well, we don PFD's and head for the  
11 shore if we feel that it's necessary. We definitely are going to  
12 get out of the water if see lightning in the vicinity we're off  
13 the water. So that's basically the training that we do for severe  
14 weather.

15 Q. Okay. So you mentioned the parameters of 35 knots, do you  
16 know where that's documented?

17 A. It's in the CFR's. Well, it's in our captain's manual. And  
18 it's also on the COI, the Certificate of Inspection. That's the -  
19 - one of the restrictions that we have.

20 Q. Okay. You have a captain's manual in addition to the  
21 operations manual?

22 A. Well, I call it the captain's, but it's the operations  
23 manual. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. Could you talking about the company, can you explain  
25 the difference between operations and fleet operations to me?

1 What -- what the -- the delineation in the office is?

2 A. Um-hum. I just think that the operations is the day-to-day  
3 running of boats and vehicles and the fleet operations is who's  
4 responsible for all of the ducks. Which would not be in the  
5 operations side. So it would be Brian Deckard who is the head of  
6 fleet maintenance.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Possibly him.

9 Q. So fleet operations is more like fleet maintenance, it's not  
10 the -- the operation of it, it's the mechanical operation of the  
11 duck.

12 A. Yeah, right.

13 Q. Okay. These are some just general questions on the office  
14 and this manual. Are you familiar with the duck hotline?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And who does that go to, do you know?

17 A. It's supposed to be Brian Deckard.

18 Q. Okay. And could you explain to me what the the duck general  
19 internal website is? I use that correct?

20 A. Duck central?

21 Q. Duck central. I don't know why I'm not -- you know what, I  
22 had that written.

23 A. The duck central. Ask me that question again?

24 Q. No, just could you explain to me in the duck central internal  
25 website, what it is?

1 A. I really don't know. When we had our other cities operating,  
2 it was a web site that they could go to and get information off  
3 of. That's that's about all I know about that.

4 Q. Okay. And in the manual it talks about if there -- if  
5 there's an issue that you cannot get it you can't comply with  
6 something, one of the captains can't comply with the operations  
7 manual. Are you aware of anyone receiving -- or of anyone ever  
8 reporting that they cannot comply with the operator's manual?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No. Okay. In regards to as a captain when you're going out  
11 we're just going to go a little bit into weather. How do you  
12 monitor -- how do you personally monitor weather as a captain?

13 A. If I am about to go out, I look at the radar that we have in  
14 the lounge there and I try to surmise what, which way it's moving  
15 and I might make the decision to go to the water first if it looks  
16 like it's going to be in the area within the next hour or so and  
17 try to beat it. But I am -- other than that, I depend on the  
18 dispatcher to let me know if I'm out on the road, and then I use  
19 my own common sense when I get to the water.

20 Q. Okay. When you're in the office and you look at the weather,  
21 and you said you decide whether to go the -- to go to the water  
22 first or the land first, who would you tell that -- who would you  
23 make that known to?

24 A. To the dispatcher. Always. Whether -- if we deviate from  
25 the course any -- for any reason, we call the dispatcher and let

1 them know.

2 Q. Okay. On average, how many trips a day do you take?

3 A. This time of year four to five.

4 Q. Four to five?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. So prior to the trips would you check the weather every trip?

7 A. If -- I mean some days there's just no weather, but I do. I  
8 just -- it's walking out the door is the big weather  
9 (indiscernible) and I'll just look, you know.

10 Q. Um-hum. Were you working on the day of the accident?

11 A. No.

12 Q. On the 7th? No.

13 A. No.

14 Q. Because it would -- correct me if I'm wrong, I think it was a  
15 clear day most of the day.

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Is that the type of weather that we normally get in this  
18 area? If you're from this area. It'll be clear all day and then  
19 you'll have a thunderstorm in the afternoon?

20 A. Oh, it happens.

21 Q. It happens?

22 A. Yeah, it happens.

23 Q. Okay. I'm going to pass you on to the next gentleman.

24 A. Okay.

25 Hello Captain, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard. I am

1 seaweed (indiscernible) --

2 BY MR. [REDACTED]

3 Q. You were licensed in 1999 with a 25-ton license --

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. -- by the U.S. Coast Guard.

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. Is that license still current?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Prior to being licensed, did you have any military or  
10 maritime affiliation?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. Okay. On the day of the incident you mentioned that you were  
13 off that day, you weren't actually working. Do you recall where  
14 you might have been that day?

15 A. I was home.

16 Q. At the time of the passing of the storm?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Do you recall hearing or knowing of any types of weather  
19 alerts being issued?

20 A. I wasn't aware of it.

21 Q. Do you recall on July 19th being notified of a incident or  
22 mishap of one of your -- your ducks?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. There -- or the company ducks I should say.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And do you recall who notified you of that?

2 A. Yes, Captain Science, Larry Whitehouse.

3 Q. Was he working that day?

4 A. No, he had a phone call from someone else that there was a  
5 possibility of a duck going down.

6 Q. And upon hearing that did you speak to anyone else after that  
7 conversation?

8 A. I called the dispatcher, Charles -- I don't even know his  
9 last name, but I called him and I said is everything okay? And he  
10 said, no. And I said tell me about it, and he said I'm pretty  
11 sure we had a duck go down.

12 Q. Okay. And approximately do you -- you recall about what time  
13 that might have been?

14 A. I would say 7:30.

15 Q. Okay. In your years of being a licensed captain have you had  
16 any incidents mishaps, marine casualties which were cited or noted  
17 on your license?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. Okay, good. The training that's administered through you,  
20 your colleagues, or that was even provided to you, is that for the  
21 purpose of Coast Guard licensing or regulations, or is it in  
22 compliance with the company's operating -- operations manual?

23 A. Basically Coast Guard recs.

24 Q. You'd said that -- I believe you said that abandon -- abandon  
25 ship was training that was conducted, you said all the time. Does



1 that mean frequency?

2 A. No, no it just means that we trained new captains a lot on  
3 that and then the returning captains we did it at their return  
4 when we were doing a back to service.

5 Q. Okay. So that would be like an annual thing?

6 A. Yeah, I would call that an annual.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. The monthly -- or yeah, I guess it's captain's meetings every  
10 month that you all have on the 13th of every month.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. And is that -- what's consistent in that 13th every month  
13 meeting? What is that for?

14 A. Well, they -- we get a -- the general manager gives a state  
15 of the business. You know, we're up so many riders or whatever,  
16 or down.

17 Q. Sure.

18 A. And anything new, announcements are made about maybe a Duck's  
19 night out, social stuff. Then Matt Sollinger, our Operations  
20 Manager, will have some issues he's wants to get out there. And  
21 it might be just some procedures on loading ducks or whatever.  
22 And then, we do the safety training for 5 to 10 minutes out of  
23 that hour meeting.

24 Q. And okay this safety training, is that the topics for the  
25 safety training, where does that -- where's that derive? Who

1 decides on what you're going to talk about?

2 A. Well, we do. I did it for several years, John Davidson is  
3 doing it now. We pick out -- basically pick out the topics that  
4 we're going to talk about.

5 Q. For each month?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And is it rout -- is it normal that every monthly meeting  
8 there would be a safety training on some topic?

9 A. Yes. Except for June 13th, we just -- we just did not have  
10 enough time. And for -- we had -- we had ducks going out at 8:00  
11 in the morning and the meeting started at 7 or 7:30 and they tried  
12 to get all this in. So we did skip it. That's the only one  
13 meeting that I can remember not having a safety issue brought up,  
14 but the Coast Guard dictates quarterly. So we feel that we're in  
15 full compliance doing it every 30 days.

16 Q. Right. Okay. July's meeting. July 13th. Do you recall  
17 what the safety training was for that meeting?

18 A. No I don't. I was at the meeting, John Davidson did the  
19 safety, but I don't recall offhand what it was.

20 Q. Okay. How about June was skipped, there -- there was none.  
21 What about May, do you recall the topic for May?

22 A. No -- no, sir. I don't.

23 Q. You all have anything that you take away from the meeting  
24 regarding this -- the safety training? Like a handout?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Do you sign anything that states that you attended the  
2 meeting, but you also sign that you received the training?

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And those are the records you -- you mentioned that  
5 would be kept by Matt Sollinger?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Over the course of the last let's say 90 days, 3 months, how  
8 many times would you say you've participated either as a trainer  
9 or as a recipient of a man overboard drill?

10 A. Last 3 months, let's see. Well, we were training five new  
11 captains at that time. And that was at least a weekly training  
12 session with them.

13 Q. For the new captains?

14 A. For the new captains.

15 Q. Who are waiting for their license?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. How about current captains?

18 A. I would say their -- just their return to service annual.  
19 Now it might have been brought up in one of the meetings on the  
20 13th, I don't recall what we've gone over, but --

21 Q. Okay. You also mentioned that, call to dispatch prior to  
22 entering the water anytime there was a concern of inclement  
23 weather.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is that a routine thing?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Is that expected by most captains, or any other captains  
3 prior entering the water that they would check in with dispatch?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Would you say that in an issue change of itinerary, where you  
6 would be -- it would be suggested or directed to go to the water  
7 first to, as you said, beat the weather to complete a trip? Would  
8 that -- would you think that would constitute a call into dispatch  
9 to check the weather prior to entering the water?

10 A. Only if I could see the dark black cloud in the vicinity, or  
11 some lightning, or hear some thunder. Otherwise, I would go into  
12 the water and I would get it -- be able to come right back out if  
13 I had to.

14 Q. Anyone else that you might call to uh?

15 A. The show boat Branson Belle.

16 Q. You check with them?

17 A. Yeah, but we only get a response if the captain is at the  
18 wheelhouse. So there are times when he's not up there, but -- but  
19 I have contacted him.

20 Q. On each vessel, to the best of your knowledge, is there any -  
21 - are there any types of aids to navigation or weather  
22 interpretation, forecasting pieces of equipment?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. No radar?

25 A. Nope.

1 Q. Anemometer?

2 A. No.

3 Q. So prior to entering the water, with the company's suggestion  
4 or direction to change your itinerary, prior to entering the  
5 water, how would you determine the conditions of weather?

6 A. Well, personally I would determine it by making my way on the  
7 road to the water and see the condition of the sky. And again, if  
8 it was a big black cloud in the vicinity or I saw some sign of  
9 lightning, then I would make my call to the dispatch to get an  
10 updated weather forecast.

11 Q. If it were a clear day in windy conditions, how would you  
12 determine whether you should sail or not?

13 A. If it was a clear day and marginal windy conditions I have  
14 called the show boat captain for a wind reading, and if he's not  
15 up there, I call back to dispatch. And the final is me making  
16 that determination. And I -- and it -- sometimes it's out -- it  
17 depends on what direction the wind is coming from that I make that  
18 determination.

19 Q. In your career as a duck captain have you ever, have you ever  
20 cancelled on your own accord a sailing due to weather conditions?

21 A. I don't recall. Maybe, but I don't recall. And it's no big  
22 deal if we do. You know, it's something like I probably wouldn't  
23 remember. And I don't recall.

24 Q. Do you ever recall altering your course? Which -- and I'll  
25 be specific. A routine course, from what I understand, is to sail

1 out and behind the island into the exit route, correct?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. So altering course, what I'm saying is, do you ever recall  
4 shortening your route by sailing under the island, short of going  
5 around?

6 A. Yes, I do.

7 Q. And for what purpose?

8 A. Wind.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Possibly what we talked about, rain or lightening in the  
11 vicinity that all of a sudden popped up. I am going to increase  
12 RPMs and shorten my tour and get off the water.

13 Q. Gotcha. So conditions you felt like had -- had worsened even  
14 after you decided that it might be okay to get in.

15 A. Yeah, right.

16 Q. How long have you known Captain Scott McKee?

17 A. A long time. I think he has been there 18 years - maybe?  
18 And I've been there 20, so 18 years.

19 Q. You related to Captain McKee in any way?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. What can you tell me as a professional, your opinion of  
22 Captain McKee as a professional captain?

23 A. If there -- if there was anyone that I would have on the  
24 water in the conditions that hit Thursday, Scott McKee would be  
25 one of them.

1 Q. Captain Barry King, do you know Captain King?

2 A. Yes I do.

3 Q. How long have you known Captain King?

4 A. He is a new captain. This is his second year, I trained him.  
5 Spent a lot of time with him, know him well.

6 Q. Your opinion of Captain King as a captain?

7 A. I think he's -- I think he's a good captain. He took  
8 everything seriously during training and I feel very good about  
9 him on the water.

10 Q. Are you familiar with a -- a binder of documents referred to  
11 as the Captain's Safety Binder?

12 A. A binder of documents?

13 Q. Yes, sir.

14 A. And what's the name of it?

15 Q. It's referred to as the Captain's Safety Binder. It's  
16 supposedly kept on shelf in the -- in the break room.

17 A. The only binder that I'm aware of is a binder that we used to  
18 sign at every captain's meeting.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. For safety standards. Is that what you're referring to?

21 Q. I don't know (indiscernible). I don't have any further  
22 questions at this time. Thank you captain.

23 A. You bet, thank you.

24 MR. VOLPE: Are you okay?

25 MR. PURMA: Yes.

1 MR. VOLPE: Anybody else?

2 Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, thank you. Good morning, again thanks for  
3 coming in. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with U.S. Coast Guard Investigations out of  
4 St. Louis.

5 BY MR. [REDACTED]

6 Q: We kind of followed along a little bit of the -- the training  
7 that we talked about, I think -- I think John kind of referenced  
8 these training records. This is the Captain's Deckhand Water  
9 Training Log. Are you familiar with that?

10 A. Yes, I am.

11 Q. Okay. You guys -- you being the trainers, utilize this to  
12 train, new and existing captains, or what do you use that form  
13 for?

14 A. This is basically for a returning captain.

15 Q. Yes, sir.

16 A. We use -- we have another form for signing off on new  
17 captains at the end of the training. It's -- you may have it.  
18 It's four or five page document.

19 Q. On the various topics, as you can see different emergencies  
20 that they -- that the captains would encounter. What -- which one  
21 of one those sections would I -- would you cover or address severe  
22 weather training?

23 A. I would say under knowledge of COI restrictions.

24 Q. In the event that you ever had a returning captain out on --  
25 on there and you're going through the checklist with them there,



1 what would be your procedure you would follow if they were  
2 unsatisfactory in their knowledge or demonstration?

3 A. I have in the past told a returning captain that we're going  
4 to do it the next day or two. I mean it's not a -- it's -- if I  
5 don't feel comfortable with them they go home, read the manual,  
6 and we do it again. I've done that a couple of times.

7 Q. Is that information communicated up to Operations Manager at  
8 all?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Is that documented somewhere?

11 A. Maybe not operations, but maybe Curtis, the general manager.  
12 Yeah.

13 Q. Okay. So you would -- you would report that -- you would let  
14 Curtis know that?

15 A. Yep, that he -- we would need another day or two on water.  
16 Yeah.

17 Q. When was the last time you personally have reviewed the  
18 operations manual?

19 A. Sixty days ago when I completed training on new captains  
20 probably.

21 Q. So that was in conjunction of you --

22 A. Training.

23 Q. -- captain training program?

24 A. Yeah. Right.

25 Q. And is -- that would just be kind of a sporadic review, or

1 would -- or would it be a full -- full review of the manual?

2 A. Sporadic. You know, we would -- we would come meet here at  
3 the Ducks maybe at 8:00 or whatever and it may be raining or  
4 something, so we would go into the conference room with our  
5 operations manuals and go over all the bullet points. Not only  
6 for on water emergency procedures, but policies that are in there.

7 Q. Yes, sir.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. You mentioned that you administered like a 6 to 8 week  
10 captain training program. Does that -- is that mostly classroom,  
11 hands on, combination?

12 A. That's all classroom.

13 Q. All classroom?

14 A. All classroom.

15 Q. Okay. And then in that training, do you cover the operations  
16 manual with the captains in training?

17 A. No, no. It's basically to prepare them for the Coast Guard  
18 test. Rules of reg, general deck, weather, (indiscernible), all  
19 that.

20 Q. (Indiscernible)

21 A. Yep.

22 Q. Understand. Is there ever a point in which you -- in the  
23 capacity of the 6 to 8 week training is this like a classroom with  
24 other, multiple students? Not just one on one, correct?

25 A. No more than six.

1 Q. No more than six?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Is there ever a point where you had similar training, like a  
4 classroom setting like that with the -- with the captains in  
5 training where you cover the operations manual?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Oh there is? Okay.

8 A. You talk -- did you say other than captains in training?

9 Q. Well, other captains in training -- classroom.

10 A. Repeat that question.

11 Q. So, is there a point at which you're in the -- in a classroom  
12 setting with the captains in training where you cover the  
13 operations manual?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So that's outside of the 6 to 8 week?

16 A. Yes, correct. Several times we do that.

17 Q. Is this the most current ops manual that you're aware of?  
18 It's the 2012 version.

19 A. Well, I've got a 2013, but it's the same, they just changed  
20 the cover sheet so we guess.

21 Q. So there is a 2013 version.

22 A. I believe so. But I mean, I'm just saying that it's the same  
23 manual, but the cover sheet was changed.

24 Q. You've compared the two manuals?

25 A. They're the same.

1 Q. Oh, but you don't know if the content had changed at all from  
2 2012 to 2013.

3 A. No I don't. Yeah.

4 Q. How are trainees assigned to their trainers, internally? For  
5 returning captains?

6 A. For returning captains?

7 Q. For those -- for these --

8 A. To go on a check ride?

9 Q. Yes, sir.

10 A. It's what is going on that day. Like I say we have four  
11 trainers and we may be -- I may be with two of the trainers -- or  
12 captains in training and somebody else is with one or two. So  
13 kind of whoever's available of the four of us.

14 Q. And then you've -- you've mentioned that -- you've done the  
15 in office training which is on the 13th of the month typically.  
16 What happens if -- if a captain, or somebody's not present and  
17 they miss the meeting? How -- what is the procedure for those  
18 captains to receive the trainings for the topic of that month?

19 A. I don't know.

20 Q. Do any of your training that you conduct internally, does  
21 that ever -- is that ever accompanied by a drill or some sort of  
22 on water demonstration of knowledge?

23 A. For -- on the 13th?

24 Q. Yes, sir.

25 A. You're talking about --

1 Q. Yes, sir.

2 A. We have done some. We actually went to the lake one time and  
3 deployed the curtains manually.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And we've activated the fixed CO2 system.

6 Q. On the water?

7 A. Actually on the road for that. We did go on the water to  
8 deploy the -- the side curtains to see, you know what they're  
9 going to do.

10 Q. Was that -- oh I'm sorry.

11 A. When?

12 Q. Yeah, I was going to ask if that occurred -- when did that  
13 occur?

14 A. I would say about 2 years ago for the curtains.

15 Q. Is that the only training that you recall doing on water  
16 demonstration like that?

17 A. Yeah, I think so. Now we've had towing drills that we have  
18 gone on the water, not the whole group. But we've all been a part  
19 of that at some point on the water -- to be towed off the water  
20 with another duck.

21 Q. Reaching back to that, the side curtain deployment that you  
22 did, generally speaking was there a handful of captains, or did  
23 you try to get -- or was it just one or two captains?

24 A. No, we had several.

25 Q. Several captains?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And if I remember right we had two ducks out there. We had  
4 some on another duck watching it.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But we had several out there.

7 Q. Pretty good attendance?

8 A. Yeah. Right.

9 Q. Okay. So I'm going to -- I wanted to ask have you ever heard  
10 of the authorized operators program? Is that --

11 A. I've heard of it.

12 Q. You've heard of it?

13 A. Yeah. Authorized operator.

14 Q. Happen to know what that means at all?

15 A. That was a long time ago I think.

16 Q. Okay. What about a -- and I'm not sure if this is an actual  
17 document or a plan, but something that's referred to as the  
18 training plan for 2012. Have you ever heard that? Or --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. So what is that exactly?

21 A. It's a -- it was written by Curtis Lanham it was a -- pretty  
22 much a schedule of training by day.

23 Q. By -- oh, broken down by like day of the week?

24 A. Yeah, something like that. Yeah.

25 Q. And what kind of training would be in that -- in that plan?

1 What kind of topics?

2 A. Well, all the emergency procedures, everything that is on  
3 that -- that sheet that you showed me there, and then several --

4 Q. Are you referring to the Captain's Deckhands Water Training  
5 Log?

6 A. Yeah. Right. And weather would be on there, and --

7 Q. So this training plan is a -- a matrix of some sort that  
8 tells you when to cover those topics?

9 A. Yes, to make sure that everything is covered.

10 Q. Okay. Do you know if that's currently still being used?

11 A. I don't, I don't know. I didn't -- did not use it this year.

12 Q. Did not use it this year?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Do you know the last time that -- that -- the training plan  
15 was employed?

16 A. I'd say -- to be honest with you, I'd say we probably looked  
17 at it. You know it was a nice plan that he had put together, but  
18 it's everything that we do anyway.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And like I say some days, you know we decide to go out and do  
21 man overboard in high seas.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. And so we kind of pick our days to do certain things.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But it was all covered.

1 Q. Okay. Did this -- did that training plan cover both captains  
2 in training and existing captains or did it not --

3 A. That was for captains in training.

4 Q. Oh, the captain plan for 2012 was protected to--

5 A. That matrix thing that you're talking about, that was for  
6 captains in training.

7 Q. Okay. But not existing captains?

8 A. Yeah, correct.

9 Q. And switching hats and kind of putting on your captain's hat  
10 right now, do you still conduct tours but just as a captain  
11 overseeing a captain-in-training? Is that capacity in which you  
12 operate?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay, when you go out is it typically three crew members on  
15 board or it's just two?

16 A. Well, I also have a CDL. So many times it is me driving and  
17 the captain narrating, and when we get to the water, we switch  
18 places and he does the water and I'm just onboard.

19 Q. Okay, so it's just still just the two of you?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay, I just wanted to clarify from an earlier question.

22 A. Yeah, we also have what we call a ramp captain. And that  
23 might be a CDL driver, with a captain that does not have their  
24 license yet. And I will be at the Water's Edge and I get onboard  
25 so there are three of us at some point. We call that a ramp



1 captain.

2 Q. Do you have a particular duck that you -- that you  
3 predominantly operate when you're a captain?

4 A. No. No. We used to. We used to basically have our own  
5 ducks that we preferred. Senior captains would get the first pick  
6 but not anymore.

7 Q. Not anymore?

8 A. Yep.

9 Q. So you're fairly familiar with all of the different--

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. --installations, marine systems, all the way up?

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. I believe that's all the questions I have sir. Thank you.

14 A. Okay, thank you.

15 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

16 Q. I had some more. Are you okay?

17 A. Yes. Yep.

18 Q. Just some follow-up questions. When we talked about training  
19 and you doing the exercise, the annual training for the captains,  
20 when the Coast Guard comes in, have you ever participated in  
21 actual on water training with the Coast Guard?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Good. And do you happen to recall the last time you were  
24 onboard for when they did that training?

25 A. I would say 3 or 4 years ago.

1 Q. Okay, you discussed that you know about the weather -- the  
2 weather program that the office has. To your knowledge is there  
3 any training given by the office or yourself for new captains or  
4 existing captains on that particular program?

5 A. No.

6 Q. No, okay. And you also mentioned as a captain you could  
7 chose go or no go and say, we'll use lightening for instance in  
8 the area. You're on the water. You see lightening. You make --  
9 you decide to get off the water and you said you would call the  
10 MOD to let them know. How would the MOD -- how would the MOD --  
11 or does the MOD pass on that information to other ducks or commute  
12 contact other ducks to let them know that the ones behind you that  
13 there's lightening on the -- hey, heads up, I'm getting off  
14 because there's lightening. How is that done?

15 A. It would be a call to the dispatcher saying that there's  
16 lightening in the immediate area. I'm getting off the water. I  
17 might say that I see Duck 19 out there or the name of the captain.  
18 And he would dial them up on the two-way radio --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- and contact them. Now I would -- I also have the ability  
21 to personally talk to that other vessel out there on bridge-to-  
22 bridge. I may do that too.

23 Q. Okay. In your career have you ever contacted another vessel  
24 while you were on the water -- another duck?

25 A. Well, we have only had the marine radios for 3 or 4 years I'd

1 say. I did. But this year that happened. We went into the  
2 water. And a lady kept and followed me. And we went inside the  
3 island towards the showboat. And it was starting to get a little  
4 bit rough. And I told her that we were going to turn to starboard  
5 and go out the exit ramp. So, so yes.

6 Q. Okay. Okay, I have no further questions.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No further questions. Thank you.

8 BY MR. [REDACTED]

9 Q. Again, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard in St. Louis.  
10 Was there ever a time when you were operating as a captain that  
11 maybe you had to change course and go off the ramp -- the entrance  
12 ramp that you had launched on?

13 A. I'm sure there is but I can't recall the specifics.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. But I think that probably has happened to some of our crew  
16 for a differing of reasons.

17 Q. When you're doing the training both with captains in training  
18 and obviously existing captains, is that -- is that covered --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- as part of the consideration on what to do?

21 A. For instance, a vapor detector goes off on the water. Well,  
22 we give it -- we try to clear it for 30 seconds. If it doesn't  
23 clear, we get off the water. So it's the turn around, bridge-to-  
24 bridge radio, you're coming out and get off.

25 Q. Okay. Do you know what some of the emergencies that they

1 might experience while underway, which would require them to  
2 immediately evacuate? When I say evacuate, I mean immediately  
3 egress the Table Rock Lake (indiscernible) --

4 A. In a faulty system, you know -- vapor detector, pi heat  
5 alarm, the high water build alarm. We don't investigate. We just  
6 PFDs and get off the water.

7 Q. And that so PFDs would be common practice for any of those  
8 alarms --

9 A. Yes, the paper detector possibly no. Now if a lot of times  
10 when we splash in, that sensor get a little bit wet. We all know  
11 that. We try to clear it and if it doesn't clear, we teach the  
12 state -- we try to clear it right by the ramp instead of heading  
13 out. And after about 30 seconds, we come out of the water where  
14 you don't have enough time to don PFDs at that point.

15 Q. Yes, sir. I understand. What would be the normal procedure  
16 if you were out on the lake, say we're launching from the south  
17 ramp? And you're just off the bowel of the grant a bell in an  
18 emergency assert -- what one of these emergencies is not favored  
19 detection per se, or some other emergency. Would it be -- would  
20 you say it'd be common practice that you would go to the north  
21 ramp to exit or is it just closest ramp?

22 A. Closet ramp.

23 Q. Okay. And that's where you've trained --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- with the crew?

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. Okay. I have no further questions, thank you.

3 Is there anything that you'd like to add that might aid us in  
4 our investigation?

5 A. Nothing that I can think of offhand.

6 MR. VOLPE: Okay, and if we need to contact you, or I need to  
7 contact you for further questions, is it okay to contact your  
8 attorney to get a hold of you?

9 MR. PURMA: Yes, sir.

10 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Thank you. I want to thank you for coming  
11 in today. Jeff Spore, our transcriber. This is John Volpe from  
12 the NTSB. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard INCOE, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
13 U.S. Coast Guard, St. Louis Investigations. We're going off the  
14 record at 12:31. Thank you, sir.

15 MR. PURMA: Okay.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:               CAPSIZE AND SINKING OF STRETCH DUCK 7  
  ON TABLE ROCK LAKE, BRANSON, MISSOURI,  
  JULY 19, 2018  
  Interview of Joe Purma

ACCIDENT NO.:                   DCA18MM028

PLACE:

DATE:                             July 24, 2018

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.



Pamela Ross Neil  
Transcriber