



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary – DCA22FM024

Interview of: Fred Weber – Deckhand for Rigid Constructors
Date/Time: July 7, 2022 – 1055 to 1200 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), Jeff Mizzi – Rigid Constructors President of Marine Operations (Party in Interest), Mark Fazioli – 3D Marine (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).

This interview summary has been compiled based on Coast Guard and NTSB investigator notes taken during the interview of Mr. Fred Weber, one of the Rigid Constructors deckhands assigned to secure the e-crane barge *Ambition*.

- Mr. Weber is a deckhand for Rigid Constructors and has worked as a deckhand for 3 to 4 months after starting with the company in March or April of 2022. He has no previous experience as a deckhand and had no training as a deckhand prior to joining the company.
- When asked of training and qualifications, Mr. Weber stated the only training he has had was the company new hire orientation and safety training with all other training being on the job.
- When asked if he had worked on the *Ambition* previously, Mr. Weber stated that he had not. When asked what day he worked in preparing the *Ambition*, Mr. Weber said he could not remember the date but remembered the events of the day.
- Mr. Weber said that the crew met in the morning at the New Iberia yard and that is where they were informed, they would go to the *Ambition* to secure it for transit. There were three people total in the truck with him on the way to Lake Charles and he recalled Dillard Bowman was one of them.
- Once they got to the dock in Lake Charles, they got in the skiff and went to the *Ambition* barge. They were all told to secure everything down on the *Ambition*.
- When asked if he saw what the draft or freeboard of the *Ambition* was, Mr. Weber said he did not know.
- On the barge, Mr. Weber said he secured the concrete blocks, the man-lift and oil tanks. There were multiple concrete blocks which were on both, the port and starboard side of the barge. He described the concrete blocks as “big” and “huge”. He helped secure the

man-lift and the concrete blocks. The man-lift was on the port side around the middle of the barge.

- When asked what else was on the deck of the *Ambition* barge, Mr. Weber said it has been the second time he has seen that barge but couldn't think of anything else.
- When asked of a Conex box being on the barge, Mr. Weber said he did not recall and was not in his area of focus.
- When asked what they used to secure items on the barge, Mr. Weber said they were "big" ratchet straps.
- When asked about the manhole covers on the *Ambition* barge, Mr. Weber said there were manhole covers all over the barge but did not know how many there were. He noted that he is new to the marine side.
- There was a total of 4 crew on the barge to secure things: himself, Dalton, Brady, and Aiden. They all had to strap things down. As the newest guy on the team, Mr. Weber was guided by the other workers on the barge as to what to do.
- When asked if there was any sort of checklist used to secure and prepare the barge for transit, Mr. Weber said that he was not aware of that.
- When asked how the cement blocks were loaded on the barge, Mr. Weber said he did not know, and they were already there when he got there.
- When asked when he was on the barge if it had any movement or motion to it, from wind, the water, tug or anything, Mr. Weber said he was not aware of any.
- When asked if he rode along with the barge, Mr. Weber said he did. From when they got on the barge, they rode it a short little way. There was a tug on the hip of the barge, maybe on the starboard side but he wasn't sure.
- When asked about the weather on the day they were securing the barge, Mr. Weber said the weather was good but it started "white capping".
- One they were done securing everything, they got off the barge and back on the skiff and rode back to the truck. When they were at the truck the captain of the tug got on the radio and said everything was good.
- At one point, Mr. Weber recalled the barge stopped so the tug could "rehook" onto the barge. The tug went to the back of the barge.
- From where they recovered the skiff, they went to the enclosed facility, Stone Fuel, since the barge was going to be there.
- When asked of the height of the barge when he boarded the skiff, Mr. Weber said there was no ladder and he just stepped down into the skiff.
- At the fuel dock, they had to wait for the barge. The captain was struggling to put the barge in and eventually he could not do it, so they changed location.
- When the *Ambition* was alongside the dock, Mr. Weber said he boarded it because he was tasked to put water in the ballast tanks. He used a hose from the facility to do this.
- When asked where he put the ballast water, Mr. Weber said he put the water in the port aft manhole which did not have a cover. The hose went from the dock right up onto the barge and into the manhole.

- When asked how much water he put in the tank, Mr. Weber said it was filled visually to about half full in each tank. He said it was easy to see inside the tanks because it was daylight.
- On the starboard barge, he filled ballast water from the inboard aftermost manhole.
- The port aftermost tank that Mr. Weber had filled with water did not have a manhole cover, so he used a “big plate” to cover the open manhole. He had to drag the plate across the deck to cover the manhole.
- When asked if the “big plate” covered the manhole entirely, Mr. Weber said that it did.
- When asked if he had any part in securing the crane, Mr. Weber said he did not and did not know who did.
- When asked if the bucket for the crane was secured, Mr. Weber said he did not know.
- When asked if anyone checked all manholes on the barge to make sure they were properly closed, Mr. Weber said he did not know and that it was not his job.
- When asked if the *Ambition* had any list to it, Mr. Weber said no, and that he did not see or notice anything. He noted that when the captain said things were “all good” they got off the barge. After they left the barge, the captain said one of the manhole covers was not covered, which Mr. Weber recalled was one on the port side and maybe one in the middle of the barge, so they went back and put the covers on.
- Mr. Weber did not place any covers on the manholes that were open when they were called to the barge. He did not see or recall who did but recalled that it must have been done because the captain said that everything looked good.
- When asked if this was his first time working on a barge, Mr. Weber said that it was.
- When asked if he knew of any reasons that would cause the barge to sink, Mr. Weber said he did not know.
- When asked if he knew what the cement blocks were for, Mr. Weber said they were from another job at “Jay Day”. He said he secured the blocks with straps.
- When asked if the blocks had any numbers or lettering on them, Mr. Weber said there were not.
- When asked what the straps were secured to on the barge, Mr. Weber said they were lashed to D-rings on the deck. All the guys were showing him how to lash things down.
- When asked to describe the shape of the lashing points on deck, Mr. Weber said he could not recall. It was his first-time having boots on the deck.
- When asked to again recount what they secured when they got on the *Ambition*, Mr. Weber said they strapped down the man lift and then strapped down more stuff and then the cement blocks. They were all together. Some of the guys strapped down barrels. The barge was being towed by the tug when they were strapping down stuff.
- When asked how many spuds were on the *Ambition* barge, Mr. Weber said he did not know.
- When they were done securing things on the barge, they left with the skiff and went back to where they launched it from. They took the skiff out of the water and the three same guys, plus Aiden, left with the truck and skiff on a trailer in tow to go to the fuel dock. Aiden was not with them on the ride from New Iberia in the morning.

- When they got to the Stone fuel dock, they noticed the captain was having trouble parking the barge.
- When asked if he witnessed the barge hit anything at the fuel dock while the captain was having trouble docking it, Mr. Weber said it did not hit anything. Mr. Weber said he noticed the captain hit a marker in the river while they were on the barge.
- Once the barge was secured at the fuel dock, they got back on board the barge.
- When asked when they left the barge on the skiff, Mr. Weber said that when the barge was stopped moving so that the tug could reposition was when they got off with the skiff to proceed to the launch.
- When asked what manholes he put water into, Mr. Weber, said it was the port side outboard manhole aft and the inboard aft manhole of the starboard side barge, the manhole near the center of the barges.
- When asked who instructed him to put the ballast water in those two tanks, Mr. Weber said that it was his supervisor, Ronnie. He was told by Ronnie to fill them halfway.
- When asked if he remained at the hose while filling each tank, Mr. Weber said that he did not recall. He first started filling water through the port side outboard manhole. After he was done with both tanks, he gave the hose back to the dock guy.
- When asked the quantity of water he put into each tank, he said he had no clue and just pumped in the water as he was instructed to do.
- When asked how he referenced where to fill each tank to halfway, Mr. Weber said there was a ladder welded in the tank and he visually used a ladder rung to determine the halfway mark.
- When asked if he placed a cover on the starboard side tank manhole after he finished filling it, Mr. Weber said he did. When asked if he used any kind of tool to secure it, Mr. Weber said no.
- When asked of the color of the manhole covers, Mr. Weber said he could not recall. When asked of the color and size of the big plate he placed over the port aft manhole, Mr. Weber said that it was rusty in color and was big enough to cover the manhole entirely.
- When asked about where he got the big plate that he used to cover the port side manhole that he had put water into, Mr. Weber said the piece of steel was nearby, so he dragged it across the deck to cover the manhole. No one else was there at the time. Mr. Weber said that when he saw Ronnie later, he told him that the port aft manhole cover was missing and that he had placed the steel plate over it. He recalled someone asking if there was another cover, but there was not. Then, they left the barge to go home.
- Once in the truck, Dillard got a call from Ronnie who said they needed to go back to the barge because there were some manholes that were not covered.
- Mr. Weber said that he did not go back on board the barge after Dillard took the call from Ronnie. When asked who went, he said he did not know and noted that someone obviously took care of it because he heard the captain saying that all was good to go shortly after.
- When asked about the mile marker that was hit by the barge, Mr. Weber said that he visually witnessed this, and that it was hit by the port side forward of the barge. He was

on the port side by the crane pedestal when it happened. When asked if he saw any damage or felt anything when the mile marker was hit, Mr. Weber said he did not. When asked what happened after the mile marker was hit, Mr. Weber said he had no recall and that after that, the tug changed position on the barge.

- When asked of the weather, Mr. Weber said it was a nice day but recalled it was “pretty windy”.
- When asked to describe the hose used to fill the two tanks on the *Ambition*, Mr. Weber said it was like a fire hose.
- When asked of a job safety analysis being done before starting work on the barge, Mr. Weber said there was one done in the morning related to securing items on the barge. He did not remember if there was a safety meeting prior to starting to work on the barge.
- When asked of the big plate, and if he secured it by any means over the top of the manhole, Mr. Weber said no, there was no means to.
- When asked if there was water in the tanks prior to him filling them with the hose from the fuel dock, Mr. Weber said there was a “little bit”, but he was not sure of how much.
- When asked if he witnessed the use of any pumps to pump water out of any tanks on the barge, Mr. Weber said he did not recall.

End of summary