

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD THE
STATEN ISLAND FERRY *SANDY GROUND*
NEAR STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
ON DECEMBER 22, 2022

Accident No.: DCA23FM010

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Interview of: BRENNAN TULEO, Marine Oiler
Staten Island Ferry

St. George Ferry Terminal
Staten Island, New York

Thursday,
January 19, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Accident Investigator
United States Coast Guard

BARRY TORREY, Director of Ferry Operations
Staten Island Ferry

DANIEL J. FITZGERALD, Attorney
Freehill Hogan & Mahar, LLP
(On behalf of Staten Island Ferry and New York City
Department of Transportation)

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Brennan Tuleo:

By CWO [REDACTED]

4

1 Q. All right. So we would just like to begin with talking about
2 your personnel experience. Could you discuss some of your
3 maritime experience thus far?

4 A. Okay. I went to SUNY Maritime. I graduated and then I
5 sailed for about 5 years. I sailed on small cruise ships for
6 about 2½ years, then I sailed with Military Sealift Command for 2
7 years.

8 Q. Okay. And then how long have you been with the Staten Island
9 Ferry?

10 A. About a year and a half.

11 Q. Okay. What was your experience from the beginning when you
12 first got hired with the ferry and up to now?

13 A. It's been a fair job. I'm an oiler, so do my -- when I first
14 got here, we got trained. I do my startups, I do my job. We
15 maintain the plant once it start up, and we make trips and make
16 sure everyone's safe, and it's been pretty consistent.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So you were initially hired on as a oiler?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. And that's your current position now. Are you working
22 and have worked on other vessel platforms? Like do you work on
23 all the platforms in the fleet or just particular ones?

24 A. We -- well, personally, I work on every boat that's here.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. All right. Could you describe some of the training you've
3 received for your position?

4 A. Okay. When I first got hired it was 2 weeks, 9 p.m. to 9
5 a.m. You get a couple shutdowns, you get a couple of startups
6 every day with the crews. You essentially shadow the other oilers
7 and then there's a lot of on-the-job training, too. So after that
8 initial break-in period of the 2 weeks, we go and we start our
9 job. We got a partner, and our training is -- every day we go
10 through a drill, which is training.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. And then, you know, that's it.

13 Q. Okay. So for the training that you received for the *Sandy*
14 *Ground*, what -- was that similar to like what you received, like
15 how you got trained on other vessels, or was there anything
16 different because it's a newer vessel?

17 A. The break-in period was 3 full days, so it's 36 hours on the
18 vessel.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then if you had anything else or you needed any more
21 training, you can get it. I had a walk-through with the training
22 oiler at the time, and then after that we got to go in as a spare
23 person on a watch, on a full watch, get a full shutdown. And then
24 we do that for another 2 days, and then if you had any questions
25 after that, you would ask -- say, hey, listen, I need another day

1 or -- and that was on your own time. So, you know, you can make
2 the time and you can be well rested for it. It was pretty
3 similar, if not a little more in depth.

4 Q. Okay. What was used as a method of recording the training?
5 Was there -- did you have some kind of a qualification system that
6 you had to do or was there some kind of training plan that you had
7 to review or sign?

8 A. There is a form that you get whenever you start training for
9 any boat, and you have to get checked off these boxes on each
10 boat -- safety, can you do your job. And it's -- you go in and
11 you get your training and you walk through everything, and then
12 what you do is the training officer -- so at the time my training
13 officer was Michelle. I believe she's still. But she is the
14 chief engineer here, and what she does is she walks you through
15 everything and says, okay, walk me through what you would do. And
16 then she says, okay, the crew's going to be on and so you're going
17 to do everything for them; you're going to show me that you can do
18 it before the next crew comes on. So she works with you one on
19 one in almost like a practical setting before she signs you off.
20 So that's how you get approved, you get approved to work that
21 vessel then. And she has like a spreadsheet and she keeps track
22 of all the people.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I just know this very closely because I work with her every
25 day. She's my chief right now.

1 Q. I see. Okay. Throughout the training did you feel that it
2 was, you know, adequate and sufficient enough for you to do your
3 job and your duties in your position?

4 A. For myself, absolutely.

5 Q. Okay. Did you have any pamphlets or manuals given, you know,
6 to describe like the equipment or systems?

7 A. We would get a printout that was written up by the training
8 officers and you could review it.

9 Q. Okay. And those were provided for you as your own like
10 guide, correct?

11 A. Yeah, own personal copy. They're in my car. If I haven't --
12 let's say I haven't been on a boat in a month, I make sure I bring
13 those with me, you know.

14 Q. I see.

15 A. Those are your bibles.

16 Q. Okay. And then you have those for the various vessels
17 throughout?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay. With the systems on board the *Sandy Ground* and even
20 the *Michael Ollis*, are there any differences that you noticed or
21 seen as far as, you know, the engine room or machinery?

22 A. Everything's pretty much the same, I believe.

23 Q. So as far as the fuel system on board, do you perform
24 anything different between the two vessels like, for instance, the
25 *Ollis* versus the *Sandy Ground* or, you know, vice versa, or are

1 those procedures pretty standard, you know, in regards to your
2 duties and what you do as an oiler?

3 A. It's standard for both.

4 Q. Okay. So when you -- because you'll be assigned on a
5 different vessel a lot of times, right?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. It's not always the same. So you feel that you're able to
8 transition easily between the vessels and perform your duties?

9 A. Absolutely.

10 Q. Okay. And then just in regards to the fuel system itself on
11 the *Sandy Ground*, what does that entail as far as your procedures
12 for maintaining levels, monitoring tank levels, things like that,
13 fuel supplies? Could you explain that process, that procedure?

14 A. Oh, yeah. Sure. I'm morning crew, so we get in, make sure
15 everything's open, everything's open as far as the fuel system
16 goes. And when we start up the boat, what'll happen is a return
17 might favor one side versus the other. The purifier is really
18 close to one tank, so you might have to adjust it. But as far as
19 my watch, what I was told during training was one person keeps
20 their hand on the fuel, that's it. I don't want to overcorrect; I
21 don't want to undercorrect. I want to make sure that -- it's my
22 responsibility, it's mine. If it's the other oilers, it's theirs.
23 Obviously, we're both monitoring it and I would -- always
24 communication, always.

25 Q. And then just, if you don't mind elaborating a little bit

1 more about that. So when you mean the fuel handling to one
2 person, do you mean one oiler or --

3 A. It's one oiler.

4 Q. -- one engineer?

5 A. One oiler.

6 Q. One oiler. And that's what you've normally done for your
7 shifts, for your watch, just keeping it one person?

8 A. Oh, yeah. Always.

9 Q. And then the individual, would that individual monitor levels
10 as well as operate?

11 A. Yes. I mean, obviously I would be monitoring the levels as
12 well. But we're either in the control room or in the engine
13 space. So if you're in the control room you can see the levels.
14 If you're in the engine space you can see the level.

15 So if that was my duty for that day -- which is what I
16 normally do on my watch, I usually make sure the fuel stays level.
17 I can monitor it from anywhere. And then if I'm on a round or I'm
18 in the engine room, the guy who's in there knows I'm already on
19 it. He knows I can see it. He knows I'm already on it, so he
20 doesn't touch it.

21 Q. I see. What would be the standard configuration of as far as
22 valve alignment or, you know, your manifold setup for a typical
23 underway operation?

24 A. Say we're pulling from the storage purifier, purifier's
25 going. That purifier goes very closely to one tank and that tank,

1 that return has to be adjusted accordingly because -- personally,
2 I wait until the first -- from Staten Island to New York, I wait
3 until we get to New York just to make sure, and we make slight
4 adjustments that way. But everything's fully open and then --
5 until we get to New York. And then once we get to New York, we're
6 like, okay, this is what we're doing, this is how the returns are
7 acting, and we can adjust accordingly. So we'll close down that
8 side that's really close to the purifier slightly and leave the
9 other one alone.

10 Q. Could you describe a little bit more about what you mean by
11 one side and when you say everything open? Could you explain what
12 those actual items are or pieces?

13 A. Okay. Yeah. So you got the storage valve that's open, is
14 coming; both sides are open and they run through the purifier and
15 they go to engines, boiler, whatever. And then the returns coming
16 out of the engine, there are valves going back to these service
17 tanks that are servicing the engine.

18 So you got your storage purifier going into your service
19 tank, and then coming out of the service tank it's going to your
20 engines. And then from there, you got your returns that go back
21 to the service tank. So you're feeding the purifier to the
22 service tank, your returns are coming into your service tank, but
23 there's valves on the end of your returns. There's two ball
24 valves, one on each side.

25 MR. FITZGERALD: That's pretty impressive. He just traced

1 that all just about from memory. That's pretty good.

2 CWO [REDACTED] Yeah. Yeah.

3 BY CWO [REDACTED]

4 Q. So when you're mentioning sides, is this like the port and
5 starboard or --

6 A. Yeah, they're port and starboard, but they're also on
7 opposite ends of the boat.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Of the main engine space. So you -- they're port and
10 starboard but also opposite end, so they're not really -- the pipe
11 chase is a lot longer from one tank to the other as far as when
12 the purifier is feeding the service tanks.

13 Q. Okay. For your, you know, descriptions and nomenclature,
14 what do you normally use as far as the terminology to talk about
15 each side? You know, do you say the port and starboard or do you
16 say like the New York end, Staten Island end?

17 A. I usually go with New York, Staten Island, just because when
18 you're in that particular control room, the way the tanks are,
19 it's easier just saying New York, Staten Island.

20 Q. Okay. How do you normally collect information as far as the
21 fuel levels and monitoring? Like when you're doing your rounds or
22 when you're in the process of leveling, you know, what does that
23 look like as far as you making records of it or --

24 A. So the chief comes in the morning and she makes a record of
25 what's on board.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And then we have the TLIs that show on the screen, and then
3 you got your -- the gauges or the orange flags that come up that
4 lets you know where you're at. And we don't take like an hourly
5 log of fuel.

6 Q. As far as the areas that you say you can monitor levels, you
7 mentioned in the control room?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. And then as well as locally?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Have you experienced, you know, any like big difference
12 between the two as far as gallons or, you know, soundings,
13 perhaps, or are they relatively --

14 A. They're pretty good on those boats, yeah.

15 Q. Have you experienced any issues with like alarms, level
16 alarms, tank alarms, or things like that?

17 A. No.

18 Q. No? Okay. And in your experience you feel like the labeling
19 is pretty adequate for all the valves and piping for the fuel?

20 A. Yeah. They all have tags and labels on them.

21 Q. Okay. No issue actually conducting your operation when
22 you're at the manifolds? It seem to be adequate for you to --

23 A. Oh, yeah, you got plenty of space. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And it's clear.

1 Q. Do you know what would happen if both fuel day tanks supply
2 valves were closed?

3 A. Fuel day tank supply valves. I mean, eventually you run out
4 of fuel, right?

5 Q. Okay. How about if the return valves were closed, if both
6 return valves were closed, do you know what might happen to --

7 A. Probably overpressurize the system.

8 Q. So another thing -- I just want to talk a little bit more
9 about your work shifts. Do you normally have the same crew or
10 same shift that you're with like as far as the other engineers or
11 do you move around more so with other, like other engineers or
12 oilers?

13 A. I, right now, come in the same time every day with the same
14 people.

15 Q. All right. Do you know the daytime level limits, like what
16 they're set at, like what are the highs and lows as far as the
17 alarm parameters?

18 A. I don't know off the top of my head.

19 Q. Okay. Do you know if that's ever been modified or adjusted?

20 A. We have had people on board, the electricians coming on board
21 and checking the high and low levels, and that's all I can recall.

22 Q. Okay. Where would the alarms go off? Like if you do get any
23 type level alarms, where would you normally get those alarms?

24 A. Control room.

25 Q. Control room? Okay. Do you have the ability to like silence

1 an alarm if it comes on?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. And then just with the fuel system itself, is there
4 any other procedure that -- like as far as your training, was that
5 part of your training that you got as far as the familiarization
6 for the vessels?

7 A. Yes. You get a familiarization with the fuel system, as you
8 generally would, including a startup, and then you also have to be
9 signed off on a fueling. So in that case, you would have probably
10 put your hand on near every valve there, which is, I think,
11 important to be able to remember things.

12 Q. And was this included in the training manuals or in the
13 pamphlets, the fuel system?

14 A. I don't know. I can't recall. But it's a part of the
15 training and it's something that you have to get signed off, so
16 you have to witness and be a part of that, every aspect of the
17 fueling.

18 Q. Which you did and you got signed off?

19 A. Yes. That's correct.

20 Q. Okay. And have you noticed any issues with fuel management
21 on any other of the vessels other than the *Sandy Ground* or the
22 *Ollis* ferries?

23 A. No. I mean, everyone that I've worked with is well -- you
24 always have to have the brief in the morning. Like you said, if
25 you work with other people, sometimes you get someone who's an

1 overtime guy and you just have to brief him and say, hey, listen,
2 this is my job or this is your job, do one.

3 Q. So with what you have so far as your experience on board, the
4 two day tanks being on each side, the port and starboard or New
5 York, Staten Island, that doesn't seem to be, you know, that
6 difficult to, you know, understand the layout and still conduct
7 and perform your -- what you need to do as far as the fuel
8 leveling or fuel monitoring?

9 A. No. I don't think it really matters.

10 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. At this time I'd like to open it up to
11 the room if anyone else would like to ask any other questions?

12 MR. FITZGERALD: No. I was just impressed with your
13 understanding of the fuel system. The way you traced that out
14 was -- I'm good. Thanks.

15 CWO [REDACTED] Yeah. And, you know, before we conclude, I
16 just like to ask is there anything you would like to add or, you
17 know, anything further that you think may be, you know, beneficial
18 to the interview?

19 MR. TULEO: No. I'm good.

20 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. And would you be willing to be
21 contacted at a later time if I have any follow-up questions or --

22 MR. TULEO: Yeah, sure.

23 CWO [REDACTED] -- might want to follow up again? Okay.

24 So that concludes our interview. Time on deck is 10:22.

25 (Whereupon, at 10:22 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD THE
 STATEN ISLAND FERRY *SANDY GROUND* NEAR
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
 ON DECEMBER 22, 2022
 Interview of Brennan Tuleo

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM010

PLACE: Staten Island, New York

DATE: January 19, 2023

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.

Kay Ma
Transc



