UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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KRISTIN ALEXIS/BARGE *MR. ERVIN* *
ALLISION WITH THE SUNSHINE BRIDGE * Accident No.: DCA19FM003
DONALDSONVILLE, LOUISIANA *
OCTOBER 12, 2018 *
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Interview of: DAVID RAMIREZ
Chief, Water Management Office

Lamar Dixon Expo Center
Gonzales, Louisiana

Friday,
May 10, 2019

APPEARANCES:

CDR MATTHEW MESKUN, Lead Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

LT [redacted] Hearing Recorder
United States Coast Guard

MICHAEL KUCHARSKI, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

LCDR [redacted]
United States Coast Guard

HANSFORD WOGAN, Esq.
Jones Walker, LLP
(On behalf of Cooper Consolidated)

BOBBY MILLER, Esq.
(On behalf of Marquette Transportation)

I N D E X

P R O C E E D I N G S

(8:00 a.m.)

CDR MESKUN: Good morning. This hearing will come to order. Today is Friday, May 10, 2019,, and the time is 8 a.m. We are continuing at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Louisiana.

Convening purpose -- convening and purpose of the investigation. I am Commander Matthew Meskun of the United States Coast Guard, Chief of Inspections and Investigation at LANT 541, at Atlantic Area, Portsmouth, Virginia. I am the lead investigating officer of this formal investigation and the Presiding Officer over these proceedings.

Commander, Sector New Orleans, has convened this investigation under the authority of Title 46 United States Code § 6301 and Title 46 Code of Federal Regulations Part 4 to investigate the circumstances surrounding the allision of the Sunshine Bridge by the *Mr. Ervin* crane barge being pushed by the towing vessel *Kristin Alexis* on October 12, 2018 while transiting on the Mississippi River.

I am conducting this investigation under the rules in 46 CFR Part 4. The investigation will determine as closely as possible the factors that contributed to the incident so that proper recommendations for the prevention of similar casualties may be made; whether there is evidence that any act of misconduct, inattention to duty, negligence or willful violation of law on the part of any licensed or certificated person contributed to the

casualty; and whether there is evidence that any Coast Guard personnel or any representative or employee of any other government agency or person -- other person caused or contributed to the casualty.

Parties in interest. I have previously determined that the following organizations or individuals are parties in interest to this investigation: Marquette Transportation, represented by Mr. David Reisman; and Cooper Consolidated, represented by Mr. Scott Jenkins. These parties have a direct interest in the investigation and have demonstrated the potential for contributing significantly to the completeness of the investigation or otherwise enhancing the safety of life and property at sea. Their participation as a party in interest. All parties in interest have a statutory right to employ counsel to represent them, to cross-examine witnesses, and to have witnesses called on their behalf.

Witnesses. I will examine all witnesses at this formal hearing under oath or affirmation, and witnesses will be subject to federal laws and penalties governing false official statements. Witnesses who are not parties in interest may be advised by their counsel concerning their rights; however, such counsel may not examine or cross-examine other witnesses or otherwise participate.

General information. These proceedings are open to the public and the media. I ask for the cooperation of all persons present to minimize any disruptive influence on the proceedings in

general and on the witnesses in particular. Please turn your cell phones or other electronic devices off or to silent or vibrate mode. Please do not enter or depart the hearing room except during periods of recess. Flash photography will be permitted during this opening statement and during recess periods.

The members of the press are, of course, welcome, and an area has been set aside for your use during the proceedings. The news media may question witnesses concerning the testimony that they have given after I have released them from these proceedings. I ask that such interviews be conducted outside of this room.

Since the date of the casualty, the NTSB and Coast Guard have conducted substantial evidence collection activities, and some of that previously collected evidence will be considered during these hearings. Should any person have or believe he or she has information not brought forward but which might be of direct significance, that person is urged to bring that information to my attention by emailing it to accidentinfo@uscg.mil.

Opening statement from government entities. The Coast Guard relies on strong partnerships to execute its missions, and this formal investigation is no exception. The National Transportation Safety Board provided a representative for this hearing. Mr. Mike Kucharski, seated to my left, is the investigator in charge for the NTSB.

Mr. Kucharski, would you like to make a brief statement?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes, Commander. And good morning, and good

morning to all here in attendance on this rainy day. I'm Mike Kucharski of the National Transportation Safety Board, investigator in charge for this investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent federal agency which, under the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974, is required to determine the probable cause of this accident and to issue a report of the facts, conditions and circumstances relating to the accident. The NTSB has joined this hearing to avoid duplicating the development of facts. Nevertheless, the NTSB may develop additional information separately from this proceeding if that becomes necessary. At the conclusion of this hearing, the NTSB will analyze the facts of this accident and determine the probable cause. And independently from the Coast Guard, I'd like to point out. We'll issue a separate report of the findings and, if appropriate, issue recommendations to correct safety issues discovered during this investigation.

Thank you, Commander.

CDR MESKUN: Thank you. We will now call our first witness, Mr. David Ramirez. Please come forward at the witness table, and LT [redacted] will administer your oath and ask you some preliminary questions.

(Whereupon,

DAVID RAMIREZ

was called as a witness and, after being first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:)

LT [redacted] Please be seated. Please state your full name and spell your last into the microphone, sir.

THE WITNESS: David Ramirez, R-a-m-i-r-e-z.

CDR MESKUN: Morning, Mr. Ramirez.

THE WITNESS: Good morning.

CDR MESKUN: Thank you for coming today.

EXAMINATION

BY CDR MESKUN:

Q. Can you please describe to us where you work, what your office does, what your roles and responsibilities are?

A. I am the Chief of the Water Management Office for the New Orleans Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. My job entails anything that has to do with the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers. Basically our jurisdiction is the Mississippi River and tributaries project, the flood control system of the Mississippi River. So anything that falls within those two rivers is under my office's responsibility. Mostly regarding flood control, navigation, (indiscernible) operations section, but we do support navigation with water data, river -- we collect, you know, gauge information, stream flow information, velocity information. So we do support the navigation offices within the Corps of Engineers.

Q. Sounds like you've had some excitement in the last few months.

A. And it's still going on.

Q. Let me start off by saying if there's any questions that we

ask that you don't understand, please ask us to rephrase it. Or if it's information that we're asking that you don't know, just state that you don't know.

A. Sure.

Q. Can you please tell us a little bit about your background, your experience, your history?

A. I've been working for the Corps for 23 years now. I'm a civil engineer. I specialize in -- I initially started as a hydraulic engineer doing hydraulic analysis, hydraulic models, river engineering, designing levees, structures, floodwalls, dams. That's my background. It's typically in engineering. I now run the water management section, which is basically -- we operate the old river complex, all the flood control features of the lower Mississippi River and tributary system.

Q. Thank you. The Mississippi River seems to be a very complex and dynamic waterway. Can you just describe a little bit about -- I don't want to say how the Mississippi River works, but what are some of the -- like, is the waterway constant? Is it constantly changing? How does -- can you describe some of that?

A. It's very dynamic. So it's constantly changing. The channel itself is constantly changing. And that's one of our challenges. So we built -- the Corps built, you know, these flood control works years ago. These are static structures. And the river constantly -- every year, every flood year, is different. It starts different; it ends different. Sedimentation in the river

is a big factor in this -- this typical -- this river, in particular, we see a lot of channel changes.

You know, it drains 41% of the country, and we see just in a typical year, you know, the channel -- the geometry or the shape of the channel moves, changes 20 feet or so in different places just by one flood. So managing that, managing water levels, managing flooding, managing navigation is a challenge, because it's constantly changing. You know, we could take channel surveys, and then within 6 months, they're completely different. You know, the river's -- it's a living, it's a living thing. It's constantly changing. So managing that and trying to maintain, you know, static flood control and static structures that are built, you know, years ago, it's a challenge. It's a real challenge.

Q. Some of the topics I want to talk about a little bit are -- and we've heard lots of testimony from several witnesses over the last week, essentially, talking about different things. And I was hoping that maybe you could just help clarify some of those issues. Charting issues are some of the things I would like to talk about, and the datum as well.

Can you talk about -- well, let's just -- we've been specifically focusing on the Sunshine Bridge and the Donaldsonville gauge. Can you just talk to us about the Donaldsonville gauge, or any of the gauges for that matter, how do they work?

A. So the gauges -- we have -- you know, there's multiple gauges

up and down the lower river, at least in our area of responsibility. And they're set to a datum issue. They're set to a datum, which is called NGDV29. Most of the river gauges in the lower river are set to that datum. There are more current datums. There are newer datums. And in the lower river and the lower -- the top Louisiana area, there's -- we have subsidence, and our datums are constantly changing, which is a big issue for our gauging interest and our -- you know, our survey folks are really reminding us that, you know, we're sinking and things are changing. So we try to keep, you know, datums updated every so often.

But river gauge datums have stayed constant because of the consistency, and the navigation industry has asked us not to keep changing the datums because, you know, a certain stage at Donaldsonville means something to people. Ten feet at Donaldsonville means something for the last 50 years. If we change 10 feet to 12 feet, it changes perceptions. It changes what people understand. So those datums, those gauge datums have been held to NGDV29 datum. Even though the current survey criteria datum has moved forward, we have a -- we just have a conversion factor. So we keep the gauges as they are in the river for navigation interests. Because there's so much going on and so much interest in the river that people have an understanding of what that number means to them. So to keep changing that would be -- it'd be too hard to keep up, and people would misinterpret it.

And so those gauges stay at a static level, and we just -- we can convert it to the latest datum, which is -- NAVD88 is the latest datum that was -- in 1988, they did a new datum. And so we have -- we keep conversions from our gauges to the river gauges to that new datum. So instead of changing -- so in a lot of places on land, we'll change heights or change gauge datum or change elevations based on the new datum constantly. Every 8 to 10 years, they come up with new datums. The river, we don't. You leave it at the 29 datum, and we just put a conversion.

So on, like, our webpage or some of our river gauge -- our river pages, you can see, you know, 10 feet at Donaldsonville on the gauge equals X amount on the latest datum. So there's a conversion there, rather than changing the gauge height to that new datum.

So it's a challenge. You know, in the lower section of the river, again, we have subsidence. So it's -- moving upriver in the Midwest and other parts of the country, you don't have that movement as much. But here, it's a challenge, so we keep having to reclassify our datums and reconnect them to the river gauges.

Q. So in layman's terms, can you define what subsidence is?

A. Subsidence is basically the relative movement -- the movement -- the relative movement of land versus the mean sea level, basically. So sea level supposedly is rising, which may or may not be happening, but subsidence is happening. Our land in south Louisiana is subsiding. It's sinking. Relative to that water

level in the ocean, we're moving down. Many reasons why. You know, oil and gas extraction is a major reason why, but we see it. We see it in our gauge readings. We're moving down. So those datum -- so if you set a datum 50 years ago, it's probably sunk. So what you thought it was, is not what it is today. And so those need to be resurveyed and those datum need to be adjusted.

Q. Okay. Could you -- I guess, do the gauges get calibrated to --

A. They do. They do get resurveyed probably -- I'm not positive, but at least on an annual basis. Especially -- the Mississippi River gauges are probably our most used gauges. You know, we have gauges on tributaries and smaller streams, bayous, creeks, everywhere. But these gauges are heavily depended upon. So those are -- they're resurveyed to make sure that they're where they need to be, where they say we -- where we say they are. They're adjusted and calibrated.

Q. And would you be able to roughly say how much subsidence there is every year?

A. It varies. Closer to the coast, we see higher rates of subsidence. I know -- so we have a -- for example, our Grand Isle gauge is a famous one for -- you know, people like to use that for climate change purposes. We've seen on the order of, I think, 5 to 6 centimeters of it moving in the last 50 years. So again, and that's out on the coast, you know, obviously. And that tapers off as you move inland, that -- the rate of subsidence. But we are

seeing the gauges move as well as the ocean level increase. So that difference, it's obvious. And the average heights, you can plot average heights period of record, and they're slowly increasing over time. So we do see that change.

Q. Do you happen to know what the subsidence is at Donaldsonville?

A. Not offhand. Not exactly.

Q. But it's not as severe as --

A. It's not as severe. As you move upriver, it is less and less. I can tell you just from our old river project, which is at mile -- about River Mile 306, 305 -- Donaldsonville is about 175. I'm familiar with the old river project. The subsidence there is less than, you know, a few tenths of a foot. You know, since we've been keeping records, so say in the last 50 or so years. So again, that's a little further upriver. But you can see the difference between there and, as I mentioned, Grand Isle. There's -- it kind of tapers off.

So I would be speculating if I tried to tell you about Donaldsonville, but it's somewhere in the middle there.

Q. So if -- I was just trying to think about this from a reality perspective, because that's very technical. So if you had a bridge -- let's just say the Sunshine Bridge -- that was built 50, 60 years ago, and it was -- all the plans were calculated for a certain amount and air drafts were -- I'm sorry -- vertical clearances of the bridge were charted. Based upon the calibration

that happens every year and the adjustments that are made every year, is the charted information for the vertical clearances still an accurate information?

A. We do resurvey the gauges. And I know we worked with the folks at NOAA on some of the clearance information. Now again, that's not directly under my office, but I would say -- and again, maybe it's speculation. Most structures -- most major structures are built with foundations to resist the subsidence. They're deep foundations. That subsidence we see as occurring in, you know, kind of the top layers of the earth, I'd say, you know. Something like a bridge, foundations go much deeper than that.

I wouldn't think the air gap or the clearance of a bridge -- I don't think a bridge would be subsiding equivalent to what the land is. I wouldn't -- again, it's not our bridge, but our major structures are built -- our blocks and dams are not built to -- are built to -- you know, deep enough to avoid that subsidence. We don't want it to move.

So in essence, and the subsidence datum change -- you know, the earth subsiding in Lower -- South Louisiana doesn't affect the water level. The water level's the same constant. So we're seeing, you know, we're seeing -- the channel bed may be sinking, but that water level is tied to the ocean. That's not moving. You know, it's not falling equivalently. So that -- again, it's confusing there when you talk about water elevation and the earth moving, it's -- there's a lot of confusion in that whole datum

subsidence conversation. But I know that we worked -- our survey folks worked with the NOAA folks on, you know, vertical clearances, and those are checked. I couldn't tell you at what frequency, but they're checked.

Q. Okay. And just hypothetically speaking of the Donaldsonville gauge -- I don't know what the gauge is today. That's what my hypothetical is. Let's just say the gauge is at 20 feet today.

A. Right.

Q. What is that 20 feet based off of?

A. It is -- so it's -- that vertical datum, that NGVD29 vertical datum, those gauges were set -- so zero at Donaldsonville would be, you know, a zero at NGVD29 datum. What I understand the gauges from basically our old river project south through New Orleans are set at NGVD29 datum, which in layman's terms, I believe was approximately sea level at the time, back in 1929, I guess. That was their zero, sea level or -- some folks -- mean low gulf. There's a few nuances in the terminology there, but since then, again, the datums have changed but those gauges have not. And because -- as I mentioned earlier, they were -- you know, those were so heavily used by navigation industry, those numbers meant something to folks, that we kept them on a 29 datum.

So that's what -- at Donaldsonville, you know, 20 feet means 20 feet -- I guess 20 feet above sea level, I guess you could say, in layman's terms.

Q. That's perfect. That was a very poorly worded question, but

you hit on exactly what I was trying to get at. So does that mean that there's zero water, that the river is bone dry when it's --
A. No, no, no. The depth of the river is minus. You know, I know in, like, past New Orleans, we'd have areas up to -100. So below sea level. So if the river would, you know, dry up, we'd still have water from the Gulf of Mexico filling the channel because it's below the level of the ocean all the way past Baton Rouge. So it doesn't mean it's dry. Still plenty of water.
Q. Excellent. Thank you.
CDR MESKUN: Before I move on to any more questions, does anybody else have any questions?
MR. KUCHARSKI: Hi. Good morning, Mr. Ramirez. That's enlightening. Thanks.
BY MR. KUCHARSKI:
Q. So does NGVD29 use those for the gauges; is that correct?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And do you know how that correlates to what NOAA uses on mean high water?
A. No. Mean high -- I know mean high water, it's a tidal datum. So it changes every so many years; they recalculate it. So the tidal datums are dynamic. And this is a geodetic datum, you know. So no. I could figure it out, or I have people that could figure that out, but I couldn't tell -- there's a conversion.
So when NOAA would update mean low-low water, you know, when it comes -- when a new one would come out, we'd develop a

conversion. That could be, that could be calculated. But I couldn't explain it or do it now.
Q. I guess you're aware that the NOAA charts have mean high water on them?
A. Mean high water. Yeah. Yes. Yes.
Q. You are? Okay, okay. So --
A. They have a few. They have a few different tidal datums they use. And so when they do update those, we will correlate them to our gauges as well. And I guess I assume the folks that need to know that know that, you know, that that exists, that the relationship exists.
Q. And just one point of clarification. So the -- this exhibit that's been pulled up, it says NOAA on there and it has the Donaldsonville gauge. But the gauges are owned by the Army Corps. They just put it on the NOAA site; is that how it works?
A. Yeah, they just display our -- yes. They just display our data. We have a network of gauges. We share -- we put them on the -- we have their gauges on our website as well.
Q. Okay, great. You've hit on a word called "share," but I think we'll go into that. And we have some questions down for sharing. Thank you.
BY CDR MESKUN:
Q. I'd like to move into the topics of some charting stuff, if that's okay. Does the Army Corps produce river maps, if you will?
A. Yes, sir, we do.

Q. Okay. And are those paper and electronic?
A. Yes, sir. They're both.
Q Are there any -- do you know if there's any differences between the paper chart -- other than being electronic, but differences between the two charts?
A. There shouldn't be. Unless, you know, you use the older version. But the -- you know, when a new survey comes out or a new book comes out, they're similar. They just provide them in two different formats.
Q. Okay, perfect. And you may not know the answer to this one, but do you know how often a new version comes out?
A. I know -- no, I don't. But I know we do -- we survey the river, the entire river, every -- about every 10 years. And that survey is used to update the charts. I'm not sure if the charts are updated more frequently than that, but I know we do order a full survey of the -- we do partial surveys for different projects, but we do a full survey of the channel every 10 years. And I know that information is turned over to the folks who do the charts. So again, I would say at a minimum of 10 years, but I'm not certain of that. They may update them more frequently or less frequently.
Q. Do you know if there are any Army Corps electronic charts available from Baton Rouge south?
A. I believe -- now I believe the, you know, paper or the electronic version -- yeah. We have the entire -- our entire area

of responsibility charted. Yes.
Q. Do you happen to know how information makes it onto a chart? Like, let's say a new bridge is constructed. Do you know how that information would make it to the Army Corps?
A. I know -- we work with, you know, of course, the major agencies, DOTD. I'm not exactly sure of the process. I would be speculating on, you know -- but I would assume, you know, once it's decided to make a new chart, we would reach out to all parties that we feel influenced anything that changes on a chart, you know, navigation, DOTD, state agencies or anybody associated -- or any high-flying companies, any utilities the cross the river, we're engaged with them. But I personally do not do that work, so I would -- I am speculating.
Q. Okay. That's fine. Thank you. Can you pull up Exhibit 8 in the -- yeah, right down there. This is the profile view of the Sunshine Bridge from the Army Corps map book. Are you familiar with what the clearances are for the Sunshine Bridge?
A. Yes, I am.
Q. Yeah, okay. Looking at what's provided there -- I guess, I think we've kind of already talked about this, but can you just describe again how some of those numbers come from? Like, so it says, the -- for the main channel span, it says the vertical clearance is 171, and then it references a minimum vertical clearance, 135 at Donaldsonville gauge equals 36. And can you just describe where that 36 comes from and what that is?

A. So basically the clearance is the 171 minus whatever their Donaldsonville gauge is reading at that time. So -- and it's been determined that the minimum clearance is -- when Donaldsonville's at 36, you have less than 100 feet; you have 99 feet of clearance, and that's the minimum vertical clearance. That's what that's saying. Why that's been determined at 36, I'm not positive why 99's the limit. But basically the higher the Donaldsonville gauge reads, the less clearance you have, which would make sense. So 171 is the vertical clearance when Donaldsonville gauge reads zero. So when it's at zero, you have 171 feet, and as it moves up, you -- you know, that is reduced.

And that's just showing you how to compute it, I guess. If you see a Donaldsonville gauge reading, you can subtract that from 171 and you know your vertical clearance for the main span. And then there's another basic equation similar for the west span.

Q. Okay, thank you for that. Are you at all familiar with the NOAA charts for this area as well?

A. I know -- I'm familiar with them. I'm not familiar with the details of them. I'm more familiar with our charts.

Q. Understood. And then -- so Mr. [redacted] brought up IO Exhibit 7. This is actually the NOAA chart that shows the Sunshine Bridge. And then it indicates the fixed bridge vertical clearance is 133 feet. Do you see that?

A. Where is that? Okay.

Q. I'm just curious if you knew why they're -- you know, what

the difference between the two charts for what it has for vertical clearances.

A. No, I do not.

CDR MESKUN: Okay, thank you. That's all the questions I have.

Mr. Kucharski?

BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

Q. Mr. Ramirez, you're familiar with the term on the electronic charts, Inland Electronic Navigation Charts, that the Army Corps calls them IENCs?

A. I wasn't familiar with that terminology.

Q. I'm sorry?

A. I know we have electronic charts. I didn't know the exact name of them.

Q. Sorry. I'm looking at the Army Corps' site right now for electronic -- to download these. You were asked the question if there exists electronic charts from Baton Rouge downriver, I believe, okay. But let's concentrate just on the area of this accident.

A. Sure.

Q. Okay. If there is -- you stated, and I'd ask you to kindly check on that, if there are electronic charts available. And if they're not on your site, how would a mariner get them? How would we get the copies? Because I -- I apologize, but it says -- the furthest one down I see is 236, mile marker 236 to 325. I don't

see anything further south on the river. Okay, and that's really critical for us to understand that.

A. Sure. Sure.

Q. Okay? You may have touched on this, and I apologize if I wasn't listening carefully. But why is it that the Army Corps has map books, okay, and information going all the way down -- I think it's 22 miles below the Head of Pass all the way down, when NOAA charts exist for that also?

A. I do not know one way or the other. It's a duplicate effort, I agree. But I'm not sure.

Q. Does Army Corps also have flood control type issues or -- that they're responsible for?

A. Absolutely. So our map books are used -- we use them in-house for more than just navigation purposes. So we do use them for our mission as well. So again, I'm not sure why there are duplicates as far as the navigation is concerned and bridge clearances, but I know we use them for river information, river mile information or any information we need that -- it lists utilities, pipeline crossings. And we need to do dredging; we need to what's around. We use those for -- to show us what's in our project area, whatever, you know, our area concerns. So we use them for our mission as well.

So in that case, I guess, yeah, that's why they're produced, probably. And then they -- there's multiple uses for them.

LCDR [redacted] (Indiscernible) like, discussed

internally. You know, feel free to respond to the questions, but what we don't want to have to ask is for you to personally speculate is --

THE WITNESS: Okay. Okay, yeah.

LCDR [redacted] -- when you answer some of these questions. So we're trying to stay away from that.

THE WITNESS: Got you. Thank you.

So yeah, I mean, we use them for our mission for sure, and we put them out to the public to use as they need, I guess, would be the answer.

BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

Q. And you said you're familiar with the NOAA charts? Or you're not?

A. I'm familiar -- I'm aware that they exist. I don't -- I'm not familiar with the details involved.

Q. Okay. I won't ask you that question then. And would you please confirm that the minimum vertical clearance of the west span of the Sunshine Bridge is on the western side of that span? Is that where it is?

A. Well, it depends on which way we're looking. We're looking upriver. So that -- yes, that's the west side.

Q. Do you or anybody in your department -- do you get involved with a bridge strike like this if you're not being asked by the Coast Guard, or involved in litigation or another agency asks you to get involved? Are you --

A. No. We only get involved -- we basically -- mostly we'll get requests for data, for river data, stages, flows, velocities, maybe even channel surveys at the most.
Q. When you're talking about clearances -- you're familiar with clearances, obviously?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. Are you familiar with the term navigation box?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. So, Mr. Ramirez, earlier you talked about sharing information. Okay. Could you tell us how information from -- let's be specific -- on bridge clearances, okay, you have all these calculations, how is that shared with other agencies? Like, is there a formal process with NOAA, because they're responsible for charting in this area? Okay. And with Coast Guard? Is it shared with the Coast Guard, you know, this information, because they have responsibility for light lists? NOAA has coast pilots. Have you ever seen a coast pilot, the books?
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah, okay. And then the charts. We're trying to see how all this ties together. So could you tell us that?
A. Right. So for bridge clearances, I'm not positive how that's shared. Stage data, flow data, velocity data, water data, we actually -- we send data to each other via -- through our webpages. We automatically -- when we collect data, we ingest it and process them, and it automatically shares with NOAA, National

Weather Service; USGS, you know, is another data-collecting agency that -- so it's just an agreement we have that, hey, if I'm collecting data, I'll share with you; if you collect data -- that way we're not duplicating efforts. For water data. For bridge clearance data, I'm -- we do collect it; I am not positive how that's shared with NOAA.

Q. Could you point us in the right direction? Who would be able to tell us that, the sharing?

A. We have our -- the folks that make the maps, our map -- our GIS, our mapping folks, are the ones that get this data and actually physically make these charts, these maps. And that would -- I would suspect that office would be the ones who --

Q. Would you be able to get us a point of contact there?

A. I absolutely could.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. Thank you.

BY CDR MESKUN:

Q. As it pertains to information like the river stage at the Donaldsonville gauge, how hard is it for a mariner to find that information on your website? Where is it located? Is it on your website?

A. It is on our website. We have a website called River Gauges. And I know for other gauge locations, it's as easy as basically googling Donaldsonville gauge on the Mississippi River, And you should get a link to it.

Q. So it's readily available to the public?

A. It's readily available.
Q. That's kind of where I was going. Thank you for that. Appreciate it. I wasn't trying to trip you up.
And also a question that you may not know the answer to. But do you know, are all of the bridges that are charted that have an alternate span that you can travel through, does it have the vertical clearance listed on those charts?
A. I'm not positive.
CDR MESKUN: Okay, that's good. Thank you. That's all the questions I have. You -- one more? Okay.
BY MR. KUCHARSKI:
Q. Just a quick follow-up. On the gauges, you said there's a site where it's accessible, you can get the gauge heights. Is there any site that has the computations for the actual vertical clearance at any point in time applying the gauges to -- gauge information to them?
A. Not a Corps site that I'm aware of.
MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.
CDR MESKUN: Mr. Wogan? Mr. --
MR. WOGAN: No questions.
CDR MESKUN: You good? Okay.
Mr. Ramirez, thank you for your testimony. You are now released as a witness from this formal marine casualty investigation. Thank you for your testimony and cooperation. If I later determine that this joint investigation team needs

additional information, I will contact you through your counsel. If you have any questions about this investigation, you may contact the recorder, LT [redacted]

The time is now 8:44. We'll take a 16-minute recess. We're off the record.

(Whereupon, at 8:44 a.m., the testimony was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	*KRISTIN ALEXIS*/BARGE *MR. ERVIN* ALLISION WITH THE SUNSHINE BRIDGE DONALDSONVILLE, LOUISIANA OCTOBER 12, 2018 Interview of David Ramirez
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA19FM003
PLACE:	Gonzales, Louisiana
DATE:	May 10, 2019

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.

[redacted]

Eileen Gonzalez
Transcriber