

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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SHIPBOARD FIRE ABOARD THE *HOËGH*
XIAMEN IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA,
ON JUNE 4, 2020

Accident No.: DCA20FM020

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Interview of: JOHN WHITE, General Manager
Horizon Auto Logistics

Jacksonville, Florida

Friday,
June 19, 2020

APPEARANCES:

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U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Jacksonville

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:10 a.m.)

1
2
3 LTJG [REDACTED] Good morning everyone. My name is Lieutenant
4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm an investigator with the Coast Guard down here
5 in Jacksonville. We're here today at Horizon Terminals down in
6 Blount Island to conduct an interview pertaining to the fire which
7 occurred on board the vessel *Hoëgh Xiamen* on July 4th -- I mean
8 June 4th, excuse me.

9 So we'll do this how we've been doing the other ones. We'll
10 go around the table in person, have everyone introduce themselves,
11 and then we'll go to the phone, and then we'll get started. So,
12 like I said, my name is Lieutenant [REDACTED]

13 MR. [REDACTED] Good morning. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard
14 investigator.

15 MR. TAMASITIS: Patrick Tamasitis, I'm the Ops and Logistics
16 Manager for the Southeast Region for Horizon Auto Logistics.

17 MR. WHITE: John White, Terminal Manager for Jacksonville
18 Horizon Auto Logistics.

19 LTJG [REDACTED] And Mr. White, it's common -- John and White
20 is common spelling for everyone?

21 MR. WHITE: Yes, sir. J-o-h-n, W-h-i-t-e.

22 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay. Perfect.

23 MR. MASSEE: Jules Masse with the law firm of Hamilton,
24 Miller & Birthisel. I'm here representing the Horizon interests.

25 MR. BAIAD: Todd Baiad, Bouhan Falligant in Savannah, counsel

1 for SSA Atlantic.

2 MR. MOSER: Shea Moser, Moseley, Prichard, Parrish, Knight &
3 Jones for the vessel owner and -- or interests.

4 LTJG [REDACTED] And then we'll move to the phone. If NTSB
5 could introduce themselves, please?

6 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise, Office of Marine Safety at
7 NTSB.

8 MR. STANCIL: Paul Stancil, Hazardous Materials Accident
9 Investigator, NTSB.

10 MR. PANAGIOTOU: Joseph Panagiotou, Office of Research and
11 Engineering, NTSB.

12 LTJG [REDACTED] All right. And then we'll move to PHMSA.

13 MR. HENEGHAN: Hello. This is John Heneghan. I'm the
14 regional director of the Southern Region in Atlanta.

15 MR. DiGIACOMANDREA: Robert DiGiacomandrea, Chief
16 Investigator, Southern Region.

17 MR. HATFIELD: Clayton Hatfield, Investigator, Southern
18 Region.

19 LTJG [REDACTED] All righty, and then the parties in interest,
20 their attorneys on the line.

21 MR. THIEL: Hi. This is Eric Thiel on behalf of Grimaldi
22 Deep Sea.

23 LTJG [REDACTED] All righty. Did -- is there anyone else on
24 the line that we missed?

25 MR. STEWART: Just me. It was Keiran Stewart, Accident

1 Investigator with PHMSA at Oklahoma City.

2 LTJG [REDACTED] Okey dokey. All right. With that then, we're
3 going to commence with the interview of Mr. John White.

4 INTERVIEW OF JOHN WHITE

5 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

6 Q. First of all, sir, I want to just thank you for taking time
7 to come and speak with us. The purpose of the Coast Guard's
8 investigation is purely to establish the cause of the fire, how we
9 can prevent it and, you know, establish marine -- you know, how we
10 can make the marine environment safer. Obviously, like, nine
11 firefighters got injured, and that was really horrible, and we
12 want to try to prevent that.

13 So if you could just start off just kind of by telling us how
14 long you have worked here, what your title is, your role, just
15 kind of those general things, that would be appreciated.

16 A. I've been at this current job for 12 years for two different
17 companies. I'm a terminal manager here, and we receive cargo in
18 daily for several lines of, obviously, cars and heavy equipment.

19 Q. Okay. And what does being the terminal manager entail?

20 A. Managing people that are receiving the cargo.

21 Q. Okay. And receiving the cargo from who?

22 A. Truckers.

23 Q. Truckers?

24 A. Truckers, over-the-road truckers.

25 Q. Okay. So they truck all the cars in and drop them off here?

- 1 A. Um-hum.
- 2 Q. And then what happens to the cars?
- 3 A. We check them in and then label them and then set them up for
4 the vessels when they're released.
- 5 Q. Okay. And when you say set them up for the vessels, can you
6 kind of explain, like, what are you actually doing?
- 7 A. Just the ones that go, we stage together.
- 8 Q. Stage them together?
- 9 A. Group them together as best we can so they don't have to work
10 around no-go -- stuff that doesn't go.
- 11 Q. Right. Absolutely. Could you -- are -- is Horizon the
12 terminal involved with prepping the cargo prior to going on the
13 vessel at all?
- 14 A. What do you mean by prepping?
- 15 Q. Checking for, like, leaks, fuel tank issues --
- 16 A. We do that when we check the cargo in.
- 17 Q. Okay.
- 18 A. When we set it up, that's, that's when we do that. After the
19 fact, no, we stage it in line, and then it's ready.
- 20 Q. Can we talk about the check-in process then? Can you kind of
21 describe what -- so, a car comes in via truck, what kind of
22 happens after that?
- 23 A. It comes in. If it's -- it comes in, we'll check the car in
24 based on the guidelines given by the line.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Whether -- that determines whether it's non-run or forklift
2 or a running vehicle.

3 Q. Okay. So for example, like, establishing things like the
4 level in the gas tank?

5 A. We make -- we do our best to make sure there's enough gas in
6 them to get to the vessel.

7 Q. Okay. Now, something like -- I know you talked about
8 forklifts and non-runners. How would you check to see the level
9 of gasoline in those tanks?

10 A. We wouldn't.

11 Q. Okay. So if -- so, for example, if I'm a liner, and I send
12 you instructions saying, hey, all the cars, I want to make sure
13 that they have less than a quarter tank of gas. You get some
14 non-runners in. How would you execute that?

15 A. There wouldn't be a way on a -- typically on a non-runner,
16 because you typically can't get --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- couldn't read the gauge.

19 Q. Right. Absolutely. Right. Because can't turn it on. So
20 whatever is in the tank, is in the tank. Got you. What kind of
21 documentation goes on for that? So, obviously, you have cars with
22 unique VINs. So you bring one car on, you do the check. Is there
23 any record kept of who did that check, or how does that work?

24 A. It's just a dock receipt. No, not necessarily who did it.
25 It's multiple people. They -- well, I say that. They do sign

1 their name. They'll initial it.

2 Q. Okay. And those --

3 A. But --

4 Q. -- dock receipts, where do they -- do they stay on the cars,
5 or do you have copies of them, or how does that work?

6 A. We keep copies of it, and we also send them to the line.

7 Q. Okay. For the -- so would you be able to -- could we
8 eventually go back and grab the dock receipts that were done for
9 the cars that were loaded on the *Hoëgh Xiamen* here?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. All right. So those documents exist. Do you know
12 approximately how many cars were checked for loading onto *Hoëgh*
13 *Xiamen*?

14 A. It was about 1,500. 1,575 was the final number.

15 Q. 1,575?

16 A. Yeah, we cut (audio distortion).

17 Q. Who -- I'm sorry. I couldn't hear you. You said we cut
18 some?

19 A. Yeah. There were some cut because of space.

20 Q. Okay. Is that -- kind of going off the cut stuff, so the
21 reasons you would cut car -- could you get in -- from shipping,
22 could you get into that? Is it strictly space on board the
23 vessel, or is there other reasons you would do it?

24 A. Space or a unit doesn't fit a criteria --

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. -- to be able to be at least towed.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. Because they would turn into a forklift, and they cut those.
- 4 Q. And then they would be reassigned to a later shipment --
- 5 A. For forklift.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 Q. And then how many people do you have, approximately, working
- 9 under you as the terminal manager?
- 10 A. Ten.
- 11 Q. Ten people?
- 12 A. Ten to twelve, depending on my temp labor.
- 13 Q. Okay. Great. And are those Horizon employees or are they --
- 14 A. The --
- 15 Q. -- you said temp labor --
- 16 A. The 10 would be, and then some temp labor on top of that.
- 17 LTJG ██████████ Okay. Great.
- 18 What have you got?
- 19 BY MR. ██████████
- 20 Q. So let's move on with those folks -- those ten individuals
- 21 with the, with the other folks that there -- the laborers. When
- 22 they are hired here, what kind of training are they given as far
- 23 as for the -- are they given, like, on-the-job training, or is
- 24 there requirements that they have to understand the job --
- 25 A. The temp labor?

1 Q. Either. Let's, let's go to permanent employees first.

2 A. I mean, pretty much online there are ones that have been here
3 10 years, 12 years -- 10 years, I think, at least 10 years or
4 more, so -- it was -- when they first got hired, you trained them.

5 Q. Okay. So is there a training doctrine or anything that's
6 given to them?

7 A. Huh-uh. You, you train them based on the guidelines given by
8 the steamship line.

9 Q. Okay, so -- and each steamship line is different with their,
10 their guidelines, and basically you guys just sit down with the
11 folks. So when you do this, is there, like, a pre-meeting, like,
12 hey, we're doing it for this liner? This is what they want for --

13 A. In terms of -- do what?

14 Q. For the, for the training for the individuals.

15 A. You would just train them as the cars came in.

16 Q. Okay. So when those cars come in -- just so I'm, so I'm
17 straight here, when those cars come in, do you already know the
18 liner that those cars are going to?

19 A. It's based on the dock receipt presented by the truck driver.

20 Q. Okay. So the, the truck driver will have the liner
21 information on that documentation?

22 A. Yes. They will have the dock sheet that has the, the line's
23 information for each vehicle, yes.

24 Q. Okay. At what point do you get any kind of communication
25 with, like, a port engineer, port captain, as far as -- do, do

1 they speak to you, or who do they speak to?

2 A. They do some. Just asking -- if they have questions on any
3 cargo, like heavy equipment, but not really on POVs.

4 Q. So the -- when the truck drivers come in, and it has the
5 liner information on that, does it also have any -- like, the
6 prerequisites and anything that the liner wants?

7 A. Just a description of the cargo, typically.

8 Q. So how do you know what that liner would want for that cargo
9 that's, that's going to board?

10 A. What, what the driver tells us, the cargo looks like. We
11 just go by the -- we just go -- what it is, he'll come up and tell
12 us, this should be a non-runner or forklift or running vehicle.
13 Some of them don't know, so we reject it out there accordingly and
14 then get him to book it the way it should be.

15 Q. Okay. So we mentioned a little bit about the gas level. Do
16 you know why that gas level is -- like, why do they want to load a
17 vehicle with a, like, a low amount of gas?

18 A. They just want enough to get it to the ship.

19 Q. Right. Do you know why that is?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. You just -- so you don't know if there -- if that's just
22 something that the liner wants, or is that law, or -- you don't,
23 you don't know?

24 A. I'm assuming it's just something the liner wants, but I don't
25 know.

1 LTJG [REDACTED] Can I interrupt now?

2 MR. [REDACTED] Yeah. Go ahead.

3 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

4 Q. So let's say I was, I was the liner and I sent instructions
5 to you saying, hey, I want all my cars to have a half tank of gas
6 in it. You guys would say, roger that, and load them on?

7 A. We would probably try --

8 MR. MASSEE: Wait. Actually, if I may --

9 LTJG [REDACTED] Yeah.

10 MR. MASSEE: The, the question, load them on, that's not what
11 the --

12 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.

13 MR. MASSEE: Okay.

14 LTJG [REDACTED] Let me rephrase that.

15 MR. MASSEE: Let's be, let's be clear about --

16 LTJG [REDACTED] Yeah.

17 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

18 Q. So if you were given instructions by a liner saying, hey, we
19 can have no more than a half tank of gas in our cars, you would
20 check them in and notice -- like, if there was one that had
21 three-quarters of a tank, you would get rid of that one, but if it
22 had just slightly under half a tank, you would be all right with
23 that?

24 A. We would try our best to follow the guidelines.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I'm not saying we'd be perfect.

2 Q. Yeah. No, no, no. Absolutely. So when you do have, like,
3 running cars that come here, so let's say you were given -- said
4 -- the liner says we, we want an eighth of a tank of gas. One of
5 the runners comes in, and it has half a tank. Is there a
6 procedure that you guys do to get the gasoline out, or what would
7 you do at that point?

8 A. We, we try to reject them, but we don't most of the time.

9 Q. Okay. And why is that?

10 A. Most of the gauges don't appear to be working, so it's like
11 you're trusting the gauge of a junk car --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- that, that being the main reason.

14 Q. Okay. So for a lot of -- is there ever a discussion between
15 Horizon then and the liner about, hey, I know you said -- you
16 specified a minimum or maximum amount of gasoline, about how you
17 guys are verifying -- you're not able to verify?

18 A. No, sir.

19 LTJG ██████████ Okay.

20 BY MR. ██████████

21 Q. So back to the folks. Most of them, I understand you said 10
22 years here. The trucks come in, they get the information from the
23 truck drivers on the vehicles as far as they're -- if they're
24 runners, not runners, fuel, things like that. What about for the
25 temporary folks that, that are hired here? Are they given

1 training?

2 A. No, because they just move cars. We do have one now that is
3 training to check in cars, but he just started. So he is trained,
4 but -- or he, he is in the process of being trained, but 90
5 percent of my temp labor just moves cars.

6 Q. Okay. So they won't have interactions with the truck
7 drivers?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. Okay. So their job, the temp folks, would -- you would have
10 your permanent folks interact with the truck drivers, getting that
11 information.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. The temporary folks then, unloading the trucks and kind of
14 staging them out here in your, your lot?

15 A. No. They don't unload the trucks. The drivers unload them
16 themselves. They just --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. They just move cars for me to set up for the vessel.

19 Q. Okay. So they're just moving vehicles in the lot?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. All right.

22 Did you have something?

23 LTJG [REDACTED] Yeah.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

25 LTJG [REDACTED] Or, actually, no. You keep going.

1 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

2 BY MR. [REDACTED]

3 Q. So in your lot -- you said you've been here for, for 12
4 years. Over that 12 years, have you guys had any kind of issues,
5 like, any kind of vehicles fires or anything like that, that --
6 in, in the lot?

7 A. We've had some.

8 Q. Okay. And do, do you recall what most of those came from?

9 A. The only one I can remember was one a few weeks ago that they
10 were loading on the vessel, and -- which they were just starting
11 it for the vessel. It was just sitting there running, and then it
12 caught fire. I didn't physically see it. I got a video of it.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Do the -- the vehicles, once they're out
14 here, about how long are they staged?

15 A. What you mean, staged?

16 Q. About how long does a vehicle sit in the, in the lot? Does
17 it vary in time?

18 A. It varies.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. It just depends on when the ticket is cleared by Customs.

21 Q. Okay. And what are we looking at as far as a timeline there
22 on -- could you give an average of how long a vehicle may be out
23 here?

24 A. Not really. I mean, it's a broad -- very broad
25 (indiscernible).

- 1 Q. Okay. All right. So as little as a day or two?
- 2 A. Three days.
- 3 Q. Three days? And then maybe as long as --
- 4 A. I've seen them be there 200 days.
- 5 Q. Okay. So --
- 6 A. (Indiscernible).
- 7 Q. -- over six months?
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. Okay. All right. In those timelines that, that you see
- 10 vehicles out here, is there somebody that goes out and does any
- 11 kind of walkaround and checks the vehicles, just to see if there's
- 12 -- the, the condition of the vehicle?
- 13 A. (No audible response.)
- 14 Q. If anything has changed? I know you guys are on a secured
- 15 facility here. So there's no kind of security checks to make sure
- 16 the, the vehicles have not been tampered with since they've --
- 17 A. No, sir.
- 18 Q. -- arrived on your lot? What about as far as just checks
- 19 overall, looking for leaks, things like that?
- 20 A. No, sir.
- 21 Q. Is the lot gravel or paved?
- 22 A. Paved.
- 23 Q. Paved, okay. So, if there would be a leak, you would
- 24 probably see the vehicle sitting there, you would see a spot and
- 25 stuff. Do you guys have any kind of precautionary measurements

1 for that, if you do come across one that's leaking?

2 A. We have spill kits, but typically we'll go get Oil-Dri. Get
3 it -- let it dry, and clean the mess up.

4 Q. Okay. Is that documented anywhere if you have a vehicle
5 that, that leaks?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. Okay. And when you guys receive the vehicles from the trucks
8 and you move them over here to the staging, is there anything --
9 what, what do you guys do as far as -- like, how will somebody
10 know if it's a runner, a tow, or a forklift?

11 A. We have them separated by runners, forklifts, and tows.

12 Q. Okay. Is there any kind of labeling or anything that are --
13 that's on those vehicles?

14 A. Usually there's NR on the label or a non-running sticker, and
15 then our forklifts with a sticker on the side on that.

16 Q. Okay. So are those stickers already on when they -- when you
17 receive the vehicles here?

18 A. Not when I receive them. We'll -- we put them on.

19 Q. Okay. You guys put the stickers on. And are those standard
20 stickers for different liners? You pretty much do a non-runner
21 and runner?

22 A. Yeah. Pretty much. I mean, it's -- a lot of times we'll
23 just note it (indiscernible), let them know what we have a
24 non-runner, forklift.

25 Q. Okay. So it's like a decal and you guys stick it on the

1 vehicles saying non-runner, runner, forklift?

2 A. We don't put runner, just non-runner or forklift, and if it
3 doesn't have it --

4 Q. Okay. Then you know it's a runner? Okay. So those vehicles
5 (indiscernible), then you stage those, those vehicles. Is there
6 any other decals or anything that you guys put on the vehicles?

7 A. Just the, the same -- it's a port label which we write some
8 of them, some of them down. We don't have a -- there's stickers
9 for each port that those vehicles go to, because there's a number
10 of ports that are loaded.

11 Q. Okay. So like, different identifying ports so that --

12 A. And then our --

13 Q. -- whoever comes over there, like, when the stevedores come,
14 they know where -- kind of helps separate --

15 A. And we also go back through and we'll have a scan label,
16 after we put them in, that has the VIN and another number that we
17 attach to it that will -- somebody will have to go and put those
18 on.

19 Q. Okay. Great. So is this the same for all vehicles, whether
20 it's a small passenger vessel or large, like, commercial-type
21 vessel, like a box car? Like, are they all the same -- done the
22 same way?

23 A. For cargo here, like, heavy equipment and everything?

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. Pretty much.

1 Q. Okay. What about electric vehicles? You guys see a lot of
2 those?

3 A. Used to. Not much anymore.

4 Q. Okay. So is -- to the best of your knowledge, is there any
5 different policy for electric or hybrid-type vehicles?

6 A. The electric vehicles for -- typically, we do it across the
7 board, they just have to have a certain amount of miles to be able
8 to get to and from the ship. So it needs to be, basically, fully
9 charged. Hybrids, no.

10 Q. Okay. So hybrids you pretty much treat exactly like a --
11 just a regular --

12 A. Regular vehicle.

13 Q. -- regular vehicle --

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. -- gas run vehicle? Okay.

16 MR. [REDACTED] You got anything?

17 LTJG [REDACTED] Yeah.

18 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

19 Q. Kind of going back to the dock receipt, so what kind of
20 information is noted on the dock receipt for a, for a specific
21 vehicle?

22 A. Just whether it's self-propelled runner or a forklift. We
23 got to, to circle, too, either whether it's just minor damage or
24 heavy damage. And then, if it's forklift, we don't worry about
25 keys or radios --

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. -- so we just circle no on all that. And then, if it's a
3 non-runner or a runner, we circle yes for key, no -- yes or no for
4 -- yes for key, yes or no for radio, and stuff like that.

5 Q. Is there anywhere that it would be noted, specifically on
6 runners, like, the level of gasoline in the tank?

7 A. No, sir.

8 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

9 BY MR. [REDACTED]

10 Q. All right. What about other items? Or when you receive the
11 cars, are they supposed to be empty?

12 A. They are, minus personal effects. Like, sometimes the bumper
13 off the front may be loose and they have taken it off and put it
14 in the back, stuff like that. There's not supposed to be any
15 personal effects in it.

16 Q. Okay. What does, what does Horizon do if you come across a
17 vehicle that has personal effects in it?

18 A. We're supposed to reject it.

19 Q. Okay. You reject it to the --

20 A. Or make the driver pull it out.

21 Q. So you reject it back to the driver?

22 A. (No audible response.)

23 Q. Okay. Does that include, like, everything? Like, like --

24 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

25 Q. Maybe this might help. What, what are you -- what is your

1 definition of personal effects?

2 A. Anything that don't belong to the vehicle.

3 Q. Okay. So like, if there was a car seat in there?

4 A. That would be personal effects. Would I reject it? Probably
5 not.

6 Q. Okay. Like, what about, like, pillows or something like --

7 A. Personal effects.

8 Q. Okay. So basically, anything that's not a specific car part?

9 A. Basically, yes, sir.

10 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

11 BY MR. [REDACTED]

12 Q. Okay. Yeah, that -- so, cardboard boxes or anything like
13 that, you guys would reject the vehicle, or you would give the
14 truck driver the option to --

15 A. Throw it out.

16 Q. -- remove those --

17 A. We do our best to do that. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. All right. Is there any -- is there anything for,
19 like, as far as any kind of paints, gas cans, anything like that,
20 that you guys allow?

21 A. Yeah, no, that wouldn't, that wouldn't be allowed. That's --
22 that should all be rejected or taken out.

23 Q. Okay. Is that documented anywhere if you happen to reject a
24 vehicle for personal items?

25 A. Huh-uh. We just reject it, give a void back to the -- you

1 know, we'll give a rejection dock sheet back to the driver.

2 Q. Okay. So the, the truck driver would receive the rejection.

3 Is, is the liner informed in any way of that, do you know?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. That they're --

6 A. Not as of today anyway.

7 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

8 Q. Checking for personal effects though, you said, does that
9 include the trunks of the vehicles?

10 A. Yes, sir. It should be. Yes, sir.

11 Q. And that would be easy on runners, but if I had a forklift
12 brought in --

13 A. It would be -- you wouldn't be able to check it if the truck
14 was smashed or you couldn't get to the trunk.

15 Q. Right. So these cars that come wrecked, there's no, no way
16 for Horizon to access the trunks?

17 A. Typically, no.

18 Q. Typically not, depending on the condition, right?

19 A. (No audible response.)

20 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

21 MR. [REDACTED] So the wrecks coming in, just to summarize,
22 can't really check the fuel levels, because there's no way to
23 check the fuel levels; can't check any of the cargo spaces,
24 potentially, because it's wrecked. So there's, there's really
25 minimal things that Horizon can do --

1 MR. WHITE: To check those.

2 MR. [REDACTED] -- to check those.

3 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

4 Q. So do the liners give different checking instructions for the
5 three different types of vehicles?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. So they'll say -- typically, they'll have you check
8 certain things on, like, a runner versus a forklift?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. And what do they typically have you check on a
11 forklift?

12 A. In terms of -- let me rephrase that. What do you mean by
13 checking --

14 Q. Or when the, when the cars arrive, and Horizon does the
15 initial check in.

16 A. It's determined by our check-in crew whether that should be a
17 considered a runner, a non-runner, and/or forklift -- or forklift,
18 excuse me.

19 Q. Okay. So your crew decides that there's going to be -- this
20 one is a forklift --

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. -- for whatever reason. The liners provide you different --
23 do they provide different guidance for what you need to check on
24 each of the three, or is it the same for all of it?

25 A. No, it's not the same.

1 Q. Okay. So, like, what would be an example of, like, a
2 difference between what you would check on a runner versus a
3 forklift?

4 A. Like on, let's say, Grimaldi --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- front end damage, wires hanging, those are automatic
7 forklifts, where Sallaum will take those as non-runners.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. As long as there's nothing (indiscernible).

10 Q. But -- so, for the forklifts, they just -- basically it's
11 outside condition. They -- do they specify ever that you're
12 supposed to check the gas tanks for leaks?

13 A. No.

14 Q. So Grimaldi --

15 A. Not to my --

16 Q. -- wouldn't, wouldn't tell you to do that?

17 A. Not to my knowledge, no.

18 BY MR. [REDACTED]

19 Q. So, once these vehicles are brought to Horizon's lot and they
20 are staged, what is the interaction between Horizon and the
21 stevedores?

22 A. We just talk about where the cargo is kind of staged and set
23 up and how it looks.

24 Q. Is that you that they interact with?

25 A. Typically, yes.

1 Q. Or is it the -- is it your subordinates that do that at all,
2 or you --

3 A. No, just -- typically, I'll deal with whoever the head
4 stevedore is that day.

5 Q. Okay. So can you walk -- can you kind of just walk me
6 through what you and the head stevedore talk about?

7 A. They'll just -- they'll, they'll have some questions about
8 where the cargo stays, and I'll tell them it's here, here. You
9 know, there's a few more no-gos mixed in that don't go, but they
10 may have to work around the normal, stuff like that.

11 Q. Okay. Is there ever a time where a stevedore refuses a car?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And what would that be?

14 A. The same guidelines we have.

15 Q. Like, what would that -- just, just paraphrase, if you don't
16 mind --

17 A. Something is leaking or we -- a unit can't be safely towed or
18 driven to the ship, they feel it needs to be a forklift. That
19 would cut. Stuff like that.

20 Q. Okay. So then who does that stevedore talk to?

21 A. They'll tell me.

22 Q. Okay. So, if the stevedore has an issue, then they come back
23 -- you're the, you're the point of contact for them to -- and
24 then, if it's brought back and it's not -- if it's not accepted,
25 then what's your actions from that point?

1 A. We'll note it, why, reason, and then there may be others, and
2 we'll group them together, and then we'll let Grimaldi know.

3 Q. Okay. So for the, for the *Hoëgh Xiamen* on, I think it was
4 June --

5 LTJG [REDACTED] June 4th.

6 BY MR. [REDACTED]

7 Q. -- June 4th, do you recall if any vehicles were rejected from
8 stevedores?

9 A. There were a few. The number, I don't remember.

10 Q. I mean, do you, do you recall why they were rejected?

11 A. Just units that turned into forklifts.

12 Q. Okay. And is that common in this kind of business? And how,
13 how does that happen? How does something change from a -- is it
14 kind of, like, personal, based on whether the -- the comfort of a
15 person?

16 A. It is, and then, you know, brakes quit working correctly or a
17 tie rod breaks on the way to the vessel. Various reasons.

18 Q. Okay. All right. So, potentially, the conditions of the
19 vehicles could change by the time they leave the lot here going to
20 the *Hoëgh* -- like, the vessel?

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. And if that happens, it would -- instead of being loaded, it
23 would come back here. And then, is there documentation that you
24 have to do to -- for these vehicles that are not accepted?

25 A. I would just write them down, note it, and give it to -- let

1 Grimaldi know why they weren't -- you know, why they turned into
2 forklifts.

3 Q. All right. Then what happens to those vehicles?

4 A. They're set aside until Grimaldi gets approval from the
5 customer to load them as forklift units.

6 LTJG [REDACTED] So that's the cut list then?

7 MR. WHITE: Cut list, unless it's -- that's one cut list, and
8 then a cut list for potentially space issues --

9 LTJG [REDACTED] Right.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Which there was also a cut list for the *Hoëgh*
11 *Xiamen* that day for vehicles that were cut just due to space
12 alone?

13 MR. WHITE: Um-hum.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

15 LTJG [REDACTED] All right. Mr. Muise, if you would like to
16 take over with the NTSB? The Coast Guard is done.

17 MR. MUISE: Sure. Thank you.

18 BY MR. MUISE:

19 Q. John, this is Marcel Muise. I'm with the National
20 Transportation Safety Board. And we're, we're investigating this
21 accident alongside the Coast Guard. At this point, we work
22 together with them and -- to gather the facts, but we'll go our
23 separate ways eventually and produce our own investigation report.
24 That may or may not include recommendations for -- it could be
25 anybody, really, the -- other regulatory agencies or, or the

1 facility or the ship's owner. But we're not a regulatory agency
2 and we're, we're not a law enforcement agency.

3 With me I have a fire expert and a hazardous material
4 specialist joining me as well. You'll hear from them in a second.
5 And do you have any questions for me about the NTSB?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. Okay. I just have a couple of follow-up questions, really.
8 These cars, when they arrive at your facility, are they coming
9 straight from shippers all over the country, or is there -- are
10 they consolidated for this specific ship by Grimaldi somewhere
11 else?

12 A. I'm not really sure. They'll usually come from options, but
13 where, they could be anywhere really.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I don't deal with that aspect.

16 Q. And do you and the facility do training with the fire
17 department? Have they ever been there to, you know, tour a car
18 care area or, or look at your stuff?

19 A. No, sir.

20 MR. MUISE: Okay. That's all I have. Joe, anything?

21 (Pause.)

22 MR. MUISE: You're muted, Joe.

23 MR. PANAGIOTOU: Yeah. Sorry. I was having trouble
24 operating the mouse. No, I do not have any questions. Thank you.

25 MR. MUISE: Paul?

1 MR. STANCIL: Yes. Paul Stancil here. I just have a few.

2 BY MR. STANCIL:

3 Q. Mr. White, does Horizon have any role in classifying the
4 cargo for the shipping manifest, including whether or not the
5 cargo is described as hazardous material or dangerous goods?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. So what organization is considered the shipper or the
8 consignor for the used automobile? Is it Horizon, Grimaldi, or
9 the individual sources from where these cars are originating?

10 LTJG [REDACTED] If, if you know.

11 MR. WHITE: I'm not 100 percent sure who. It could be
12 anybody. It could be personal people. It's not Horizon.

13 BY MR. STANCIL:

14 Q. Okay. Do you know whether any of the shipments for various
15 carriers are consigned as dangerous goods or non-dangerous goods?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. Okay. Regarding the, the inspection procedures, you
18 mentioned you look for leaks and batteries, fuel tanks, and
19 engines. Can you tell us a little bit more about how you do that,
20 who's responsible for that, and how you document it?

21 A. We just -- we have a dock receipt that the driver presents,
22 and if it's, if it's supposed to be a running vehicle, then we'll
23 go in and check the VIN, make sure there's a key, make sure it
24 looks like it can be a running unit, and then put our port
25 stickers. And we have the drivers drive the unit to where that

1 particular port would go, and the car sits until we're ready to
2 start staging it for the next vessel.

3 Q. Do you actually go under the hood or under the car and look
4 for leaks or anything like that?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. Okay. What -- and you mentioned rejection criteria for
7 leakage. What -- how bad does a car have to be leaking before you
8 reject it or send it aside on the cut list?

9 A. If we see it, if we see it visible when it's received in,
10 then we reject it.

11 Q. Okay. And regarding cars noted as forklift or cars that have
12 to be handled with equipment, do you have any specially designed
13 equipment or procedures that you use for handling or moving
14 vehicles to protect them from damage or fuel tank rupture,
15 anything like that?

16 A. No, sir. I mean, we use a forklift to put them in place for
17 forklift units and non-runners, but that -- we just stage them,
18 and then they're towed to the ship by the stevedore or forklift.

19 Q. Has there ever been an occasion -- have there been any
20 occasions where cars were damaged from the handling and, and
21 resulted in any leakage?

22 A. I'm sure there has. Nothing that I recall right now, but
23 over the years, I'm sure there has.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But that would be cut --

1 Q. And you mention -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

2 A. They would be cut if that happened.

3 Q. Okay. You mentioned training for your employees. Does any
4 of that training include awareness about the transportation of
5 dangerous goods?

6 A. It's a, it's a -- just a, a regular training of the
7 guidelines of the way the steamship line wants us to check in
8 cargo. That's what the training covers.

9 Q. Anything specific about dangerous goods regulations or
10 shipping regulations?

11 A. No, sir, because we don't really handle dangerous goods,
12 other than the vehicles and heavy equipment.

13 MR. STANCIL: Okay. All right. That's all I have, Marcel.

14 MR. MUISE: Okay. Thank you. And there's one other --
15 somebody else has joined us from overseas I believe.

16 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. Apologies for the late start, and Mark
17 Thompson with HFW for vessel interests in London.

18 MR. MUISE: And, [REDACTED] that's all we have from NTSB.

19 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay. Great. I guess next we'll move to the
20 parties in interest. And I think we'll do it how we've been doing
21 it, where we'll start with those present, and then we'll move to
22 those on the line. So I guess we'll start with Mr. Moser?

23 MR. MOSER: Sure. Again, Shea Moser for vessel owners.

24 BY MR. MOSER:

25 Q. You indicated that you check runners for gas level.

- 1 Specifically, you, you -- are you checking the gas gauge --
- 2 A. They do their best --
- 3 Q. -- to do that?
- 4 A. -- to look at the gas gauge.
- 5 Q. Do you check in any other manner?
- 6 A. No, sir.
- 7 Q. You mentioned dock receipts a few times, and you said that
- 8 they are kept. Where are those dock receipts kept?
- 9 A. We have them on the computer, and they're also sent to the
- 10 steamship line.
- 11 Q. Do you have a document retention policy that you're aware of?
- 12 A. No, sir.
- 13 Q. If, if we wanted to get copies of these dock receipts, who
- 14 would we contact within Horizon?
- 15 A. You could get with me.
- 16 Q. Are there paper copies?
- 17 A. No, sir. It's just on the computer.
- 18 Q. So when the driver comes in, he doesn't physically hand you a
- 19 dock receipt?
- 20 A. He does.
- 21 Q. He does?
- 22 A. That's where we check it in, but we don't keep paper copies.
- 23 Q. So describe what happens to that paper copy from the moment
- 24 you -- one of your employees receives it.
- 25 A. We stamp it with a receiving stamp, whether there's a title

1 received or not, and the date. And then we will write up a -- the
2 label that has some number on there, and then it will go to our
3 check-in crew outside. They will check in the car based on what's
4 on that dock receipt. You know, the driver will tell us whether
5 it was a forklift or non-runner, and that's how they check in the
6 car. The driver will get one back; he'll take it with him. We'll
7 keep ours, and the next day we scan them into the computer, and
8 then we basically get rid of them.

9 Q. Okay. You discussed that each, each different line has a
10 potentially separate qualifications or checklists of how to treat
11 these vehicles. For the Grimaldi, do you have a copy of their
12 guidelines?

13 A. I do on my computer.

14 Q. Is it a one-page document? Is it a, is it a pamphlet?

15 A. It's about two pages, maybe three.

16 Q. So, if we wanted to get a copy of that, we could contact you?

17 A. Yeah, we can -- I can get it off my computer.

18 MR. MASSEE: And my office will facilitate document requests
19 in the investigation.

20 MR. MOSER: Thank you.

21 BY MR. MOSER:

22 Q. Describe to me where Horizon's job ends.

23 A. Once the cargo is staged for the vessel, in my opinion.

24 Q. So if the, if the cargo is staged in a lot, you have a
25 meeting with the stevedore foreman, and you discuss the staging

1 aspects of where the different vehicles are located. And then the
2 longshoremen come to that lot physically and either drive on the
3 runners or begin using a forklift for the forklifts or using a
4 flatbed for the non-runners; is that correct?

5 A. Pretty much. They're, they're pretty much in the same spot,
6 every vessel, for the most part.

7 Q. Do Horizon employees walk around in the yard watching the
8 longshoremen take the cargo from the yard -- out of the yard
9 towards the vessel?

10 A. Not just watching. We do job -- we, we -- I mean, I'm not
11 saying we don't see them, but not -- no, we have jobs we got to do
12 every day, so we're just constantly doing those -- focused on
13 those.

14 Q. Is there anybody watching that cargo leave?

15 A. Not from us, no. That's -- the stevedore would. They
16 usually have somebody.

17 Q. Would the stevedore have someone posted at the entrance up to
18 the yard, or is it someone that just roams around (indiscernible)?

19 A. I have no idea on that.

20 Q. Is there a minimum time that a car has to stay in the yard
21 before it's loaded on a vessel?

22 A. Usually, it's 3 days for Customs clearance.

23 Q. Is that a Customs requirement, or is it a requirement from
24 the individual lines?

25 A. Customs. That's business days as well.

1 Q. So, if a car gets delivered on a Friday, it's 3 business
2 days; it may actually sit there for 5 days?

3 A. Typically, yes, sir.

4 Q. Did you ever have a situation where a driver will tell you,
5 hey, I've got some, some cars on here, and some of them are
6 leaking?

7 A. If they tell us that then we, we are to reject them. Most of
8 the drivers know as well.

9 Q. What's the process for disconnecting batteries for
10 non-runners and forklift cars?

11 A. We don't disconnect them.

12 Q. Do you check to see if they're disconnected when they're
13 delivered to you?

14 A. No, sir. Grimaldi has somebody come in and disconnect the
15 batteries for forklifts, and then they have them do them on the
16 ship for those that load.

17 Q. Who does that for Grimaldi?

18 A. For Grimaldi, on the yard, it's a local company, Port
19 Storage, for the forklifts.

20 LTJG [REDACTED] What was that? I'm sorry.

21 MR. WHITE: Port Storage for the forklifts.

22 LTJG [REDACTED] Port Storage?

23 MR. [REDACTED] Port Storage and Delivery.

24 MR. WHITE: I'm not 100 percent sure who does it on the ship.

25 BY MR. MOSER:

1 Q. And that was for the forklifts?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. So, during the time after the cars are checked in by Horizon
4 and they sit for a minimum of 3 business days, someone from Port
5 Storage comes on behalf of Grimaldi to walk the yard, going to the
6 areas where the forklift and non-runners are and checks the
7 vehicles to disconnect the batteries?

8 A. Just the forklifts. They're all in the same area. They
9 don't walk the yard.

10 Q. Do they -- what happens if the front end is so badly damaged
11 they can't get the hood up? Do they carry around crowbars with
12 them to, to help them get to it?

13 A. We've helped them to get to, to hoods. We'll help them get
14 to the hoods if, if they can't get it. It's our job to make sure
15 the hood opens before it gets here, but if there's one that
16 doesn't, then we help them open the hood.

17 Q. Is there ever a situation where a forklift comes in, and you
18 go to disconnect the battery, and you just can't get the hood
19 open, and you just say, ah, mark it -- and say, well, I just
20 couldn't get the hood up?

21 MR. MASSEE: They don't disconnect the battery.

22 BY MR. MOSER:

23 Q. Port Storage, is there ever a situation where Port Storage
24 does that?

25 A. Not that I know of.

1 Q. Does -- do -- does Horizon personnel walk around with Port
2 Storage to supervise what they're doing?

3 A. No, sir, because we, we didn't hire them. It was Grimaldi.

4 Q. If Port Storage has any issues with the vehicle, like not
5 being able to get a hood open, is there a process where they
6 report that to Horizon?

7 A. Yeah. So they know -- they'll just contact me, and I'll do
8 my, do my best to get -- help them get it open. We will get it
9 open, one way or the other, or we'll have it -- we, we would cut
10 it. But we can get the hood open.

11 Q. So if you received, hypothetically, 200 cars in a day in your
12 yard, and the truck drivers were bringing the cars to the yard,
13 do, do you -- would you receive -- would all 200 cars on that day
14 be for Grimaldi, for example?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. So each driver that comes in may have a load for -- one
17 driver may have a load for Grimaldi and then the, the driver
18 behind him may have a load from another -- for another one?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. So, at that point, you've got the different guidelines for
21 the different lines. How do you keep it straight?

22 A. By the labels that were handwritten. We'll write a --
23 there's different labels for different truckers. So they're
24 handwritten labels. So when the clerk goes to put a label on, he
25 can look, that's a Sallaum, that's a Grimaldi, that's a Hoëgh.

1 You can tell by the label it's written on.

2 Q. So at what point does Horizon say, okay, this is, this is a
3 Hoëgh or this is a Grimaldi; let me get that check -- that
4 appropriate checklist out and go through the prep of the car?

5 A. They don't get the checklist out. They do it, they do it by
6 memory.

7 Q. Does anybody from Horizon ever board the vessel?

8 A. Sometimes.

9 Q. Describe a situation where Horizon would board a vessel.

10 A. Looking for a vehicle that they say they haven't found. So
11 we'll go up there -- if we don't see it out in the yard, we'll go
12 up there to look to see if the, the vehicle is actually on the
13 vessel.

14 Q. Who would report to you that a vehicle hasn't been found?

15 A. It would be usually the lead stevedore.

16 Q. Does Horizon ever interact with the longshoremen, separate
17 from the stevedore foreman?

18 A. Not, not -- no, not working, other than I know some of them.
19 That would be about it.

20 MR. MOSER: That's all I have. Thank you.

21 BY MR. BAIAD:

22 Q. Good morning, sir. My name is Todd Baiad, and I'm a lawyer
23 in Savannah. I'm going to be asking you some questions today. I
24 represent SSA Atlantic. If you don't understand one of my
25 questions, please let me know, and I'll be happy to rephrase it.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. I don't think this is going to be terribly long, but if for
3 some reason you want to take a break, I'm happy to accommodate
4 that. The only thing I would ask is, if there is a question
5 pending, you would answer the question.

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. My understanding is you are familiar with the Grimaldi
8 requirements for receiving cargo here in Jacksonville; is that
9 correct?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. And it's my understanding that one of the requirements is to
12 make sure the hoods can open; isn't that correct?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. And if there's a vehicle where the hood can't open, you're
15 not supposed to turn it over to the stevedore, correct?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Okay. And, specifically, what would be -- first of all, how
18 do you make sure the hood is open?

19 A. We try to make sure it, it's open when we check them in.

20 Q. Okay. So for each car that comes in, if the hood is not
21 open, do you try and physically open it?

22 A. Yes, sir. We try to make the driver do it. Sometimes --
23 well, sometimes we have to help, but we try to make sure. We try
24 not to reject them because we can't open the hood. We try to make
25 sure we get the hood open.

1 Q. Okay. In instances in which you can't get the hood open,
2 what happens?

3 A. We're supposed to reject it.

4 Q. Okay, but is that done?

5 A. I've never had a hood I couldn't get open.

6 Q. Okay. So your testimony is that you were able to open all of
7 the hoods on every vehicle that was turned over to SSA prior to
8 loading on the ship, correct?

9 MR. MASSEE: That's splitting hairs. This isn't testimony,
10 but go ahead and answer.

11 MR. WHITE: I can't say I can say we opened all of them. I'm
12 just saying I've never gotten a hood that I couldn't get open.

13 BY MR. BAIAD:

14 Q. Okay. Did -- how many regular employees versus temporary
15 labor worked the, the ship at issue in this case?

16 A. We didn't work the ship.

17 Q. Or prepared the cars for loading?

18 A. It was -- mostly it was four temps that we -- for the past
19 couple years, and then me and a couple other people helped and
20 guided those guys.

21 Q. Okay. So did any of the temporary folks handle the, the
22 vehicles as they came in with the dock receipt?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Would -- so would any of the temporary labor have been
25 responsible for opening the hood or checking for fluids?

1 A. No, sir, other than jumping it off when they went to stage
2 it. They jump the car off. If they'd have to jump a car off,
3 they'd have the hood down.

4 Q. Okay. Were any cars on this shipment rejected because the
5 hoods could not be opened?

6 A. They wouldn't, they wouldn't have loaded it; they were
7 rejected.

8 Q. Okay. That's what -- I, I mean --

9 A. You're talking about not loaded at all?

10 Q. Right.

11 A. Not that I know of.

12 Q. Okay. Did you personally -- were you personally responsible
13 for checking the hoods on some of these cars?

14 A. No. No.

15 Q. Okay. Who -- can you give me the names of the actual
16 employees who would have done the vehicle inspections relative to
17 this shipment?

18 A. The ones that do most of them are Chuck and Ryan (ph.).

19 Q. What is Chuck's last name?

20 A. Eisenburg (ph.).

21 Q. Okay. And what's Ryan's last name?

22 A. Bouchell (ph.).

23 Q. Okay. And those would have been the primary two employees
24 responsible for checking the cars at issue?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Would there have been anybody else?

2 A. Any of our group can check in a car, but they're the ones
3 that do most of it.

4 Q. But can temporary labor check cars?

5 A. Typically, no. We are training one now, and we've had
6 someone in the past that were temporary labor. Any temporary
7 labor checking in cars is going to be at the instruction of, of
8 Ryan and Chuck.

9 Q. Okay. Have you ever seen a situation in which you -- SSA
10 could not get a hood open on a car that you turned over to them?

11 A. Not that I'm aware of.

12 Q. Okay. Have you had any discussions with anybody at SSA
13 relating to their inability to get hoods open on cars you all have
14 received?

15 A. No. No. If they got one -- this, this past ship, there was
16 a couple they couldn't get open, and I went and got them open.

17 Q. Okay. Is that -- on the forklift cars, does, does that apply
18 with that as well? I mean, you're supposed to get the hoods open
19 on the forklift cars?

20 A. Correct. The battery has got to be disconnected.

21 Q. Okay. And your testimony is that all of the cars that got
22 turned over to SSA for this shipment, including the forklift ones,
23 you were able to get the hoods open?

24 A. As far as I know, yes, sir.

25 Q. Okay. If you had not been able to get a hood open on one of

1 those cars, would it have been documented in any way?

2 A. Well, we would have -- we should have rejected it.

3 Q. Okay. Walk me through, when you get the dock receipt, the
4 actual inspection that you guys do on cars.

5 A. We'll get a stamp and then go look, verify the VIN that --

6 Q. You said stamp? What does that mean?

7 A. It's what -- we stamp the dock receipts, title received, date
8 received stamp, receiving stamp. We'll write a handwritten label.
9 We'll go out there. They'll take the -- get to the car. They'll
10 verify the VIN matches, put the handwritten label on there, walk
11 around the car, and make sure it indeed can be a running car.

12 There's no tires bent, the hood, hood should open, everything like
13 that. And then they'll have the driver drive it into the lot.

14 Q. How long is that inspection?

15 A. It depends on the car they've got. That inspection probably
16 takes, maybe 30 seconds.

17 Q. Thirty seconds?

18 A. Thirty to forty-five seconds.

19 Q. And, and is part of the inspection, if you can look at it, is
20 it, yeah, that looks like that hood might be able to get opened,
21 or is every single hood actually opened?

22 A. I won't say every single hood is actually opened. They try
23 and make sure the drivers can pop them, but 90 percent of the cars
24 have to be jumped, so if they can't drive in line, they got to get
25 the hood open and jump the car.

1 Q. Okay. But there are instances where it's just kind of
2 eyeballing. Oh, yeah, it looks like I can get that one open,
3 correct?

4 A. I would say so.

5 Q. Okay. What about fluids? What, what kind of examination are
6 you doing on the cars to make sure there's no fluids leaking?

7 A. It's just eyesight. We don't physically check and get
8 underneath and look, but if we see -- notice some fluids, then
9 they're rejected.

10 Q. Okay. And that's just a, again, just a -- you're doing all
11 of this in about 30 seconds, correct?

12 A. Thirty, thirty to forty-five seconds.

13 Q. And you don't go, you don't go look underneath the car,
14 correct?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. Is any of this done at night?

17 A. Very rarely.

18 Q. Okay. Are you -- I think we covered this, but you're not
19 aware of any of you guys rejecting any cars relative to this
20 shipment?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. Okay. What -- for the runners, tell me what you understand
23 Grimaldi's requirements are for them?

24 A. Running vehicles, obviously, the tires got to be straight; it
25 should have brakes; there's enough gas to get it to the ship; no

1 tires rubbing; any type of damage -- I would say no major damage
2 to the front, to the radiator; no major damage to the rear.

3 Q. When you say major damage, what do, what do you mean by that?

4 A. Like it's t-boned or ran into a telephone pole. That's my
5 (indiscernible).

6 Q. Okay. Anything else you can think of with respect for
7 runners?

8 A. Flat tires.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. No personal goods.

11 Q. Okay. What about the non-runners?

12 A. Non-runners are similar to -- they can have damage to the
13 front. Don't want any wires hanging or anything like that; those
14 should be forklifts. Hood has got to open, obviously, on
15 everything. No personal goods. The tires have to, have to be
16 able to have air, stuff like that.

17 Q. Okay. And what about the forklifts?

18 A. Forklifts, just no leaking fluids. You've got to be able to
19 get the hood up, and -- they're a little more lenient with those:
20 no leaking fluids, hood up so they can get to the battery, and if
21 it looks like it's safe enough to be forklifted.

22 Q. Okay. Anything else you can think of?

23 A. Not off the top of my head.

24 Q. Okay. Have you -- you said you've, you've -- have you ever
25 been onboard any of these ships as they're loading?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. Were you onboard this ship?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. Okay. Have you ever been onboard a ship where they're
5 loading used cars and you've seen one of the cars marked with
6 either caution tape or something on the hood?

7 A. What do you mean by cars -- what are you talking about
8 caution tape?

9 Q. You know, yellow caution tape. Like, somebody gets murdered,
10 you see a policeman put yellow tape around to protect the scene.

11 A. I haven't ever seen anything like that.

12 Q. Okay. What about red tape? You ever see any red tape on
13 cars?

14 A. Not that I've noticed, other than maybe for us to note that
15 it was a non-runner or something.

16 Q. Okay. Are you aware of there being a procedure in place
17 where the stevedore will mark cars where they couldn't get the
18 hood open by some kind of tape or other marking to the ship?

19 A. Onboard?

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. Not onboard.

22 Q. Okay. Is there -- so you've seen that situation where it's
23 -- where, where cars are off the ship and that happens?

24 A. Yeah. If they've got one that they can't get a hood open --
25 I say hood open, or it's -- they feel it's turned into a forklift

1 unit, they'll put ribbon across it then.

2 Q. Okay. And where do they put the ribbon across it?

3 A. Usually the window -- across the front window.

4 Q. Okay. But that's before it gets onboard the ship?

5 A. Typically, yes.

6 Q. Okay. Has there ever been a situation where -- and again, my
7 understanding is, by the time you give the cars to SSA, those
8 hoods are all supposed to be opened, correct?

9 A. Technically.

10 Q. Has there ever been a situation that you're aware of in your
11 experience where you all thought you could get the hood open
12 through some -- whatever means you guys used, and then it's gotten
13 to SSA or (indiscernible), whoever the stevedore was, and they
14 couldn't get that hood open?

15 A. Not that I'm aware of.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. They haven't told me if they couldn't.

18 Q. Okay. Have there been instances when you're trying to get
19 these hoods open where you've had to use crowbars?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. What are some of the other things you've had to use to
22 try and get these hoods open?

23 A. We've used forklifts before.

24 Q. You've used a forklift to get the hood open?

25 A. Um-hum.

- 1 Q. Okay, and explain that to me.
- 2 A. Just pop it open. You can't get, you can't get to the hand,
3 so you'll pop it with the blade of the forklift and --
- 4 Q. And do you just leave the hood open in that situation?
- 5 A. We'll pop it open and just take -- shut it back down.
- 6 Q. You say it'll get shut back down?
- 7 A. Or it will just get pushed back down, and it won't latch
8 anymore.
- 9 Q. Okay. So will the person who's using the car after you've
10 done that, how do they -- I mean, I guess, does the forklift
11 create a little bit of separation so it's easier to open?
- 12 A. Yes, sir.
- 13 Q. Okay. And what about when you've had to use a crowbar?
- 14 A. Same idea. Usually, if you're using a crowbar, you're just
15 trying to get to the latch.
- 16 Q. What are some other things besides using a forklift or a
17 crowbar that you've had to do in order to get hoods open?
- 18 A. That's about it.
- 19 Q. Okay. Do you know if SSA has crowbars or have had to use
20 forklifts in order to get hoods open?
- 21 A. I don't know.
- 22 Q. Okay. They shouldn't have to, because by the time you've
23 gone through them, those hoods ought to be easily opened, correct?
- 24 A. Correct.
- 25 Q. And you wouldn't have turned it over to SSA if in fact you

1 hadn't complied with these instructions and made sure these hoods
2 were easy to open, correct?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. And in fact, if there was a car onboard that, that you had
5 turned over to SSA, the expectation would be it would be easy to
6 open that hood, correct?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Otherwise, you'd be in violation of the receiving
9 instructions, correct?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay. Have you had any discussions with anybody from SSA
12 about what might have happened on the shipment at issue?

13 A. No, sir. I have spoken to Jeff Dixon about just the fire,
14 but other than that --

15 Q. And tell me what you all talked about.

16 A. Just did he know what happened. Nobody seemed to know
17 what -- anything, what happened.

18 Q. Okay. Have you had any discussions with anybody, outside of
19 your counsel, as to what might have happened onboard the ship to
20 start a fire?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. Okay. You mentioned in your earlier -- your lawyer will
23 object if I use testimony, but in your earlier discussions about a
24 video you had taken of a car catching fire; is that correct?

25 A. I didn't -- that was just a video somebody sent me. It was

1 during a vessel operation (indiscernible).

2 Q. Okay. Do you still have that video?

3 A. I probably do not.

4 Q. What would you have done with it?

5 A. I can look through my texts, but I don't think I do.

6 Q. Okay. Who sent it to you?

7 A. It was during a vessel -- it may have been the stevedore that
8 sent it to me, as they were loading up. I, I'd have to look back
9 and see.

10 Q. What stevedore and company was it?

11 A. APS.

12 Q. Okay. And, and this was in the last couple weeks?

13 A. Months, couple months. I'm trying to remember when it was.
14 I was on vacation.

15 Q. And this -- did, did the car just spontaneously start -- a
16 fire started onboard?

17 A. I don't know.

18 Q. Okay. What did the video show?

19 A. It just showed a car smoking and catching fire.

20 Q. Okay. And do you know where the car was?

21 A. It was in line out there to be -- ready to be loaded on the
22 ship.

23 Q. Okay. Was this a car that you all had received?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Okay. And was this a car that you had already done your

1 inspection on?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. And do you know how long in between when you had
4 received this car and how long it sat before the fire started?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. Okay. Do you have any understanding as to what ultimately
7 happened to that car?

8 A. I think it's still here.

9 Q. Okay. Do you have any idea what caused that car to catch
10 fire?

11 A. I never heard -- I never got full proof, but I heard it was
12 just they cranked it and let it, let -- left it running, waiting
13 for it to go on the ship, and then it overheated.

14 Q. Okay. Is that a common occurrence?

15 A. No. Not common for us, no.

16 Q. Is -- well, for us, what about for others?

17 A. I have no idea on that.

18 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any other cars catching fire?

19 A. Not other than the one that was there in the past -- I can't
20 remember any.

21 Q. Okay. Where do you get your temp labor from?

22 A. PeopleReady.

23 Q. PeopleReady.

24 MR. BAIAD: That's all the questions I have for right now.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. [REDACTED] I, I think I have a couple follow-ups.

2 BY MR. [REDACTED]

3 Q. You mentioned with the, the CBP hold for the vehicles -- when
4 they come here, they got to be cleared by CBP. Does CBP come out
5 and check these vehicles?

6 A. Some of them. Some of them, they do; some of them, they
7 don't.

8 Q. Okay. But they are aware of every vehicle that comes onto
9 the lot?

10 A. They get titles sent to them once we receive the title.

11 Q. Okay. So do they, do they email you that they're cleared, or
12 how do you get confirmation that they're cleared?

13 A. That's not a -- it's -- Norton Lowe (ph.) gets it, but it's a
14 company that Grimaldi hires to clear their titles.

15 Q. Okay. So CBP doesn't come out and do any kind of, like,
16 safety inspections or anything like that --

17 A. Oh, no, sir.

18 Q. -- though that --

19 A. Not to my knowledge.

20 Q. Okay. All right. And then about how many different liners
21 did you guys -- did you say you guys deal with?

22 A. Steamship lines? Four.

23 Q. Four different steamship lines. Are there different
24 processes for the used vehicles and the new vehicles?

25 A. We don't really get a lot of new vehicles, other than BMWs,

1 but yes, there is. Obviously, you just try to keep the new stuff
2 segregated from the used stuff and --

3 Q. Okay. I guess I should have started with, do you guys deal
4 with new vehicles?

5 A. Yeah. We do a few BMWs mainly.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. SUVs.

8 Q. So are there different -- so there are different processes
9 for new vehicles than used vehicles?

10 A. It's, for the most part, the same. Obviously, you do a
11 keener eye looking for damage on a new vehicle than you would a
12 used vehicle, but other than that, it's the same.

13 Q. All right. And then you, you said that most -- like, that
14 there is no checklist or anything for when they, when they come
15 on. You guys do the checks by memory?

16 A. For the most part, yeah.

17 Q. Okay. So would you be familiar -- if I said Grimaldi, you,
18 you -- could you go down through that checklist of what they
19 expect for their vehicles?

20 A. Not word-for-word, no.

21 Q. Could your folk do that? Because they're, they're actually
22 the ones that do the checklist, right?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. You just, you just are oversight to it?

25 A. Not word-for-word.

1 Q. Okay. So that's kind of a lot for them to try to remember.
2 Is there any kind of quality assurance that Horizon has to ensure
3 that the checklists are being fulfilled?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Okay. So the folks that check the vehicles when they come
6 off are the know-all-be-all of that, of that vehicle?

7 A. Pretty much. Yes, sir.

8 Q. For the runners, we talked about things like leaks and just,
9 just kind of, you know, condition and stuff like that. What about
10 the actual operating condition of them? Like, are -- as long as
11 they start up and run, does that -- that's acceptable?

12 A. For the most part. I mean, if it looks like there's radiator
13 damage or anything of that nature, then we try to make those
14 non-runners for certain lines.

15 Q. Okay. Have you heard them, you know, knocking and making all
16 -- you know, they've been accidents --

17 A. Yeah. Yeah. I've heard.

18 Q. Have you heard them kind of --

19 A. Yeah. I've heard that.

20 Q. And, and those are, those are --

21 MR. MASSEE: I'm sorry. Let him finish his question before
22 you say you've heard it.

23 BY MR. [REDACTED]

24 Q. Okay. So those are, those are acceptable, if they come out
25 and they are knocking and just not sounding that they're 100

1 percent well and efficient?

2 A. Correct. As long as they meet the other criteria.

3 Q. Meaning the leaks and the --

4 A. The hood and the damage part of it.

5 Q. Are there any, are there any regulations or any, I guess,
6 criteria for airbags?

7 A. We try our best to have the driver cut the airbags out if
8 they're in -- the driver that would drive the vehicle to the ship.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Or take them up; they do take them too.

11 Q. And then back to the hybrid as well. For the battery
12 disconnects to the hybrids -- so I guess there's a couple of
13 different batteries. You have the actual starting battery and
14 then you have the lithium battery. Does Horizon do anything for
15 those lithium batteries?

16 A. No. They're starting to reject those now too.

17 Q. Okay. All right. What about for vehicles that do not have
18 the batteries under the hood? Is there a process that Horizon
19 does to help the liners check those? For instance, I know there
20 are some batteries located in the trunks, under seats; does
21 Horizon have any processes for assisting the companies with, with
22 those?

23 A. Just when they ask.

24 Q. Okay. But there's nothing in writing, to the best of your
25 knowledge?

1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. That would be on the -- would you say that would be the
3 company's responsibility that comes out to disconnect those
4 batteries to, to be able to access those?

5 A. To let us know, yes, sir.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I'm good.

7 LTJG [REDACTED] All right. Mr. Thiel? Still on the line,
8 sir?

9 MR. THIEL: All right. Thank you. Can -- yes, can you hear
10 me all right?

11 LTJG [REDACTED] Yup. Yup. Whenever you're ready, go ahead
12 please.

13 BY MR. THIEL:

14 Q. Okay. Thank you. Okay. First, I apologize if I ask you
15 some questions that you've already been asked. Some of the --
16 some of your answers don't come across real clear. But first, I
17 want to confirm who this interview is. Is this John or Patrick?

18 A. John.

19 Q. Okay. Thanks. You were just asked about four, four
20 different lines that HTS provides terminal services to. What are
21 those four lines?

22 A. Hoëgh Autoliners, Grimaldi, Sallaum, and NYK. And we --
23 actually, it's five, because we do do Glovis, but it's about two
24 pieces every couple of months. Glovis and Sallaum kind of work
25 hand-in-hand. They work -- they load -- their stuff loads in the

1 same ship.

2 Q. Okay. So do each of those lines provide you with receiving
3 guidelines?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. And are, are all of those receiving guidelines in writing?

6 A. There's a file, yes, sir.

7 Q. All right. So I, I understand you testified that you did
8 receive guidelines from Grimaldi that are in writing?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. All right. And who do you receive those from at Grimaldi?

11 A. Typically, it's Michael Loeuis.

12 Q. With regard to Hoëgh, have you received those in writing?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. And, and just so we're clear, this, this vessel was a Hoëgh
15 vessel. So would you apply any Hoëgh guidelines with, with the
16 cargo that went onboard the *Hoëgh Xiamen*, or would those be
17 Grimaldi's guidelines?

18 A. Grimaldi's.

19 Q. All right. So when you're applying the Hoëgh guidelines,
20 that's for a vessel that is owned and operated by Hoëgh?

21 A. Hoëgh cargo going on, yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. Remaining on the subject of guidelines, does Horizon
23 itself have its own policy for its terminal activities concerning
24 the condition of cars or vehicles?

25 A. We, we do have some guidelines as well, and they're very

1 similar --

2 Q. What are those guidelines --

3 A. It's -- they're very --

4 Q. -- sir?

5 A. -- similar to the steamship lines. But the steamship lines
6 supersede our guidelines, in terms of cargo.

7 Q. And are your guidelines in writing?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. What are those called?

10 A. I think it's -- I'm not sure exactly what they are -- what
11 it's called. I'd have to look at the heading on it.

12 Q. Okay. But if, for instance, I asked for documents that were
13 called Horizon's receiving guidelines, would, would that be what
14 those guidelines are referred to?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. All right. So you'd know what that would mean, okay. Are
17 there any differences between the Horizon guidelines and
18 Grimaldi's guidelines?

19 A. Very -- they're roughly the same. There are some
20 differences. The exact differences, I would have to sit down and
21 compare them.

22 Q. Okay. So you, you can't just rattle them off right now as we
23 sit here?

24 A. No, sir.

25 Q. Who's responsible for developing those guidelines for

1 Horizon?

2 A. Anthony Vrban.

3 Q. I'm sorry. Was that Anthony?

4 A. Anthony Vrban.

5 Q. And what's his title?

6 MR. TAMASITIS: Chief Operating Officer.

7 BY MR. THIEL:

8 Q. Okay. Is there any difference between the Hoëgh guidelines
9 and Horizon's guidelines?

10 A. There's some, yes.

11 Q. All right. Is there a relationship between Hoëgh and
12 Horizon?

13 A. They are our parent company.

14 Q. Now, turning to Grimaldi's guidelines, are, are -- I know you
15 mentioned that the employees that receive the vehicles from the
16 truck drivers are the ones that are responsible for complying with
17 these guidelines; is that a correct understanding?

18 A. Can you repeat that again?

19 Q. Okay. The -- from my understanding of your, your prior
20 testimony, the individuals -- the employees of Horizon that
21 receive the vehicles from the truck drivers that are delivering
22 them, they are the ones that are responsible for following the
23 guidelines provided by, in this instance, Grimaldi?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. All right. And that's the only point in time when there's

1 anyone at Horizon that basically inspects these vehicles and, and
2 follows these guidelines; is that right?

3 A. I mean, if we see one when we're staging it that shouldn't be
4 a run and drive, then we do let Grimaldi know. Especially --

5 Q. Okay. So it's --

6 A. -- if it's a forklift -- specifically a forklift.

7 Q. Right. So, like, if a runner doesn't start and turns into a
8 non-runner, or a non-runner turns into a fork while you're
9 staging, then, then the status might change.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Is that fair?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 MR. THIEL: Okay.

14 LTJG [REDACTED] Do you, do you need some water or something?

15 MR. WHITE: No, I'm good.

16 LTJG [REDACTED] No? All right.

17 BY MR. THIEL:

18 Q. Do you have any -- does the truck driver, when they bring
19 vehicles to you from, from the shipper, do they provide you with
20 any documentation?

21 A. It's a dock receipt, and it typically has to have the title
22 with it.

23 Q. Okay. So you receive a dock receipt and then the vehicle
24 title?

25 A. Typically, yes, sir. Well, it has to have a dock receipt,

1 typically the title.

2 MR. THIEL: Okay. Okay. I don't have any further questions.
3 Thank you.

4 LTJG [REDACTED] All right. From PHMSA, is there any
5 additional follow-up questions?

6 MR. HENEGHAN: This is John. I think -- and I'm going to
7 defer to our incident or accident investigator, Keiran, if he has
8 anything he wants to ask.

9 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

10 (Pause.)

11 MR. HENEGHAN: Not hearing Kurt, then PHMSA has no questions.

12 LTJG [REDACTED] All right.

13 MR. [REDACTED] That's --

14 BY MR. [REDACTED]

15 Q. One, one last question, just for clarification.

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. You mentioned about the, you mentioned about the differences
18 in guidelines between Horizon's guidelines and maybe the liner's
19 guidelines. Can you give an example of, of what maybe the --
20 like, just one of those differences may be?

21 A. Like, Hoëgh with forklifts; they won't take ones with,
22 typically, with loose glass and stuff like that, you know, where
23 you can with Sallaum and/or Grimaldi; those two are the same.
24 Hoëgh are very -- not a lot of damage on their vehicles. A little
25 bit of a gray area, but they don't want a lot of damaged vehicles.

1 Where (indiscernible), typically not, but where you can have a
2 little bit more damage than what Hoëgh has.

3 Q. Okay. So is there -- I guess, does Horizon have their
4 guidelines of what they'll accept and then the liners have their
5 guidelines, or does Horizon basically just shadow any of the
6 guidelines that whatever liner they're working with has?

7 A. They're pretty much similar. We can say, hey, we're not
8 taking this cargo in because we don't want it, no matter what your
9 guidelines is, but they're pretty much similar.

10 Q. Okay. So the guideline -- it's not like there is a set of
11 guidelines that, that Horizon has and then there's a set of
12 guidelines that the Hoëgh -- that the shippers or the shipping
13 agencies has -- that the liners have. You just -- it -- overall,
14 what you're saying is Horizon has an overall safety flag that they
15 can throw.

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Saying we're not -- even though it meets the criteria, we
18 didn't feel comfortable --

19 MR. TAMASITIS: More broad, that covers all commodities.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. That's -- thank you. I just needed some
21 clarification.

22 MR. WHITE: Yes, sir.

23 MR. [REDACTED] I didn't know if there were two things, and if
24 so, how does that hierarchy work, but got it.

25 LTJG [REDACTED] All right. Well, hearing nothing else, we're

1 going to end this interview. Thank you, Mr. White. I think this
2 was very enlightening, and thank you for taking the time to answer
3 our questions.

4 I think we're going to hang up on this phone here because the
5 battery is dying, and I'll call back into the line with a
6 different phone for the next interview. So thank you, everybody.

7 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: SHIPBOARD FIRE ABOARD THE *HOËGH XIAMEN* IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA,
ON JUNE 4, 2020
Interview of John White

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20FM020

PLACE: Jacksonville, Florida

DATE: June 19, 2020

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.



Linda S. Dehn
Transcriber