UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
CAPSIZING OF THE LIFTBOAT *SEACOR*	*	
POWER SOUTH OF PORT FOURCHON,	*	Accident No.: DCA21MM024
LOUISIANA, ON APRIL 13, 2021	*	
	*	

Interview of: [redacted]

Via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,
April 21, 2021

APPEARANCES:

ANDREW EHLERS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

MARCEL MUISE, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL RICHARDS, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board
(Via Microsoft Teams)

CAPT TRACY PHILLIPS, Chair
U.S. Coast Guard Marine Board of Investigation

LT [redacted] [redacted] Recorder
U.S. Coast Guard Marine Board of Investigation

[redacted] [redacted] Member
U.S. Coast Guard Marine Board of Investigation

LTJG [redacted] [redacted] Search and Rescue Controller
U.S. Coast Guard

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JOHN PRESTON, Chief Surveyor Offshore
American Bureau of Shipping (ABS)

MICHAEL CENAC, QHSE Manager, Designated Person Ashore,
Chief Security Officer
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I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(14:46 p.m.)

MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise. It's 14:46 on the East Coast with the NTSB. We're online today investigating or interviewing Lieutenant [redacted] from Coast Guard Cutter Glennn Harris, who was one of the first responders for the capsizing of the Seacor Power on April 13th. Lieutenant [redacted] can you spell your name for us and give us your title?

MR. [redacted] Yes, sir. [redacted] is the first name, [redacted], last name [redacted].

MR. MUISE: And you can consent for me to record this interview?

MR. [redacted] Yes.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Also online with us from NTSB, Drew?

MR. EHLERS: Hey. Good afternoon, Lieutenant [redacted] My name is Drew Ehlers; I'm the investigator in charge of this accident investigation for the NTSB. My name -- last name is spelled E-H-L-E-R-S.

MR. MUISE: Anybody else from NTSB? Mike Richards?

MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards. That's R-I-C-H-A-R-D. I am the NTSB weather Group Chairman.

MR. MUISE: And Captain Kucharski?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Good afternoon, Lieutenant [redacted] Mike Kucharski, National Transportation Safety Board, and I am the Group Chairman of operations. Spelling my name is K-U-C-H-A-R-S-

K-I. Thank you for being here.

MR. MUISE: And from the Coast Guard, please?

MR. [redacted] Hey. Good afternoon, Lieutenant. This is Lieutenant Junior Grade [redacted] with the U.S. Coast Guard.

MS. PHILLIPS: Good afternoon. This is Captain Tracy Phillips, last name P-H-I-L-L-I-P-S. I'm the chair of the Marine Board of Investigation.

MR. [redacted] Lieutenant [redacted] A-L-G-E-R, Coast Guard Marine investigation.

MR. [redacted] This is [redacted] with the Coast Guard, [redacted].

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard, [redacted].

MR. MUISE: And from ABS. Mr. Preston, are you there?

MR. PRESTON: Yes, sir. This is John Preston from ABS, J-O-H-N, P-R-E-S-T-O-N. American Bureau of Shipping.

MR. MUISE: And from Seacor?

MR. CLERC: Good afternoon. This is Tim Clerc, vice president of engineering for the Seacor Marine based in Houston. Selling of my last name C-L-E-R-C.

MR. MUISE: And --

MR. CENAC: Michael Cenac with Seacor Marine, C-E-N-A-C.

MR. MUISE: And there's somebody online from [redacted]?

MR. PENTER: Yes, sir. Good afternoon. This is Lieutenant Commander [redacted] with Coast Guard District 8

(indiscernible).

MR. MUISE: And somebody else online from [redacted]?

MR. [redacted] Hello, sir. Yes. This is Lieutenant, junior grade, [redacted] with the Coast Guard.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Thank you. So Mr. Ehlers, I forgot tell you Commander [redacted] is from District 8 legal, he's on the line with us. If you need to take a break and talk to him at any time, we'll do that, and you guys can go offline and chat if you want.

MR. EHLERS: Thank you, sir.

MR. MUISE: Okay.

MR. EHLERS: And I think, Marcel --

MR. MUISE: Yes, sir.

MR. EHLERS: This is Drew here. We asked for -- and I'm sorry, one member from each party only in the investigation -- or in the interviews with the exception being the Coast Guard. And I see both Tim Clerk and Michael Cenac online.

Michael and Tim, do you want to take a second and just decide which one of you wants to participate here? I'm not trying to leave anyone out, but if we have too many folks on the line it just becomes cumbersome. So if you want to take a minute to do that, we'll step over or we'll halt for a second.

MR. CENAC: Thank you, Drew. And I'll remain online and Tim, thank you for your attendance.

MR. CLERC: Okay. Yes. Just update me later, Mike. I'll leave it with you guys.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Thanks again, Captain.

INTERVIEW OF [redacted] [redacted]

BY MR. MUISE:

Q. So just to get started I'd like to get some background information. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got to be Captain of a brand new FRC?

A. Yeah. Thank you there, sir. Lieutenant [redacted] [redacted] here. I graduated from the Coast Guard Academy here back in 2012. Following my graduation I went onto my first tour in Kodiak, Alaska on board the national security -- or excuse me, high endurance cutter, Douglas Munro.

Following that, I moved down to San Diego in support of one of our deployable special forces unit in San Diego (indiscernible) specific tactical law enforcement as an officer in charge and deployable team leader on the enforcement units on allied deployment, allied naval vessels for counter-drug deployments.

Following that tour, I was there for three years. I was a staff officer at Pacific area. Following that I was the combat systems officer on the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton, the National Security Cutter in Alameda, California. I was there for two years and I just departed that unit (indiscernible) reported end of February to Bollinger pro command there at Bollinger Shipyards to start the pre commissioning process for the Coast Guard Cutter, Glenn Harris.

Q. Okay. Thanks. Can you tell us a little bit about the Glenn

Harris? And actually the 154 in general.
A. Yeah. So Glenn Harris is the hull number 1144, it's the 44th hull out of the shipyard Bollinger, it's 154-foot fast response, it's about three quarters of the way through the procurement of those FRCs. Glenn Harris and hull 44 are being assigned to our Far East unit, that's in Bahrain. It will be used out there to support the Sixth Fleet commander as well as mission sets that are out there in the Persian Gulf.
Q. Okay. The 154 in general, can you tell us a little bit about the capabilities and seakeeping characteristics of it?
A. Yeah. So still a little new with getting familiar with the particular specs, but 154 has two MTU diesel engines, two generators, capabilities can come up to, you know, roughly 29 knots, the fixed propellers. And seakeeping was -- the only thing that I can really remember is a beam to knot wind with a constant -- I actually don't have that number correct, I'd have to pull some of the ship data to answer that, those numbers more accurately.
Q. Okay. And I understand you have a small boat as well?
A. We do have a small boat. It's one of our -- it's our, what we call the Mark IV, it's the fourth iteration of our over the horizon small boat (indiscernible).
Q. So on the day of this accident, you guys left Bollinger and were underway doing sea trials? Is that accurate to say sea trials?

A. No, sir. So this day underway was a training day for the crew. So Bollinger assigned certain days where (indiscernible). This was the second of two days where Bollinger sea trial crew gets us underway and teaches us a little bit about the capabilities of the cutter.

This day in particular we were prescribed to see the limitations and capabilities of the ship, and to also do a little bit of maneuverability for the crew while in open ocean. We We, due weather and in this event, we weren't able to do that training for the day.

Q. Okay. I understand. So speaking of the weather, and again this is before the accident, do you remember what the forecast might have been before you got underway?

A. Yeah. So the forecast for the day was definitely in the marginal category, roughly in the 30 to 40 knot wind and upwards into the possibility of some heavy seas. I don't -- I can't recall the exact number, but the offshore wind and (indiscernible) the predicted wind was definitely in the marginal. We were -- we definitely had cause for concern that was within our risk mitigation and we talked about it. Yeah.

Q. So do you have a favorite source for getting weather information?

A. Yeah. So for us because we were, technically, in the student mentality, I wasn’t in -- other than just to be informed about the sea state, I wasn’t using what I would now use as the CO of a

cutter to get underway. So I wasn't very -- looking at weather in a detailed form. But we looked -- we used applications like Windy and then looked at a weather buoy. I can't recall what that exact data is -- that I was looking at from those two sources.

Q. Okay. You actually brought up a point that I missed. Can you describe, briefly, the relationship between the -- or who owned the vessel at that point and what was going on with people on board?

A. Yep. So Bollinger was the -- Bollinger Shipyard was responsible for all things of the Cutter Glenn Harris at that time. At that time I was responsible for the crew. So the morning of the ship, the unmooring ship, driving the, the plan, the navigation, and all of that is under the -- was under the responsibility of Bollinger. Specifically the master captain was Captain Leonard Guidry. He was the sea trial master and captain of the vessel and is the mastering captain for majority of the FRCs.

Q. Okay. The bridge of the FRC, what do you have for radio sources up there? Is it our weather fax?

A. We have the ability to tune to a radio station, but we do not have a printout or a way to receive a weather fax, like for example on the NS -- the National Security Cutter has an entire system that receives that type of data.

Q. How about a navtex receiver?

A. Can you say that again, sir?

Q. Have you ever heard of a navtex receiver?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. Do you remember seeing -- hearing about a special -- any special marine warnings that were issued starting at noon that day?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay.
A. I would say -- when I say hear, I wasn't in a mental state to be on the lookout and hearing or paying attention to those things.
Q. Of course. Okay. So what I'd like to do now is -- just as much detail as you can remember, just recount the -- from the time of the response or the distress call to when you left the scene. In fact I'll turn my camera off, so you don't have distractions. Just talk to the computer and let us know what happened out there.
A. Yes, sir. So we were (indiscernible) to get underway from the Bollinger Shipyards volunteer shipyards pier give or take around 1300 local that day.

The reason why it was so late is that some of our training was prescribed to do evening ops so the plan was to spend most of the afternoon and into the evening conducting training.

We had gotten underway from the Port of Fourchon, through the channel and we went -- we turned left and then I think went to the East, right outside of the Grand Isles waterfront there and that's where we, kind of, we were positioning ourselves through training.

When we arrived into a little safe haven area away from a lot

of the rigs that were out there, that is when the weather system had came over top of us and we saw it on radar and it approaching.

We began our training and went into passing control of the ship to various watchstanders and then the weather system had come on top of us pretty quickly at that point.

The weather system was very cumbersome and it definitely engulfed us. Our visibility have reduced all the way to a point where we could barely see the bow of our cutter.

At that point we were also observing winds ranging from 50 miles per hour up to 80 miles per hour locally on board the cutter. Our visibility was reduced because of the rain and at that point is when -- as time had just generally began as that system stalled over top of us, is when we started to hear and queue into a lot of the other merchant vessels in need for support.

So there was a handful of, sounded like, crew boats or tugboats that couldn't -- that were a little late with getting into safe haven. So we were closely monitoring as we were station keeping and keeping our bow into the weather. We were just listening to some other vessels struggling with fighting into the elements and getting into safe haven.

I think, eventually, all of them that we were able to listen to either had a support vessel there with them, or the weather had subsided to a point where they were able to get into a, for example, Grand Haven or Grand Isles, excuse me.

When the system had, kind of, gone over the top of us and visibility starting to improve, we heard from a merchant vessel that was out there. I think it was the merchant vessel Rockfish, that there was an overturn platform.

At that point we were roughly five nautical miles away, we were barely in visual range of that. We were repositioning to, kind of, assist or slash identify what was actually happening.

When we had gotten closer and arrived on scene, if you will, was when we -- one of my crew members were on the cutter's forward looking infrared camera and FLIR camera. And we were about two miles away from the rig at this point and the camera was what helped us identify that there were people on the overturned rig.

We were, at that point, just remaining quiet because on the radio there was a lot of other merchant vessels that were closer into the rig and, kind of, down swell and they were finding a lot of debris in the water, and so we were just trying to listen to them and hear what reports they had.

Once we identified that there were folks on board the rig, was when we -- the Captain Guidry decided to insert the cutter into the case at that point and into the scenario.

As we were able to get a clearer picture, we were able to identify five individuals climbing on the overturned rig, on the white part of superstructure, taking shelter from the waves that were hitting the structure at that time. I'm going to pause there just to see if there's any questions before proceeding forward.

Q. Of course. Thank you, Captain. So just to confirm that the first distress call you heard was the Rockfish's, for this incident. You were responding to the Rockfish and not some other tasking.

A. Yes. That is correct, sir. We heard nothing from the actual vessel that overturned, the liftboat, or anyone else. The Rockfish was -- I'm pretty confident it was the Rockfish was the one that made the initial report, kind of, to follow the vessels in the area that there was an overturned liftboat.

Q. Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about the liftboat's condition when you arrived, what position it was in, and how much of the superstructure was exposed?

A. Yeah. So the -- I still to this day can't -- I can't do a good job of telling which sides the forward or port, the starboard side of the liftboat. But there was a corner of the liftboat -- I'm unassuming the liftboat is more of a square, but there's a corner of the liftboat that one of its spuds that were protruding out of the water, and that's what you can see in most photos.

In terms of the level -- thanks for providing that. In terms of what could be seen, there is the white superstructure --trying to make this a little bit bigger.

Q. For the record we're looking at the -- an outboard profile of the Seacor Power, which I've inverted and flipped horizontally, so it actually looks like the port side.

A. Yeah. So the white superstructure, that I think -- which is

level 2 that top level underneath, I think that's the bridge, was the -- what could be -- what was seen. The (indiscernible) -- even the bridge was a bit in the water and those windows were being splashed by the waves. It was just about that first deck that looked to be -- first to second deck to looked to be out of the water.

Q. So when you say the first and second deck, you mean what the Coast Guard would call the main deck and the oh-one deck.

A. No. I'm working my way down from the top of the master --

Q. Okay.

A. -- and that first check down, first or second deck down.

Q. Okay. And where were these five survivors at that time?

A. So I would say -- it's kind of hard to tell from this image, I know there's a few local or a few photos that were released from -- released into the media that provide a little bit better description. But I think it’s between the first and the second deck, that ladder -- behind that ladder is where there was a bit of a covey, if you will, that they were able to take shelter behind.

Q. So can you see my mouse? Right here, is that what you’re talking about?

A. Down -- or sorry. Higher.

Q. Oh, okay.

A. Higher in the rig, yeah.

Q. This is the (indiscernible) hole here. This is what they

call the main deck. There's a door to the galley here.
A. Okay.
Q. And forward of that is a door that goes forward into the engine room. You can't actually see the door on this drawing.
A. Yeah, yeah. That that makes sense now. I just re-looked at a photo. So I would say that main deck area where your -- that ladder was definitely, kind of, a hiding spot that they were using to tuck themselves into a corner.
Q. Okay. Were these doors -- any of them open when you arrived?
A. So it was hard for us tell that. It was definitely later, I think, and I'll get to this later in the narrative --
Q. Sure.
A. -- but there was a hatch that was opened by the two remaining survivors, hard to tell what hatch that goes to or what it's for.
MR. MUISE: Okay. Somebody else had a question, let's see.
MR. [redacted] I think it was Drew.
MR. MUISE: Sorry. Drew, go ahead.
BY MR. EHLERS:
Q. Yeah. And sorry, I'm going to back play up here just a little bit and go through some questions. You mentioned doing a -- looking at the weather and I think doing a risk assessment. Was -- when you were looking at that weather information, was that something internal to your Coast Guard crew or was that something you did with the Bollinger crew?
A. Yeah. So the conversation that we had -- we had two

conversations, one was with my crew. My crew was a bit concerned about, you know, risk versus gain, this being training, it was our last day in Bollinger. So there was just -- there was some angst amongst my crew that I wanted to leave and give them a bit of a certainty.

And when we did our overall safety brief with all hands, it was talked about by Captain Guidry about, you know, we're not going to continue to stay out there if they think that things become burdensome or we're not able to complete training, so and it was often in two different places.

It definitely didn't get the level of scope that, you know, Coast Guard operations usually gives to risk assessment but that's, you know, that was -- it wasn't our cutter, it wasn't our risk assessment to make.

Q. Okay. All right. And did you have any authority to, I'll call it stop-work authority, when it comes to these training voyages?

A. Yeah. I felt like I had a say, and I had an authority to make a comment or make a decision to Captain Guidry if I felt or if I was getting levels of uncomfortable and uncomfortableness from the crew, (indiscernible).

Q. Okay. And fast forwarding to when the system hit, you mentioned the whiteout conditions or visibility going down. Do you have a sense of what the winds were at that point?

A. Yeah. And a whiteout is a really good word to describe it.

I would, you know, I would also throw a phrase of a true definition of a squall. But winds ranged from -- at the start of on scene there from 50 to 80 mile per hour winds on the least locally observed on board the cutter when it first came over. As the night had moved forward, we continued to see 35 to 40 knot winds went alongside the rig.

Q. Okay. So you'd say about the time the accident happened, 50 to 80 knot winds?

A. I don't know the time -- the exact time of when the boat capsized. But when we were in whiteout conditions, it was -- we saw 80 knot winds.

Q. Okay. And I believe you said this, but correct me if I'm wrong, you were about 5 miles away from where the accident location was at the time that the winds hit. Is that correct or?

A. Yes. So by the time that we could get our, kind of, our clarity of seeing where we were, and that’s when the motor vessel Rockfish reported that the boat was overturned. We were -- from that -- from Rockfish, where about five nautical miles away.

Q. Okay. And how long would you say the heavy rains and the wind lasted? The period that, again, the squall hit to the time that you were able to regain your bearings?

A. I would say that that experience was from 30 to 45 minutes of a pretty cool whiteout squall condition.

Q. Okay. And I believe you said prior to that squall hitting, Coast Guard folks were taking turns at the controls and, correct

me if I'm wrong, did -- number one, is that correct? And number two, did the Bollinger crew take back control -- take the controls once the squall hit?

A. Yes, sir. So we (indiscernible) my Coast Guard crew were giving controls of the cutter to the (indiscernible) as we were making our way through the squall. At the time that we heard the report of the liftboat, that is when Bollinger took over controls.

MR. EHLERS: Okay. All right. Thank you very much.

MR. MUISE: Mike Richards, you had a question?

MR. RICHARDS: Yes, sir. Mike Richards, NTSB.

BY MR. RICHARDS:

Q. I don't think you mentioned sea state. Do you have an assessment of what seas were while you were in the white out conditions, specifically, (indiscernible) during the squall?

A. Yeah. So when we were -- when we had gotten underway, we were looking at about one to three foot of waves, no major swells of any sorts. When we got into the squall, those waves had picked up to just wave tops here, had picked up to about four-to-five-foot waves, still no swells.

By the time we got to the liftboat, we were -- we saw a good amount of swell developing, that developed all the way into a 6-foot swell with waves on top.

Q. So this was -- if you were in whiteout conditions for about 45 minutes, the swells you say developed at least 45 minutes after the initial impact of the squall.

A. Yes. When we first got underway, and when we first got hit by the squall, we didn't have any -- nothing more than a notable swell, so I would say there was nothing more than a two-foot swell. When the swell came through, it just produced a lot of waves, bigger waves, messy, you know, kind of, white chop waves that were in that 4-foot category. By the time we had repositioned and, kind of --

MR. EHLERS: Marcel, I lost him.

MR. MUISE: Yeah. I lost him too. Give him a minute.

MR. EHLERS: Okay. We may have to have him repeat that.

MR. [redacted] I think I'm back; I think I dropped there for a minute.

MR. MUISE: Sure. Go ahead. We lost you when you were talking about the sea state.

BY MR. EHLERS:

Q. Yes, sir. So you when you were -- we can't see you, but we can hear you, and you were in the middle of describing the evolution of sea state as you experienced from the initial squall event through the (indiscernible).

A. Yes, sir. So during this, when we had first arrived to our training box, we likely saw a swell of about 1 to 2 feet waves, about one to two. When this squall came over top, we saw a grow in wave height, up to the four to five category. We weren't really seeing a big swell at that time. We were seeing -- we were feeling a lot of sea wave and a lot of wind pressure, by the time

or visibility cleared --

MR. EHLERS: Oh, he always gets to that point and then we lose him, must be important.

MR. [redacted] Hello.

MR. MUISE: Hey, Captain.

BY MR. [redacted]

A. So I think I know where you guys lost me there, it was, kind of, the transition from when the squall became an issue with us. So by the time that 45 minutes of being in a whiteout condition to learning about the liftboat, swells were generating fast. By the time we had got into the liftboat, we were then looking at about a four to a five-foot swell.

And I want to point something out, that we were in two different sections of water. So our training ground was a little bit closer aboard the shore, whereas the liftboat was out in deeper water than where we were initially, where we were initially were hit by the squall.

Q. Okay. Thank you. This is really helpful. You had said that you had been anticipating by the (indiscernible), 30 to 40 knot or mile per hour winds, but I don't think you said what type of seas were you expecting. Were you expecting one to two? Do you know, Marcel, I don't know if video is not required, it might help if he used the audio phone.

MR. MUISE: Yeah. Yeah. I agree, maybe it'll help with bandwidth if we secure the video on his end.

MR. EHLERS: Okay. Sir, if you can hear us, we've lost you. You may want to re-connect by phone.

Hey, Marcel. Try sending him a chat and just ask him to call in (indiscernible).

MR. MUISE: Yeah.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Good afternoon. This is Lieutenant Commander [redacted] I'll pass him the message and the call-in code and have him call in on top of the video.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Thanks, Commander.

UNKOWN SPEAKER: And Marcel, I have just a few questions, but I'll make him quick because I know now we're starting to run long and there's some other people who want to ask questions.

MS. PHILLIPS: While we're waiting, Marcel, he mentioned he's looking at a photo. Do you know if we have the photo he's looking at?

MR. MUISE: I don't know, actually. Good question.

MS. PHILLIPS: I'll ask him if --

MR. [redacted] I'm back online if that helps.

MR. MUISE: Sure. Lieutenant [redacted] lets -- you can secure your camera, maybe that'll help with the bandwidth if that's the problem and we'll just go with audio.

MR. [redacted] Yeah. I'm going to go ahead and try to get the meeting thing back up and then I'll also have my phone line on as well if I get dropped again so there's no loss, I'll just transition to that, if that's all right.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Roger that. So go ahead, Mike Richards.

BY MR. RICHARDS:

Q. Okay. Are you there?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. Sorry. There's other people have questions. I'll wrap these up pretty quick. But I think the question is, briefly, what seas were you anticipating before departure?

A. I think we were anticipating for that system that was going to come through about 3-to-4-foot seas, which we were comfortable with proceeding for the training.

Q. Okay. So you were expecting 30 to 40 knot winds. The seas you just mentioned, to me a squall is a more particular type of events characterized by high winds, heavy rain, it, qualitatively, it makes an intense impact if you're out on the water. So my question to you is based on the forecast information you had looked at, were you anticipating a squall?

A. No, sir.

MR. RICHARDS: Okay. That's all for me now, Marcel.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Captain Phillips?

MS. PHILLIPS: Good afternoon. Tracy Phillips.

MR. [redacted] Yes, ma'am.

BY MS. PHILLIPS:

Q. When you heard about the weather before you got underway, did the Bollinger captain show you a written weather report, or did he have (indiscernible) whether --

A. That's my fault, sorry.
Q. Did he just, kind of, verbally talk with you about the weather forecast?
A. Just verbally talked, nothing -- we didn't look at any products or anything of that sort.
Q. And you don't know if he had a written (indiscernible)?
A. No, I do not.
Q. Okay. You mentioned the wind speeds that you saw that day between 50 and 80. Was that in miles per hour or knot? What would you --
A. That's in knots, ma'am. Off of the tools that we have on board the cutter.
Q. Knots, okay. Thank you. And I think you said you were station keeping when the squall was coming through. Is that right?
A. Yes, ma'am. We watched the squall approach us on radar and by the time it got into us, the wind was so strong that we needed to put our bow into it or we would have been set very quickly in a dangerous direction so yes, ma'am.
Q. So what was your heading against when the wind hit or when you were going into the winds. Do you remember or what general direction --
A. I would say the general direction was to the East.
Q. So you were pointing --
A. Into the wind.

Q. (indiscernible).
A. We were pointed into the wind and I couldn't give you a direct bearing, but I want to say it was in an easterly direction. We were pointed in an easterly direction.
Q. Okay. And you had mentioned that you were looking at a photo just now.
A. Yes.
Q. Can you tell us what photo that we're looking at?
A. Yes, ma'am. It was just one of the press releases released by, I think it was the first press release released by District 8 or Sector New Orleans. It was just helping me orientate myself to what we were seeing that night and that I have a better, clearer way to answer the earlier questions about where on the deck for when we get there so.
Q. Great. Okay. Thanks. Do you know if you or any of your crew took any pictures of the capsized vessel that day?
A. Yes ma'am. Our crew members had taken photos and all of those photos have been provided to District 8 and Sector New Orleans public affairs.
MS. PHILLIPS: Okay. Thank you. That's all the question I have.
MR. MUISE: Okay. Thank you, Captain. ABS and then NCOE and then we'll move on with the story. So go ahead, John.
MR. PRESTON: Yes, Captain -- or Lieutenant.
BY MR. PRESTON:

Q. While you were seeing the storm come on the radar and going through, did you hear any notices over the radio about the oncoming weather?

A. No, sir.

Q. So and no pan-pan notices or anything like that?

A. Nothing that stood out, sir.

MR. PRESTON: Okay. Thank you.

BY MR. MUISE:

Q. And just to clarify, Lieutenant, did you hear the UMIB issued by New Orleans? This would have been about 10 minutes after the distress call?

A. Did I hear --

Q. The urgent marine information broadcasts?

A. About vessels in distress?

Q. This specific vessel in distress.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. I -- there were many released by Sector New Orleans. There was -- there was a vessel that had lost power outside of the entrance to Grand Isle, and then there was this liftboat.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Go ahead, [redacted] with NCOE.

MR. [redacted] Yes. Hello, Lieutenant.

BY MR. [redacted]

Q. You stated that or right before we lost you on video, it was talking about the location of (indiscernible) to the location of

the liftboat. Can you describe that? I believe you said (indiscernible) inward?

A. Yes, sir. We were further to the East, a little bit closer to the entrance of the Grand Isle. The -- over and in a little bit further in, kind of, when you get underway a little bit in more open ocean, there's a lot more rigs that are out there closer in a little bit clearer water for us to train.

When we found and received the report of the overturned liftboat, it was roughly, I would say, five nautical miles to our -- was it was (indiscernible) to be five nautical miles to the West and a little bit Southwest, and it looked a little bit more offshore in deeper water.

We were initially started training in, I think, it was about around 30 to 40 foot of water. I think the liftboat was in about 50 to 60 foot of water, I might be a little off on the liftboat location. But we were definitely in closer to shore of where were planning to conduct training.

MR. [redacted] Okay. Right. Yeah. That's what I was curious about was the water depth and the training location versus at the scene of the accident as well. So that's all I got. Thank you.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Thank you, [redacted] Michael Cenac, can you hold off on your question so we can get to the end. I'd like to continue with the timeline.

BY MR. MUISE:

A. So I think I took a pause at us arriving on scene and finding

the five persons on the overturned vessel.

Q. Yes, sir.

A. When we had arrived on scene, we slowly were able to identify that were five people. It took a while for us to find and identify all those members. Only one person at that time had a personal floatation device on.

We were upswell, so we were to the East of the liftboat at that point, so we were in a bad position and we needed to come about and get ourselves into the weather.

When we had identified that there were personnel on the rig, the Bollinger sea trial crew made an attempt to launch their small boat pretty early upon our rival.

They launched their small boat. The small boat was able to get near the rig but wasn't able to get close and really get onto the rig in a rescue manner, and the people were -- the Bollinger crew returned, and the captain recovered the small boat.

I would say at that point was when it became apparent that the swell height had increased dramatically. It was apparent that from the way the small boat was riding in the water, it was clear that we were looking at 5-to-6-foot swells at that time.

We had recovered the small boat and we positioned ourselves a little bit more down down swell of the rig and continued to evaluate the situation.

We made an attempts to hail via the loudhailer upwind to try to reach out to the folks on the rig. We had no means to receive

communication back from them. We were trying to direct them to put flotation devices on.

As the scenario -- situation developed and we were down swell, we could see on the rig that the five members were losing -- when I say losing, I mean by waves, kind of, a safe haven area to be. And I have a Zulu time on the timeline that we have here of went things started to happen.

So we had three merchant vessels that were further down swell from us that were finding flotation devices and life rafts, and they were searching in those. The motor vessel, Atara, found a person in the water. They were unable to retrieve that person in the water, so the motor vessel Elise Mary came alongside to assist, I think Elise Mary had a shallower freeboard to get that person on board.

At that time, all these vessels were losing communications with sector -- Coast Guard Sector New Orleans. So we ended up taking on communications and the coordination's there locally and pushing that and sharing that with Sector New Orleans relaying information.

At that time there was a local, it was either a motor vessel Rockfish or another sister platform had informed us that the capacity of the motor vessel Seacor Power was 18 persons (indiscernible) capacity. The person that was rescued from the water had informed us that the (indiscernible) from the Elise Mary that (indiscernible) was there was a possibility of 17 persons on

board.

There then was the motor vessel, Christian Chouest, that found or located another person in the water. They were able to recover that person, we relayed information on that. And at that time about 2300 Zulu was when we observed -- we maintained -- through all of this, we maintained position right off of the liftboat and as close a fashion as we could, as Captain Guidry felt comfortable with. And we had our FLIR looking at the five individuals on board of the platform.

At 2300 Zulu was when we observed one person fall into the water, and that's when we drove into and positioned ourselves in a way where we could rescue and recover that person from the water, we did. That person did not have a flotation device.

Shortly after that was when motor vessel Cape Cod observed another person in the water, rescued and was able to recover them. The two Coast Guard 45 medium response small boats responded to the scene from station -- Coast Guard station, Grand Isle. They were able to be a little bit more into the rig than we were. At that time that’s when the fourth member on the liftboat had entered the water.

When the 45 was in a good position to recover that person from the water -- was the best position, and that person that they recovered was one of them that had a severe wound that needed to be evacuated to EMS and they did so. And the second Coast Guard response boat, the 45, had come and relieved the other one up

close and tight of the overturned rig and we were a little bit offset.

So at this time there were three survivors still remaining on the rig and we were closely approaching sunset. The -- we were informed that we were able to get a Bristow helicopter on scene from Sector New Orleans and from what I understand, that's a commercial rescue company. And they arrived on scene with hoist capability and a hoist swimmer or rescue men that could be lowered down; they arrived on scene.

Due to the orientation of the platform, it was hard for them to identify where the individuals were, they needed to do a few orbits. And at this time it was night, so we were using our spotlights to provide them direction and then be able to maintain visual of the folks on the rig, three remaining.

We -- they made an attempt to lower their swimmer and their swimmer was able to touch the hole in the rig but wasn't able to really go underneath the hole in the rig and get to where those survivors were. When I sat underneath, I mean things were inversed -- were capsized at that point, so when I say underneath, I mean not underneath the hole against the main deck of the rig.

They -- we were able to lower a bag with a radio and flotation devices for the three remaining survivors. It took them a while for them to up on the radio, but they eventually did, and we took over communications directly with the survivors at that time. And I'll go ahead and pause there.

A. Okay. That's actually very helpful, Lieutenant. I had some confusion about how many, four or five people but I think I understand the story now. Can you -- and this might be a difficult question but if you were to explain to the lay person, somebody who's never been to sea before, how would you explain why the FRC couldn't get any closer to within heaving line range?
A. So I would say the reason is there -- it was unclear of the condition of the water surrounding the rig. So we -- there was -- it was unclear to know if our approach would have hit another spud or if we would hit crane.

We were not familiar with what was on the approaching water, if that water was clear to get any closer. There was a high likelihood that we -- the cutter could have drove right over the top of another spud or the crane that was on that lift platform. Does that answer your question?
Q. It does, thank you. And I asked about doors earlier, but I didn't get to the crane. Where was the crane that port side crane when you arrived?
A. When we arrived, I don't recall seeing a crane at all. I mean, we may have seen a corner of the crane but as I look at the photo again, yeah there -- we didn't see any cranes. We only could see one of the spuds in the corner, and a section of that pilot house where that -- the superstructure on the deck. We could not see any crane. We would see railings. We could see railings for the main deck, but we could not see any crane.

Q. Okay. So similar question about your small boat, can you explain too, again, the lay person who's ever been in a small boat before. Why was it that you couldn't get the over the horizon boat close enough to the liftboat?
A. Yeah. So I wasn't driving the small boat, so I couldn't speak directly to that. But the condition -- the weather conditions at that point were so cumbersome and so dangerous that a small boat of that tonnage, of that weight, is a bobber and could get thrashed against that rig very quickly and aggressively.
Q. Okay. So of the five -- the first three that went in the water, one of them was one that you recovered?
A. So the first -- yeah. The three -- we know that three went in the water. I haven't talked about the third. But the two that went in the water that I mentioned, the first one was recovered by us, yes.
Q. Okay. I'll tell you what, I'll let you continue with your story from there. Go ahead.
A. Okay. So there were three crew members remaining, they had flotation devices at this time, and they had radio communications with us. The helicopter needed to return for fuel for endurance and we remained on scene. At this -- for us there on scene all we had was the Coast Guard cutter, Glenn Harris, and a 45. So we were attempting to identify what could we do in that time and there wasn't anything safe for us to approach, and so we just continued to monitor and watch to see if somebody had gone in the

water.

Unfortunately during this time, when the helicopter was away was when the third person went into the water. And when I say went into the water for all three of these individuals, it was unclear if they had done it by choice, or if they had been swept away, or been forced into the water.

We observed from the FLIR that the third person had gone in the water, but we weren't able to maintain -- it was at night, we weren't able to maintain visual of that person in the water. It is unknown if that person came up from the water. So no clarity other than us seeing him just being swept away from that point.

Moving from there, we tried to search the water. The down swell run, the drift of the sea conditions for the person in the water and both the 45 and us weren't able to identify anybody or anything in the water.

Moving forward, we continued to maintain communications with the two members on board, and that's when things started to get challenging as the -- we observed the weather shift further to the South or more southernly and when it -- when that happened, it -- their current lee or area of protection became more exposed, so they were losing protection on the external decks and the wave condition towards or onto the platform was becoming more violent and increasing.

The Bristow helicopter returned, and we were still able to have communications with the two survivors at this point. They

were entertaining a series of many opportunities to try to rescue them, but they were not -- especially as the weather had shifted more southernly, just became even more dangerous with the amount of overhangs and railings.

The Bristow had a conversation with the survivors about seeking shelter and that's when we observed on the FLIR, the opening of a hatch or a door, unknown exactly what that hatch goes to or where that -- where and what that was for, but we only saw one person move. The Bristow made it sound as if both of them entered that space and sought shelter as the conditions were shifting and increasing. When I say increasing, I mean wave height and in violence, I don't mean wind. Wind was not increasing, wind at that point was sustaining 35 to 49 winds.

At this point was towards our, we continued to maintain on scene but we -- Captain Guidry was approaching his air endurance limitations, so yes, we had a Coast Guard crew on board, but we weren't yet trained and ready to take over command of that vessel, and captain Guidry only had a crew of one -- a crew of his sea trial crew. So he needed to make the decision about endurance and stamina for the rest of the night, and he, eventually, at this point, give or take, you know, maybe 30 minutes was when he made the decision that they -- that he needed to head in.

So we had passed all information to Sector New Orleans. Coast Guard 65 had arrived on scene and that last 65 helicopter, a Dolphin helicopter arrived on scene and, kind of, took over

control -- regional control of that and assessed it and we passed information to them.

There was still a handful of merchant vessels that were searching the waters in the area. And we, eventually, around 04 Zulu had made the decision that we were -- we needed to head in for the Port of Fourchon.

Q. Okay. Thank you again for that, Captain. So that decision to head back in was more of an insurance thing it wasn't about food, fuel, or water?

A. It was an endurance thing. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. I have a few follow-ups about the crew on the liftboat. If that hatch that you described that they sought shelter in, was that a little bit forward?

A. Yeah. It was -- if you -- can you show that --

(Crosstalk)

Q. I could bring up that -- if I can figure out how to do that again. Okay. Can you see that?

A. Yep.

Q. Okay. There is a hatch here.

A. Yeah, yeah. It's unclear to me if it was a deck hatch there or if it was a bulkhead door.

Q. Okay.

A. But there was -- in that region there is a hatch that we saw that opened and that they went into.

Q. Okay. And the way the liftboat landed was more of a

southeasterly heading or more southerly heading.
A. I would say more southeasterly, yes.
Q. Okay. And then I heard you say that the waves started to shift, or wind started to shift or both to the South. that would make since --
A. So I would say --
Q. -- that this would provide some shelter.
A. Yeah. I would say that it was definitely favoring a little bit more southerly, it had a little bit of an East head to it, the way that the deck was facing. But the way the flat deck was facing at that time, was definitely more on the southerly.
So when things had first started, they were able to hide behind superstructure there where you have things circled and that's when things had shifted that, that base. Imagine that the actual working deck was a wall, that became the backboard, pretty much, of the swells as they shifted to the South, so that's why things became a lot more violent.
Q. Okay. The patient that you recovered, a few questions about him. How did you get him on board?
A. So we deployed a series of life rings and heaving lines. We were able to get connected to him and we helped haul him into the hole. We had a pilot’s ladder over the side, once he was able to recover his wrath and he felt strong enough, he just needed to stand up on one of the rungs of the pilot ladder, and the crew was able to pull up the rest of the way.

Q. Okay. Did he say that how he egressed from the liftboat?
A. He did not.
Q. Okay. I know your timeline says that he was treated for shock. Is there any other medical treatment that you gave him?
A. No.
Q. Is there -- does the Coast Guard have like a patient contact report, where you describe treating the victims of SAR cases, things like vital signs, sign symptoms?
A. We didn't take any medical conditions or symptoms of those sorts from him.
Q. Okay. The -- so the effort -- did you have a whole crew, like your whole crew on board or were you shorthanded?
A. Yes, sir. We had -- at that time we had 27 members on board.
Q. So is there an instruction somewhere that says how much -- what kind of medical training people have to have in your crew? Like for example, you know, A 154 needs two EMTs and a 110 needs one 45 (indiscernible) first aid.
A. Yeah. So, generally, for an FRC we do not have a requirement to have a level of medical operational -- we call that operational medical knowledge. Our crew, from where we're going and tactical combat care, so triaging in combat, but that's the level of medical training that majority of the folks had on board.
Q. Do most patrol boats have a stateside -- have a basic EMT onboard?
A. No.

Q. How about equipment? What's -- is there an instruction somewhere that that says what kind of equipment you have to carry for trauma or any medical?
A. Yeah. So for a regular FRC we typically have, kind of, a more increased or a plussed of a first aid. But this was not -- this FRC in the condition of equipment on board did not meet Coast Guard standards, it was not yet owned and operated by Coast Guard.
Q. Okay.
A. So the medical level of medical readiness would have been a volunteer standard.
Q. And you didn't wind up using any of that anyway. Is that correct?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. Okay. Are you familiar with search and rescue transponders?
A. Like EPIRB's?
Q. So it's similar, excepts it shows up on your radar screen, your X-Band radar like a -- looks like a RACON.
A. SART.
Q. Right. So when you arrived on scene, did you remember seeing any of those on your radar?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. The 45s that you were working with, from what I can see, they were transmitting their AIS in a law enforcement mode, so we can't see that information. But can you see that when they're in an LE mode, can other Coast Guard cutters see blue

forces? Like and does that affect your capabilities as an on-scene coordinator?

A. I don't -- in that scenario, it did not affect our ability to be able to be an on-scene coordinator. But we have other means of maintaining blue force tracking and blue force awareness -- situational awareness of other assets in our area.

Q. Okay. And my last question for you is -- I'll have one more later but was anybody hurt in your crew? Can you confirm that there's no injuries or any damage to the FRC?

A. No. No one hurt and no one hurt on our crew or no damage to the cutter itself.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Again thank you, Captain for all the information.

MR. [redacted] Sure.

MR. MUISE: I will open it up to the rest of the -- the rest of my team.

MR. [redacted] Hey, Lieutenant. This is Lieutenant, junior grade, [redacted] [redacted] with the Coast Guard.

BY MR. [redacted]

Q. A couple of follow up questions for you, sir. First one being can you confirm whether or not you and your crew had undergone ready for sea or ready for operations certifications?

A. We did not.

Q. Understood. And as the on-scene commander, what type of tasking were you giving to the other search and rescue units under

your purview at the time?

A. So tasking was -- all the tasking was verified with the Sector New Orleans. But tasking, for example, for the merchant vessels was, kind of, giving them direction and guidance on how to best position and recover the folks that they found in order. If they weren't able to inform us and to provide them flotation devices and get -- to remain on scene and alongside.

Regarding the forty -- the Coast Guard assets and the helicopter, the Coast Guard small boats tried to take direction in the way of, you know, positioning themselves as close and as tight to the platform in case that somebody did go in the water and, kind of, relieving each other of that but then also provided them -- putting them off searching pattern.

There was one detail that I missed was the piece of a Coast Guard fixed wing, there was a Coast Guard CASA aircraft that was in the area and we had communications with them about, like, identifying a rescue attempt and using life rafts but that wasn't able to be deployed or used. Coordination with the Bristow helicopters was directly with us about trying to either -- trying to get the radio down to them or just identify any means of reaching the survivors.

Q. Understood. And that segways to my next question, it was regarding the CASA and their intent to drop the two tethered life raft into the water. So you're saying that that did not happen, sir?

A. That did not happen. We felt that it -- that we wanted to do that rescue attempt with the assistance of a 45. And when we were positioning ourselves to make that attempt, was when that third person went in the water.

Q. Roger that. And my final question was your FLIR recording the entire time during this evolution?

A. Yes.

MR. [redacted] All right. Those are all the questions I have. Thank you, sir.

MR. MUISE: Okay. Thank you, [redacted] Thank you, [redacted] Anybody else? Any follow-ups? Okay.

BY MR. MUISE:

Q. So my -- the last question for you, Captain, and not to make light of it all of, you know, this tragedy but I'm always curious what went well in this scenario. So given the circumstances, is there a piece of equipment, or some training, or a procedure that you found especially useful that you think we should share with the rest of the fleet?

A. I think one thing for us for recovering a person in the water, the use of life rings with throw bags or attached heaving lines was greatly useful for our individual rescue. We were challenged in being able to get or just get the survivor to the hole of the cutter. By having and using those tools, it allowed us to, kind of, extend our arm out and get them a life ring and get them an additional floatation assistance and then haul him

into us, that was very beneficial and something that was of a huge tool of success.

Radio communications I would say was -- would be another thing and I think that's a hard thing to put on a product. But the communication that of a good Samaritan is the merchant vessels in the area was phenomenal, they were highly supportive and maintained great communication with us and Sector New Orleans.

For our Coast Guard cutter, that forward, that FLIR, that forward looking infrared camera was the game changer, that was our eyes of being able to be on scene. One, we wouldn't have identified that there were people on the rig so early if we didn't have it. And two, it was really our success to identifying when somebody went into the water, being able to -- trying to maintain that level of clarity and looking into to those folks, with just binoculars, at least from the standpoint of a Coast Guard asset. I think those are a few that really jump out to me, sir.

Q. Okay. Is there anything I didn't ask that you think I should know about besides that?

A. No, sir.

MR. MUISE: Okay. If you could think of anything else later on, you can always reach us through Captain Phillips, or our email addresses is witness@ntsb.gov. Again congratulations on your command and please pass on our sincere thanks to your crew for all their efforts that night.

MR. [redacted] Thank you, sir. Appreciate that.

MR. MUISE: Okay. And with that, it's 1600. I will secure the recording here.

MR. EHLERS: And I just want to echo on behalf the NTSB. This is Drew Ehlers the investigator.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

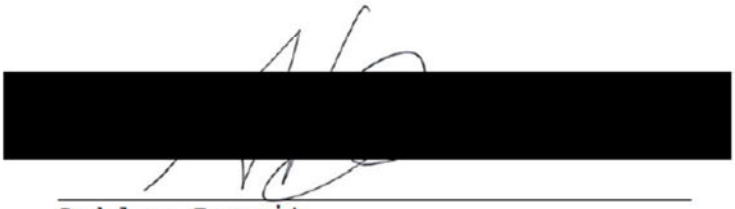
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	CAPSIZING OF THE LIFTBOAT *SEACOR POWER* SOUTH OF PORT FOURCHON, LOUISIANA, ON APRIL 13, 2021 Interview of [redacted]
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA21MM024
PLACE:	Via Microsoft Teams
DATE:	April 21, 2021

was held according to the record, and that this is the original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed to the best of my skill and ability.



Ashley Daumit
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT INTERVIEW WITH: LT [redacted]
RECORDED ON APRIL 21, 2021

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
31	16&17	hole	hull
35	15	his air	their
37	22	hole	Hull
37	23	Wrath	breath
39	5	plussed of	plussed up
42	23	hole	hull

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED. _____
Initials

Marcel L. Muise
Marine Accident Investigator, NTSB

_____
Printed name of person providing the above information

[redacted] Digitally signed by Marcel L. Muise
Date: 2021.09.27 11:18:02 -04'00'

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Signature and date of person providing the above information