



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary - DCA23FM008

Interview of: BM2 [REDACTED] - Officer on Duty at Station Galveston
Date/Time: November 29, 2022, 1125 to 1203 CST
Location: US Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Texas City conference room
Interviewed by: CWO [REDACTED] - USCG, Adam Tucker (by phone) - NTSB, [REDACTED]
- USCG, Lt. [REDACTED] - USCG
Attendees: [REDACTED] - USCG
Accident: November 25, 2022, flooding and subsequent sinking of the fishing vessel Captain Alex, about 11 miles south of Jamacia Beach, Texas (NTSB No. DCA23FM008).

This interview summary has been compiled based on NTSB investigator notes taken during the interview of BM2 [REDACTED]

- BM2 [REDACTED] said he was the OOD at Station Galveston.
- The watch stander of the night, BM3 [REDACTED], received a call from sector Houston-Galveston which came through on the station landline. BM3 [REDACTED] called BM2 [REDACTED] to let him know they had a case unfolding. He was told it was a fishing vessel taking on water and there was a latitude and longitude from the reporting source which was plotted from their navigational software.
- BM2 [REDACTED] woke up the Coxswain and the rest of the crew.
- BM3 [REDACTED] received the reporting source phone number, was told there were three persons on board.
- BM2 [REDACTED] called the reporting source who was a lady who told him she was the owner of the fishing vessel. She was on a three-way call with the captain. BM2 [REDACTED] couldn't understand what the captain was saying, he was speaking Vietnamese and the owner was translating. BM2 [REDACTED] told her to tell the captain for the crew to put their lifejackets on. He asked how much water was coming on and if they had pumps running. BM2 [REDACTED] recalled being told there were no pumps running at that time and that water was up to the engine. He also asked if they had an EPIRB on the boat which he was told they did not. If they had one, he was going to ask that they activate it so they can get their position.
- BM2 [REDACTED] briefed the Coxswain BM3 [REDACTED] with the information they had and the position. The initial report was that there was 3 POB. There were two other BM3's on board but [REDACTED] was the Coxswain.

- RB-M 45630 got underway and shortly after, they had a problem with the starboard engine, which was not making over 1200 rpm, and had to restart it. After the restart, the engine was fine and the 45 continued its way.
- BM2 ██████ said outside of that he was the middleman between sector and the boat crew out there. He was relaying everything. They kept logs at the station. At one point he recalled sector passing along that the boat had a 4-inch hole in it.
- When asked if at any point was it discussed towing the Captain Alex into shallow water, BM2 ██████ said he recalled at one point sector was trying to figure out the vessels overall size and if it was possible to tow the fishing vessel because the 45's are limited to a towing capacity of 100 displacement tons.
- When asked why he thought sector was having trouble identifying the fishing boat, BM2 ██████ said he thought that it was because of a language barrier.
- When asked about the dewatering operations of the Captain Alex, BM2 ██████ said he was aware the P6 pump was passed from the 45 to the Captain Alex and the crew got it running but the issue with the P6 is that it is not a self-priming pump, and it didn't sound like the fishing crew primed the pump. BM2 ██████ noted it is his belief that if the pump is not pumping water after 5 minutes, the pumps impeller will be damaged.
- When asked if anything could have been handled differently or if there were suggestions for improvement related to the case, BM2 ██████ said no. The safety of the boat crew and fishing boat crew was the top priority and the Coxswain acted in the best of his abilities to ensure both crews were safe. He noted the Coxswain was hesitant to even send his crew to the fishing boat and that he didn't want to put his guys in an unsafe situation. But they did a risk assessment, and the crew agreed at some point that the risk mitigation measures were in place to send some crew to the fishing boat.
- When asked about initially being told of what size of fishing vessel they were responding to was, BM2 ██████ said at the time he was taking information from sector and the vessel owner, and all he knew was it was a shrimping boat, he was never told what specific size it was. All he knew was that it was a commercial fishing vessel taking on water.
- When asked if a P6 is constantly on the Coast Guard 45, BM2 ██████ said yes, it is required equipment. When asked that knowing it was a situation where a fishing boat was sinking and if he tasked the 45 crew to take an extra pump, BM2 ██████ said no he did not.
- When asked if there was a helicopter asset in the area, BM2 ██████ said yes there was. It was an MH 65. When asked if there was any thought in having the helicopter lower their P6 to the fishing boat, BM2 ██████ said at that point in time, he reached out to sector after hearing the helicopter say they had a P1 (or whatever they have), and asked the watchstander at sector about having it

lowered and he recalled being told that there was too much oily water in the bilge and they said no since the P1 had the same risk as the P6 when it came to pumping oily water.

- BM2 [REDACTED] said that only after the mission, did he learn the P6 pump that was sent over physically broke. The priming handle broke on it, which he noted break all the time. BM2 [REDACTED] said from his understanding that when the P6 pump broke is when they made the evacuation call.
- When asked if he heard any conversation regarding having the helicopter drop a pump to the fishing vessel, BM2 [REDACTED] said he did not know. He noted there was radio issues between the helicopter and the boat crew, and they finally were able to communicate on channel 22A or 23A.
- When asked how he was communicating to the 45 crew, BM2 [REDACTED] said it was by cell phone and radio. It depends on how busy the crew is, if they are overwhelmed, he will put stuff over the radio and if it is over the landline, he doesn't call the Coxswain. He will usually call the engineer or a crewman who in turn can relay information to the Coxswain. He speaks with the sector command center by the landline through the station OOD phone.
- When asked if the 45 was transmitting AIS information at the time of the casualty, BM2 [REDACTED] said the majority of the time, they are transmitting secured. When asked if he had means to see the Captain Alex from the station by AIS, BM2 [REDACTED] said he was not but he thought sector was because they were communicating positions of the boat.
- When asked what other assets they have at station Galveston, BM2 [REDACTED] said they do have a 29-foot boat but that is it. Nothing larger than a 45.
- When asked if there was a GAR risk assessment conducted, BM2 [REDACTED] said he and the Coxswain, and the crew did a GAR before they departed. They had a medium risk-high gain GAR score. The high gain was the potential for saving a life.
- When asked of the weather, BM2 [REDACTED] said at one point he asked the 45 crew when they were on scene, and he was told 2-to-3-foot seas. He could not recall what he was told regarding winds.
- When asked what frequency he was speaking to the 45 crew on, BM2 [REDACTED] said it was CG121 which was their primary frequency.
- When asked if there were any Coast Guard assets in the area that had the capacity to tow a vessel greater than 100 displacement tons, BM2 [REDACTED] said he did not know and he was not aware if there were any cutters operating in the area at that time.
- When asked who checks and maintains the P6 pumps at the station, BM2 [REDACTED] said they are maintained and inspected at the station by the engineers who use/reference maintenance procedure cards (MPC's).

- When asked about the decision-making process for the 45 to return to the station once the Captain Alex crew were on board, rather than remain on scene, BM2 [REDACTED] said he was not sure how they long remained on scene after taking the *Captain Alex* crew. He said he heard the captain of the *Captain Alex* was covered in oil and diesel, so he requested fire and EMS to meet the 45 when they arrived back in Galveston. The captain declined medical attention and transport to the hospital.
- When asked what the towing capacity of the 45 was, BM2 [REDACTED] said that in their boat operator's manual, it specifies 100 displacement tons is the capacity. He noted the boat crews know that limitation.

End of summary