

The crew present from the UTOPIA IV on January 6th consisted of the Chief Officer, Chief Engineer, Deck Hand, Chief Stewardess. The following are key points from each interview:

Chief Stewardess - Was attending to the passengers who were eating dinner prior to the incident. Once incident occurred, Chief Stewardess provided first aid to passengers. During this time, she noticed the Master running to the bridge, thus confirming that the Master was not on the bridge at the time of the collision. Post collision and after the passengers were confirmed to be okay, the UTOPIA IV attempted to try and rescue the crew of the TROPIC BREEZE but lowering their swimming platform, but were unsuccessful due to the height of the swimming platform. Chief Stewardess also claimed to have seen the navigational lights of the M/T TROPIC BREEZE when looking out at the vessel post collision.

Deck Hand (Alex Rose) - Alex Rose was sleeping in his quarters at the time of the incident. Mr. Rose felt a big "bump" and awoke. The Chief Officer (who shares a room with the deck hand) jumped out of his rack and attended to the bridge. Mr. Rose relayed to the bridge as well and began receiving instructions from the Chief Officer. It is to note that he stated the bridge watch consisted of the Master and Bosun at the time of the incident. Post collision, the Bosun was in shock and was hyperventilating and Master seemed to be in shock as well. The Chief Officer took over the helm of the vessel and attempted to rescue the crew of the TROPIC BREEZE. Alex noticed that on the bridge, only one of the radars were displayed on the bridge monitors post collision. Alex also stated that the Bosun was one of the newest additions to the crew and seemed to not be competent in his position as the bridge watch. It was also noted that the Master of the vessel smokes and sometimes goes out to the bow to smoke a cigarette. Alex also stated that the crew is permanent party and not chosen by charterer, thus confirming that the vessel cannot be considered a bareboat charter Chief Engineer (Fred Wennberg) - Fred Wennberg was heading to his quarters to rest prior to the incident. He states that when walking to his quarters around 2200, he saw the Master of the UTOPIA IV headed to fantail to have a smoke. (The master tends to smoke on the port bow often, but the weather provided spray on the bow that day) Once collision occurred, Fred went to restart engines for they automatically shut down upon impact into the TROPIC BREEZE. Once engines were operational, Fred began to assist in the attempted rescue of the TROPIC BREEZE crew. He has stated that he does not recall if the vessel had their navigation lights on, but saw in pictures afterwards that they were running.

Chief Officer (Jeffrey Wierzba) - Jeffrey stated that the crew is not paid by the charterer and also the crew is permanent party for the vessel. He stated this was the first time the UTOPIA IV went on the route they were on prior to incident. When asked if any navigation equipment was not operational the day of the incident, he stated that the S-band radar was unable to be viewed on the bridge monitors. He was in his rack at the time of the incident. When he heard a loud crash, he departed his quarters and went straight to the bridge where both the Master and the Bosun was in shock. On the bridge, he saw that the UTOPIA IV was lodged into the TROPIC BREEZE and was unable to detach from the vessel until the seas broke them apart. Jeffrey commenced a Mayday call while on the bridge and was able to communicate with the M/Y AMARA in order to have the crew of the TROPIC BREEZE rescued. He states that he did not see navigation lights on the TROPIC BREEZE post collision.

On January 7th, our team interviewed the A/B who was on bridge watch from the TROPIC BREEZE as well as the master. The TROPIC BREEZE was heading to Grand Stirrup Key from Clifton Pier, Bahamas.

A/B (Egan Morgan) – Egan conducted a safety round at 2200 which consisted of verifying all navigation lights were operational check engine room and check alarm panel on bridge. Mr. Morgan states that he did not see any vessels on radar or visually prior to the collision. When asked about lights from land, he states that he was able to see them, but they were multiple miles away. A few seconds before the

collision, the Master of the vessel stood up to head to the restroom on the bridge did not make it due to the UTOPIA IV striking their port aft quarter moments later. After being struck, the master instructed himself and the crew to depart because the UTOPIA penetrated the engine room and it began to flood. The crew mustered and gathered the equipment they are assigned to bring during an abandon ship. The crew departed the vessel on a rescue boat and a life raft and attempted to be recovered by the UTOPIA IV by way of the swimming platform, but was unsuccessful due to the height of the platform. The crew was then rescued by the M/Y AMARA, who responded to the collision.

Master (Travis Taylor) - Travis states that the route taken by the vessel is very common and is done about twice a month. He stated that he is familiar with the route. Travis stated that prior to departing on their voyage, he conducted pre-departure checks as required by management. He stated that prior to departing the AIS on board the vessel has recently lost power but recovered by the time the vessel departed. The AIS was scheduled to be replaced due to it losing power once on a weekly basis. Besides the AIS issue, all navigational equipment was operational. TROPIC BREEZE's radars were set to alarm when a vessel was in a 2-mile radius of the vessel. The vessel's two VHF radios were set to Channel 9 and Channel 16. A few moments prior to the collision, he proceeded to make his way towards the restroom on the bridge when they were struck by the UTOPIA IV on their stern. The power to the vessel remained on post collision due to the emergency generator. When asked if the UTOPIA IV had their navigational lights on post collision, he stated that he did not recall. 15 minutes after collision, all of the crew on the TROPIC BREEZE successfully abandoned ship and attempted to be rescued by the UTOPIA IV but subsequently was rescued by the M/Y AMARA. When asked about comms, Travis stated that no one responded to his Mayday call post incident. When asked about the radar and possibly why the vessel was unable to see the UTOPIA IV heading towards them on the radar, he stated that there is a possible blind spot on the stern of the vessel due to the radar being located forward of the mast.