



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
Office of Marine Safety

### Interview Summary – DCA22FM024

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**Interview of:** Jarrod Williams – Mate/Pilot Relief Captain of Karen Koby  
**Date/Time:** July 11, 2022 –1602 to 1709 CDT  
**Location:** Jones Walker Office, 201 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA  
**Interviewed by:** CWO3 [REDACTED] – USCG, Adam Tucker – NTSB  
**Attendees:** Alan Breaud – Breaud & Myers (representing Rigid Constructors interests), Jeffery Mizzi – President of Marine Operations Rigid Constructors (Party in Interest), Jefferson Tillery – Jones Walker LLP (representing LA Carriers interests), Tommy Plaisance - LA Carriers Operations Manager (Party in Interest), John Plaisance - LA Carriers (Party in Interest), Wayne Zeringue - Jones Walker LLP (representing LA Carriers interests)  
**Accident:** June 15, 2022, Capsizing and sinking of the e-crane barge *Ambition* in the Gulf of Mexico, about 18 nautical miles offshore of Freshwater Bayou, Louisiana (NTSB No. DCA22FM024).

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This interview summary has been compiled based on Coast Guard and NTSB investigator notes taken during the interview of Mr. Jarrod Williams, mate/pilot of the Karen Koby.

- Mr. Williams has worked with LA Carriers for about 7 years. He has held a merchant mariner credential for 2.5 years and all his experience has been with LA carriers.
- Mr. Williams said they work with crane barges “quite regularly”. He said there is no noticeable difference in the handling of a crane barge versus a regular deck barge.
- When asked what responsibility he had regarding getting the barge *Ambition* ready to get underway, Mr. Williams said that he did not have anything to do with getting the barge ready since he was not on watch at the time. He noted they have a barge checklist that must be completed before getting a barge underway, but he had nothing to do with completing the checklist.
- Mr. Williams said that when they were departing the fleet with the barge, he was in the wheelhouse with captain Murphy, but he was not on watch at that time. The barge was initially on the hip outbound down towards the fuel dock. He and the captain discussed the poor handling of the barge from the hip, and incoming traffic. Captain Murphy decided to stop and regroup the barge from the hip and make up to it with their push gear and push the barge to the fuel dock.
- Mr. Williams said he took over the watch after the *Ambition* was made up for the push. He took over in the crow’s nest. The barge handled fine on the way to the fuel dock. It was a little heavy on the bow. He noted there was a significant difference between the bow and stern of the *Ambition* related to its freeboard. The bow had about four feet of freeboard and the stern had about 7 to 7.5 feet of freeboard.

- Just above the fuel dock, Mr. Williams called them and told them they were approaching. The guy that answered said they need to hurry up because they were going to shut down fuel operations at 1640 because his paperwork had to be turned in at 1700.
- Mr. Williams said approaching the fuel dock there was a supply vessel at the slip, and he called the fuel dock about it since they were supposed to dock there. The fuel dock attendant said the supply vessel was to relocate to the end of the fuel dock so that it could unload.
- Making the approach, Mr. Williams said with the current flowing inbound he had to back the tug and barge so that it wouldn't hit the pier. Captain Murphy then came up to the crow's nest where Mr. Williams told him he was having trouble putting the barge in with the current. Captain Murphy then took the controls and attempted to put the barge into the slip, but the same thing happened. The current would have set the barge down on the north side pier, so Captain Murphy backed out into the channel again. The supply vessel had completed offloading and departed, so they asked to dock in that position which the fuel guy said no problem. Captain Murphy got the barge alongside at that position with no issues.
- The Rigid crew then began to fuel and ballast the barge.
- When asked if he had ever set foot on the Ambition, Mr. Williams said no he had not.
- When asked he had ever towed the Ambition in the past, Mr. Williams said he had not.
- When asked if he had seen anything tied down on the Ambition, Mr. Williams said he saw two tie-down straps. There was one on the boom of the manlift and one on a tote tank. He did not recall seeing anything else and he did not see that the crane was secured.
- When asked if he saw any open manhole covers on the Ambition, Mr. Williams said he did see two that were open on the way to the fuel dock.
- When asked about who has responsibility for checking barges for secured and in place manhole covers, Mr. Williams said they do a barge checklist where it requires the tug crew to check the manhole covers. Mr. Williams noted that once at the fuel dock Captain Murphy talked with Ronnie and told him that the manhole covers were not secured. Ronnie asked if that was something the tug crew could take care of and captain Murphy told him no that he would prefer that the Rigid crew take care of it. Ronnie told Captain Murphy that he would send two guys to secure the manhole covers.
- When asked if he knew if the Rigid crew secured the manhole covers, Mr. Williams said he knew the Rigid crew came back to the barge but was not around to witness them securing them. He noted that he was told the manhole covers were secured.
- When asked if he was aware of any issues when departing the fuel dock and entering the gulf of Mexico, Mr. Williams said there were no issues that he was aware of.
- When asked if he was aware of the Ambition hitting a channel marker, Mr. Williams said the barge brushed against the marker and that it did not hit it. Captain Murphy turned the barge to port which caused the barge to slide to starboard where it touched the channel marker. There was no damage to the channel marker.
- When asked if he took the picture of the barge looking downriver, Mr. Williams said he did take it. It was taken on June 14<sup>th</sup> when he was pushing the barge to the fuel dock. He

said he took the picture only because it was a pretty cool view from the crow's nest. That picture was the only one he took pre incident.

- When asked how the tow was configured for offshore, Mr. Williams said they had one 65-foot bridle from the port side, one 65-foot bridle from the starboard side which was shackled into hard eyes to a shock line which was connected to the tow line by means of another shackle. The bridles were placed over the timberheads of the barge. Overall, there was about 900 foot of cable let out.
- When asked about how the Ambition handled once under tow in the Gulf of Mexico, Mr. Williams said it handled fine with no issues.
- When asked of the weather, Mr. Williams said it was 2-to-3-foot seas with about 10 knot winds. The winds were off their starboard side. He did not recall what the current was.
- When asked when he took over the watch, Mr. Williams said it was around midnight. There were no problems with the tow when he took over the watch.
- At approximately 0330 in the morning Mr. Williams noticed a reduction in speed on the Rosepoint monitor which caught him by surprise, noting that the wind and seas were still the same. There should not have been that drastic of a speed reduction which was from around 5.2 knots to around 4.5 knot. This caught his attention.
- Mr. Williams called Allen, who was on watch with him and right outside the wheelhouse door smoking and asked him to come inside the wheelhouse while Mr. Williams went to the stern to check on the tow. He went to the doghouse to use the spotlight, but it was “froze up” and would not adjust up and down. It would move side to side but not up and down. The spotlight could only shine about 20 feet aft of the boat, so he turned it off and went back down to the wheelhouse. He turned the spotlights on top of the wheelhouse 180 degrees to face the stern to shine them back on the tow to see if there were any issues there. He said that it was hard to tell anything with the boat riding in the seas and the barge being 900 feet behind.
- It was around 0340 in the morning when he told Allen that he was going to get Captain Murphy because he was unsure of what was going on. He went downstairs and woke up captain Murphy and told him they might possibly have a situation and that he needed his help to try and figure out the issue.
- When asked if he noticed the running lights on the barge, Mr. Williams said he did see them, red on the port side and green on the starboard.
- When asked when the last time he personally saw the barge, Mr. Williams said it was 0400 as it was rolling over. He saw the barge roll over, dipping down on the bow port and as it dipped on that bow corner, the whole thing rolled over on its side. He noted it rolled over pretty quick. It sank right at 0400.
- When asked if they did anything with their speed upon noticing the reduction in speed, Mr. Williams said no, they maintained the rpms that they had been on.
- When asked if Captain Murphy was in the wheelhouse when the barge capsized, Mr. Williams said yes, but he had gone outside, and he did not know exactly where he was.

- When asked what the farthest distance from shore when they had the Ambition under tow, Mr. Williams said it was about 19 nautical miles. That was around where the incident occurred.
- When asked about the 5.2 knots, if that was what they maintained in the gulf, Mr. Williams said that was correct.
- When asked how they detached from the barge after it capsized, Mr. Williams said they reeled in as much tow line as safely possible and backed up as close as safe to do, they cut the cable with a metabo blade. They were within about 100 feet when they did that.
- When asked if he felt anything when he noticed the speed decrease, Mr. Williams said no. The only thing he noticed was the speed drop on the monitor. The engines were still sounding the same and the only indication was from the electronics on board.
- When asked if the Karen Koby had an autopilot and if it was on autopilot at the time of the casualty, Mr. Williams said yes, they had it and it was on autopilot for his entire watch. When asked if there were any problems with the autopilot, Mr. Williams said there was not. The autopilot was not disengaged until after the capsized.
- When asked what rpms they had on during his watch, Mr. Williams said he could not remember.
- When asked of any course alterations made on the autopilot, Mr. Williams said that shortly after coming on watch he altered course for two fishing boats and a towing vessel. The towing vessel was approaching, and they agreed to pass on the one whistle. He noted that towing vessels speed was 11 knots. For the fishing boats, Mr. Williams said he altered course to starboard for them. He said he had about a 1.5 nautical mile closest point of approach. It was all at the same time. One of the fishing boats appeared to be fishing, but he could not tell what the other one was doing.
- When asked of the effect of turning the tug with a barge in tow, Mr. Williams explained that if he turned to starboard, the starboard bridle would become slack and the port one would be pulled tight for it to go to starboard. When asked if that can be felt in the tow line, Mr. Williams said no, not unless you overturn, and it would have to be a serious turn for that.
- When asked if he saw any kind of list to the Ambition when pushing it downriver, Mr. Williams said he didn't see it list to one side or the other but noted he did see that the barge was bow heavy. It was down in the bow while they were headed to the fuel dock.
- When asked if there was any traffic in the area at the time of the accident, Mr. Williams said no there was not. There were some platforms around, but he thought they were 6 to 8 miles away from them.

**End of Summary**