



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
Office of Marine Safety

### Interview Summary – DCA22FM024

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**Interview of:** Jeffery Mizzi – President of Marine Operations for Rigid Constructors, LLC.

**Date/Time:** July 8, 2022 – 1025 to 1149 CDT

**Location:** USCG Marine Safety Field Office Lafayette Conference Room

**Interviewed by:** CWO3 [REDACTED] – USCG, Adam Tucker – NTSB

**Attendees:** Alan Breaud – Breaud & Myers (representing Rigid Constructors interests), Jefferson Tillery – Jones Walker LLP (representing LA Carriers interests), Tommy Plaisance - LA Carriers Operations Manager (Party in Interest), Jill Willhoft (representing Rigid Construction 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. Jeffery Mizzi, President of Marine Operations for Rigid Constructors, LLC.

- Mr. Mizzi has worked with Rigid Constructors for two and a half years. He is the president of the marine operations division for Rigid Constructors. He does not have a merchant mariner credential and stated his qualifications for his role as president of marine operations is experience based. He stated he has 15 years of experience in the marine construction field.
- When asked about the *Ambition* and its planned transit, Mr. Mizzi said the *Ambition* was to be taken under tow from Cameron to Myrtle Grove Louisiana on the Lower Mississippi River where the crane barge was to work at an LNG plant project there.
- In order to move the *Ambition*, they contracted for a tug to export the barge from Cameron to Myrtle Grove. He noted that they sent a crew from Rigid Construction to help with the *Ambition* so that the captain of the tug would not have any issues with the tow.
- When asked how many crane barges Rigid Constructors had, Mr. Mizzi said “give or take, six”.
- When asked the reason the *Ambition* was chosen for the job at Myrtle Grove, Mr. Mizzi stated that the *Ambition* was finished with a previous job, and they needed the reach of the crane on the *Ambition*.
- When asked how LA Carriers was contracted to tow the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi stated they made a purchase order to Patriot Marine and that company contracted for the tug. He noted Rigid Constructors uses Patriot Marine almost exclusively and that they have never had any past problems with their services. Sometimes he would discuss with Patriot what

boat Rigid would like utilized for a tow, but normally Patriot decides what company and boat to assign for a tow.

- When asked who is contractually responsible for the barge, Mr. Mizzi stated it would be the captain of the tug that would be responsible the minute the tug makes up to the barge.
- When asked if he has had to look into the past performance history of any tug company tasked to move their barges, Mr. Mizzi said he has never had to look at any company or operator history.
- When asked if the *Ambition* had been previously towed through the Gulf of Mexico, Mr. Mizzi said that this would have been the barges second move for this year. Baton Rouge to Lake Charles was the earlier move. He estimated that between 6 and 12 times per year would be normal. There have been no past issues with any move of the barge *Ambition*, and that they have never failed to mobilize the barge and crane for any past project.
- When asked of the construction of the *Ambition*, Mr., Mizzi said it was built for Rigid. They contracted the building project through Diamond B Industries.
- Rigid has had the *Ambition* for two years, or maybe a little more.
- When asked if there were any special conditions for towing the barge Mr. Mizzi said that would be to the captain's discretion.
- When asked how many manholes (hatches) the *Ambition* barge had, Mr. Mizzi said that he thinks it had 16.
- When asked of the last time he was on board the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said he thought it was in February or March of 2022. He is on board the barge maybe 10 to 12 times per year.
- When asked if he was aware of the use of a metal plate to cover up a manhole access to a tank, Mr. Mizzi said he was not informed of any missing manhole covers on the *Ambition*.
- When asked of the manholes on the stern of the barge *Ambition* and where they go, Mr. Mizzi said he don't know where they go, but probably to tanks.
- When asked about the Naval Architecture Assessment (NAA) for the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said the assessment was done for a US Army Corps of Engineers contract bid. The NAA was done by a professional engineering firm.
- When asked if he has meeting with his Rigid supervisors such as Mr. Douget, Mr. Mizzi said he does not meet personally with supervisors. He noted that supervisors do Job Safety Analysis (JSA) and discuss safety topics in the morning prior to a job. He was not on site for this operation.
- When asked if he provided any instruction for crews to check the tanks and voids of the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said that he did not as it is "common knowledge" to do so.
- When asked if there was any water removal needed from a tank or void on the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said that the crew would do it on their own and that he would not be involved.
- When asked what his expectation was for checking of voids and tanks on the barges, Mr. Mizzi said he would not expect this every time and only if something was out of the ordinary would the crew be expected to check.

- When asked about the use of ballast tanks on the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said the use of the ballast tanks are dependent on what material is on the barge and that water ballast is used to keep the barge level.
- When asked if he was aware of any water being pumped out of the barge and if so, why, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know.
- When asked about the cargo that was on the deck of the barge of the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said that there were concrete blocks on the deck, but they would not have made any difference with respect to its stability.
- When asked if they charge for carriage of cargo, Mr. Mizzi said that carriage of cargo is included in the job.
- When asked about the drafts of the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know.
- When asked about a picture that was taken of the *Ambition* being pushed by the *Karen Koby* that was presented, with a red truck in the foreground, Mr. Mizzi said that picture was taken when the tow was on its way to get fuel and water at Stone Fuel. He did not know who took the picture.
- When asked if he had ever been notified of any stability issues with the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said no he has not.
- When asked if there were any offshore, or near coastal, weather and sea condition limitations for the barge *Ambition* in transit, Mr. Mizzi said no, not that he was aware of.
- When asked if the barge *Ambition* had a certificate of documentation (COD) from the Coast Guard, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know. The barges were purchased and owned by Rigid Constructors.
- When shown a postaccident photo of the barge *Ambition* partially sunken, Mr. Mizzi was asked to confirm that it was the stern of the barge that was visible above the water. He confirmed that it was the stern and starboard side of the barge that was visible in the photo.
- When asked if any of the *Ambition*'s wing tanks would had water in them, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know and noted that if they did, it would have been fresh water.
- When asked if a company internal investigation was being carried out into the cause of the capsizing of the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said no, nothing formal. They did fill out the occupational health and safety administration (OSHA) type accident forms.
- When asked on the day when the Rigid crew were securing the *Ambition*, where he was, Mr. Mizzi said he was maybe at the office in Lafayette.
- When asked when he was notified of the capsizing of the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said he was notified the day of the accident by phone at 0515. He was at home when he received the call from Patriot Marine. After that there was a text message thread with the marine guys at Rigid.
- When asked about how boats are selected to move their barges, Mr. Mizzi said Patriot Marine chooses the boats based on what boat is available. At the time, the *Karen Koby* was available to make the move. For the move, the contract was to move and position the *Ambition* in Myrtle Grove. At Myrtle Grove the crane was to offload cement from ships

there for the construction of an LNG terminal. It was supposed to be a three-to-four-month project.

- Mr. Mizzi noted that Patriot Marine has their own boats, but if their boats are not available, they will broker out to another company.
- When asked if Rigid conducts any vetting of companies that tow their assets, Mr. Mizzi said no and that LA carriers had in the past moved their assets.
- When asked if there was a minimum horsepower requirement for a tug to move the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there was not.
- When asked to confirm if the barges that made up the *Ambition* had hull numbers, Mr. Mizzi said that he was not a part of the construction project and that he didn't know. He was with the company when the barges were mated but was not working the project.
- When asked if there were any other documents related to the operational requirements of the crane barge *Ambition* other than the NAA, Mr. Mizzi said there were not. The NAA was done after the construction for the US Army Corps of Engineers.
- When asked if there were any third-party stability assessments for the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there were not.
- When asked about the accuracy of the drawing found in the NAA, and if anyone from the company verified its accuracy, Mr. Mizzi said no accuracy verification of the drawing was done.
- When asked how the naval architecture company that created the NAA referenced the barge *Ambition* and the basis for its calculations, Mr. Mizzi said he was not sure.
- When asked how the barges were married together, Mr. Mizzi said structural members and the bulkheads were connected all throughout.
- When asked about the longitudinal bulkheads in both barges and if they were added during the construction of the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said they were there before and not added. No modifications were made to any of the tanks and voids of either barge during the mating project.
- When asked why the NAA drawing had a raked stern for the *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know.
- When asked if there was any kind of scheduled or planned maintenance for the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there was not and that maintenance on the barge was done on an "as needed basis".
- When asked about maintenance on the crane and its wires, Mr. Mizzi said the crane had no wires and that mechanical maintenance was carried out on the crane when needed.
- When asked who maintains the barge *Ambition* and the crane, Mr. Mizzi said that the Superintendent fixes the barge and crane as needed with the personnel that he has on hand.
- When asked if there was any planned maintenance system for the barge or crane, Mr. Mizzi said there is not. There have not been any kind of inspections of the hull of the barge. There are no maintenance records for the barge.

- When asked of there was any history related to watertightness of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there was not and he had never had any reports of water intrusion in the vessel.
- The barges were purpose built for Rigid Constructors. There were only spuds on one side of the barge, and it is common for spuds to be only on one side of a barge.
- When asked if there were any problems brought to him regarding the towing and handling of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said no company has ever said they have had problems in the past.
- When asked what it means there was to secure the crane on the barge *Ambition* for transit, Mr. Mizzi stated that there was no other means to secure the crane other than what Mr. Douget described.
- When asked if there are any accommodations for employees on board the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said no, it was not a live aboard.
- When asked if the barge or crane had any sensors like an anemometer or tilt/inclinometer, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know adding that Mr. Douget is the superintendent of the barge.
- When asked if there was any kind of pre or post casualty stability assessment for the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there was not.
- When asked about the concrete blocks that were reported to have been on the *Ambition* and their dimensions and weights, Mr. Mizzi stated he did not know the dimensions or weights. The concrete blocks were from a completed project that involved the removal of two power line transmission towers along the Intracoastal waterway. They were the foundations for the transmission towers.
- After the approximate three-week transmission tower removal project was completed, the barge *Ambition* remained in the area at the Duvall fleet for about four to five weeks before it was to be moved to the project in Myrtle Grove. There was no tug accompanying the barge for that period because it was secure on the bank. The *Ambition* was not manned during that time and Duvall checked on the *Ambition*.
- When asked if the center of gravity of the barge *Ambition* with the crane on it was known, Mr. Mizzi said it was unknown.
- When asked if there was any policy or guidance for ballasting of tanks, related to free surface effect, Mr. Mizzi said there was not. When asked if he was aware what free surface effect was, Mr. Mizzi stated he had no awareness of what this is, and it is not in the company vocabulary.
- When asked of any crane swing load limit for the crane on the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said he did not know.
- When asked if there were any third-party inspections of the barge *Ambition* or the crane, Mr. Mizzi stated there was not.
- When asked if the barge *Ambition* had a certificate of load line, Mr. Mizzi said no.
- When asked if the barge *Ambition* had a certificate of inspection or certificate of documentation, Mr. Mizzi said no.

- When asked if the barge *Ambition* had any kind of survey carried out on it, Mr. Mizzi said he did not think so.
- When presented with an email sent on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 by Rigid employee Dylan Trim, regarding a previous move of the barge *Ambition* and whether it was accurate with respect to the towage conditions set by Rigid, with respect to maximum wave heights of 4 to 6 feet and a near coastal route to be used, Mr. Mizzi said that the email seems accurate.
- When asked if Rigid had any policies related to the movement of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said no and that the tug captain is the one who deems that the barge is good to tow.
- When asked if there were any surveys carried out by any customer prior to the crane being contracted for a job, Mr. Mizzi said no, there were no surveys done of the in between jobs.
- When asked if there had been any previous hurricane damage to the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there was not.
- When asked if there were any company policies or documentation for barge safety of operations, Mr. Mizzi said there was not.
- When asked if there were any occupational health and safety regulations applicable to the crane for the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there were not.
- When asked if there were any company instructions to crews related to the draft of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Mizzi said there were not.
- When asked if there was anything in general, he would like to add, Mr. Mizzi stated he had nothing to add.
- Mr. Mizzi was asked, since he was in attendance for previous Rigid Constructor employee interviews if he had anything to add, or clarify based on what he heard, Mr. Mizzi stated he had nothing to add.
- When asked what he thought might have caused the *Ambition* to capsize, Mr. Mizzi stated he had no idea.

**End of summary**