



U.S. COAST GUARD INVESTIGATING OFFICER STATEMENT

On Sunday, November 12, 2023, I conducted an in-person interview with Captain Joseph Bromley aboard the towing vessel CINDY B (No. 561814). On or about 0600, November 12, 2023, the CINDY B, while pushing ahead the ST JOHN (No. 575053) and transiting upstream on the Columbia River near ST M 53, Oak Point Channel, allided with the Columbia Pacific Bio-Refinery pier.

Attendance:

Name	Title	Organization	Present
[REDACTED]	Marine Investigator	U.S. Coast Guard	Y
Joseph Bromley	Master	CINDY B	Y

The interview with Captain Bromley revealed the following information.

Captain Bromley stated:

1. The CINDY B was being operated as a day boat with one Master and tow Deckhands onboard.
2. He was the general manager of Wilsonville Concrete Products.
3. Wilsonville Concrete Products was the owner and operator of the CINDY B.
4. Wilsonville Concrete Products was contracted by Teevin Bros to transport the barge ST JOHN between Westport, OR, to the Sundial facility in Troutdale, OR, hauling aggregate.
5. He was onboard to be the Master for the initial trips of this contract.
6. A Master and Mate were scheduled to relieve him the morning of 12th to carry on with the contracted work.
7. He and his deckhands, Wilford Faler and Brycen Mace, embarked the CINDY B on 09 November 2023 in St Helens, OR.
8. Wilford Faler’s nickname and alias is Nilkko.
9. Wilford Faler is an unlicensed deck hand with about a year of experience.
10. Brycen Mace is a licensed Master; however, he does not have a towing endorsement.
11. Wilford Faler is a smart and well-regarded deckhand who shows natural ability as an operator of a towing vessel.
12. The deckhands maintained 6 hours on and 6 hours off watch rotation while he was the sole licensed Master for the duration of his time onboard.
13. Wilford Faler came on watch at 0000, 12 November, to stand the 0000-0600 watch.
14. The CINDY B, pushing the ST JOHN, had just got underway from the Westport, OR, facility, on or around 0406, enroute upriver to the Sundial Facility in Troutdale, OR.
15. At some time during the transit, he needed to go to the bathroom and had Wilford Faler take control on the tug and tow as he stepped below.
16. He would rarely, and only in what he regarded as emergency situations, pass the wheel watch to his deckhands.

17. While down below to use the bathroom he decided to take the opportunity to make a pot of coffee.
18. He estimates the total time he spent down below was 15 to 20 minutes and he was sitting down while the coffee was brewing.
19. During that coffee brewing process, he was startled as he heard a loud noise and felt the boat shudder.
20. The galley was on the main deck of the 3 level vessel and his normal transit to the bridge sent him up the interior stairs to the second deck and where he would exit the aft facing amidship door and travel up the exterior and sole access to the elevated pilot house.
21. Upon feeling the disturbance, he rushed up the exterior stairs up to the pilot house.
22. He reflected that it was strange that he took the exterior stairs up to the pilot house.
23. It was very dark outside, and he didn't immediately have a clear picture of what occurred, but he could see debris like the vessel had struck an object and he could hear a liquid, assumingly water, spraying into the river from the debris.
24. As he entered the pilot house, he recalls Wilford Faler appearing confused and groggy, as if he was startled out of a deep sleep.
25. He excitedly inquired as to what was going on and what had happened.
26. He and Wilford both observed that the throttles were both in the same ahead position that they were in when Wilford took over the wheel watch.
27. Wilford reacted by bringing back the RPM's and declutching both mains.
28. Wilford fell asleep while at the wheel watch.
29. From the pilot house he could ascertain that the tug and barge hit the structure or pier known as the Beaver Dock.
30. He was surprised that the vessel was able to get inside of the main pier that ran parallel with the river without running aground or hitting the railway access pilings just downriver from the Beaver Dock.
31. The vessel threaded the needle and "T Boned" the downriver access pier to the Beaver Dock.
32. The vessel did not appear to be hung up on any of the debris and once the mains were declutched it freely drifted back down river.
33. The vessel drifted back clear of the collision point and began to pose a risk for running aground or drifting back on structures down river.
34. He took over direction and control and repositioned the vessel to the outboard side of the Beaver Dock.
35. He instructed Wilford to go back down below and assess the barge and tow boat.
36. Wilford reported significant debris from the pier on the head of the barge and the barge did not appear to be holed through or making water.
37. The Beaver Dock initially appeared to be free of personnel; however, he could eventually see lights from people responding to the incident.
38. He could not recall how long he remained on scene.
39. He had limited interactions with personnel on or from the pier.
40. After discussions with company personnel, he eventually departed the scene to reposition the vessel upriver in Rainier Oregon.
41. He intended to conduct alcohol tests on himself the tow deckhands; however, he discovered the test swabs were not in the expected location and he believes they were not on, or they were removed from the vessel.
42. Alcohol tests would be conducted by drug testing collector who was enroute to the vessel.

43. He indicated that alcohol tests would be conducted within 8 hours of the incident.
44. The CINDY B and her equipment was in good working order and had no mechanical issues or equipment that was inoperable.
45. The CINDY B does not have an auto pilot system and requires physical input from the operator to make steering inputs.
46. CINDY B's steering system has four rudders, two main rudders and two flanking rudders, which can be operated independently with their own levers.
47. At the time leading up to and during the incident the steering mode was "synced" where the main the two main rudders were synchronized and shifted together with the manipulation of one lever and the two flanking rudders did not move and remained amidship.
48. He was not aware of any traffic coming up or down the river.
49. The vessel utilized Rose Point for its navigation system.
50. The Rose Point electronic charting system had track lines set up for the transit.
51. If the vessel deviated from the track lines, there would be a visual alarm or indication on the Rose Point screen and an audible alarm.
52. The visual indicator and the audible alarm were weak and potentially not significant enough to gain the attention of the operator.
53. Wilford was directed to keep the vessel in the middle of the channel and on the track line as he piloted the vessel.
54. The pilot house is outfitted with an alerter system with two motion detectors to detect movement on the bridge.
55. The system was operational, could not be secured, and remained activated as long as a steering gear hydraulic pump was online.
56. If the alerter system did not sense movement after a certain period of time it would provide an audible alarm throughout the vessel.
57. The alerter system did not actuate during the events of that morning.
58. He was not aware of how many minutes of non-movement it took for the alarm to actuate.
59. The vessel was going 6kts when the collision occurred.
60. AIS playback of the event showed Wilford making appropriate course changes as he navigated the vessel upriver until all course corrections inexplicably stopped and the vessel began to veer off to starboard with no additional course changes and maintaining a constant speed.
61. Deckhand off times were there own to rest and there was no pressure or requirements to conduct any additional duties or tasks.
62. As for as he was aware, both deckhands properly utilized their off times to ensure they received the proper amount of rest.
63. Drugs and alcohol were not present on the vessel and strictly prohibited.
64. He was not on or under the influence of any prescription medication.

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[REDACTED]
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Marine Investigator
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