

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: FRANK RODA, 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

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Interview of Frank Roda:

By CWO [REDACTED]

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:40 a.m.)

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CWO ██████████ Good morning. This is Chief Warrant Officer

██████████ That's spelled ██████████.

And we are conducting an interview today, January 19th, 2023.

Time on deck is 10:40. We are located at the St. George Terminal
in Staten Island, New York. We'll begin with introductions.

MR. FITZGERALD: Good morning. Dan Fitzgerald here, with the
law firm of Freehill Hogan & Mahar on behalf of the party in
interest New York City DOT and Staten Island Ferry.

MR. ██████████ Could you please just spell your last name?

MR. FITZGERALD: Fitzgerald. My last name is
F-i-t-z-g-e-r-a-l-d.

MR. RODA: This is Frank Roda. I'm a marine oiler at the
Staten Island Ferry. R-o-d-a is how you spell the last name.

MR. TORREY: Barry Torrey, T-o-r-r-e-y, and I'm director of
ferry operations for the Staten Island Ferry.

CWO ██████████ Very good.

For the record, just wanted to confirm with you that you're
in agreement for us to record this interview?

MR. RODA: Yes.

CWO ██████████ All right.

INTERVIEW OF FRANK RODA

BY CWO ██████████

Q. So we would like to begin with discussing your personal

1 experience and maritime background. Could you please just
2 describe your experience and background?

3 A. Yeah, sure. I'm technically a hawsepiper. I didn't go to
4 any schools. I started over at Governor's Island, I think it was
5 2013 or the end of 2012. Worked there till March of 2017, so
6 about 4 or 5 years or so, and -- till I got the position here and
7 I've been here since. So I'm coming up on 6 years this March.

8 Q. You were initially hired as an oiler?

9 A. No. I was actually originally hired as a deckhand over
10 there, and a spot opened up so I transitioned below deck. Started
11 learning things little by little. They sent to me to school and
12 kind of worked my way up from there.

13 Q. Okay. How many trips would you say you've had on board the
14 *Sandy Ground*?

15 A. How many trips? You're considering one trip, I guess, there
16 and back?

17 Q. Roundtrip or --

18 A. Yeah. That's tough to say. I mean, a lot, I'd say.

19 Q. Okay. What was your like training time? Like could you
20 describe your training leading up to being trained on board the --

21 A. I was actually one of the training marine oilers on there.
22 So I was on there for a few months training with the other
23 officers, helping the other crew members train.

24 Q. All right. Could you explain that process and how that was
25 developed and your role?

1 A. So my chief at the time, she, I guess, was elected training
2 officer, so she asked if I wanted to be involved in the process.
3 I said, sure, no problem. And then from there, you know, we get a
4 different crew member every week or so, whenever they came by,
5 whenever they were free to get over there. And we just basically
6 went over all the systems; we start up, shut down the boats, take
7 it out. Just for everyone to basically get used to the process, I
8 guess, of the boats.

9 Q. Okay. And as far as the other vessels -- you work on all the
10 other platforms as well, right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. And as far as the training procedures and processes,
13 is that the same across the board in how you would train on
14 different vessels?

15 A. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I usually take an oiler and, you know,
16 show them their daily process, what to do start up, shut down.
17 Basically get the same thing on the *Sandy* and the *Ollis*.

18 Q. Is there a set number of shutdowns and, you know, procedures
19 to do in order to be considered --

20 A. There is, but I'm not sure of the exact number. But, yeah,
21 in order for them to get checked off, they have to do a certain
22 number of startups and shutdowns on each vessel.

23 Q. What is included in training? You know, could you describe
24 that? Like, for instance, hands on, on the vessel versus, you
25 know, in the classroom, or materials provided?

1 A. First off, familiarization obviously. You know, your escape
2 routes, your -- all your firefighting equipment. Hands on for
3 oilers, at least, you know, how to start lube oil purifiers, how
4 to start fuel oil purifiers, valves, what valves do what, things
5 like that.

6 Q. Okay. So as part of the training you are learning the
7 different components --

8 A. Yes. Right.

9 Q. -- in that system? Okay. For the fuel transfer system in
10 particular, how were you trained in that system? So to include
11 the fuel manifolds and tanks and, you know, the associated
12 equipment, what did that training look like for you?

13 A. First of all, they show you the valve lineup and then from
14 there try to -- I would trace out the system and see where each
15 valve goes and where it leads to, what tank it goes to. Basically
16 trace out the lines, you know, just to get familiarized with them.

17 Q. And do you feel training was adequate for you to conduct your
18 duties and --

19 A. Oh, yeah.

20 Q. -- and responsibilities in your position?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Have you had any issues with labeling of the components such
23 as valves or, you know, any of the equipment in relation to their
24 nomenclature and how they're labeled?

25 A. No. Everything's labeled pretty well. And plus, you know,

1 labeled simple enough for people to understand.

2 Q. So what would be your typical duties as an oiler? So can you
3 walk me through what a, you know, what a shift looks like for you
4 when you start --

5 A. Yeah. So --

6 Q. -- when you come on?

7 A. I'm on a morning crew. So we come on in the morning, and
8 I'll look in the logbook first of all, see what was done last
9 night, anything we need to know for our shift. The tank -- I
10 mean, depending on what vessel you're on it's somewhat different
11 duties because of the valve lineups and all that. But we come on,
12 we open our valves, what valves need to be open. We clean the
13 purifier every day. We check our oil levels. We clean the
14 strainers. We usually do -- we'll do a PM, depending on what
15 needs to be done. And we go from there. You know, then we start
16 up, we go down and start the engines, we observe.

17 Q. Does valve alignment come into -- or is a part of that
18 process at all? Like lining up any fuel valves or --

19 A. Depending on the vessel, yes.

20 Q. Okay. So, for instance, the *Sandy Ground*, if you were to
21 have a shift on board the *Sandy Ground*, you know, what would be
22 that process for you?

23 A. The *Sandy Ground*, we got the main sea strainers, that's
24 majority of it on that vessel. All the other stuff remains open
25 for the most part because, you know, one crew leaves, one crew

1 comes in. So it's mostly just the main sea strainers and then we
2 clean auxiliary strainers and vents. When it comes to the fuel,
3 everything usually remains open the way it was except for the
4 valves actually going into and out of the fuel oil purifier.

5 Q. I see. And that's typical to run the fuel oil purifier in
6 conjunction with the operation?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Depending on the level of the tanks. You know, if we come in
10 and the tanks are high, you know, we might not run the purifier
11 for a few trips just to get it back down to normal.

12 Q. I see. Is there any big differences that you've noticed with
13 the fuel process and fuel management on board the *Sandy Ground*
14 versus, you know, other vessels?

15 A. Not really a difference, but one side the return tends to
16 lean that way, so we would kind of adjust the fuel based on that.

17 Q. Could you just elaborate more on when you mean -- you know,
18 what it means?

19 A. So let's say, let's say the purifier's not even online so we
20 don't have to worry about that, you're just running the machinery.
21 The returns of that machinery tend to go to the port side more
22 than the starboard side, so slowly throughout the day that port
23 side will gradually increase compared to the starboard side.

24 Q. I see.

25 MR. FITZGERALD: I'm sorry. Which vessel is this?

1 MR. RODA: This is the *Ollis* and *Sandy Ground*.

2 MR. FITZGERALD: Both of them. Okay.

3 BY CWO [REDACTED]

4 Q. Okay. So this -- so you've seen this on the *Ollis* as well --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- and the *Sandy Ground*?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. As far as the fuel leveling and monitoring of levels
9 in the tanks, could you describe that process and how you perform
10 that?

11 A. Yeah. So you got the mark-on screens on the *Sandy*, which
12 shows you starting your starboard day tank and your port day tank.
13 We monitor it based off the screen, but to be safe you have the
14 flags just to make sure the screen's accurate, the flags.

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. And that's essentially how we monitor it.

17 Q. Have you noticed any, you know, major differences between
18 using the local, you know, flags or gauge versus the indicators in
19 the EMS?

20 A. No. They're pretty accurate.

21 Q. Okay. So if you were to notice levels being, you know,
22 offset more than you would like, you know, so what would you do in
23 order to, I guess, level them or keep to where you would want
24 them? Like what's the procedure for that?

25 A. Well, if the port side, which is the one I said tends to go

1 higher gradually, we usually just -- on that one return valve,
2 maybe about a 45-degree angle, it tends to stay pretty even
3 throughout the day.

4 Q. Okay. How about on the other side, starboard side, have you
5 noticed that similar --

6 A. The starboard side we rarely have to touch. It's usually
7 return wide open. If the purifier's on we have the fill wide
8 open. The only valve we touch is the return on the port side.

9 Q. I see.

10 A. So we'll adjust that but very minimal. You know, when --
11 crack it open a little bit, crack it shut, but it's never
12 completely shut. It's like 45-degree angle most of the time and
13 it's pretty good from there.

14 Q. Okay. What are some of the ways that you record fuel levels,
15 for instance? Or is that recorded down somewhere as you're --

16 A. Every shift -- well, every morning shift and then when we get
17 relieved, the chief engineer on -- in the logbook, writes down the
18 fuel levels for each tank. So you'll have your two day tanks and
19 your two storage tanks.

20 Q. Storage tanks. And this is the logbook in the engine
21 control --

22 A. In the control room.

23 Q. Okay. Do you feel that the space and the area by these fuel
24 manifolds is adequate, you know, for you to perform the management
25 of leveling and --

1 A. Oh, yes. Definitely.

2 Q. And you don't have any issues with labeling or nomenclature,
3 right, of the system and the labeling of the valves or different
4 tanks?

5 A. No. I have no issues with that.

6 Q. So for the day tank supply valves, do you know what would
7 happen if the running engines -- do you typically have all main
8 engines running?

9 A. Yeah, on the -- yes.

10 Q. So if -- with all main engines running and for the fuel oil
11 day tank supply valves, do you know what'll happen if those valves
12 are closed?

13 A. The machinery will eventually shut down.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. If they're both closed.

16 Q. If they're both closed.

17 A. They should be able to run with one open. Like because you
18 can shut the port side and you can shut the starboard side. If
19 you just shut the port supply, it should -- I mean, the machinery
20 will still run.

21 Q. What would the be the typical operation though?

22 A. Oh, they're both wide open at all times.

23 Q. Okay. How about if the fuel oil day tank return valves were
24 both closed, do you know what would happen?

25 A. The fuel oil day tank return valves? Like from the

1 machinery?

2 Q. Correct.

3 A. Yeah, be back pressure.

4 Q. If the return valves to the day tanks were closed, right?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. How many people does it normally take to perform
7 the -- you know, that process, the monitoring and leveling like as
8 you describe and trying to maintain those like --

9 A. With the two oilers there, we try to keep it to just one
10 oiler just so someone doesn't do something without the other
11 knowing. One guy handles it for the most part.

12 Q. I see. Is that something that you're doing on your --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- shifts that you're responsible for? Okay.

15 And what does the communication look like for that? Like
16 between you and the chief engineer or any of the engineers, do you
17 just explain, you know, what you're going to be doing and --

18 A. I normally go out there and do what I feel is necessary and
19 then I'll come in and I let my partner know and then I also let
20 the chief know what I just did.

21 Q. I see. Would you say that fuel procedures are similar
22 between the other crews and the other vessels or do you notice,
23 you know, maybe differences in how it's done?

24 A. No, I think they're similar. I mean, I'm usually with the
25 same crew, but if I come in on an overtime shift or work with a

1 different crew, it's basically the same process.

2 Q. Okay. Do you know what are the fuel day tank level limits
3 for the alarms are set at?

4 A. For the alarms?

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. Recently they've been -- they've been going off around 1500
7 right now on those for a low level, which is --

8 Q. Low level. Okay.

9 A. I mean, that's plenty of fuel. It's not very low.

10 Q. What would be a high level, if there was?

11 A. 24-.

12 Q. Have you seen or experienced the alarm parameters being
13 changed at all or modified?

14 A. I haven't been -- I haven't seen or experienced that, no.

15 Q. And then as far as the alarms themselves, you know, are they
16 pretty accurate when they do go off or do they seem to appear
17 pretty close to what the level would be when they're saying high
18 or low?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And then I just wanted to go back a little bit to the
21 training aspect of it. With the training that you received, were
22 you given any training material --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- or pamphlets?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. All right. Could you describe what they were and --

2 A. So the training officer -- and we had another training
3 officer, so we had two chiefs training along with myself and the
4 other oiler. They traced out the systems. I'm talking every
5 single system, pictures, bullet points, and how it operates,
6 parameters, everything. Every single system was -- it was a very
7 thick packet, let's say that. It was pretty well written.

8 Q. I see. And you were given your own personal copy?

9 A. Yes. Everyone that trained was given one.

10 Q. Okay. And as far as your training that you've attended, was
11 that recorded or documented?

12 A. As far as who was training?

13 Q. Well, for you for when you conducted your training, was that
14 documented or --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. Everyone that showed up is either in the logbook, it was
18 written -- every day whoever was there was, it was recorded.

19 CWO ██████████ Okay. At this time I'd like to open it up to
20 the room if anyone has any other questions?

21 (No response)

22 All right. Well, lastly, before we conclude, I wanted to ask
23 if there were any final things you might want to add or feel like,
24 you know, we should know?

25 MR. RODA: No.

1 CWO [REDACTED] And do you agree to be contacted at a later
2 time in case I have any follow-up questions or --

3 MR. RODA: Yeah, that's fine. No problem.

4 CWO [REDACTED] All right. So this concludes our interview.
5 Time on deck is 10:57.

6 (Whereupon, at 10:57 a.m., 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: ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD THE
 STATEN ISLAND FERRY *SANDY GROUND* NEAR
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
 ON DECEMBER 22, 2022
 Interview of Frank Roda

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 M 
Transcriber

