

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GROUNDING/STRANDING OF THE FISH
TENDER BARGE SM-3 IN NUSHAGAK BAY
NEAR EKUK, ALASKA, ON AUGUST 30, 2020

* Accident No.: DCA20FM027

* * * * *

Interview of: DREW COHEN, Chief Engineer
SM-3, Northline Seafoods

Via telephone

Thursday,
October 1, 2020

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Furukawa Robert](#)
Subject: RE: Mr. Drew H. Cohen, Chief Engineer, SM-3 & Northline Seafoods: Interview Transcript, Transcript Errata, and Non-Disclosure Agreement
Date: Monday, November 2, 2020 11:54:23 PM
Attachments: [Transcript Errata-SecondPage-SM-3-grounding-stranding-DCA20FM027.docx](#)

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Jon,

Attached are the corrections for specific errors in the transcription itself.

Additionally, to my first point, the first page (although not a numbered page) identifies me as the SM-3 chief engineer which is not quite accurate. It would be more accurate to simply omit "SM-3" from my title so I am designated as the Chief Engineer for Northline, but not the vessel itself.

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Interview of: DREW COHEN, Chief Engineer

~~SM-3~~, Northline Seafoods

Thanks,

Drew Cohen
Chief Engineer
Northline Seafoods



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TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR
Mr. Drew H. Cohen, Chief Engineer, SM-3 & Northline Seafoods

TAKEN ON

October 1, 2020

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
5	10	the naval (ph.) industry.	Various industries.
8	12	15-inch	58-inch

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEEDED. _____
 Initials

Drew Cohen
 Printed Name of Person providing the above information



 Signature of Person providing the above information

11/2/20

 Date

APPEARANCES:

██████████ Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

R. JON FURUKAWA, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:01 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. FURUKAWA: It is 1501 Eastern Daylight Time on Thursday
4 the 1st of October 2020, and we're here to interview Mr. Drew
5 Cohen from -- the chief engineer of the SM-3 and also with
6 Northline Seafoods.

7 Drew, do you acknowledge that this interview is being
8 recorded?

9 MR. COHEN: What was that? I didn't hear the last --

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you acknowledge that this interview is
11 being recorded?

12 MR. COHEN: I do, yes.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Go ahead and take it away, [REDACTED]

14 CWO [REDACTED] Drew, thanks again for calling in. I hope we
15 won't take up too much of your time, but we've interviewed
16 everybody that was on the barge, and then we've also talked to
17 Ben, and a couple of times during those conversations, your name
18 came up as the engineer. And full disclosure that they did point
19 out that at no time are you a professional engineer or, you know,
20 an engineer of -- expected in that capacity at Northline.

INTERVIEW OF DREW COHEN

21
22 BY CWO [REDACTED]

23 Q. But, with that, I saw from your bio on Northline's website
24 that you have experience in commercial fishing and that you have a
25 degree in engineering. Can you talk about both of those briefly?

1 A. Sure. Yeah, I fished on two different vessels back in 2011,
2 one in Bristol Bay, one in Sitka. I attended Cal Poly State
3 University, got a degree in mechanical engineering, graduated
4 2013.

5 Q. Okay. And your bio also says you came from an R&D, so out at
6 Cal Poly, did you have a job at an engineering firm?

7 A. Yeah. Prior to working at Northline, I worked for a company
8 called Czero in Denver -- or Fort Collins, Colorado. We were a
9 mechanical engineering consulting firm doing a whole range of
10 (indiscernible) projects across the naval (ph.) industry.

11 Q. Okay. What year was that?

12 A. I started with them I believe in 2014, and I transitioned
13 from them to Northline right around the end of the year 2017. I
14 think my start date for Northline was January 10th, 2018.

15 Q. Okay. You said, in 2011, you were in Bristol Bay and Sitka.
16 Is that the only year you had commercial fishing, or did you have
17 commercial fishing experience prior to that?

18 A. Nope, just those two. I worked on a gill-netter in Bristol
19 Bay and a seiner in Sitka, but those were the only two I worked on
20 and the only two seasons.

21 Q. Okay. Did you come to hire through Northline because you
22 knew Pat, or was he advertising for an engineer and you just
23 answered a headhunter type of ad?

24 A. Pat (indiscernible) since I fished on his boats in 2011. I
25 think I initially engaged them through my previous employer that

1 they were looking to hire an engineer instead, so yeah, it was
2 kind of an organic development like that. Not necessarily
3 applying to a job posting, but knowing that they were looking to
4 hire someone, decided to (indiscernible), so that's how I got
5 involved.

6 Q. Okay. That makes sense. So you're the chief engineer or are
7 you the only engineer or do you have a staff?

8 A. Yeah. So my official title is chief engineer. Pat Glaab,
9 the CEO, is -- also does a lot of engineering and is kind of a
10 second, co-leader in the company. There are a few other engineers
11 in the mix. Pat's brother, Dan, I don't believe is a certificated
12 engineer, but he's a -- has a mechanical administrator license and
13 has worked in engineering capacities in the seafood industry for
14 several decades, and he helps with some of the engineering that we
15 do, so --

16 Q. Okay. So in your capacity as chief engineer, and
17 specifically for *SM-3*, when the barge was purchased, you were
18 already employed by Northline, correct?

19 A. No. I came to work for Northline after they had already
20 purchased the barge.

21 Q. Okay. So they were still working on modifying it while it
22 was in Sitka?

23 A. That's correct. Yeah, I came on partway through the project.

24 Q. Okay. And as chief engineer, did you have any input to or
25 responsibility for -- so they put the freezer on and all the

1 evaporators and the machinery to run that and then filled the
2 lower (indiscernible) full of engineering equipment; were you in
3 charge or involved with supervising that operation?

4 A. I was neither in charge nor supervising. Pat Glaab was in
5 charge and supervising all of those things. Most of the
6 refrigeration components that you mentioned had already been
7 purchased before I came onboard. I was more working as a -- you
8 know, my title is chief engineer, but for the most part, I do just
9 hands-on design work of fish processing equipment and mechanical
10 systems, so --

11 Q. Okay. All good.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay. So I'm sure you've seen pictures of the barge now on
14 the beach and pictures of the mooring buoy.

15 A. I have, yes.

16 Q. So that's our main focus is the mooring system. I think
17 otherwise, had that buoy not failed, the mooring system itself
18 didn't appear to have moved or shifted or given way in any shape
19 or form. But I think Ben and Pat both told us that you had some
20 input to calculating how -- what equipment needed to be purchased.

21 A. Yes and no. So most of the -- so we bought most of that
22 equipment -- actually all of that equipment for the previous
23 system when we were operating in a different location -- or,
24 sorry, previous season when we were operating in a different
25 location. Since I don't have much of a background doing naval

1 systems, I wasn't part of selecting the original components that
2 went into that mooring system.

3 However, when we moved location and got into deeper water
4 with more currents and different weather conditions, I did do some
5 calculations to determine things like how much scope and whether
6 our anchors were big enough so that we didn't have a risk of
7 dragging anchor. I did not -- I wasn't necessarily involved in
8 the selection of components initially.

9 Q. Okay. How did that -- so the mooring -- I noticed the
10 company bought all of the mooring equipment from one supplier in
11 Florida, and I can understand how you would come up with the size
12 of the anchor and the chain and whatnot, but how does a 15-inch
13 buoy come to be that size? Is that just what they had in stock
14 and you thought that was big enough, or it didn't matter, or was
15 it even considered?

16 A. I can't speak to that, I guess, because I wasn't involved in
17 those original component selections at that -- particularly that
18 item, so I can't -- I guess anything in response I'd have would
19 just be kind of me surmising there on how they went about that.

20 Q. Okay. So you say you saw pictures of the buoy?

21 A. I did. I saw pictures of the top portion of the buoy that
22 had separated from the main body.

23 Q. Okay. So that was just a picture, and this is just an
24 assumption, and we're not holding you to anything firm. But as an
25 opinion, do you think it was a failure of the weld that initiated

1 the buoy coming apart, or do you think it was a flaw in the plate
2 where the padeye was?

3 A. I -- the pictures I've seen are probably not detailed enough,
4 and I haven't scrutinized them enough to answer that.

5 Q. Yeah, and it's hard to tell from a picture, but I thought
6 maybe with an engineering background, you had that, in the back of
7 your mind, an a-ha kind of moment.

8 A. I did not. I did not have an a-ha moment looking at those
9 pictures.

10 Q. Okay. That's fine.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. I think the insurance company is probably going to send it
13 out for forensic testing, which should, you know, obviously
14 eliminate any kind of guessing that we're trying to make, but just
15 thought you might have an opinion on that. That's fine.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Okay. For when you were calculating the size of the anchors
18 and chains, did you take into account the windage, sail area of
19 the barge at all, or was it just buoyancy of the barge -- you
20 know, simply put, how did you calculate what you needed?

21 A. The three primary forces I was looking at were wind, current,
22 and wave action. And then using those three external forces
23 combined with the depth of the spot where we were moored, and then
24 taking into consideration the properties of the chain, I
25 determined what would be an appropriate scope, as well as

1 confirming that the size of the anchors we had was adequate.

2 Q. Okay. For the wave action, did you come up with a go or
3 no-go, like this is the maximum that this barge should be
4 susceptible to, or was there I guess a water limitation at all in
5 your calculation?

6 A. I'd have to pull it up. I mean, certainly, yeah, you could
7 glean that from this data. I guess I was looking at it more from
8 the lens of, given the conditions we have in that location, do we
9 have an adequate margin for anchor drag. And I concluded that we
10 did.

11 Q. Right, right. Well, in your defense, your calculations were
12 spot on. Like I said a little bit ago, your -- the barge didn't
13 drag the anchor. The buoy failed, and that's what set the barge
14 adrift. So your calculations were, at least for pretty close to
15 hurricane force, adequate for holding. So that was good on your
16 part.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. I don't have a whole lot of questions because it's
19 mostly about engineering and the buoy, and I think that's really
20 all I wanted to do was touch base on what it was that you did and
21 what kind of input you had. But like you said, you didn't buy the
22 original equipment and that you just verified that what they had
23 on the new location was adequate. And I think they did change the
24 chain size from 2019 to 2020 based on the location change, didn't
25 they?

1 A. Yeah. I recommended that we add -- we had some additional
2 inch-and-three-quarter chain in our inventory, so I made the
3 recommendation that we add that to the mooring system that was
4 used in 2019. So I think in total we added 1½ shots of chain, so
5 three 45-foot sections of inch-and-three-quarter chain.

6 Q. Okay. Without -- I know you don't have your notes in front
7 of you, but you remember what the expected depth of the mooring
8 was?

9 A. I think I used 55 feet, but I'm not -- I would have to check
10 to confirm that.

11 Q. Okay. I don't know that it's vitally important, just more of
12 a curiosity question. Okay. And then the site selection, you
13 didn't have anything to do with that; that was Pat pretty much
14 chose the spot just by having Bristol Bay experience?

15 A. Yeah. I think some other people had some input on that, but
16 that's more or less correct.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. He reached out to talk to tender operators and fishermen and
19 people who were knowledgeable about that specific area and the
20 channels and everything.

21 Q. Right. And I know -- personally, I haven't been out there,
22 but I've seen pictures of that Clark's Point/Ekuk area, and I know
23 it's real popular with the tenders, all kind of lay in there on
24 that east side off the shoal, and they all sit in there. So I
25 know that -- I'm familiar with the group that he probably reached

1 out to.

2 A. Yeah.

3 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. I think that's about all I can think of
4 to ask you about this. I'm sure Jon's got a couple of follow-up
5 questions, and I won't hold you up from getting on your flight any
6 longer.

7 So go ahead, Jon.

8 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

9 Q. Okay, Drew. Let's see. So you're Cal Poly, 2013, Bachelor
10 of Science, mechanical engineering, two seasons on a boat, and the
11 3 years with the engineering consulting firm and -- what, about 3
12 years now with the company, with Northline?

13 A. Yeah. I'm coming up on 3 years here in a couple months, in
14 January.

15 Q. And, Drew, what's your age? How old are you?

16 A. Twenty-nine.

17 Q. Okay. And where were you at the time of the accident? Were
18 you in Dillingham with Ben, or were you in Sitka?

19 A. I was in Sitka.

20 Q. Okay. When did you first hear of the accident?

21 A. The following morning, probably -- I got a text message that
22 the anchor -- that they had broke free of the mooring system in
23 the middle of the night, and then I didn't receive any follow-up
24 information, so -- until we got to work and then after they had
25 landed on the beach.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And let's see. I think that's pretty
2 much it for me too.

3 [REDACTED]

4 CWO [REDACTED] What's that?

5 MR. FURUKAWA: [REDACTED] --

6 CWO [REDACTED] Oh, yeah. I just -- like I said from the
7 beginning, we just wanted to talk to Drew, just have a little bit
8 of his input about the mooring system, since that is our primary
9 focus, I think, at this point. But no, I don't have anything
10 else.

11 Do you want to add anything, Drew, before we turn the
12 recording off?

13 MR. COHEN: I don't think so.

14 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. We can go ahead and -- if you don't
15 have anything else, John, you can end the recording then.

16 MR. FURUKAWA. Okay. Hey, Drew, before that --

17 MR. COHEN: Yeah.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you have any -- see, what [REDACTED] and I are
19 doing is we're doing the factual part, and then we're going to
20 analyze, and the whole reason for doing an accident report is to
21 try to figure out how to prevent the exact same kind of accident
22 from happening again. Do you have any suggestions how we could
23 prevent an accident like this from happening again?

24 MR. COHEN: I think -- I guess I'd want to reserve judgment a
25 little bit until I see the findings from the forensics from the

1 buoy, but -- yeah, so maybe I'd wait to comment on that until I
2 get the final information.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Yep. That's good for me.

4 And, [REDACTED] anything else?

5 CWO [REDACTED] No, that was a good question. Thanks for your
6 input on that, Drew. No, I don't have anything else.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. The time is 1521 Eastern Daylight Time
8 on Thursday, the 1st of October 2020, and we're ending the
9 interview with the SM-3's chief engineer, Mr. Drew Cohen.

10 (Whereupon, at 3:21 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: GROUNDING/STRANDING OF THE FISH
 TENDER BARGE SM-3 IN NUSHAGAK BAY
 NEAR EKUK, ALASKA, ON AUGUST 30, 2020
 Interview of Drew Cohen

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20FM027

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: October 1, 2020

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.



Autumn Weslow
Transcriber