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] U.S. Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Commanding Duty Officer

Via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,
April 22, 2021

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT INTERVIEW WITH: LT [redacted]
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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

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Digitally signed by Marcel L. Muise
Date: 2021.09.07 09:56:16 -04'00'

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Signature of Person providing the above information

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Date

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I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(11:35 a.m.)

MARCEL MUISE: This is Marcel Muise, a Marine Accident Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. It's 11:35 on April 22nd. We are in Houma, Louisiana, investigating the circumstances around the capsize of the *Seacor Power* from April 13th. With us online is one of the search and rescue controllers from Coast Guard Sector New Orleans.

Mr. [redacted] can you introduce yourself and spell your name for us?

LT. [redacted] Yeah, good morning. My name is Lieutenant [redacted], middle initial is [redacted], and I was the Command Duty Officer for the response to the *Seacor Power*.

MARCEL MUISE: Do you mind if we record this interview?

[redacted] No.

MARCEL MUISE: Okay. We will go around the room here so you know who's in the room with us.

ANDREW EHLERS: Good morning, this is Drew Ehlers. I'm the NTSB investigator in charge for this accident.

Lt. [redacted] Good morning, Lieutenant. This is Lieutenant Junior Grade [redacted] with the U.S. Coast Guard.

CAPTAIN TRACY PHILLIPS: Good morning. This is Captain Tracy Phillips. I'm the Chair of the Coast Guard's Marine Board of Investigations.

[redacted] [redacted] Good morning, Lieutenant. [redacted] [redacted] with the U.S. Coast Guard.

MICHAEL CENAC: Good morning. This is Michael Cenac with Seacor Marine.

MICHAEL MUISE: National Weather Service?

MELISSA HUFFMAN: Good morning. This is Melissa Huffman with the National Weather Service.

MICHAEL MUISE: And district police?

LCDR [redacted] [redacted] Sir, good morning. This is Lieutenant Commander [redacted] [redacted] with District 8 Legal.

BY MICHAEL MUISE:

Q. Okay. Lieutenant [redacted] Lieutenant [redacted] can you -- we'll get started with some housekeeping stuff. Can you tell us a little bit about your background, some of your calls, maybe your duties where you're at right now? Go ahead, sorry.

A. Yeah, no problem. So yeah, I enlisted in the Coast Guard in 2005. I was an MST-1 up until 2017 when I applied to OCS and commissioned as a response ashore officer. My first commission tour was in sector Honolulu as a full-time Command Duty Officer responsible for all the multi missions out of the sector command center. Leaving there, I attended industry training for marine environmental response, landing in Preston, New Orleans, as an Emergency Management Assistant Department Head and a Collateral Duty TDO.

As far as background over the past 15 years I've been exposed

to pretty much all of the Coast Guard mission's law enforcement search and rescue: MER, TWCS, facilities for state control and emergency management and all the various ICS functions.

Q. Okay. Can you tell us a little bit about Sector New Orleans? What is it that you guys do there in the command center and what is your AOR?

A. Yeah. So in sector New Orleans, I just recently recertified as a command duty officer. In that position, we serve as the liaison for the captain of the port, acting on his behalf for really anything within his federal jurisdiction zone. Spanning the five different authorities from captain of the port, SMC, officer in charge of marine inspections, FMSC and FOSC. So it's a pretty broad range here, covering offshore up to 200 miles for search and rescue, the lower Mississippi River for the captain of the port in OCMI, and really kind of, you know, just acting as a liaison or a touch point from him and the command center operations.

Q. Okay. Can you describe the watch there? What positions are there in the command center?

A. Yeah. So it's made up of four various watch positions. Starting with our communications unit controller, they're responsible for all forms of communication to the maritime environment. Then we have the SU, which is the Situation Unit. They're in charge of the common operating picture, situational awareness, understanding the ins and outs of the port, vessels,

vessels of opportunity. We have an operations unit controller who would be our third position. That's typically a First Class, or an E-6, and they're in charge of all operations within the command center from running search and rescue, marine casualties, pollution; they're our -- kind of our operational touch point. Then you have the command duty officer which is a supervisory role and oversees the watch in its entirety.

Q. Okay. Which watch hand is responsible for actual drawing up search plans?

A. So the search planning itself would be at the operation unit controller unit level, and they would be the ones to come up with your search action plan with consideration from the CDO. Then elevating beyond the command center would be our SMC, which is our Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator, and they are the one responsible for the search and rescue case itself.

Q. Okay. Thank you for that. I have your sit-rep, but I'd still like you to now walk us through, as much as you can remember, of this incident here. Just the first evening is fine from the time of notification to -- through midnight we'll say.

A. Sure. So in context, this was one of those cases where the command center had had a lot of responses. We did have a lot of weather come through earlier in the day, and so the command center itself had received multiple reports of search and rescue vessels in distress, breakaways, potential swamping.

So at 1628 local, we received a transmission from a good

Samaritan reporting a capsized liftboat. The transmission itself came through very broken and kind of hard to read on our side.

Coincidentally, I was actually with the communications unit controller, kind of in the radio room, trying to, basically, prioritize the number of cases that had come in. So when this call came through -- I believe it came through a good Samaritan, the *Rockfish*; basically said that in speaking with another mariner, if they could turn around and come take a look. It looks like the liftboat had capsized.

At that point, we're trying to ascertain the specific location, determine what -- you know, it came across broken, so it was hard to understand, you know -- in hindsight we understand it's a liftboat now, but at the time it sounded like a lifeboat. So really trying to get a better idea of the scenario. Once we got confirmation of a capsized boat and a lifeboat, a life raft in the vicinity, we issued an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast, basically a UMIB, alerting all mariners of the potential distress. And then began trying to come up with a common operating picture determining weather on scene, what other vessels were in the area, vessels of opportunity, but also kind of starting to come up with a game plan for Coast Guard resources.

I guess it's worth note that prior to this call coming in, we were getting notified from our independent units that they were outside of parameters. So we had confirmed that Station New Orleans was not able to respond due to weather. Station Grand

Isle had had flooding, basically water intrusion all the way up to the boathouse. Air Station New Orleans was grounded due to weather. So our options were pretty limited upon that initial notification. And really the vessels on scene was our best and most realistic asset.

Coincidentally, you know, we did have the non-commissioned Coast Guard cutter -- yeah, *Glenn Harris*, which is a fast response cutter -- pre-commissioned FRC, that was able to arrive -- and by the notes of 1702 from that initial notification -- and they were our main touch point and our on-scene coordinator throughout that early evolution. Like I said, at the time there was a lot going on at the command center. We felt like we needed to bring an additional watch standers.

So throughout pretty much all of this conversation, I was walking to Commander [redacted] who was our Assistant Rescue Mission Coordinator, and requested that we begin surging the watch for -- in order to make this case what we believed was our main priority and to have enough bandwidth for other members to kind of take the rest of the cases that had been coming through.

According to the notes, at about 1730, we had a surge watch staff with Senior Chief [redacted] OS-1, a couple different OS-1's and another junior officer, all who are qualified in their competencies. From that point forward, we really tried to make the best use of the situation, contacting different

(indiscernible) requesting air support, contacting the various stations for their parameters, and considering what additional resources we could bring to bear from the Western side of the AOR. Really looking at Corpus Christi and Houston, Galveston.

Are there any questions at this point or do you want me to kind of just continue, continue to --

Q. Nope. I'm not going to interrupt you at this point. Go ahead.

A. Okay. I think it's important to note that during the communications itself, it's pretty broken. Honestly, conditions were really challenging. At one point, we got it from a Good Samaritan that on-scene conditions were at 80-90 knots, 80-90 miles an hour winds, 7-to-9-foot, occasional 12-foot seas, really reduced visibility to the point where it was a whitewash -- had a very challenging time even seeing, even seeing the front of the bridge. By the time that we did have the Coast Guard cutter *Glenn Harris* get on scene, it did seem like conditions started to recede and that we had a lot more opportunities to get assets out there.

So we diverted the Coast Guard cutter *Amber Jack*, which is an 87 that was located previously in White Lake. It was anchored the night before and had been operating to the West. So they had about a 6-to-8-hour ETA. Corpus Christi air station lost a C-144 fixed wing that was en route with about an hour and 45 minute ETA, and an operational waiver was granted for Station Grand Isle.

We launched two 45 RBM's: the 45687 and the 45674. Looking

at the local time here, I'd say within about an hour to an hour-and-a-half, conditions on scene were about 4 to 6, occasional 8 to 10. The ceiling had raised and visibility extended to 4 to 5 nautical miles.

So one of the things that was initially challenging for that beginning of the response was the air frames, which would be our predominate search and rescue asset, were all grounded due to weather. And that was all the way through from Mobile, to New Orleans. Basically, we were told that Mobile itself had diverted all commercial air traffic away, just due to the severity of conditions.

So that was really our initial lay down, trying to complement the surface and air asset piece. The 65, you know, there were various other government agencies -- OGA's that launched. We had Bristo (Ph.), we had Lafourche Parish, and we had a varying complement of OGA's -- or excuse me Good Samaritan vessels on scene as well. So I'd say that would take us through our initial launch within the first few hours.

The other thing that I would say is that Sector New Orleans itself immediately initiated an incident management team. Basically, I requested through the Captain that we bring in all of our relevant department heads to try to take it off of the watch floor where we could make this case our dedicated effort. That was done almost immediately, and I would say our first initial brief went in -- maybe an hour to an hour-and-a-half after that

with the dedicated command posts.

Q. Go ahead, Lieutenant.

A. I mean, I don't know how much -- do you guys have any questions, or do you want me to kind of just go into more specifics? I'm really drawing a lot from our sit rep, because that's kind of my baseline to making sure I'm accurate with our times on scene and what assets had responded.

Q. Yeah, we have your sit rep. So I think times we have already. I guess I'm more interested in the general story and what was happening in the command center there and what challenges you were facing.

A. Sure. So like I said, I think we were extremely busy in the command center from the weather event that had hit us earlier in the day. So bringing in those additional resources was really valuable and critical in allowing us to make the *Seacor Power* a priority. The only challenges I would say is the broken communications was a little bit challenging, coming over channel 16. A lot of that was due to weather and the RSS.

But overall, I thought like from the initial action to the initial resources launched to considering all alternatives was done very, very well. We had a lot of people in the command center dedicated to this specific case. And then the minute it became apparent that it was, you know, that there was much more of a complicated response to it, we broke this out of the command center into the adjacent conference room, set up a situation

board, search staff with, I'd say, ten-to-twelve initial people standing up the ICS, Incident Command System structure. We had a planning section, an operation section, a SITL. Finance was notified. Then we doubled up on our SMC to allow Commander Ferguson to focus solely on this case, which I think was one of the reasons that we were able to bring to bear (Ph.), you know, three or four air stations requesting FRC support from District 8, taking advantage of a noncommissioned cutter, sagging an 87 from 6 to 8 hours away, fueling en route, and then continuous coverage from a 45 -- the multiple 45 at that point.

Q. Okay. Well thanks, Lieutenant [redacted] Along the lines of communications, is that normal for you to struggle with communications in that area? Is there a VHF dead zone in there?

A. There's not, no. And I don't think it was necessarily, I don't think it was necessarily an outage or any sort of lack of frequency. I think the on-scene conditions, there was a lot of wind in the background. And listening to the recordings after, you know, it seems to be kind of broken and hard to understand. There was an accent with one of the reporting sources which made it kind of just more difficult to really understand. And he was using terminology that wasn't typically used I would say in normal broadcasts.

Q. Okay. How about your radio direction finder, was that working fine?

A. It was as far as I know sir, yes.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about an EPIRB notification? I don't see that in the sit rep.
A. Yeah. So EPIRB is handled at Coast Guard District 8, JRCC. So I would be reluctant to speak on their behalf. We did not get notified, or excuse me -- I did not get notified of an EPIRB. My initial notification came through the Good Samaritan on scene.
Q. Did you ever get notified of an EPIRB hit?
A. I don't know. That would have been through the Joint Rescue Coordination Center, District 8. They would be the ones to get the EPIRB notification.
Q. Is the procedure for them to, if it's in your AOR, to pass it to you?
A. Nope. They would run the case as a SAR mission coordinator. We would coordinate responding callouts, assisting, but as far as the EPIRB that falls within their purview. CLV, EPIRB's, aviation, it's very clearly delineated on what they're responsible for.
Q. In your command center, do you have -- is there something on the (indiscernible) like a monitor that's got something like marinetraffic.com or AISlive.com, or something like that where you have a picture where all the good Sam's are?
A. We do as long as they're -- yep. There's a few different common operating pictures we can use for AIS that's done typically at the SU and situation unit level depending on whether or not the AIS is on, but we should have a fairly good idea of the vessels in

the area. Commercial vessels I would say.
Q. Is that a service you pay for?
A. I don't know. I'm not sure. I think it's just within the bandwidth of the Coast Guard, but I don't know how that's funded, if it's contracted or what.
Q. Okay. Your search plan, the search charting when you're doing your planning, was that -- were you searching for a head in the water or a life float, or a life raft when you were doing --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- doing one of your patterns.
A. Yeah. I mean, I would need to go back. I can't speak offhand of what they optimized for except the four different items. I would assume -- I don't want to speculate on what they searched for, but at the time what we did know is that we did have a capsized vessel with numerous people on board in the water with no confirmation of life jackets. I would have to look and look into what programs and see what they optimized for. I don't know off hand.
Q. So what are the various targets that you can search for in that software?
A. It's a huge range. I don't know how many categorical items there are, but essentially, you can get debris, you can get barrels, you can get people with or without life jackets, canoes. And it's all based on wind speed, current, drift modelling, but it's a lot.

Q. If you don't have any information, what is the first thing you run a calculation (Ph.) for?
A. For me specifically, it would be a person in the water without a life jacket because that's what I want to ascertain is how quickly I need to get assets on scene and where that person could potentially go.
Q. Okay. The weather data that's going into that software, where is that coming from?
A. It's our EDS, environmental data, it's pulled with wind speed and current. I don’t know how it's generated or through what programmatic level, but that's something I could look into.
Q. Okay. And with currents, for like, I know loop current is further offshore, is that something that is in there?
A. It would be, yep. And you would pull real-time statistics based on set and drift of the object you're optimized for.
Q. There seems to be a discrepancy in the number of people we were looking for, at least initially. Do you know where that number came from? I understand we were looking for 17 people when the actual POB was 19.
A. Yeah. So actually me and Mr. Cenac, Michael Cenac -- who I believe is on the phone, and then a counterpart of his; I was able to make contact with them fairly early on in the case. They had reported that there were 18 people on board. I believe that when some of the good Samaritans had recovered, some night captain I believe, he reported the crew manifest of 17. So there was a

disparity there. When I spoke with Mr. Cenac earlier, I asked for the passenger manifest, and it came out to be 19 with the total crew onboard. So between that initial report to the people being saved to the crew manifest is how we came up with that disparity.

Q. Okay. Do you have access to the vessel's drawings there (indiscernible) once you know what the target is?

A. That's not something that I would have readily available to me in the command center. I would assume it's in the Coast Guard organization. We could get that, but no, I did not have it at the time.

Q. How about a mass rescue plan or a mass casualty plan, does the sector have one of those?

A. We do. We have a mass rescue operation plan. It's really a Coast Guard District 8 plan, but we have an annex to it.

Q. Is that something you had to activate for this case?

A. We did, yep. We looked at that specifically for the organizational chart, scan and control, initial assumptions, and to just validate that everything we had done up to that point was covered both in doctrine, practical experience and common sense.

Q. Is that maintained by the passenger vessel safety specialist, is that where that comes from?

A. It is, yeah. District 8 would maintain the MRO's, the Master Rescue Operation, and then our Emergency Management Department and the command center share the responsibility for the local annex of the sector.

Q. Okay. The Bristol 739, do you use them a lot? I'm just curious what their capabilities are and when you might use them, why you might use them?

A. Yeah. So from -- it's interesting, I had not, in my experience here at Sector New Orleans, that's the first time that I had used Bristol. So I can't speak confidently about the number or frequency that they're used. I know for this particular case that they were available and had offered their support, but I couldn't talk about how often or what kind of -- the amount of casework they would get or their capabilities.

Q. And my last question is a couple acronyms. Can you describe what probability detection is, or POD; POS and POC?

A. Yes. Probability of Detection is locating the item ,or the object within a specific search area, and that ranges a lot. The probability of detection depending on what that actual item is. If you have an upright 20-foot cuddy cabin, it's going to be a lot different for a probability of detection than a individual in the water with no life jacket.

So these all kind of correlate into themselves. The probability of detection and then the probability of containment is your POC. Probability of containment is the set and drift that we're able to contain the drifted particles where the optimized item could potentially go and those will both culminate in Probability of success; how likely are we able to find what we're looking for in a search area, before it drifts beyond our

resources.

MARCEL MUISE: Well, thank you Lieutenant. I'm going to pass it off to my colleague, Drew.

ANDREW EHLERS: I have no questions at this time.

MARCEL MUISE: Okay. Lieutenant [redacted]

BY [redacted] [redacted]

Q. Good morning, Lieutenant. This is a Lieutenant Junior Grade [redacted] of the Coast Guard. Great job explaining everything in detail. I do have a couple of follow up questions for you, sir. First one being when you did the breakout of the watch team, when it transitioned from the MRO over from the routine command center responsibilities, can you kind of just define what that looked like? Were you able to come up with a secondary watch team fully devoted to the MRO, and if so, where did you fall? Did you stay with the MRO officer or remain with your traditional CDO command center duties?

A. No, that's a great question. So I think one of the reasons that I'm really -- that we rely heavily on our IMT or our breakout group is that it's starting to overwhelm or incumbent the sector command center organic functions. In a case like this where it does have so much to it, we thought having its own dedicated watch team and staff was appropriate and prudent given the time of day. So coincidentally, it happened right during watch relief. So as well as surge staffing, some of our senior leadership to the command center, we also had the oncoming watch rotation.

So what I did is I took this case as the main point of contact for the command center as the CDO, and he oncoming CDO I devoted solely to the other cases that had come as a result of the weather. And we did that pretty much holistically. So we doubled up the communications, we doubled up the OU and the CU, and then myself and MSC stayed devoted to this case breaking it out to literally the room within the command center that's just adjacent to it. And that's where we started kind of our storyboard, our SITL board, where we're able to keep track of relevant information, updates, passenger accountability as we basically initiated the MRO.

Q. Understood. How long are your watches a Command Duty Officer?

A. We're on 12-hour watches; 0445 to 1645.

Q. Understood. So you were the off-going watch, but you and your team stayed behind instead of the MRO, is that correct?

A. Not all of us. I think once we had additional search staffing come in, we tried to release those that had been previously on watch. For me, independently, in sector Honolulu we were on 24 hour shifts. So it's what I'm accustom to and I had stayed on for this particular case as the CDO.

Q. Understood. Thank you for clarifying that. Just for the record, can you just give a brief explanation of how the search and rescue optimization planning system works, and then also how intimately you were involved in the search planning with your OU?

A. Yeah. So you want me to explain SAR Ops, is that kind of the question.

Q. Yeah. Just how the particles work when they drift and what not.

A. Sure. Okay so SAR Ops is really the Coast Guard's system for coming up with realistic search planning. Essentially what it does is it allows you to input a specific scenario into the system and dependent on when that scenario is, you can drift a certain amount of particles, coming up with a realistic idea of where a particular object would drift.

So for this case in particular, we had a last known position or a current position of the vessel, so that was our scenario. It basically takes what we call 5000 rubber ducks, and it puts it at that last known position and then based on winds and current and the object itself, it'll drift those 5000 rubber ducks or those particles within the system to give us an idea of how and where we should dedicate our search and rescue assets.

So as we take into consideration what assets we have coming on scene -- you know a fixed (Ph.) wing is very different than a 65 or a 60 versus an 87 and a 45. So we take a realistic look at that; our probability of detection, containment and come up with a realistic search pattern on a sweep width on how we can maximize the endurance of that particular resource on scene to try to locate the various items or objects.

Q. That's great. Thank you for clarifying that. When you all

issued your UMIB, did you get any good Samaritans to (indiscernible) to the call?

A. We did. So I think we had quite a few on scene. We had the *Elise-Marie*, we had the *Rockfish*, we had the *Ms. Ally*, we had the -- fortunately for us, we had the *Glenn Harris.* And those were just the ones who had initially come through. Like I mentioned before, due to circumstance and the weather conditions there were -- they had sent transmissions on top of each other. So it was pretty challenging to kind of determine who was on scene at what particular point. But we knew that due to the sea state and the visibility, the more vessels you can bring to bear, the better the opportunity there was to find people.

Q. Understood. And two more questions, if you would bear with me here.

A. Yeah.

Q. First one being is did the sectors issue any safety marine information broadcasts or small craft advisories, and if so, how frequently were those going out ahead of this event?

A. That's a great question, and I had actually meant to find that out ahead of time. That's something I'd like to get back with you on.

Q. Sure. My last question is reading through the timeline, I noticed there was a power drop in the command center. I know you have the uninterrupted power source that would help mitigate that, but as someone who is in the command center firsthand, did you

notice any issue during the power drop?
A. None. It has zero effect on the search and rescue case, so -- our backup generator fired up immediately, no loss of power, connectivity, communication with vessels or assets. So yeah, no impact.
Q. Great. Those are all my questions Lieutenant, appreciate your time.
A. Thank you, sir.
BY [redacted]
Q. Good morning, Lieutenant, [redacted] with the Coast Guard. You said the initial communication that contacted you guys was through a good Samaritan on marine radio? Would that be VHF channel 16?
A. It was, yes, sir.
Q. Okay. At any point, was the communication altered or changed to a different frequency on the marine VHF, like 22 or --
A. Yeah, it was not. The reason for that 16 is obviously our international hailing and distress, so we're not going to take anybody off. The more widely we could disseminate this information, the more assets we can bring to this scene and the better educated they'd be. So from my understanding and from my assumption, we would not have changed off of 16 in its entirety.
Q. Yeah, that's fine, it's understandable. I'm just trying to put it on to the record.
A. Yeah, it's a good question.

Q. Also, an alternate frequency, was there was any consideration -- because you said there was some trouble hearing, due to weather. Was there any consideration or thought maybe going to a medium frequency band, 2182 possibly?

A. I can't speak to that. I think at the time we really just wanted to get -- my priority was finding out the most information in the shortest amount of time so that we could start to get people heading in that direction. So no, that was not a consideration for me. In hindsight, it sounds like a good idea. But at the time with the unknown, the weather, the inundation of calls, we just kept them on 16 for continuity. It never got to the point where we really couldn't figure it out.

You know obviously, we're trained to find out the big five: people, position, problem, PFD's, and then description of the vessel, and we were getting those. So I felt that we could put into place a good and realistic response, so we kept them on 16.

Q. Roger that. Just to be sure, medium frequency, 2182 -- 2182 on the meridian -- excuse me, on the medium frequency, so the (indiscernible) band radio, marine radio, that's usually a backup for medium distance communications?

A. Got you, I appreciate it. I did not consider that.

Q. Okay. I was just asking because of the transmission trouble.

A. Nope, understand.

Q. I'm sorry --

A. All right, thanks.

MARCEL MUISE: Michael?

BY MICHAEL CENAC:

Q. Yes. Thank you for your service. This is Michael Cenac, and thank your team as well for everything they did that night and assistance. Just a quick question, I heard you state there was many reported cases that night. Do we know how many cases we were responding to?

A. I don't. And like I said, there were at this point it was simply monitoring the incoming calls. Some vessels had shared some concerns about the sea state and some swamping and some waves coming over the bow, but I don’t have an accurate number of the number of cases responded to, no.

Q. And I understand that all of the cases funneled to New Orleans, is that correct?

A. As far as all search and rescue cases?

Q. Yes, emergency response.

A. We have a clearly delineated area of responsibility that we consider for the -- for Captain Watson is kind of a second commander for sector New Orleans. Under his authority is SMC. He goes about 200 miles out and then a certain duration to the East and West where we share responsibility with the East and West sectors. So yeah, we had a lot, but it was all within our AOR.

Q. Okay. And then do you know how far East and West? Just curious?

A. It's basically Whit Lake to the West to Pearl River on the

East side, and we share that with sector Mobile and the units out of Gulf Port. And to the West I'd have to come up with -- I can get you GPS coordinates for exactly where the jurisdictional boundary lines are, but geospatially, it's White Lake and Pearl River, and then two hundred --

Q. No, sir, just curious. That was how it was originally explained to us is all the sectors. Anyone you call, it funnels up, based on emergency (indiscernible) command.

A. It is. And what you're looking at holistically is you're going to have the independent sectors that have their own authority and resources, and then you have a larger parent command which we call Coast Guard District 8 here, and they would have the air station and some of the larger response assets like the FRC that they dedicated to us.

Q. Okay. Thank you, sir.

A. Thank you,

MARCEL MUISE: Melissa?

BY MELISSA HUFFMAN:

Q. Hi [redacted] I just want to get a sense of what your expectations were for the weather on April 13th?

A. Yeah. So I think that's an interesting conversation because we were looking at it holistically from the sector command, from the sector, like, basically, our home unit. So I had actually gave a call to the forecaster at LIX New Orleans in Baton Rouge. I don't remember who I spoke with, but what they had relayed to me

was that it was confirmed, localized heavy rain and flooding, with gusty winds and hail, and that we should anticipate the impact from 1300 to 1700 with storm (indiscernible) before and after.

So aside from what we had been provided by the National Weather Service, that's really all we had used to kind of go through our forecasts. And I'm looking at the update that was provided that morning. I'm happy to read the bulletin here, but it's basically just the National Weather Service New Orleans, Baton Rouge, NOAA. Basically, overview: severe weather impact, primary threat would be damaging winds in excess of 60 miles an hour, downed trees and powerlines, heavy raining and flooding, 3 to 5 inches of rain. Locally higher amounts possible, especially southeastern Louisiana, Baton Rouge to New Orleans.

But yeah, we take a lot of our guidance, especially in the command center, from the reports provided through National Weather Service.

Q. Okay, excellent. Once you get a briefing from the New Orleans office, how do you disseminate that through the sector?

A. It depends. So in this particular case, I let Captain Denning, our sector deputy know, and she actually sent out -- it says due to weather, due to forecasts of severe weather in the area this afternoon and into the evening, she granted early liberty effective immediately, pending operations. Primarily used to caution when transiting roads, and do not driving through

flooding areas.

So it's really made on a command-risk-based analysis decision on what we feel is prudent for our service members and their ability to get home. Additionally, we can push out that SMIB or some sort of broadcast to mariners depending on the situation.

Q. Okay. What happens in the sector, how does it affect your operations when the weather forecast doesn't match the observations that you all are getting?

A. I think we use real-time data. And what the Coast Guard does exceptionally well is operational risk management by allowing each unit to operate autonomously. So, for example, Lieutenant [redacted] I think you spoke with his (indiscernible) called them directly when the weather hit, found out the parameters. They told me whether or not they could realistically get underway to respond. And the same thing goes across the area of responsibility. It's a huge range, and every unit experiences circumstances differently. So we base it on location primarily.

Q. Okay and then --

A. Did I answer your question, is that what you were asking, is how we kind of do it, like, in a general sense with the Coast Guard unit?

Q. So I guess I'm just trying to get a sense of, you know, if you're given a weather report, and then maybe the observations that you're seeing don't necessarily match what the weather forecast had entailed, how does that affect your decision making,

or what do you do to confirm what's actually going on with the weather?

A. Yeah. I mean, we use -- the best I can say is that we use on scene reporting from our Coast Guard units, or, for example, good Samaritans on scene in this particular case. So we got a weather report; we called each of our units independently and said hey, what are you experiencing there specifically and what are your parameters and able to respond? So the weather report gives us guidance, but we're going to leverage our different units for their observation, and they're going to tell us what they feel comfortable doing based on their commanding officer.

Q. Okay, perfect. And then my last question is, you mentioned that you spoke to someone in Slidell, was that the only time you spoke to someone in that office, or were there other phone calls made to them.

A. Yeah. So that was the first time we had spoken with them. After that, I believe the command center had established a communication frequency with you all to determine what the consistent and updated weather information is going to be in a specific region. So they were getting dedicated updates throughout the entire response. But for me in particular, I only spoke to that forecaster one time at 1200 on April 13th.

Q. Excellent. Thank you, [redacted] That concludes my questions.

MARCEL MUISE: Okay, thank you. Does anybody have any follow-ups? Okay, Mr. [redacted] is there anything else you want to

share with us that we didn't ask?

[redacted] No, not really. No, overall I think that is as best as I can explain the way it went. I do think the Coast Guard leveraged and really used every opportunity and resource at our disposal to make an effective and coordinated response, both in the beginning and throughout. I'm really, really proud of what the team was able to do at every level of it; absolutely challenging situation. Mr. Cenac, my heart goes out to you and your crew, but that's really all I have on my side.

MARCEL MUISE: Okay. And with that its 12:15 and I will secure the recording.

(Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m. 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.

[redacted]

Nikolas Oka
Transcriber