

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK* *

NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, *

Accident No.: DCA22FM022

VIRGINIA ON JUNE 7, 2022 *

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Interview of: CANDACE BAKER, Restaurant Manager
City Cruises

Virginia Beach, Virginia

APPEARANCES:

CDR RANDY WADDINGTON, Lead Investigating Officer
Chief of Analysis and Compliance Division
United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:40 p.m.)

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2
3 CDR WADDINGTON: The time is 4:40. The hearing is now in
4 session. At this time, I call Ms. Candice Baker, restaurant
5 manager, Spirit of Norfolk. Lieutenant [REDACTED] will administer
6 your oath and ask you some preliminary questions.

7 LT [REDACTED] Ms. Baker, please stand and raise your right
8 hand. A false statement given to an agency in the United States
9 is punishable by a fine and or imprisonment under 18 U.S.C. 1001.
10 Knowing this, do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are
11 about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
12 the truth, so help you God?

13 MS. GINN: Yes.

14 LT [REDACTED] Please be seated. Please state your full name
15 and spell your last name.

16 MS. GINN: Candice Baker, B-A-K-E-R.

17 LT [REDACTED] Please identify counsel or representative if
18 present and have them state and spell their last name as well as
19 your firm or company relationship.

20 MR. DENLEY: Eric Denley, D-E-N-L-E-Y, Deputy General
21 Counsel, City Cruises - Hornblower Group. Party in interest to
22 this investigation.

INTERVIEW OF CANDACE BAKER

23
24 BY MR. [REDACTED]

25 Q. Please tell us what is your current employment and position?

1 A. Restaurant Manager, City Cruises on the Spirit of Norfolk.

2 Q. What are your general responsibilities in that job?

3 A. Taking care of my staff and the guests on the boat.

4 Q. Can you briefly tell us your relevant work history?

5 A. I've been in the restaurant industry as a manager since 1978.

6 Q. And what is your education related to your position?

7 A. None.

8 Q. Do you hold any professional licenses or certificates related
9 to your position?

10 A. Yes. Serve Safe.

11 CDR WADDINGTON: Mr. Baker, could you move your microphone
12 just closer? Thank you very much.

13 LT [REDACTED] Thank you. Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] will now
14 have follow up questions for you.

15 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

16 Q. Good afternoon, Ms. Baker. Thank you for being here. And as
17 we ask you questions this afternoon, if you need a break, please
18 just let us know. All of my questions are related to the period
19 up to June 7th, 2022, unless I specifically ask you about a later
20 date.

21 There's an exhibit binder that will be available and an
22 exhibit list that was provided in advance. And the Recorder,
23 Lieutenant [REDACTED] will pull up any exhibit on the monitors as
24 well.

25 Please try to refrain from using any acronyms. And if you

1 must, just spell it out for us.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. We're going to break your testimony into two parts this
4 afternoon. One, your experience in employment as the restaurant
5 manager on board the Spirit of Norfolk. And the second, the
6 events of June 7th, 2022.

7 So, Ms. Baker, how long have you been employed with City
8 Cruises and how long have you worked on board the Spirit of
9 Norfolk?

10 A. Thirteen and a half years for both.

11 Q. When you were hired on as the restaurant manager, can you
12 describe for us what training you received from City Cruises?

13 A. Damien Madison (ph.), the food and beverage director, was --
14 taught me how to do the restaurant manager job as needed on that
15 boat compared to what I've done before. He worked with me for the
16 first couple of weeks. Obviously, I had plenty of restaurant
17 experience, so it didn't take a lot. I just had to learn their
18 procedures.

19 Q. And as the restaurant manager, you're responsible for
20 managing the waitstaff on board the Spirit of Norfolk. Can you
21 tell us what other duties you have on board the vessel?

22 A. I've got the whole front of the house staff, so the servers,
23 the servers assist the bartenders. And then I'm also responsible
24 to make sure the guests have a good time, are safe, any questions
25 answered. Just make sure they have a great dining experience.

1 Q. And can you explain -- I know you mentioned when Lieutenant
2 [REDACTED] asked you -- but can you explain your primary duty on board
3 the Spirit of Norfolk?

4 A. Just taking care of my staff, make sure they're doing their
5 job correctly, and also that the guests are having a good time.

6 Q. Prior to the incident on June 7th, were you aware of any
7 documents or policies that assigned the restaurant manager duties
8 during the event of an emergency?

9 A. I can't think of any documents. We go through an orientation
10 that we take all the people, all of our staff through, and it
11 talks about man overboard, lifejackets, big safety video that
12 we've put everybody through.

13 Q. And prior to the incident on June 7th, 2022, were you
14 familiar with the City Cruise's Emergency Response Plan?

15 A. I'm not sure what you're talking about.

16 Q. I'm going to ask Lieutenant [REDACTED] to pull up Coast Guard
17 exhibit 031 TAC one. And please turn to page 11, which is the
18 City Cruises Emergency Response Plan. I'm just going to read
19 under where it says restaurant manager. It states that primary
20 responsibility is passenger safety. It also states that you will
21 perform the following duties to include, coordinate the needs for
22 first aid and CPR, passenger management, keeping passengers calm,
23 informed and organized, and verify passengers and crews are
24 accounted for during an evacuation.

25 If you scroll down, can you scroll down or turn to page 35?

1 In that same exhibit. It also states that during an emergency,
2 managers on scene can assist passengers with safety equipment,
3 accounting for passengers and crew during an evacuation and
4 assisting passengers with safety equipment. Is that solely your
5 job, or is that a shared assignment?

6 A. As far as the safety equipment, no, that's going to be
7 everybody in the front of the house. As well as the Marine Team.
8 Everybody goes through training with lifejacket, how to put
9 lifejackets on. They go through, you know, they know how to put
10 that on, and they know how to help the guests first and then put
11 theirs on afterwards. So, we go through, man -- talk about man
12 overboard in orientation and what their responsibilities are for
13 that.

14 But I hadn't actually seen those pages. But yes, that is all
15 of the stuff that I know that I'm responsible for doing.

16 Q. And have you ever received training on what to do or how to
17 conduct passenger accountability during an evacuation or how to
18 manage passengers during an evacuation?

19 A. Not really any training, just common sense.

20 Q. Have you ever received training on how to assist passengers
21 with safety equipment? I know you said that they do --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. And can you kind of describe how you received that
24 training?

25 A. In our orientation that everybody goes through when they

1 first get hired, myself included, that as part of the safety
2 module as far as putting on lifejackets, learning how to put those
3 on, talk about putting that guest's on first and then yours. That
4 was all part of our initial training. And every day for every
5 cruise that we have on one of our staff is responsible to do that
6 demonstration on the dance floor in front of the guests during our
7 safety announcements. And so, we make sure everybody knows how to
8 do that. If I don't have -- if I have somebody brand new that's
9 too nervous, that might be me out there doing it.

10 Q. Have you ever participated in a fire drill on board the
11 spirit of Norfolk?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Have you ever received training or participated in any drills
14 that exercise the City Cruise's Emergency Response Plan?

15 A. A few years ago, we had a -- what we call our spirit days.
16 That's -- we bring all our staff on just to have a night out and
17 have a picnic. The captain of that -- the captain -- one of the
18 captains that was there, decided to perform a evacuation,
19 basically set off the general alarm. We all had to get
20 lifejackets, help each other, and get off the boat. And then
21 afterwards, he said, of course, this was just a drill, but none of
22 you knew that.

23 Q. So, for that drill, were you acting as the passengers?

24 A. We were just -- we were are all employees there. So, we were
25 just all acting -- because we didn't know what was going on other

1 than they said, get off the boat, get lifejackets. And we're not
2 out to sea, we were at the dock.

3 Q. Understood. Thank you. As the restaurant manager, can you
4 describe any training that you conduct with your staff outside of
5 the realm of food service?

6 A. I do the training with the lifejackets. I do the training
7 with the man overboard with my staff. That's pretty much it.

8 Q. And as part of your condition of employment, are you enrolled
9 in a random drug testing program?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And has that always been the case?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. In that plan that we pulled up, it said that you were
14 responsible for coordinating first aid and CPR. What does that
15 kind of -- what does coordinating mean?

16 A. If we have a guest that has an incident or an employee, a lot
17 of times I'm the first person that they will come and get because
18 I'm right there and I will radio up to the Marine Team and tell
19 them I need somebody, we've got an accident or an injury,
20 whatever. So, one of the Marine Team will come down as well.

21 I will make sure that our guest is comfortable. I'll try and
22 initially find out what's going on. If they're coherent and
23 everything, you know, they're just having a having an incident,
24 we'll talk to them, try and get information. If there is
25 something more serious, then taking the training that I've had, we

1 take first aid and CPR training. So, we have a little bit of
2 basic knowledge as far as that goes as well.

3 Q. We're going to go to the events of June 7th, 2022. Can you,
4 in your own words, describe for us what you saw, what you did,
5 what your interactions were on board the Spirit of Norfolk that
6 day on June 7th, 2022, starting from the moment you first became
7 aware of the problem in the engine room.

8 A. Okay, I was down in the galley. The galley team had just
9 called up (indiscernible) staff meal and I was down there to kind
10 of monitor my staff as they came down. Brian (ph.) was there, and
11 then one of the other deckhands was there. I heard Ryan (ph.)
12 over the walkie talkie saying, need someone to check the engine
13 room. There was an alarm going off. And Brian was right there,
14 so he's like, I got it.

15 I was watching him at that time. He walked over, opened the
16 door, and then shut it right away, told our sous chef who was at
17 the dish room, you need to get out of here. There's a fire down
18 here. He called over for the other deckhand to go help him. I
19 immediately went upstairs. Most of our guests were already up on
20 third back because it was a beautiful day. They were done eating.
21 I went to the DJ and I asked them to please make an announcement,
22 calmly. We needed everybody to go up to third deck. We had a
23 situation and for their safety we needed them to go up to their
24 deck.

25 Some of them went right away. Other ones I had to go give a

1 personal invite to and ask them to go up. So, as I was getting
2 everybody up to third deck, it's two flights of stairs, I had
3 somebody holler down that the smoke was too bad in the back. I
4 said, everybody move towards the front of the boat. There's an
5 enclosed area. I said the smoke's probably not as bad that way.

6 I was probably about three steps up to the top to get to
7 third deck and another guest came through and said, is there
8 anywhere else we can go; it's too bad? I said, absolutely. One
9 of my staff was down on the second deck -- at the bottom of that
10 stairwell there's a door to go into the second deck. I asked her
11 to hold that door open and I told everybody, start coming back
12 down and get onto second deck. That was no smoke was in there.
13 It was enclosed.

14 At that time, I went up to third deck to tell everybody that
15 I needed them to come in, that the smoke was really bad. It was
16 hard to talk, couldn't hardly get my words out. Some people were
17 coming in right away. I had a couple of guests that didn't want
18 to. They wanted to stay out there and watch everything. I'm
19 like, no, you need to come in. We need you to get -- go down to
20 the second deck.

21 After I got them all in, I radioed. I actually walked over
22 to the wheelhouse and asked Ryan, I'm like, do I need lifejackets?
23 He said, absolutely. So, we started going down and then I let him
24 know at that time I was taking everybody down to second deck.

25 One of our photogenics, people that take the pictures on the

1 boat, the manager for that met me at the stern on second deck and
2 said, what do you need me to do? I said, help me get these
3 lifejackets out. So, we started passing lifejackets out to
4 everybody, getting them out, and we got everybody in the stern
5 that we could get to. And we went to the front, to the bow.

6 Most of the people there are already getting their
7 lifejackets, and I'm not sure who was up there handling that at
8 that point. But once we got up there, we started getting the rest
9 of them on and helping the kids get theirs on, so the parents
10 could get theirs on.

11 Shortly after that, Ryan had said that the Victory Rover was
12 coming, and we would be evacuating the boat. So, tried to get
13 everybody to get ready to go down to first deck to the -- I'm
14 sorry -- the main -- where the gangway usually is in the midship.
15 Some people would listen, and some weren't. So, I didn't have a
16 microphone. So, I sat up on a chair and tried to get loud and up
17 above everybody so they could hear me and ask them, you know,
18 we're going to take you down. We're going to be evacuating onto
19 the Victory Rover, just make your way down to the first deck.
20 Stay calm. Stay in line. We're going to get everybody off.
21 Everybody's going to be okay.

22 And then we started getting everybody to go down. I went
23 back and checked both of the restrooms on second deck to make sure
24 there's nobody in there. Followed everyone down. Got all the
25 guests off. All of my staff was off and then I got off. And I

1 think Bob (ph.) was the last person behind me. And we got on the
2 Victory and that was it.

3 Q. Thank you. I'm going to go back in time a little bit. Would
4 you say that day that cruise was a what you consider a normal
5 cruise? Typical cruise or anything different about that cruise?

6 A. No, up until that time, everything was normal. We had two
7 schools -- or I think it was a daycare and a kindergarten group
8 on. And the daycare had -- most of the kids had parents with
9 them, and the kindergarten group had some chaperons, teachers, and
10 staff. So, it was just a bunch of little kids. But that's normal
11 for us. Yeah, on the summertime, in the spring, a lot.
12 Everything was good.

13 Q. You mentioned earlier about that the safety announcement and
14 that was provided to the passengers prior -- or prior to
15 departing?

16 A. Mm-hm.

17 Q. Okay. And can you describe for us where the safety
18 announcement is conducted?

19 A. The DJ -- it's a recorded announcement. So, the DJ, before
20 he starts, he's like, asks for everybody's attention that we have
21 a safety announcement we need everyone to listen to. And he plays
22 a recording and it just kind of talks about where we're going to
23 be going, not throwing things overboard, the boat racks. So, you
24 know, be careful walking (indiscernible) whatever. No running on
25 board.

1 And then there's a section that asks everybody to look to the
2 dance floor while one of our staff shows you how to put on a
3 lifejacket. And that's when my server assistant went out. He has
4 a lifejacket. He stands out on the dance floor and very -- kind
5 of like being on an airplane when they show you how to put the
6 oxygen on. It's the same thing. Now it does -- it's very big.
7 He makes sure that people see it. And then after he gets done
8 with that, then they continue on with the announcement. Once
9 that's done, everything proceeds.

10 Q. Can the announcement be heard on the main deck or is it
11 played throughout the vessel when the DJ plays it?

12 A. It's usually just played on the deck since it's like right at
13 the beginning, most people aren't -- they're there because they're
14 starting to eat. If we have two decks, the DJ on each deck can do
15 it.

16 Q. And that's kind of to my follow up question. You just
17 mentioned that it states, please direct your attention to the
18 dance floor as part of the announcement. Do all passengers -- I
19 know you said they started to eat, but do they need to be present
20 on the main deck when the safety announcements played, or are they
21 like free to roam about the vessel?

22 A. They're free to roam around the vessel.

23 Q. Can you tell us whose responsibility it is to arrange the
24 chairs and tables in the main deck of the cabin on the Spirit of
25 Norfolk?

1 A. The managers are responsible to make sure that they're set up
2 properly.

3 LCDR [REDACTED] Lieutenant [REDACTED] can you please pull up Coast
4 Guard exhibit 047 TAC 1? And it's -- turn to page three.

5 Q. The hatch I'm referring to is where that -- the orange arrow
6 is at the bottom of the page.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And as the restaurant manager and being around that deck and
9 arranging tables and chairs, can you kind of describe what that
10 hatch looks like?

11 A. The hatch is towards the stern of the boat. There's a wall
12 back there. It's about that big and it's got carpet over it.
13 There is a sign on the wall that says, you know, it's emergency
14 exit. We have the tables there pulled away from that. So,
15 there's plenty of room all around it for anybody to come up
16 through it. That is the escape that our galley would have if
17 there was ever a fire on the other side of the galley and they
18 couldn't come up the main stairs. So, you know, we always make a
19 point that, you know, we're not going to kill our galley people;
20 keep that open, like a joke, but very seriously. And we have to
21 keep that area open.

22 Q. And so, is that your job or all your staff's job to ensure
23 that nothing obstructs that?

24 A. All the staff has to make sure. But I know ultimately, it's
25 going to be on me since I'm their boss.

1 LCDR [REDACTED] Going to ask Lieutenant [REDACTED] to now pull up
2 Coast Guard Exhibit 031 TAC 1 and turn to page 32. Again, this is
3 in the City Cruises Emergency Response Plan, Appendix B for the
4 emergency procedures.

5 MR. DENLEY: What was the page number again?

6 LCDR [REDACTED] 32.

7 MR. DENLEY: Thanks.

8 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

9 Q. Ms. Baker, I don't know if you can see up there or if you
10 want to use your book, but these are the abandon ship procedures
11 in their Emergency Response Plan. And there's a quote in there
12 that says, by order -- abandon ship is done by order of the
13 captain. It goes on to say that the -- sound the general alarm
14 and the ship's whistle with six short blasts, followed by one
15 prolonged blast to initiate abandon ship. Did you ever hear a
16 general alarm or ship's whistle initiating the evacuation of the
17 ship?

18 A. I did not hear a general alarm. I wouldn't have heard the
19 whistle from inside.

20 Q. Did you ever hear any other alarms or sounds during the
21 beginning phase of the evacuation?

22 A. No, I didn't.

23 Q. On that same page, if you keep that up there, in the
24 instructions that states, provide an announcement over the PA
25 system as to the nature of the emergency and provide proper

1 evacuation and response actions. In that appendix, it also
2 provides a sample of what an abandoned ship announcement should
3 be, and it says to repeat the announcement three times. Did you
4 ever hear or receive an emergency announcement providing response
5 actions or an abandon ship by Captain Nadeau, like the
6 announcement provided in the Emergency Response Plan?

7 A. He didn't make one over the PA. We had a bunch of little
8 kids on there, and it would have, in my opinion -- I'm not sure if
9 that's why he did it -- it would -- they probably would have
10 panicked. As it was, everything -- everybody was calm. I said, I
11 had the DJ just make an announcement that we had a situation that
12 we needed to take care of, and we need everybody to go up to third
13 deck.

14 Q. And did anyone besides the DJ provide an emergency
15 announcement to the crew and passengers?

16 A. Not over the PA. I tried to on second deck when I was
17 standing on the chair.

18 Q. Can you kind of go through that and tell us how that
19 announcement was made?

20 A. While I was trying to talk to everybody loudly telling them
21 we're going to evacuate the boat. They all have their lifejackets
22 on to make their way to the stairway, calmly go down the stairs.
23 We had another boat waiting for us. I said some people listened,
24 some didn't. So, I stood up on the chair just so I could get
25 their attention. I was waving my arms, attention, listen up,

1 folks, and made the announcement again.

2 Q. And again, on that exhibit, I know we put it down, but if you
3 want to put it back up at 031 TAC 1 -- oh, it doesn't -- okay.

4 Well, on page 32 it's the same. It also states that the crew at
5 the captain's direction will guide passengers from refuge areas to
6 embarkation areas. Were at any time you given direction or told
7 how to move passengers by Captain Nadeau or other crew members?

8 A. He had told us we were going to have -- the Victory Rover was
9 going to meet us at the midship. So, you know, I just -- I knew
10 where they needed to go from that point.

11 Q. Can you kind of talk us through that thought process and how
12 you decided how to get passengers from which deck and why?

13 A. From the beginning? Where I put them or just from that part?

14 Q. From that part.

15 A. Okay. We were already on second deck and then the stairwell
16 coming out of second deck would go straight down to first deck,
17 right to where we normally board passengers. So, if he said the
18 Victory Rover was going to be coming up to the midship to take
19 people off, it was pretty simple. It's like we're going to go
20 down -- just go down these stairs.

21 Q. So, it's a pretty fair statement to say that you were
22 directing the passengers during that process of the evacuation on
23 where the embarkation point was?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And can you tell us who was assisting passengers also at this

1 time with the donning of lifejackets?

2 A. There was -- I -- there was one person from the Marine Team
3 up on second deck. I don't remember who it was that I saw. I
4 know my bartender was also up there helping. I don't -- did not
5 see my servers or serve assistant. Like I said, I was in the
6 stern initially, and then we went up to the bow to try and get the
7 people up there. And I was kind of busy. Most people had
8 lifejackets on already. It was just some people not knowing how
9 to put them on and to make sure the kids didn't have a big adult
10 jacket on.

11 Q. Were there any other crew members aiding you during the
12 movement of passengers during the evacuation?

13 A. Yes, the same people.

14 Q. Can you kind of describe for us your interactions with the
15 passengers, some of those interactions with the passengers during
16 the evacuation?

17 A. A lot of it was talking to them, asking, you know, when
18 they're asking how to put their lifejackets on and then just
19 telling them, you know, we've got an emergency. You know, they
20 saw the smoke. So, of course, yes, we do have a fire. We need to
21 get off the boat. You know, just we've got another boat coming.
22 We've got plenty of room for everybody to get off and just telling
23 people, you know, just stay calm, we're going to get you off the
24 boat, and everybody is going to be safe.

25 Q. And can you kind of describe for us what the demeanors of the

1 passengers and children were during the fire and evacuation?

2 A. Some of the parents were concerned, of course. The kids were
3 fine. The kids were just kind of giggling and wandering around
4 and had their lifejackets on. But they were -- everybody was
5 paying attention and doing what we asked them. It wasn't -- it
6 wasn't chaos. It was just -- they were just -- as soon as they
7 heard what they needed to do, they did it.

8 Q. And how did you and your crew take accountability of the
9 passengers during the evacuation? How did you ensure every -- all
10 the passengers were getting off onto the Victory Rover?

11 A. Well, once we had everybody out of second deck, I knew
12 everybody had already come down from third deck. So, I checked
13 both of the restrooms on second deck to make sure that they had
14 gotten off. The door to first deck was closed. So, when they
15 came down those stairs, they kind of had to go that way. And then
16 I know the Marine Team, I heard them on the walkie talkie, they
17 were checking the restrooms down on first deck to make sure that
18 was clear.

19 Q. And when you made your announcement, when you were standing
20 on the chair on the second deck, were all the passengers there
21 present at that time?

22 A. Most -- the majority of them. Some of them were already
23 making their way down the stairs.

24 Q. And did you see any crew members assisting with firefighting
25 efforts or attempting to extinguish the fire at any time during

1 the incident?

2 A. No.

3 LCDR [REDACTED] Commander, that ends my line of questioning.

4 CDR WADDINGTON: Mr. [REDACTED] do you have any questions?

5 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, Commander, thank you.

6 BY MR. [REDACTED]

7 Q. Hello, Ms. Baker.

8 A. Hi.

9 Q. Just to be clear, did you have a radio on your person on June
10 7th?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Could you hear everything on that radio channel or was that
13 strictly for the house, the wait staff?

14 A. It was the Marine Team and the restaurant manager wear one.
15 I could hear everything that was going on with the Marine Team.

16 Q. Were you on the vessel, the Spirit of Norfolk on the May 15th
17 cruise where they lost an engine?

18 A. No, I was not.

19 Q. So, Commander [REDACTED] asked about the demonstration of putting
20 on the lifejackets. If I had come aboard as a passenger and I
21 went immediately to the upper deck, the third deck, and I lingered
22 there because I enjoyed the view, would I get a demonstration of
23 how to properly put on a lifejacket?

24 A. Not during that demonstration, no.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Lieutenant, if you'll pull up Coast Guard

1 Exhibit 035 -- or excuse me -- 011, page 35. Let me correct that.
2 I'm sorry. 031 TAC 1, page 35.

3 BY MR. [REDACTED] So, Commander [REDACTED] asked you briefly about
4 that and whether you were familiar with that. But I want to draw
5 your attention to the words, crowd control.

6 MR. DENLEY: Can we just have a moment?

7 BY MR. [REDACTED] Sure.

8 MR. DENLEY: I want to try to pull it back up.

9 BY MR. [REDACTED] Sure.

10 MR. DENLEY: My eyes aren't so good. I can't really read it.

11 MR. [REDACTED] While we're looking at that, would you describe
12 -- would you say that the incident was a small-scale incident or a
13 minor emergency?

14 MR. DENLEY: I'm going to object to the question. Ms. Baker
15 has already testified to her role and responsibility as to her
16 duties on board, so I object based on relevance in her position to
17 evaluate what a small scale or a large-scale incident would be.

18 CDR WADDINGTON: Objection is noted for the record. Could
19 you either rephrase or --

20 MR. [REDACTED] Certainly.

21 CDR WADDINGTON: Thank you, Mr. [REDACTED]

22 BY MR. [REDACTED]

23 Q. So, in this it says that you can give instructions to the DJ
24 and make announcements, if we scroll down. It says the manager or
25 possibly the DJ could make an amount announcement on deck to

1 address the matter at hand and inform passengers of response
2 measures and provide instructions. Would it have been more
3 helpful to have a general announcement over the ship's PA system
4 made by the captain so that all personnel would be aware of the
5 instructions rather than you having to stand on a chair?

6 A. At that time, I know Ryan was busy directing his team to what
7 he needed them to do. Most of the passengers were already getting
8 in line, but there were some that were kind of like looking like
9 they didn't know what they needed to do. So, to make sure -- I'm
10 short. So, if I'm standing on the dance floor around tall people,
11 nobody is going to hear me. So, I got on the chair so I could get
12 their attention and let them know what we were doing.

13 Q. So, over the radio, did you hear personnel of the Marine Crew
14 and the restaurant hospitality staff informing the captain of
15 where the passengers were as they moved from deck to deck towards
16 the evacuation point?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Could you describe what you heard?

19 A. Well, the first one, I had told Ryan right after I came up
20 from the galley, I was moving everybody to the third deck. And
21 then when I moved them to second deck, I let him know I moved them
22 down to second deck because of the smoke. And then after that, he
23 was telling people -- he was telling his team, we've got the
24 Victory Rover coming and we're going to -- where we're going to
25 get the passengers off and move them down there.

1 Q. My final question is two parts. So, are the tables and
2 chairs movable on the main deck?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. If I was a passenger and I wasn't in any way familiar with a
5 vessel, how would I know not to stand on top of or around or
6 obstruct the emergency escape hatch? The sign simply says escape
7 hatch.

8 A. I want to think there was also a sign that said, do that
9 block. But I can't remember for sure.

10 Q. I mean, and have you seen passengers move chairs around and
11 tables?

12 A. Not too much. Once they come on, where their tables are, you
13 know, unless you've got like -- Eric and I, we became friends, and
14 just wanted to move our table over. But other than that, they
15 pretty much leave their tables where they are. They may move a
16 chair around to the other side of a table or something. But that
17 particular area, you know, we do monitor and make sure that nobody
18 moves their tables over there. And honestly, those table seats
19 back there aren't the best seats in the house. So, we very seldom
20 seat them, or did -- we very seldom put people back there.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 A. You're welcome.

23 CDR WADDINGTON: NTSB, do you have any questions for this
24 witness?

25 BY MR. KARR:

1 Q. Thank you, Commander. I'm Mike Karr with the NTSB.

2 Ms. Baker, how many radio did you have?

3 A. I had one.

4 Q. One. And was there a separate channel for the restaurant
5 staff and for the Marine Crew?

6 A. No, the Marine -- I have a radio along with all the Marine
7 Crew. We're all on the same station.

8 Q. Okay, thanks. And just for a detail. Help me describe, as -
9 - help me describe the evacuation as far as, you know, in your
10 mind, who was overseeing things for the crew. You know, as you're
11 moving people from the third deck down to the second deck, is it
12 you? Was it you and someone? I mean --

13 MR. DENLEY: I object to the question. I think she's asked
14 and answered.

15 MR. KARR: Mr. Denley, if she did, I'm sorry. I didn't hear
16 it.

17 CDR WADDINGTON: Mr. Denley, in future, could you take those
18 objections to me? And then I will go from there.

19 MR. DENLEY: Absolutely. I apologize.

20 CDR WADDINGTON: Objection is noted for the record.

21 Mr. Karr, I think you can continue as you see fit.

22 BY MR. [REDACTED]

23 Q. -- overseeing the evacuation, the people, to make sure
24 everything was going well, to get people from the third deck down
25 to the second deck.

1 A. I was on the stairwell between third -- second and third
2 deck, and that's when I started telling people to come down
3 because the smoke got too strong. And then I went up to third
4 deck for the people that were still kind of lingering around and
5 told them personally one at a time that they needed to go down to
6 first -- down to second deck to get away from the smoke.

7 Q. All right. Thank you.

8 CDR WADDINGTON: Bay Diesel, do you have any questions for
9 this witness?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I do not, Commander.

11 CDR WADDINGTON: City Cruises.

12 MR. DENLEY: I do. Thank you, Commander. Just a couple of
13 questions.

14 BY MR. DENLEY:

15 Q. So, would you characterize your -- you and your -- you called
16 it front of house -- you and your restaurant staff. Would you
17 describe your role in safety as primarily guest focused?

18 A. I don't understand.

19 Q. The items that you guys are trained in, are they primarily
20 (audio lapse) guests on board and the guest experience?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. So, you talked about donning lifejackets and your
23 staff's role in helping guests.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And you also talked about man overboard. If your you or your

1 staff saw somebody go over the side, what would you do?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. The -- and then I guess also with, you know, related to
4 calling Marine Crew if there was a medical emergency or something
5 like that. Again, guest focused.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Is that correct? The -- when you made the decision to bring
8 -- or when the decision was made to bring the guests into the
9 second deck from the third deck because of the smoke up there, can
10 you describe the -- what the -- I mean, can you describe the
11 second deck? Was it -- was there smoke?

12 A. No, there was no smoke on second.

13 Q. Was there any heat?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Was the air clean, generally?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. It was a fairly comfortable space for the guests to be in?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And so, throughout the entire evacuation process, did you,
20 did you see anybody get hurt or injured?

21 A. No, I didn't.

22 Q. Okay. I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

23 CDR WADDINGTON: Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] do you have any
24 follow up questions?

25 LCDR [REDACTED] I just have one.

1 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

2 Q. Ms. Baker, we had talked about -- you had talked about your
3 interaction with the captain telling you that, start getting
4 lifejackets on the passengers and that the Victory Rover was going
5 to pull alongside. Did you receive any orders or directions from
6 the captain specifically telling you what to do for the
7 evacuation? How did you know what the evacuation to the Victory
8 Rover was going to look like? And how did you start getting
9 passengers to go to that? Was there any direction given or was
10 that you?

11 A. Yes. He was telling us over the walkie talkies that the
12 Victory Rover would be coming up along the midship and we needed
13 to get people down to first deck to evacuate through that door.

14 Q. And the decision to just -- how to -- where you were placed
15 or where your crew members were placed and how the passengers were
16 going to get over the railing, was that just kind of just --

17 A. I don't know how that was decided. The Victory Rover people
18 and one of -- some of our people were -- I believe it was Jeremiah
19 (ph.), actually, and the Victory Rover people were helping get
20 people across.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 CDR WADDINGTON: Ms. Baker, you are now released as a witness
23 at this formal hearing. Thank you for your testimony and your
24 cooperation. If I later determine that this team needs additional
25 information from you, I will contact you through your counsel. If

1 you have any questions about this investigation, you may contact
2 the investigation recorder, Lieutenant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The time is
3 5:19. We will reconvene tomorrow morning at 08:00. Thank you.

4 (Whereupon, at 5:19 p.m., 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: FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK*
NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, VIRGINIA
ON JUNE 7, 2022
Interview of Candace Baker

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM022

PLACE: Virginia Beach, Virginia

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.


Melissa Bousquette
Transcriber