

## NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :  
 :  
THE ALLISION INVOLVING THE : NTSB Accident No.  
AFRAMAX RIVER ON THE HOUSTON : DCA16FM055  
SHIP CHANNEL ON SEPTEMBER 6, :  
2016 :  
 :  
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: Bharatkumar Ramanlal Tandel

September 8, 2016

BEFORE

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ USCG  
BRUCE DAVIES, USCG  
LUKE WISNIEWSKI, NTSB  
MIKE USHER, Port Pilot Commission for Harris  
Co. Ports

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## APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of G&H Towing Company:

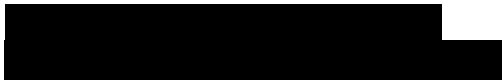
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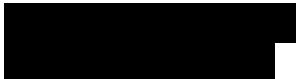
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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

12:16 p.m.

1  
2  
3           [REDACTED] All right, sir. Good morning,  
4 or good afternoon. Just here conducting a post-  
5 casualty interview of the incident. The time on deck  
6 is approximately 12:16. We're on board the Aframax  
7 River. It is September 8th. I'm [REDACTED]  
8 Con Sect to Houston Galveston Investigation Division.  
9 I'm the investigating officer. We'll go around the  
10 table, introduce ourselves.

11           MS. NORSTRUD: Stacey Norstrud with Fowler  
12 Rodriguez representing ITC.

13           MR. HUFFMAN: Jay Huffman of Blank Rome  
14 representing G&H Towing Company.

15           MR. USHER: Mike Usher with the PBIRC.

16           MR. WISNIEWSKI: Luke Wisniewski, National  
17 Transportation Safety Board.

18           MR. DAVIES: Bruce Davies with Coast Guard  
19 Investigations.

20           MR. TANDEL: A/V's Helmsman.

21           [REDACTED] Your name?

22           MR. TANDEL: Bharat Tandel.

23           MR. BAILEY: James Bailey with Eastham  
24 Watson representing the Aframax River.

25           [REDACTED] All right, and I'd like to

1 start with a little bit of background information. So,  
2 your experience as a helmsman?

3 MR. TANDEL: Yes, experience, 13 years  
4 helmsman.

5 [REDACTED] 13 years?

6 MR. TANDEL: Yes.

7 [REDACTED] As a helmsman? Have you  
8 served aboard this type of vessel, is it this size?

9 MR. TANDEL: This type size with a four.

10 [REDACTED] Four years?

11 MR. TANDEL: Four, four vessels.

12 [REDACTED] Oh, four vessels?

13 MR. TANDEL: Of these types.

14 [REDACTED] Of this type?

15 MR. TANDEL: Aframax.

16 [REDACTED] Okay. He's a helmsman. Can  
17 you -

18 MR. TANDEL: 14.

19 [REDACTED] You said four years in this  
20 size ship? You've served as helmsman?

21 MR. TANDEL: Yes.

22 [REDACTED] Okay. And have you ever  
23 served on this Aframax River before this voyage?

24 MR. TANDEL: This voyage, yes.

25 [REDACTED] Is this your first time on

1 this ship or have you served on this particular ship  
2 before?

3 MR. TANDEL: Aframax, first time. It's  
4 company, another ships.

5 [REDACTED] Okay. And when did you join  
6 the vessel?

7 MR. TANDEL: U.S. Joining with U.S.

8 [REDACTED] U.S.? You recall the  
9 approximate date?

10 MR. TANDEL: Philadelphia. (Foreign  
11 language spoken).

12 MR. BAILEY: When, when did you start your  
13 contract? This contract?

14 MR. TANDEL: Two and a half months.

15 [REDACTED] Two-and-a-half months ago?  
16 Okay. In those two-and-a-half month, how many times  
17 would you say you've served as a helmsman?

18 MR. TANDEL: Steady?

19 [REDACTED] Yes.

20 MR. TANDEL: And then pilot and I watch the  
21 [unknown].

22 [REDACTED] Okay. Safe to say you've done  
23 several voyages as a helmsman on this ship. Have you  
24 been going in and out of channels?

25 MR. TANDEL: Yes. Coming me 24 instance.

1                   [REDACTED]   [REDACTED]   Okay, so, September 4th, the  
2 first time the vessel entered Houston. Were you the  
3 helmsman on that voyage?

4                   MR. TANDEL:   Yes, yes.

5                   [REDACTED]   [REDACTED]   From 12 to four?

6                   MR. TANDEL:   Yes.

7                   INTERPRETER: 12 to four?

8                   MR. TANDEL:   (foreign language spoken)

9                   INTERPRETER:  (foreign language spoken)

10                  MR. TANDEL:   (foreign language spoken)

11                  INTERPRETER:  He was the steering guy.

12                  [REDACTED]   [REDACTED]   Okay.

13                  MR. TANDEL:   Yes.

14                  [REDACTED]   [REDACTED]   This is on September 4th.  
15 Vessel came about?

16                  INTERPRETER:  (foreign language spoken)

17                  MR. TANDEL:   (foreign language spoken)

18                  INTERPRETER:  (foreign language spoken)

19                  MR. TANDEL:   (foreign language spoken)

20                  INTERPRETER:  (foreign language spoken) Yes.

21                  MR. TANDEL:   (foreign language spoken)

22                  [REDACTED]   [REDACTED]   Steering part. And who was  
23 giving you orders, helms commands, who was relaying  
24 helm commands to you? Was -

25                  INTERPRETER:  (foreign language spoken).

1 starboard port (foreign language spoken).

2 MR. TANDEL: Pilots.

3 INTERPRETER: Pilots? (foreign language  
4 spoken).

5 MR. TANDEL: Pilot (foreign language  
6 spoken).

7 INTERPRETER: Pilot.

8 MR. TANDEL: Pilot stand by here, say, go  
9 starboard.

10 [REDACTED] Okay. So you were taking  
11 commands directly from the pilot?

12 MR. TANDEL: Yes.

13 [REDACTED] All right.

14 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

15 [REDACTED] Were you relaying the commands  
16 back to the pilot once he gave you a command?

17 MR. TANDEL: Yes. Command. He yell close,  
18 we have steady --

19 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

20 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

21 INTERPRETER: So, he would repeat we long  
22 starboard 10.

23 [REDACTED] Okay.

24 INTERPRETER: And then he will continuously  
25 explaining the process that speed stay.

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1                   [REDACTED] All right. Were there any  
2 issues during your inbound voyage on September 4th?  
3 Any problems?

4                   MR. TANDEL: No.

5                   [REDACTED] No?

6                   MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

7                   [REDACTED] No problems?

8                   MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

9                   [REDACTED] All right. Now, do you recall  
10 what time you came on watch on September 5th, the day  
11 of the incident? Does he recall what time he came on  
12 watch that day?

13                  INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

14                  MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

15                  INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

16                  MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

17                  INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

18                  MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

19                  INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

20                  MR. TANDEL: 11:40.

21                  INTERPRETER: 11:40, 11:40.

22                  [REDACTED] 11:40?

23                  INTERPRETER: 23:40.

24                  [REDACTED] Okay. Can we go into a little  
25 bit your routine when you go on watch, what do you do?



1 To prepare yourself to get underway?

2 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

3 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

4 INTERPRETER: He verify the steering,  
5 whether the it's steering is complying with his  
6 commands, holding starboard.

7 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

8 INTERPRETER: Basically, he verifies that  
9 the steering system is in good order.

10 [REDACTED] Okay. And do you do that  
11 along with the engine room? Do you communicate with  
12 the engine room to conduct these tests?

13 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

14 INTERPRETER: He does not, that's what he's  
15 saying -

16 MR. TANDEL: The onboard steady.

17 INTERPRETER: No, no (foreign language  
18 spoken).

19 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

20 INTERPRETER: No, that he doesn't do.

21 [REDACTED] Okay.

22 INTERPRETER: That is done by the duty  
23 officer.

24 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

25 INTERPRETER: A part of the pre-departure

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1 checks.

2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right, but before he,  
3 before he turns the helm, does he get an order from a,  
4 an officer on the bridge telling him to do those tests  
5 or does he just come up and kind of do it on his own?

6 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

7 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

8 INTERPRETER: Duty officer also tells him to  
9 verify that the steering is in good order or not. And  
10 he also in case of anything he doesn't say, then he  
11 does it on himself as well.

12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay, all right. Were there  
13 any issues? Any problems with the steering test?

14 MR. TANDEL: No.

15 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Do you know how long the  
16 steering should take to go from port to starboard, 35  
17 to 30? And do you know how long it should take?

18 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

19 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

20 INTERPRETER: 30 seconds, about.

21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay, all right. So, okay,  
22 you were on the bridge, do you remember who else was on  
23 the bridge with you?

24 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

25 MR. TANDEL: Third officer, captain, and

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1 pilot.

2 INTERPRETER: Third officer, captain, and  
3 pilot.

4 [REDACTED] Okay. And, what was, who was  
5 giving you the commands? The helm commands?

6 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

7 MR. TANDEL: Who? Captain's up the bridge,  
8 captain is radioing. The third officer on the radio.

9 [REDACTED] Okay, so the captain's giving  
10 it, relaying it to the third officer, third officer's  
11 giving you the commands?

12 MR. TANDEL: Yes.

13 [REDACTED] All right. And do you recall  
14 what was the first command given to you prior to  
15 getting underway?

16 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

17 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

18 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

19 MR. TANDEL: No, midships only.

20 [REDACTED] Vessel was at midship? No  
21 commands were given?

22 MR. TANDEL: No commands.

23 [REDACTED] Okay, all right. So, when the  
24 vessel got underway, do you recall, was there any  
25 issues in the bridge, anything going on that caught

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1 your attention? Anything out of the ordinary that you  
2 saw?

3 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

4 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

5 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

6 MR. TANDEL: Normal.

7 INTERPRETER: Normal. Everything was the  
8 usual.

9 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And you were standing by the  
10 helm waiting for the command?

11 MR. TANDEL: Waiting for the command.  
12 Onboard and [inaudible] midship.

13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right. Was there, at any  
14 time was there any commands given to you before the  
15 incident?

16 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

17 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

18 INTERPRETER: No.

19 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay, how about after the  
20 incident?

21 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

22 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

23 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

24 MR. TANDEL: No, no command.

25 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay, all right. All right,

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1 Mr. Davies, do you have any questions for him?

2 MR. DAVIES: Not for that, I'm going to get  
3 right into the fire part of it. When the fire erupted,  
4 could you see it from where you were at at the helm?  
5 The flames, I'm getting at.

6 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

7 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

8 INTERPRETER: Smoke. He could seek smoke.

9 MR. DAVIES: Was there any smoke in the  
10 pilot house?

11 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

12 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

13 INTERPRETER: Just a little part.

14 MR. DAVIES: Were you given any helm  
15 commands while the fire was going?

16 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

17 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

18 INTERPRETER: No.

19 MR. TANDEL: No.

20 MR. DAVIES: Did you assist in firefighting  
21 while you were up on the bridge?

22 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

23 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken)  
24 sandbags.

25 INTERPRETER: He just got -

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1 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

2 INTERPRETER: He just got the extinguisher  
3 from the ver deck and gave it to the pilot and the  
4 third officer. And they connected the hose.

5 MR. DAVIES: So you had to go out on deck to  
6 do that? Was the, could you feel the heat of the fire  
7 when you were out there?

8 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

9 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

10 INTERPRETER: He's just, he's saying that  
11 the fire on the bridge was just because of the sandbag  
12 and there was not much heat because of that.

13 MR. DAVIES: And, I don't have any further  
14 questions. Thank you.

15 MR. HUFFMAN: I don't have any questions,  
16 thank you.

17 MR. USHER: I don't have any questions,  
18 thank you.

19 MR. WISNIEWSKI: No questions, thank you.

20 MS. NORSTRUD: No questions at this time.

21 MR. BAILEY: I just want to clear up one, I  
22 just want to be clear on one thing. If I heard him  
23 correctly, he said on the inbound transit he was  
24 getting his, the helm commands directly from the pilot.  
25 I just want to see if, was the pilot giving the helm

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1 command to the master, then to the third mate, then to  
2 him.

3 INTERPRETER: Sure. (foreign language  
4 spoken).

5 MR. BAILEY: On the inbound.

6 INTERPRETER: (foreign language spoken).

7 MR. TANDEL: (foreign language spoken).

8 INTERPRETER: Okay, so the master and the  
9 pilot were standing next to each other -

10 MR. BAILEY: Okay.

11 INTERPRETER: -- inside the bridge and pilot  
12 was saying the command and master was agreeing to it.

13 MR. BAILEY: Okay. And then, he would make  
14 the, he would make the steer, he would do the steering  
15 command once he got approval from the master, once the  
16 master agreed with the pilot order?

17 INTERPRETER: Yes, master possibly didn't  
18 say it aloud, but he did not object to it.

19 MR. BAILEY: Okay. That's all I have.

20 [REDACTED] I just have one last question.  
21 Is it normal operations for him to test the steering  
22 without getting any approval from anyone? You said  
23 sometimes he does it with the third officer or an  
24 officer on the watch?

25 INTERPRETER: So, the procedure is that the

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1 third officer or the officer of the watch, whoever is  
2 there, has a part of pre-departure check. He will try  
3 out the steering in accordance with the solace and the  
4 33 CFR. That's a pre. That's done with.

5           Once that is done with, the master and the  
6 helmsman comes up on the bridge. Once he takes up his  
7 position on the hilt, he just verifies that everything  
8 is in good order for his, because that's his part of  
9 duty. So, just to verify whether it is in order. It's  
10 a check in addition to the usually statutory checks  
11 which are being done.

12           [REDACTED] Okay. I got you.

13           INTERPRETER: So that's not the verification  
14 check. He's just verifying for himself whether it is  
15 okay or not.

16           [REDACTED] All right. That's it. Do you  
17 have any questions for us?

18           MR. TANDEL: No.

19           [REDACTED] No? Thank you very much, that  
20 concludes the interview.

21           (Whereupon the above-entitled matter went  
22 off the record at 12:29 p.m.)

23

24

25



C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Allision Involving the Aframax River  
on the Houston Ship Channel, Sept. 6, 2016  
Accident No. DCA16FM055  
Interview of Bharatkumar Tandel

DATE: 09-08-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 17 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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