

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON*  
NEAR THE BOSTON SPORTS DISTRICT  
IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS ON  
MARCH 24, 2023

\* Accident No.: DCA23FM022

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ROB SCHULER, Associate Director of Marine Ops  
Hornblower Cruises and Events

Boston, Massachusetts

Thursday,  
April 6, 2023

APPEARANCES:

██████████ ██████████ Lieutenant Commander  
First District Formal Investigation Team  
United States Coast Guard

BRIAN YOUNG, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KEITH FAWCETT, Marine Accident Investigator  
First District Formal Investigation Team  
United States Coast Guard

██████████ ██████████ Lieutenant  
First District Formal Investigation Team  
United States Coast Guard

██████████ ██████████ Lieutenant Commander, Legal Advisor  
United States Coast Guard

██████████ ██████████ Commander  
United States Coast Guard

ERIC DENLEY, Counsel  
City Cruises

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:14 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 LT [REDACTED] -- the Coast Guard as well as the NTSB and if you  
4 please, verbally acknowledge that it is being recorded?

5 MR. SCHULER: Yes.

6 LT [REDACTED] Thank you. This is a joint U.S. Coast Guard,  
7 NTSB investigation and the Coast Guard is the lead agency and we  
8 are conducting this interview under the applicable Coast Guard  
9 regulations. Today is April 6, 2023, the interview is of Mr. Rob  
10 Schuler and the location is the First Coast Guard District  
11 conference room and the time is 11:14.

12 We are conducting an interview to examine the events  
13 surrounding the fire aboard the excursion vessel *Spirit of Boston*,  
14 which occurred on March 24th, 2023, in Boston Harbor. At this  
15 time, I'd like to go around the room and introduce the interview  
16 team. Myself -- my name is Lieutenant [REDACTED]  
17 and I am part of the First Coast Guard District investigations  
18 team.

19 LCDR [REDACTED] Hello, good morning, I'm Lieutenant Commander  
20 [REDACTED] and I'm with the First Coast Guard  
21 District formal investigation.

22 MR. YOUNG: Good morning, my name is Bryan Young, Y O U N G,  
23 and I represent the National Transportation Safety Board. Thank  
24 you for being here today.

25 LCDR [REDACTED] Hello, sir, I'm Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I'm the legal advisor for the  
2 investigation.

3 CMDR [REDACTED] Good morning, Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm the  
4 lead investigator for this investigation -- [REDACTED] sorry.

5 LT [REDACTED] And on the line, we have Mr. Fawcett.

6 Mr. Fawcett, please introduce yourself. I believe you may be  
7 muted. I just need your help because it's muted on my end.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, Keith, can you hear us now?

9 LT [REDACTED] Can I just say it for the record?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, I don't know if he's there or  
11 not.

12 LT [REDACTED] He's trying, I think.

13 So, for the record, Mr. Keith Fawcett, F A W C E T T, is  
14 joined us via Teams and he is a civilian marine casualty  
15 investigator as per his previous introductions.

16 MR. SCHULER: Okay, yeah.

17 LT [REDACTED] We're good, [REDACTED]

18 And sir, Mr. Schuler, can you please introduce yourself?

19 MR. SCHULER: Sure, Robert Schuler, S C H U L E R, I'm the  
20 associate director of marine operations for the dining division.

21 LT [REDACTED] And are you represented by counsel?

22 MR. SCHULER: Yes.

23 MR. DENLEY: I'm Eric Denley, D E N L E Y, counsel for City  
24 Cruises.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can hear you now.

1 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. Good morning, sir, I'll be  
2 listening remotely. I can hear you loud and clear and I thank you  
3 very much for being here.

4 MR. SCHULER: I appreciate it.

5 LT [REDACTED] All right, sir, you may change, modify anything  
6 you say in this interview if you recall at a later time. Just let  
7 Mr. Denley know and we can make an adjustment to the transcript.  
8 You may also appeal the final results of the report of  
9 investigation that may result from this interview. For your own  
10 information, the Coast Guard Marine Safety Manual Volume Five  
11 outlines marine casualty investigations processed through the  
12 Coast Guard.

13 And at this time, if nobody has any further questions,  
14 Ms. [REDACTED] you can begin the interview.

15 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT SCHULER

16 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

17 Q. Thank you, again, for being here and speaking to us.

18 A. No problem.

19 Q. We'll just kind of start with going over your background.  
20 Can you kind of give us your work experience in the maritime  
21 industry?

22 A. Sure, I started being a deck hand around 2011, 2012 in Juno,  
23 Alaska; I did a season up there. Then I went to Maui, did a few  
24 years up there as a deck hand, snorkel and dive trips, and then  
25 went back to Alaska for a handful of years as a naturalist, and

1 then got my captain's license from University of Alaska Southeast  
2 in Sitka. Then moved to Boston in fall of 2020.

3 Q. So, how long have you been employed with City Cruises?

4 A. Two years.

5 Q. And how did you start? Did you come on as a deck hand?

6 A. Start -- I came on as a captain, yeah.

7 Q. To kind of -- to understand your role as an associate  
8 director of marine operations for City Cruises and the  
9 organization, can you kind of talk to us about what you do, what  
10 your job is?

11 A. Sure, kind of like the boots on the ground when it comes to  
12 admin to the deck hands and the captains and stuff like that.

13 (Verbatim) So, I'm kind of, like, a link between the director and  
14 the upper management to the guys that are doing the cruises on a  
15 daily basis. I still do cruises occasionally as a captain. So,  
16 I'll, you know, assist the guys scheduling wise whenever I can,  
17 I'll help with payroll kind of creating the schedule, which is a  
18 lot of work. Then just kind of working with -- working as an  
19 assistant to the director just whenever he needs anything wise  
20 whether it's paperwork -- assistance with paperwork. Like today,  
21 I'm putting on a CPR class. Just stuff like that, so just kind of  
22 like a utility person.

23 Q. So, who do you report to? Your boss?

24 A. Yeah, Director Thayer Harris.

25 Q. Okay, and is that always the case? He's always the person

1 you report to? Do you ever interact with the general manager? Do  
2 you report --

3 A. Yeah, their offices are right next to each other and Kelly is  
4 very -- Kelly, who's the general manager, is very hands on, so,  
5 yeah, we all work together. But yeah, my immediate boss is  
6 Thayer.

7 Q. And who reports to you?

8 A. Everyone in the marine division for the dining, so captains  
9 and deck hands.

10 Q. And do they report to you and also to Mr. Harris or is it  
11 kind of like a linear -- they report to you, then you report to  
12 Mr. Harris? How does that --

13 A. I think as far as a perspective, the guys go on who to report  
14 to are kind of on an even level. So, some things will go to him  
15 and some things will go to me.

16 Q. Can you kind of tell me about the director of marine  
17 operation's duties and how they differ from your duties? Or if  
18 they do differ, which ones overlap?

19 A. Yeah, so the director will handle a lot of -- he has his  
20 hands in a lot more of the paperwork and the budgetary side of it.  
21 So, I don't really handle anything that comes to, like, handling  
22 the budget and working directly with, like, the sales team and  
23 kind of the fiscal aspect of the position. I would say that's the  
24 biggest difference is that he also will handle anything like COI  
25 and COD wise. You know, I, of course, understand it all, but as



1 far as communicating with the Coast Guard, he's kind of the face  
2 of our division, which is nice to keep consistency there. He's  
3 been around -- meaning Thayer Harris has been around a long time,  
4 so he knows all these guys and stuff like that.

5 So, that's probably the biggest difference is the budgetary  
6 side of it then, you know, the relationship with vendors. You  
7 know, even -- not even necessarily the Coast Guard, but people who  
8 we bring in from the outside, whether it's window cleaners or  
9 whatever.

10 Q. We learned in his interview, which was prior to yours, that  
11 he's also -- he does new hire orientation and training. Do you  
12 have any training with the crew as well -- the marine crew?

13 A. Mostly as a captain. So, I think last weekend, I did a  
14 charter on *The Odyssey*, so it was, like, a couple of guys' first  
15 day. So, I would do, like, not necessarily like a role specific,  
16 more of just, like, a general captain's role of doing vessel  
17 familiarizations and walk-throughs of the vessels, making sure  
18 that everybody is good to go and safe to operate the machinery  
19 during the cruise times.

20 Q. Is there -- do you interact with a director of maintenance?

21 A. We have a fairly new position called a port engineer that is  
22 fairly new within the last year. But yeah, as far as the legacy  
23 kind of BHC side goes, they have -- they kind of have an  
24 engineering team that's located in Charlestown and usually, it'll  
25 come from a standpoint that I'll report to them as a captain.

1 Like if I'm driving the boat and there's an issue with any type of  
2 piece of machinery or anything like that, I'll work with them at  
3 that point. But yeah, not on a daily basis until there's a  
4 problem.

5 Q. And do you interact with the director of food and beverage?

6 A. We're around each other on a daily basis, but they kind of  
7 stay in their lane and we kind of stay in ours.

8 Q. To your knowledge, who's responsible for the operations of --  
9 we'll call it the restaurant staff or the hospitality crew?

10 A. Yeah, so that would be Thatcher (ph.), so he's the director  
11 of food and beverage.

12 Q. Do you ever have outside security on board for your cruises?

13 A. Yeah, we do.

14 Q. Can you kind of talk to us about that?

15 A. Yeah, especially with large school groups, we'll occasionally  
16 have an outside vendor that comes -- rides along. They'll do pat  
17 downs -- security pat downs, ID checks, stuff like that. They'll  
18 actually cruise along with us, so they'll be on the boat just  
19 making sure everybody is staying safe. They also assist us with  
20 getting all the passengers off the boat at the end of the night.  
21 But yeah, they're great.

22 Q. Do you know if they're -- are you involved with any of the --  
23 with the security -- like how many security for the team is needed  
24 for what size?

25 A. No, there's -- yeah, I don't schedule any of that or anything

1 like that. So, I just --

2 Q. Can you kind of describe for us the captains that work in --  
3 under you that you've worked with, how many -- in terms of  
4 numbers, how many full-time captains do you have? How many part-  
5 time captains? If you don't know the exact number, that's fine,  
6 just, you know, a general --

7 A. Yeah, I don't know the exact number. Probably four to five  
8 full-time captains and then another four or five part-time.  
9 Around there, yeah.

10 Q. Do you have -- are you involved with any of the -- do you  
11 have, like, a performance appraisal of your captains, like a  
12 review of their work, anything of that nature? Are you involved  
13 with that?

14 A. Usually, when it comes down to, like, raise and bonus season,  
15 we usually do, like, a once-a-year type of thing. What that's  
16 based upon, I personally haven't been involved in any of those as  
17 the associate director. Most of that stuff kind of goes through  
18 Kelly and Thayer.

19 Q. Do you happen to know if there's any -- and I know you said  
20 you're not involved specifically with that, but do you know if  
21 there's any policy or guidance for audits that are conducted on  
22 captains? Anything of that nature?

23 A. No, I'm not sure.

24 Q. So, looking kind of towards the marine operations before the  
25 fire event on March 24th, where would I go in terms of procedures

1 related to the operation of the vessel for safety procedures, or  
2 maintenance procedures, or any kind of procedures like that if I  
3 were a new captain, say, and you were to hand me something to say  
4 this our safety procedures? Do you have anything like that?

5 A. Yeah, we have a vessel documentation folder in the bridge.  
6 It's got, you know, emergency response documents in it and then  
7 for the everyday operations, there's a posted bill stations --  
8 station bill. Most of the time, that's reference to the deck hand  
9 and things like that. But obviously, they're posted throughout  
10 the boat based on the COI requirements. But up in the bridge, we  
11 do have kind of a safety binder that's got procedures, contact  
12 information -- emergency contacts, things of that sort.

13 Q. Do you know if that binder -- has that ever -- does someone  
14 conduct training on the contents of that binder, or is it just  
15 kind of kept up in the bridge, or how does that work?

16 A. Yeah, so when captains first start, they're given a safety  
17 binder and then we work through it -- we all work through it  
18 together. We basically do ridealongs with them -- a certain  
19 number of ridealongs and then we'll do, like, check off procedures  
20 as far as, like, do we feel like they've been adequately trained  
21 and, you know, maneuvering the vessel, start up, shut down, things  
22 of that sort. And once we deem that they've rode along with a  
23 senior captain or an administrator, they'll receive their clear to  
24 start type of work by themselves. So, they don't have to be  
25 trained anymore or ride along with somebody.

1 Q. So, you're involved in that process too, to evaluate how  
2 they've done and they're ready to (indiscernible)?

3 A. Yeah, I guess from, like, a ride along standpoint, yeah, I  
4 would be considered probably one of -- a senior captain even  
5 though I -- tenure-wise, I haven't been here longer than a lot of  
6 the other guys. But yeah, I'll certainly do the ridealongs and  
7 check guys off as they progress.

8 Q. And do they have sort of -- we call -- we have a similar --  
9 we call it a check ride when someone kind of rides along with  
10 somebody and makes sure it's like their final -- you know, is that  
11 kind of what it entails?

12 A. Yeah -- yes.

13 Q. Do you know if there's any written procedures for the  
14 hospitality stuff to be on the vessel? I know we just talked with  
15 Bob on this for the marine crew, the captains reserve, procedure  
16 for the restaurants?

17 A. I'm not sure.

18 Q. Okay, it's been said in previous interviews that the marine  
19 crew is responsible for the safety and security of the vessel when  
20 they're on board. In your opinion or your knowledge, who is in  
21 charge of safety and security of the vessel when the marine crew  
22 is not on board the vessel?

23 A. So, it would fall to whoever the managerial person is for the  
24 restaurant staff, whether it's a supervisor, a manager, they  
25 always have someone on board who would kind of take over to

1 precede the small window time that the marine crew isn't on there.

2 Q. We've had two preliminary interviews that we've conducted  
3 recently that said in the event of an emergency, say a fire on  
4 board the vessel, that the restaurant crew would notify the marine  
5 crew. That's what the procedure is. How is an emergency handled,  
6 such as a fire on board when there's no marine crew to notify?  
7 What are the procedures?

8 A. I would leave that up to speculation as far as they're not  
9 having -- we've never dealt with anything like this before, so  
10 there's no precedence for something like this. But I think their  
11 -- I think what's evident to what happened here is that they'd  
12 evacuate the vessel.

13 Q. But to your knowledge, there's no, like, procedures that say  
14 you must evacuate, or you must call 911, or anything like that?

15 A. No, I don't know.

16 Q. I'm just going to ask you about specific procedures now.  
17 We'll go into that for the *Spirit of Boston* specifically and just  
18 kind of talk to us in as much detail as you can about the  
19 policies. Do you know -- can you talk to us about the smoking  
20 policy? We'll start with smoking policy on board the *Spirit of*  
21 *Boston* for passengers?

22 A. Yeah, so for passengers, we've implemented a zero-smoking  
23 policy except if the vessel a full vessel charter. So, if the  
24 vessel has been rented out by a group and they deem that they  
25 would like to smoke, we allow it. But we -- yeah, we don't allow

1 passengers that are what we call individual bookings to smoke on  
2 board the boat. Just to not -- yeah, we just don't allow it  
3 during those cruises. But if it's a full-ship charter, we will  
4 allow it.

5 Q. And what about for the crew member -- any crew member on  
6 board, restaurant staff, marine crew, are they allowed to?

7 A. Yeah, so the crew members are kind of separate. We've kind  
8 of two lanes here when we're dealing with passengers and we're  
9 dealing with our crew members. We do allow the crew members to  
10 smoke. A lot of times it's before and after prep of the vessel,  
11 so we're still shoreside. So, they'll smoke out on the dock or  
12 anything like that, not necessarily on the boat when the boat's  
13 underway. Do they smoke on board, yeah, they do. They retain it  
14 to zero guest spacing places. So, no where that a guest could see  
15 our crew smoking. It tends to be on the *Spirit of Boston*, on that  
16 aft deck, which is enclosed and kind of out of view of passengers.  
17 Q. Are there receptacles for them to throw their -- how do they  
18 dispose?

19 A. Yeah, I'm not a smoker and I don't -- being on the bridge,  
20 I'm not around there a whole lot and to be honest, full disclosure  
21 on my part, I don't have a lot of -- a ton of experience compared  
22 to a lot of the guys on the *Spirit of Boston*, so I'm not sure if  
23 there are receptacles down there. What it usually resorts to on  
24 the other boats are -- you know, they'll have some ash trays, like  
25 a bucket of sand type of things like that.

1 Q. Kind of talk to us -- and it can be in your experience as  
2 captain on the *Spirit of Boston* about the trash disposal and  
3 putting them in containers, how is the trash taken out at the end  
4 of the cruise?

5 A. So, the restaurant staff is kind of in charge of the trash.  
6 Usually, by the time the boat is secured, they're still doing a  
7 lot of clean up, so they'll handle mostly getting the trash off of  
8 the vessel. Are there sometimes when we're cleaning up and we've  
9 got a bartender that has a huge bag of glass, will we lend a hand,  
10 yeah. The marine crew will assist when we can.

11 But for the most part, they're going to handle getting the  
12 trash on and off the vessel. We do most of our trash beforehand  
13 -- before the crew starts, we'll get -- you know, we'll take trash  
14 up to the dumpster, which has already been pulled off the boat  
15 from the night before. So -- but yeah, the end of the night, the  
16 food and beverage team pretty much handles, you know, clearing  
17 plates because we've got multiple hundreds of people on these  
18 decks. So, they're still cleaning up a lot of times as we're  
19 wrapping up our night.

20 Q. And they're the ones that take it at the night then from the  
21 vessel to the dumpster?

22 A. Yeah, correct.

23 Q. Can you kind of talk to us about the use of flammable candles  
24 and the sternos. Do you know anything -- I know you just said the  
25 restaurant staff is responsible for the trash, but do you know how



1 they're disposed of, how they're used? Do you ever see that on  
2 board?

3 A. I've noticed -- I've seen sternos just during -- on the  
4 buffet lines keeping the food warm. The candles, I don't have any  
5 knowledge, really, of how those things work or how they handle any  
6 of that. So -- but sternos are what I've seen most on the buffet  
7 lines. But that's really all I've got for that stuff.

8 Q. Have you ever seen anyone dispose of those, like the  
9 restaurant staff, have you witnessed that yourself?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay, kind of talk to us about the safety announcement for  
12 the passengers. How is that provided to the passengers?

13 A. Yeah, it's really nice. We do a prerecorded announcement  
14 that goes over all of our PA systems. So, the DJ initiates that  
15 once we -- before we get underway and it's all prerecorded. We  
16 vendor that out and everything is taken care of on our end for  
17 that.

18 Q. To your knowledge -- again, just your experience on the  
19 vessel, do you have different -- do you recall seeing -- do you  
20 have different DJs or is it kind of always the same? Like how  
21 does that --

22 A. We start to get pretty usual DJs after a while. But it  
23 doesn't mean that they don't have a call out or something like  
24 that and we might get, you know, a random DJ. But they're all  
25 very -- it's a pretty small company from what I understand. So,

1 they all are very receptive and responsive and always looking to  
2 get everything cleared up before we leave.

3 Q. And do you know how the DJs know to start -- to initiate that  
4 safety announcement?

5 A. Yeah, usually, the marine crew, when we're leaving, will pass  
6 by the booth station and just give them a thumbs up. A lot of the  
7 guys that are more experienced doing that, being that they've been  
8 on the boat a lot of times as a DJ, they'll know exactly when to  
9 start doing it. We'll stop boarding, we'll start to prepare the  
10 lines for departure and those guys will just get it going.

11 Q. So, I'm just trying to -- sorry, I'm just trying to --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. So, is this something that they have on them or is something  
14 like a flash -- like somebody hands them a safety announcement  
15 flash drive to play? How is that they have it?

16 A. Yeah, it's uploaded into their -- I'm not a hundred percent  
17 sure if it's a flash drive physically, but it's all on their  
18 interface that they use for the boat.

19 Q. Thank you.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Are you ever -- I know we kind of covered this a little bit  
22 and you said Mr. Harris does it, but are you ever involved in the  
23 new-hire orientation or is that completely just him?

24 A. I'll mostly do it with deckhands. Yeah, so now a whole lot  
25 of the captains. But once -- I don't directly do a lot of the

1 hiring. He's mostly -- Thayer mostly does most of the hiring and  
2 interviewing. I'll occasionally sit in -- as I get more  
3 experience, I'll probably be involved with it in the future. But  
4 I don't do a whole lot of the hiring and recruiting. But once  
5 they kind of get in the door, we'll kind of do a joint, like,  
6 orientation with them and I'll usually be doing some of the  
7 ridealongs as they first get started. So, I'll make sure that  
8 they feel comfortable with the start ups and docking, undocking,  
9 and then the shutdown procedures.

10 Q. Can you kind of talk to us more about what else is involved  
11 in that orientation?

12 A. Sure, yeah, so normally, we'll just start at the top deck and  
13 we'll -- at least for me, I just work my way down. We'll be  
14 pointing out and talking about any of the safety systems, whether  
15 it's throw rings, float lights, fire extinguishers, fire stations,  
16 and we'll literally go through every portion of the boat, aft to  
17 bow. We'll talk about all the safety systems and then we'll  
18 eventually make our way to the engine room where we can talk about  
19 charging the systems, how that works, the valving procedures. And  
20 then we -- eventually, we'll charge the systems and basically just  
21 do a live drill. That's pretty much how we kind of do the start  
22 up.

23 Q. And is that while underway with the crews or is that, like,  
24 while the vessel is --

25 A. No, this will be beforehand, dockside. Yeah, or before they

1 even start.

2 Q. In those orientations, do you ever talk about what would  
3 happen in the case of a fire when all the equipment is  
4 (indiscernible) a fire?

5 A. Oh, yeah, absolutely.

6 Q. Does that include the use of fire extinguishers?

7 A. Uh huh.

8 Q. And does that include the use of a fire blanket?

9 A. Yes, absolutely.

10 Q. When you do that in the new orientation with the use of an  
11 extinguisher and blanket, do you physically -- can someone -- or  
12 anyone physically get that out and demonstrate? How does that  
13 look like? Or you just kind of point to it? Do you -- does the  
14 fire blanket ever come out and you demonstrate it?

15 A. Yeah, uh huh.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah, we'll bring it out of the bags. They're in designated  
18 areas on the different boats and, you know, kind of show the crew  
19 members how to protect themselves with rolling it on their wrists  
20 and protecting their hands. So, yeah, we'll do a live demo on  
21 that.

22 Q. Has any part of the hospitality staff been a part of -- I  
23 know they usually don't get that, but have they ever been a part  
24 of that at any point?

25 A. Not usually, no.

1 Q. Can you kind of walk me through how you conducted your last  
2 fire drill and what that looked like?

3 A. Sure, last fire drill was probably on the *Boston Elite* last  
4 week. She just got back from dry dock, so just did a basic safety  
5 vessel orientation. There was new crew and veteran crew on the  
6 boat, so we did a full boat walkthrough to make sure everything  
7 looked good. We primed the pumps, you know, we obviously had it  
8 hauled out of the water, so we wanted to make sure the sea chests  
9 were all opened and primed.

10 So, yeah, we just did a very basic scenario of bow fire,  
11 charged the forward station. There's only two stations on that  
12 boat. Then just had the crew reach handle to nozzle. We checked  
13 the other station to ensure that the local valves were closed and  
14 then just went through the valving process down there. So, we  
15 have -- on that vessel in particular, we have two pumps. The  
16 bilge pump can be valved or to be a fire pump as well. So, just  
17 talked through how to change over in the event one of the pumps --  
18 we lose one of the pumps.

19 Q. Have you ever conducted a fire drill yourself in the galley?

20 A. Yeah, at some point in time. Yeah, probably on *The Odyssey*.  
21 But yes.

22 Q. If a fire were to start in the galley, kind of take me  
23 through your expectations or what the crew should do? If it  
24 starts in the galley, there will probably be hospitality crew in  
25 there or the galley personnel. So, how does that -- talk me

1 through what that would look like if a fire were to happen? If  
2 you were to conduct a drill, say, there, what your expectations as  
3 captain would be?

4 A. Yeah, so we all have radios. So, the first thing that would  
5 come up is that they would get on the radio and say hey, marine  
6 crew, we have an issue in the galley. My guys would be the first  
7 on the scene and the first thing they would do is more than likely  
8 clear the area and kind of assess quickly what type of fire it is.  
9 You know, we don't want to be throwing water on grease fires or  
10 anything of that nature. So, assessing the fire and then going  
11 down the checklist of how to fight it, whether it's fire blanket  
12 worthy, is it extinguisher worthy, is it a fire station worthy  
13 type of thing, and is there a need for closing any type of  
14 ventilation. Or if it's an electrical fire, do we need to kill  
15 some electrical panels.

16 So, that would all be happening, you know, as crew members --  
17 it would probably be a first mate that would be on scene relaying  
18 that to the bridge. The bridge would be getting on the horn with  
19 the Coast Guard, probably heading directly home. We just stay  
20 inside the inner harbor, so we'd probably head right to our dock  
21 depending on the situation. Then yeah -- and as far as the marine  
22 crew go, depending on what route the fire was going to go, they  
23 would charge a fire station if they needed to, kill breakers if  
24 they needed to, use fire blankets if they needed to.

25 Q. Thank you. Can you kind of talk to me about how rounds are

1 conducted on the -- specifically the *Spirit of Boston*, how are the  
2 -- for the marine crew?

3 A. Yeah, so the guys just kind of rove. They're looking for --  
4 they'll go from the top deck all the way to the bottom and they'll  
5 just go through every deck. The biggest thing is just having  
6 their presence know. You know, a lot of accidents and incidents  
7 can be prevented just with them being on deck and being present.  
8 They're looking for broken glass, you know, security stuff,  
9 whether anybody's maybe inebriated, or climbing on railings, or  
10 throwing stuff off the boat. There's a million things that they  
11 could be looking for. But yeah, their rounds are just them kind  
12 of ensuring the boat is safe and secure and getting eyes on the  
13 passengers and also being present for the other departments. So,  
14 if the DJ's having sound problems or the bartender's got a person  
15 that's drank too much, or the F&B doesn't have water flow. Just  
16 being there present for them is the biggest thing with the rounds.

17 Q. And does that include the engine room as well?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So, how is it determined who goes down there?

20 A. Whoever is doing the rounds at that point in time. We feel  
21 comfortable with all of our marine crew going down there. The  
22 first mate, if anybody's uncomfortable, the senior deckhand -- if  
23 anybody's uncomfortable with what to look for in an engine room,  
24 we'll just send someone with them. So, if they're pretty new,  
25 we'll just put them on with a senior crew member.

1 Q. You had mentioned that there was newer crew as the port  
2 engineer?

3 A. Uh huh.

4 Q. Is that also -- or is there another person that's designated  
5 the port safety officer? Are those two separate --

6 A. Two separate things, yeah. So, the port engineer is kind of  
7 a newer role for someone that we want to have shoreside to address  
8 any maintenance issues.

9 Q. What does the port safety officer do?

10 A. So, the safety officer is kind of comprised of many  
11 different, like, departments and they all make up a team that  
12 basically get together and -- usually once a month and they'll  
13 have a meeting of -- to talk about incident reports and stuff like  
14 that. So, if someone had a cut, or a bruise, or something  
15 happened during one of the charters, we'll talk about it and just  
16 kind of see what we can do better to alleviate for the next time.

17 Q. Who is the port safety officer?

18 A. So, I am the port safety officer for the dining division.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So, the port safety officer for, like, the excursions and  
21 ferries, is -- I believe is Mike Kurr (ph.), who handles all that  
22 stuff. But I am for the dining division and then the team is made  
23 up of a member from each department. There's a member of five  
24 departments, I believe -- four or five.

25 Q. So, what are duties then specifically to the port safety



1 officer? What do you do?

2 A. Yeah, so Mike Kurr and myself are kind of in the separate  
3 divisions. We kind of report to Jeff Taylor who's like the city  
4 support safety officer and we'll do -- we'll conduct our own  
5 meetings just on the -- for the dining division because a lot of  
6 the excursion stuff doesn't apply like if they're jumping on the  
7 *Aurora* or the *Salacia*. They don't even -- you know, they don't  
8 really have galley's or anything like that. So, it just -- it's  
9 not really applicable, so we just kind of do our own thing on the  
10 dining side. So, we'll occasionally have, like, a joint -- like a  
11 national marine meeting where, like, the port safety officer heads  
12 are on a big meeting. But as far as, like, working closely with  
13 the other -- like the ferries and excursions and stuff like that,  
14 we don't really work with them a whole lot just because it's not  
15 really applicable.

16 Q. So, those meetings that you do with the national team, how  
17 often do those occur and, like, is that on a phone conference?

18 A. Yeah, usually once a month and it'll just be, like, a Teams  
19 meeting.

20 Q. And when you're meeting locally for your role as the safety  
21 officer, is part of that, like, making recommendations, policy  
22 changes, or any of that --

23 A. We've only -- this is kind of just getting started up for the  
24 season. We've only had one meeting. So, that meeting was kind of  
25 establishing goals that we want to see. A lot of it comes down to,

1 like, incident reports. Like, you know, we had 16 passenger  
2 injuries last year, you know, whether it's somebody on the dance  
3 floor or somebody scuffing their knee, or whatever it is, and  
4 we'll try to establish quantitative goals to do better this year.  
5 So, that was kind of our first meeting and was looking at last  
6 year's incidents and seeing how we can do better this year numbers  
7 wise. So, let's get that down to ten incidents for this season  
8 instead of 16, stuff like that.

9 Q. Can you kind of expand your -- the goals you just talked  
10 about? Like what were some of your goals that were identified at  
11 that meeting?

12 A. Yeah, just --

13 MR. DENLEY: I'm just going to place an objection for  
14 relevance. But go ahead.

15 MR. SCHULER: I think it was just cutting down on incident  
16 reports. I think we put a number on it. But it was basically  
17 just talking about how we could avoid any kind of passenger  
18 injuries during cruises.

19 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

20 Q. Were you involved in any way with the fire that occurred on  
21 March 24th as far as did you get a phone call, did you respond?

22 A. Yeah, so I received a text from Director Harris. I think it  
23 was -- I'm not sure of the time, it was pretty late, maybe around  
24 -- I'm not sure, maybe 11:00ish or something like that saying that  
25 there might be a situation on the *Spirit* and that he was heading

1 in that direction. So, I had just gotten back from -- we had just  
2 brought a boat up from Fair Haven Shipyard, the *Odyssey*, so I had  
3 just docked that for the day. Me and my crew had been on --  
4 already had been on for about 12 hours that day. We were on our  
5 way home and then started getting the messages like hey, there's  
6 something going on on *Spirit*.

7 So, we turned around, got back onto Seaport Boulevard and  
8 came over the bridge and just saw a million lights. I was like  
9 oh, my gosh, something serious is going on and go down right  
10 outside of Ocean Prime and they wouldn't let me -- I didn't get  
11 any closer and I said hey, I'm a crew member here. Is there some  
12 way I could get to the boat? The guy directed me to park behind  
13 Ocean Prime and then I just got out on foot and walked to the  
14 boat. At that point, it had already been extinguished.

15 Q. Did you have any interactions with anyone on the *Spirit*? I  
16 know you said it was extinguished but crew members or the Fire  
17 Department?

18 A. Yeah, when I first got there, Thatcher Trumbly (ph.) was  
19 there with members of the restaurant staff. I was, like -- I was  
20 pretty shaken up, you know, I was just kind of concerned if  
21 anybody was hurt. He assured me, like -- he didn't even say  
22 hello, he was just like everything is okay, everybody is okay.

23 So, I passed him and his group of restaurant staff and  
24 immediately kept going closer to the boat where I saw Captain  
25 Spillane, who had been the master earlier in the night. I was

1 just like is everything okay, like, what is going on. Everybody  
2 was kind of in shock. I just wanted to make sure he was okay and  
3 just kind of tried to calm him down and see where everybody was.  
4 That was pretty much the long and short of it for that.

5 Q. And when did you start?

6 A. Oh, man, I'm not sure. Maybe around 2:00 or 3:00.

7 Q. As the associate director of marine operations but also the  
8 port safety officer role you hold, would you have been informed of  
9 the fire incident that occurred on another vessel similar to the  
10 *Spirit of Boston* last June, were you ever notified of that?

11 A. We knew that it had gone on, yeah. Last year I was on  
12 paternity leave for most of the entire season. So, we had our  
13 first kid in May, so I wasn't really on the team last year for  
14 safety stuff goes when that incident went down. But yeah, we knew  
15 that it had happened.

16 Q. In any of those meetings that you described with the national  
17 marine team that you sit on once a month, was anything ever  
18 discussed about fire prevention and fire safety as a result of  
19 that incident?

20 A. Sure, I think everything just kind of was under more of a  
21 microscope and making ensuring we were dotting our Ts and crossing  
22 our Is. (Verbatim) There was just a big push to ensure that  
23 everything was up to speed and up to par. But there was never any  
24 type of -- they never put any type of overlay as far as specifics  
25 as to what happened or anything. I don't know if it was really

1 applicable to anything that we dealt with on a daily basis.

2 Obviously, that was an emergency situation.

3 LCDR [REDACTED] So, were there any, like, what I would call a  
4 (indiscernible) safety alert or something like that put out? Or  
5 was it just passed down at the meetings to kind of, you know --

6 MR. DENLEY: You don't have to speculate if you can't answer  
7 the question.

8 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, I mean, we had -- we have a new QR code  
9 implementation where we would do drills, things like that. But it  
10 -- we've always just kind of done the same thing that we've always  
11 done. We have certain CFR codes that we have to meet. So,  
12 nothing really changed. There was just more of an emphasis on,  
13 you know, making sure everything is tidy and ready to go.

14 BY LCDR [REDACTED]  
15 Q. Have you ever implemented any policy -- local policy for the  
16 -- your dining vessels -- like you and anyone else you work with,  
17 have you ever implemented your own policies to keep -- more  
18 specifically speaking the safety policies that maybe you didn't  
19 get from the national company that you put out on a local level?

20 A. Not that I can think of.

21 Q. Do you know if the *Spirit of Boston* -- again, as your role as  
22 the port safety officer has, like, a safety management system or  
23 there's plans to implement a safety management system if you don't  
24 have one?

25 A. Like if an emergency happened on the boat?

1 LCDR [REDACTED] If you do have plans -- but yes, like, kind of  
2 an overall -- yes.

3 MR. DENLEY: You don't have to speculate. You can answer the  
4 question if you know what that is. If you don't know what that  
5 is, you --

6 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, I don't think it would be any different  
7 than what we talked about earlier as far as, like, the vessel  
8 documentation binders or the emergency response plans up in the  
9 wheelhouse.

10 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

11 MR. SCHULER: Yeah.

12 LCDR [REDACTED] That's all the questions that I have if we want  
13 to rotate.

14 Lieutenant [REDACTED]

15 BY LT [REDACTED]

16 Q. Thank you very much. We greatly appreciate having you here  
17 and if I missed something that you've already answered, I really  
18 apologize (indiscernible). Have you ever received formal  
19 firefighting training?

20 A. As far as my captain's course, we would do some -- we did  
21 some fire training and I have it working at other companies and  
22 stuff like that. So, yeah, I have.

23 Q. Can you describe that to me?

24 A. Sure, we would take, you know, our -- as far as our deck  
25 general or deck safety courses to get our masters course and then

1 we would go to actual firefighting -- like local branches and put  
2 out, like, fake fires on cars and things like that at a previous  
3 employer. I would do that.

4 Q. Have you ever done that with your current employer?

5 A. No, not specifically like that.

6 Q. And so, I believe you had said earlier that you assist in  
7 providing training to the marine crew with regards to  
8 firefighting?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Have you ever taken -- have you ever received training at how  
11 to provide training such as the train the trainer course, or an  
12 instructor course, or something like that?

13 A. There were some online modules that they would send us  
14 through, yeah.

15 Q. And where did you go through those online modules? When were  
16 you -- at what point in your employment prior to this or with this  
17 company?

18 A. Yeah, no, that was with Hornblower here.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Have you ever received any training, any course with the  
22 STCW? Or standards training?

23 A. No.

24 LT [REDACTED] You had mentioned while you were employed with  
25 the Boston Harbor Cruises and -- which is the previous owner of

1 the vessels in which you worked, correct?

2 MR. DENLEY: Objection, I don't believe that's been said.

3 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, no, the dining boats were kind of a  
4 separate entity from what I understand. They were, like, a  
5 separate company and then --

6 MR. DENLEY: Objection, it's cause for speculation.

7 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, I'm not sure.

8 MR. DENLEY: If you know, you can, if you don't --

9 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, that was kind of all before I started.  
10 But they weren't owned by PHC.

11 BY LT [REDACTED]

12 Q. Okay, in the beginning of 2020, the vessel *Spirit of Boston*  
13 changed ownership -- or a new owner became on board with cruises  
14 and events. Was there any policy changes or anything that  
15 affected you as a captain or employee of the previous employer to  
16 the new company?

17 A. That had all kind of -- was going down when I first got  
18 hired, so I'm not sure that I caught any of the changes that went  
19 through, so, yeah. I would've been hired in March of 2020.

20 Q. Okay, thank you. Have you ever responded to a fire in your  
21 capacity as a captain or crew member while working for Hornblower  
22 or Boston Cruises?

23 A. Yes --

24 MR. DENLEY: I think for the purposes of the interview, we're  
25 trying to be consistent with City Cruises.



1 LT [REDACTED] City Cruises?

2 MR. DENLEY: Yeah.

3 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

4 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, City Cruises for --

5 LT [REDACTED] I can restate my question.

6 MR. DENLEY: No, you don't have to restate the question.

7 Just for the record, the dinner boats are referred to as City  
8 Cruises.

9 Right?

10 MR. SCHULER: Yeah.

11 LT [REDACTED] Consistent line of --

12 MR. DENLEY: I'm sorry?

13 LT [REDACTED] I just wanted to be consistent with what's on the  
14 Certificate of Inspection. But City Cruise Ship works.

15 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, I mean, the owner operator -- the legal  
16 under the owner operator but, you know, again, I think we've been  
17 kind of consistent with referring to City Cruises.

18 LT [REDACTED] Roger that. Thank you.

19 BY LT [REDACTED]

20 Q. So, have you ever responded to a fire in your capacity as a  
21 captain or crew member while working for City Cruises?

22 A. We had to -- there was a sail boat that caught on fire in a  
23 mooring field that had drifted close to our boat in April 2020. I  
24 think it was my -- one of my first few shifts as a captain. But  
25 it didn't happen on the vessel. But we did have to evacuate the

1 boat and we worked with Boston Fire Department. We did charge our  
2 fire pumps just to be on standby for those guys. So, that was the  
3 extent.

4 Q. Have you ever been aboard one of your vessels that you were  
5 working upon when there was a fire on board?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. What about in any time in your career as a captain  
8 (indiscernible) vessel?

9 A. No.

10 Q. And I may have missed this when you were discussing  
11 notification for restaurant crew, but how does the restaurant crew  
12 notify the marine crew of an emergency?

13 A. Via radio. Yeah, we have -- every department has a radio  
14 that they can communicate. We're all on the same channel.

15 Q. As a captain, would it be safe to say that you're responsible  
16 for the safety of the passengers, crew, and the vessel?

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. Are you aware, as a captain, of the fire hazards aboard the  
19 vessel, specifically with regards to the restaurant area?

20 A. Yeah, I mean, we understand what's going on on the boat as  
21 far as the daily operations on it and we understand what's on the  
22 boat. But as far as handling the stuff like that, I guess I'll  
23 kind of leave it at that.

24 Q. Do you know how they are -- these hazards are extinguished  
25 and disposed of?

1 A. Not really.

2 Q. We discussed engineering rounds. Who sees -- you stated  
3 that, you know, most of the deckhands are pretty comfortable with  
4 it. If there's a newer deckhand, they will -- the first mate will  
5 go down and conduct the rounds with them?

6 A. Uh huh.

7 Q. Is there a training process for the conducting of the rounds  
8 in the engine room?

9 A. Yeah, we have some sheets that will help the guys know what  
10 to look for in a sense of consistency with data. So, we'll have a  
11 round sheet where they go out on the bridge and they'll be like  
12 okay -- not the bridge, the engine room, and they'll say this is  
13 where the engine temp is at, this is where the coolant temp is at  
14 and they'll log it like that. (Verbatim)

15 Q. You said -- let me just finish this full question -- you said  
16 not usually when responding to the demonstration of a fire  
17 extinguisher when with the restaurant staff. So, had you ever had  
18 them participate in a demonstration or any firefighting drill  
19 while employed with City Cruises?

20 A. So, they'll do pre-cruise meetings, like, before the shift  
21 gets started where we'll all meet up, like the ticket booth,  
22 marine crew, front of the house, and we may chat about some safety  
23 equipment, what does PASS (ph.) stand for. But as far as them  
24 being on a full demonstration fire drill, no.

25 Q. And that's just you as a captain -- with your experience and

1 knowledge as a captain sharing information with them?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. That's not a requirement?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Guidance?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that all firefighting  
8 equipment is in good condition and works in accordance with the  
9 regulations?

10 A. Master.

11 Q. Master?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. And do you do a round prior to? Is there a schedule? Is  
14 there a round prior to getting underway, is it a weekly check, is  
15 it a monthly check?

16 A. As far as drills?

17 Q. No, as far as the material condition of the actual  
18 firefighting equipment?

19 A. Yeah, I think it would just -- it would play into our monthly  
20 drills. So, you know, we're required once a month, per vessel,  
21 per crew, to do our drills. One of which would be a fire drill  
22 and ensuring the equipment is functional. So, it would fall under  
23 that.

24 Q. And you mentioned the internal incident reporting procedures?

25 A. Uh huh.

1 Q. Can you talk to me a little bit more about those and who do  
2 you share those with, who do they get sent to, what constitutes  
3 and incident that would need a reporting?

4 A. Yeah, so we have incident reports that we fill out in house  
5 to log any incidents that occur on the boat. It's very accessible  
6 through Industry Safe, which is a program that we use to log all  
7 that. So, we fill out a form, we take documentation, description  
8 of the incident, names, addresses, kind of what happened, what  
9 anybody saw, there's a witness statement there. We collect that,  
10 we'll tend to notate it in the ship's logbook if there's ever an  
11 incident and then we submit that to the national team.

12 Q. And are you aware of what happens with that incident report  
13 once it gets to the national team?

14 A. I'm sure it just gets logged. I'm not sure once it leaves  
15 our hands kind of where all that goes.

16 Q. In your time as the port safety director, is that the proper  
17 term?

18 A. Port safety officer.

19 Q. And you stated you have only had one meeting so far this  
20 year?

21 A. Yeah, with the dining team. We've had a couple of meetings.  
22 So, we've had at least two meetings, maybe three, with the  
23 national team.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Just as, like, the -- like I would go to it and, like, Mike

1 Kurr would go to it, and Jeff would go to it, and we would talk to  
2 our national guys. As far as, like, the dining team members  
3 meeting, we've had one meeting thus far this season.

4 Q. And in your meetings, have any incident reports been  
5 discussed?

6 A. Yes, they have.

7 Q. Can you tell me about that incident with regards to what you  
8 guys discussed -- not necessarily the incident, but what is the --  
9 what do you believe is the purpose of discussing those? What's  
10 the -- why are we discussing these things?

11 A. Sure, the incident that we reported on was a shipyard injury.  
12 So, most of the winter, we're in shipyard, so I've been living in  
13 Fair Haven for all of winter. So, this event occurred at a  
14 shipyard. It was a grinding incident and a guy cut his knuckles  
15 on there and the purpose of discussing it was essentially to paint  
16 the picture he was grinding on an hour haul, we were getting ready  
17 to do some UT scans of the vessel haul with marine surveyors. He  
18 was working overhead, it was raining, and he was on a ladder, and  
19 he cut his knuckles.

20 So, the idea was that if we had -- if we used our resources  
21 better, we could've -- if we had more relationships with the  
22 shipyard guys, we could've used a boom truck to get him up there  
23 to totally take out that situation. So, the idea behind that  
24 discussion on that incident report was basically to say use what  
25 we have access to. So, when it pertained to, like, the front of

1 the house and the back of the house, we talked a lot about big  
2 shipments of food. So, using dollies, using carts, lifting the  
3 proper way. But that was the whole purpose of -- if that's kind  
4 of showing you what we do as the safety team. We just kind of  
5 discuss how we can be better and avoid these injuries.

6 Q. And make -- so, you basically, as a collective, here look  
7 into -- not necessarily -- create policy to create a safer  
8 environment and atmosphere?

9 A. Yeah, we're just kind of just seeing how a problem could be  
10 avoided and how to prevent it in the future.

11 Q. How long has the port safety director position been -- are  
12 you familiar with how long it's been a position?

13 A. I'm not sure. Yeah, I started to be a part of it last year  
14 before I went on paternity leave. But then, obviously, I was -- I  
15 dropped to part-time work for most of the year. But this year, it  
16 just kind of starting to get ramped up as the season's getting  
17 underway.

18 LT [REDACTED] What do you believe to be the goals and  
19 objectives of this committee? As part of it, are you aware?

20 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, objection, call for speculation. But  
21 again, you feel free to answer the question as you are a part of  
22 it and as you're aware, go ahead and tell him.

23 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, I think to just improve on overall safety  
24 scope of the dinner boats. Not to sound like a broken record, but  
25 what we can do better and what we can prevent.

1 BY LT [REDACTED]

2 Q. Does the *Spirit of Boston* have (indiscernible) firefighting  
3 in the engine room?

4 A. The *Spirit of Boston* does not.

5 Q. Are you -- in -- as the associate director of marine  
6 operations, are you aware if there's a plan to install  
7 (indiscernible) firefighting in the *Spirit of Boston*?

8 A. I don't know.

9 LT [REDACTED] All right.

10 Mr. Young?

11 MR. DENLEY: Just log an objection to that last question  
12 based on relevance.

13 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

14 BY MR. YOUNG:

15 Q. Good morning, Captain, are you okay to continue or do you  
16 want to take a break?

17 A. I can keep going, thanks.

18 Q. This is Brian Young with the NTSB. Thank you, again, for  
19 your time. What license do you own currently?

20 A. I have a hundred-ton year coastal (ph.).

21 Q. And how long have you had a captain's license?

22 A. Oh, man, 2016.

23 Q. You talked a little bit about some firefighting training when  
24 you actually extinguished active fires that were set in a  
25 scenario. Is that something that was done as a requirement to



1 obtain your license or was that something otherwise?

2 A. So, the course study was a part of the course that I took at  
3 University of Alaska Southeast and then the actual physical  
4 putting out some of the demonstrating of fires was an additional  
5 just safety thing that occurred at a different employer. So, that  
6 -- and we would visit a -- like a regional firefighting station  
7 and extinguish fires prior to, like, a season and that was all in  
8 Southeast Alaska.

9 Q. Okay, but it wasn't required by the Coast Guard to obtain  
10 your license, right?

11 A. No, other than this course study, you know, deck general,  
12 deck safety.

13 Q. Right, but the actual firefighting was another company you  
14 worked for? They did that prior to a season?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. You had mentioned something about the implementation of a QR  
17 code and I had no idea what you were talking about. If you could  
18 explain it just to --

19 A. Sure, so, we -- when we -- it was an easy way for us to log  
20 our drills. So, instead of -- you know, what we do -- we have the  
21 ship's logbook that we would log a drill, we would have a -- for  
22 the dining boat specifically, we would have an emergency  
23 responsiveness notebook, right. We would put in more detail of  
24 what we did during drill. Then the QR code was a very simple way  
25 to scan it and basically zip up those two things. So, instead of

1 having physical writing as to -- like on the boat, snap the QR  
2 code and you just put that in an electronic version.

3 Q. Wait, is that electronic version go shoreside?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. So, it's a digital replication of your logbook?

6 A. Yes, correct.

7 Q. Okay, on the *Spirit of Boston*, we understand that the DJ is  
8 making the announcement and also playing music. Are his speakers  
9 tied into the ship's PA system?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. They are. As a captain on the bridge, do you have the  
12 ability to speak into it to speak to everybody on board?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Can you hear what the DJ says or is playing?

15 A. Yes, there's speakers in the bridge.

16 Q. So, could you actually hear his music while you were  
17 underway?

18 A. Uh huh.

19 Q. And you could -- could he communicate with you from his DJ  
20 booth?

21 A. I guess if we set it up that he was using his PA system and  
22 then the master would override it with the microphone, I guess we  
23 could talk that way. But it wouldn't be real time. We'd have to  
24 -- you'd have to phase in and out. I'd have to unplug my mic,  
25 listen to him -- like he would be doing an announcement and then

1 go back in like that. But, yeah.

2 Q. Okay, so you don't have his music blaring on the bridge the  
3 whole time?

4 A. No, we have the ability to localize -- turn that on or off.

5 Q. You talked about the opening up of a port engineer position  
6 who handles maintenance. If you were to have an issue with the  
7 engines or the generators and you needed to get ahold of the  
8 bridge, how would you connect?

9 A. Just call him on his cell phone.

10 Q. Oh.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Is there a form you would fill out to request maintenance?

13 A. No.

14 Q. And is there a port engineer on call around the clock?

15 A. The idea is that this new position would be that. But the --  
16 with the merger of Boston Harbor Cruises, they have an engineering  
17 department in Charlestown. So, if we ever needed help with  
18 anything like that, those guys would lend us a hand. We could  
19 call them and they always have someone on call.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Then the method of communication would be via phone?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Are you part of a team that would receive any notifications  
25 from the after-hours security system that's on board the *Spirit of*

1 *Boston?*

2 A. Like the ATS alarm system?

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Were you notified the night of the fire?

6 A. I was not.

7 Q. How was it determined who gets notified for events like that?

8 A. It was kind of a pecking order as to where the calls will --  
9 who they'll go to first. I'm not sure of my positioning on the  
10 order. But I think the director -- Director Harris is the first  
11 and then it goes to the F and B director and then maybe another  
12 couple people and then it would eventually come to me. But if  
13 it's intercepted before me, I don't get notified.

14 Q. Have you ever been contacted by that ATS system for any  
15 issues on the *Spirit of Boston*?

16 A. I'm not sure, I can't remember. Again, we're dealing with  
17 four other vessels. I can't remember if they were specific to the  
18 *Spirit of Boston* or not. I certainly have for other boats.

19 Q. On the *Spirit of Boston*, I know you haven't been there solely  
20 and specifically, but do you ever remember seeing heat lamps in  
21 use over any food buffets?

22 A. No, I don't recall.

23 Q. Since the fire on the *Spirit of Boston* on the 24th, have you  
24 noticed or been notified of any changes that are being made as a  
25 result of this fire on any of the vessels in the dining services?

1 A. Yeah, well --

2 MR. DENLEY: I'm sorry, could you ask the question again?

3 MR. SCHULER: Yeah.

4 BY MR. YOUNG:

5 Q. Since the fire on the *Spirit of Boston* on the 24th, have  
6 there been any changes to your operation on the other vessels as a  
7 result of this fire?

8 A. We're not doing anything different as far as preparation and  
9 drills or anything like that. Yeah, there has been -- there  
10 hasn't been any implementations of new necessities or anything  
11 like that. Not yet. A lot of it's still ongoing.

12 Q. Great, if I was to go on board with the *Spirit of Boston* with  
13 a private party and rent the whole vessel, you said that we would  
14 be able to smoke up on the upper deck?

15 A. Uh huh.

16 Q. Is that the only place you would be able to smoke or could we  
17 smoke on any open deck?

18 A. We direct people to the upper deck, yeah, away from anything  
19 that could be up above it. So, the other decks are partially  
20 covered, so we would direct those folks to the upper-most deck.

21 Q. And around the stern deck where the crew has been able to  
22 smoke, it seems like there's a black fabric of some sort of mesh  
23 screen around it?

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. What's the purpose of that?

1 A. I think it's just to cut down on wind in the back there.

2 Q. And the back of that after deck on the stern, is that where  
3 the larger dumpsters are kept to contain the garbage once the  
4 pails are emptied?

5 A. Yeah, like the larger black carts.

6 Q. Are they on wheels?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. At the end of the cruise, those are wheeled off the vessel  
9 after they take the contents of all of the (indiscernible)?

10 A. Yeah, correct.

11 Q. And where are they typically kept, on the starboard side?

12 A. The carts?

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Just on that general back area in the center there. I don't  
15 think there's a designated necessarily area. It's pretty wide  
16 open, but -- yet being narrow. But there's not, like, a trolley  
17 keeper or anything like that there.

18 MR. YOUNG: Okay, great, thank you very much. I'm all set  
19 with questions, thank you.

20 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, sure.

21 BY CMDR [REDACTED]

22 Q. Yeah, just a couple, thank you. So, Captain, you mentioned,  
23 like, this afternoon, you had a CPR class that you were going to  
24 be --

25 A. Yeah.

1           CMDR ██████ So, is that --

2           I'm sorry?

3           UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, I said that -- I just meant that's  
4 awesome.

5           CMDR ██████ Oh, okay.

6           BY CMDR ██████

7 Q.       Yeah, I just wanted to ask, so is that going to be -- who  
8 will attend that and why are you doing that training?

9 A.       Yeah, so as the season kicks off, we're just doing our -- a  
10 lot of new crew members and we've got some existing crew members  
11 that need their recertifications. So, we want to make sure that  
12 we have an adequate number of crew members that are CPR certified.

13 Q.       You would consider that part of your safety indoctrination  
14 program for applicable crew members only?

15 A.       Sure, yeah.

16 Q.       Then there were some questions asked earlier about after the  
17 fire on the *Spirit of Norfolk*, again, the one that happened a year  
18 ago, different city, you were aware of it?

19 A.       Uh huh.

20 Q.       And then there was some general sort of -- a general focus --  
21 I think you said dotting your Is and crossing your Ts?

22 A.       Yeah.

23 Q.       Dotting your Is and crossing your Ts from a safety  
24 perspective?

25 A.       Yeah.

1 Q. And dotting your Is and crossing your Ts about your onboard,  
2 you know, programs?

3 A. Sure, it would be relatable to covid, it's like a  
4 hypersensitivity to it.

5 Q. Yes, and that was passed onto the rest of the captains and --

6 A. Sure, yeah.

7 Q. And you did that? You passed that on?

8 A. Sure.

9 Q. And from your perspective, have you been dotting your Is and  
10 crossing your Ts from a safety training perspective?

11 A. Yeah.

12 CMDR [REDACTED] I don't have any further questions, thank you.

13 LCDR [REDACTED]

14 Q. I just have one more follow-up question. As part of your  
15 duties as the port safety officer, do you ever conduct, like,  
16 vessel safety inspections to identify hazards around the vessel?  
17 Is that part of your duty?

18 A. We will. That's the plan for the summer. That would be --  
19 that was going to be my next meeting, to be honest. So, yeah, we  
20 would -- that's something we would do. We'd walk around the boats  
21 and we would literally take a -- we meet once a month, so we would  
22 take an hour and we would probably do a walk through. That was on  
23 the agenda for sure.

24 Q. Did you create that? Did you initiate that or was that  
25 something --



1 A. No, just something that I initiated it. So, they kind of  
2 leave it up to us, which is nice. We get to do whatever we feel  
3 is right at the time or focused on. So, you know, if we were at a  
4 port that may -- had slips, trips, and falls that were high, we  
5 would maybe focus on that or whatever it may be that we want to  
6 talk about.

7 Q. Do you have any other initiatives that you want to bring  
8 about in addition to that one?

9 A. Yeah, a lot of our problems come with, like, night-life  
10 cruises. So, it's like midnight to 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. and a lot of  
11 it has to do with inebriation. So, yeah, one of our -- one of my  
12 focuses for the season was working with the security teams and the  
13 administrative staff as to, you know, how we can prepare our  
14 marine crew to deal with stuff like that. But yeah, it's kind of  
15 an ongoing thing and this is a great example as to what may change  
16 my agenda for the summer. Like maybe we're going to focus on  
17 something else. It's very nice.

18 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

19 MR. SCHULER: Yeah.

20 LCDR [REDACTED] That's all I have.

21 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

22 Q. I have one follow-up question and it's just generic.

23 A. Uh huh.

24 Q. Does your company have anything in the procedures that you  
25 know of that you use as a lesson-learned change process? For

1 instance, last year the Block Island ferries had a riot on board  
2 the boat and they changed some of their security procedures  
3 afterwards. Is that anything that you know of that's in your  
4 procedures or something that you do -- just like something  
5 happened and now we kind of look at things differently?

6 MR. DENLEY: Obviously, answer the question. You know,  
7 (indiscernible).

8 MR. SCHULER: Yeah.

9 MR. DENLEY: But the safety process --

10 MR. SCHULER: Sure.

11 MR. DENLEY: And then I don't know if that is included in the  
12 industry standards but (indiscernible). I don't know, I just kind  
13 of --

14 MR. SCHULER: Yeah.

15 No, it's something that -- it wouldn't be formal, it would  
16 just be discussed like a pre-cruise shift or a meeting -- like a  
17 port safety meeting -- a monthly meeting, we would discuss it.  
18 But as far as anything formal, not that I -- to my knowledge.  
19 But, yeah.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I appreciate that.

21 MR. SCHULER: Yeah, sure.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have no further questions.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just have a few and then -- we'll --

24 Mr. Denley, did you have any yet?

25 MR. DENLEY: I do, I have one.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Go right ahead.

2 MR. DENLEY: Okay, thanks.

3 BY MR. DENLEY:

4 Q. So, the marine director's meeting came up in one of our  
5 earlier interviews. So, how often are those marine director  
6 meetings and do you participate in those marine director meetings?

7 A. Those are monthly as well and it just kind of depends on what  
8 we've got going on. If I'm at dry dock, which I was a lot of the  
9 winter and Thayer is available -- he most -- nine times out of  
10 ten, as the direct, fields those, but there's rare occurrences  
11 where he may be with a vendor, where I'll jump on and kind of take  
12 it for him for that month.

13 Q. And that's an -- like who is on those marine director  
14 meetings?

15 A. All the directors in the country and then our national team.

16 Q. And is that an opportunity to pass information about --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Like, if you had identified a safety issue?

19 A. Absolutely.

20 Q. If you had identified something, you could pass that?

21 A. A hundred percent, yes.

22 Q. And then you said that you have the local port safety -- you  
23 have your local port safety?

24 A. Uh huh.

25 Q. And then you have -- you said you've had two or three already

1 safety focused meetings with the national marine team?

2 A. Uh huh.

3 Q. Would that be an opportunity for -- you know, if a safety  
4 issue was identified --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So, for -- you know, this fire might be an example of that --

7 A. Oh, yeah, I'm sure that's all that we're going to talk about.

8 Q. Those types of things would be discussed at that national  
9 meeting?

10 A. A hundred percent, yes, exactly.

11 MR. DENLEY: Thank you.

12 BY LT [REDACTED]

13 Q. Just a few questions and then we'll go -- we'll figure it  
14 out. So, you had mentioned the firefighting training that you had  
15 conducted with a previous organization -- a previous company?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Did that -- and you may have answered this but I'm going to  
18 get a little bit deeper into that, did you actually extinguish a  
19 fire using a fire extinguisher?

20 A. Uh huh.

21 Q. And roughly how big was that fire dimensions wise that you  
22 put out with that fire extinguisher?

23 A. I'm not sure. It was just a -- like on a car or like a -- I  
24 think it was a pile of pallets, so I don't know, ten by ten or  
25 something.

1 Q. You had mentioned a Mr. Taylor. What is Mr. Taylor's title?

2 A. So, Jeff Taylor is kind of the port director of marine  
3 operations. So, anything that -- so, his guy would be, like, Mike  
4 Kurr, who's, like, the excursion, ferries, like the legacy BHC,  
5 ferry boats, the catamarans, and then there's the dining, which  
6 would be, as far as the port safety officer goes, would be myself.  
7 We're kind of equal and then Jeff would be the port safety  
8 officer.

9 Q. And Jeff's located in the Boston area?

10 A. Yeah, he's in Long Wharf.

11 Q. Okay, and as the port safety officer in the meetings that  
12 you've had, have you or your port safety teams discussed the fact  
13 that after the marine crew departs, the remaining restaurant  
14 personnel have no firefighting training?

15 A. We have not discussed that.

16 LT [REDACTED] Thank you. I have no further questions.

17 Does anybody else have any?

18 BY MR. YOUNG:

19 Q. One final question. This is Brian Young with the NTSB. On  
20 the logbook up on the bridge, it has a line for pre-cruise checks.  
21 So, the things that they're looking for as a security sweep,  
22 steering, gears. What does it mean to do a check of the gears for  
23 the pre-cruise check?

24 A. Just to clutch the vessels engine system in and out to ensure  
25 we have proper steering control. So, just ensuring that we've got

1 way on either side. We'll look at tensions of rope to ensure that  
2 everything is good as far clutching in and out of gear.

3 Q. Understood, whistle -- I ask radar, radios, and the like,  
4 VGP, what's that?

5 A. Vessel general permeating, I believe, and they would be,  
6 like, ensure that there's no sheens being present in the water.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So, nothing going over the side.

9 Q. Okay, and I don't see a space for a post-cruise check. But  
10 is there anything that got done at the end of the night or end of  
11 the cruise?

12 A. Yeah, not necessarily on the marine side. Yeah, there's,  
13 like, a cruise summary that will be done. But nothing on marine  
14 side as far as the logbook goes.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So, we'll -- they'll usually state that all passengers have  
17 disembarked.

18 Q. And that's on the restaurant -- or that side of the house?  
19 They would --

20 A. As far as the marine goes in the logbook, we'll usually log  
21 in when the boat is secure and then sometimes the guys will put  
22 when the last passenger is off the boat.

23 MR. YOUNG: Okay, thanks.

24 MR. SCHULER: Yep.

25 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

1 Q. I'm so sorry. Really just one question. Mr. Denley asked  
2 you a series of questions about dotting your Ts -- or dotting your  
3 Is and crossing your Ts. One of them was dotting your Is and  
4 crossing your Ts on safety programs and you said you had done  
5 that. What does that mean? What safety programs were you dotting  
6 your Is and crossing your Ts on?

7 A. I'm not sure what programs -- I think I was just mostly just  
8 talking about ensuring the drills are being properly done and  
9 adequate to meet the CFR regs.

10 Q. How would you know what's required -- what drills are  
11 required?

12 A. So, CFRs, we have a nice Vessel Vanguard system that we use  
13 that tells us when drills are due. That's a program that we use  
14 and we've always used and then just ensuring that the QR codes  
15 that we're using are being logged, are all up to par. The  
16 national team does a really good job of comprising all that data  
17 for us and communicating it.

18 Q. So, those -- that Vanguard system, is that electronic or on  
19 paper?

20 A. Electronic.

21 Q. And that's distributed to you from the national team?

22 A. I guess you could say that, yeah. Yes, it's part of the --  
23 it's part of our -- it'd be like the industry safe that we  
24 discussed earlier where you upload incident reports to. It'd be a  
25 similar software program along those lines.

1 Q. So, do you receive these requirements from the national team  
2 or does somebody that you work for send you these requirements?

3 A. So, we will get, like, a report -- like a monthly report from  
4 the national team that says kind of where everyone is as far as  
5 ensuring that the requirements have all been met and that will go  
6 to myself and the director.

7 Q. Okay, so when you say we, you're talking about you and the  
8 director?

9 A. Correct, yeah.

10 Q. Who are -- so, I'm assuming there's not, like, an email  
11 address that just says national team at Hornblower dot com?

12 A. Nuh huh.

13 Q. Who is the problem that actually sends this to you?

14 A. That would be Tom Blakely (ph.).

15 Q. Who is he?

16 A. He would be our national marine administrator I believe is  
17 his proper title.

18 Q. Okay, and do you interact with him frequently in your role as  
19 the safety officer?

20 A. Yeah, occasionally. Yeah, for sure.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All good.

22 LT [REDACTED] Mr. Denley?

23 MR. DENLEY: I'm good.

24 LT [REDACTED] Okay, great.

25 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, thanks.



1           LT [REDACTED] Yeah, thank you very much. This concludes the  
2 interview at minute 1232. We're going to stop the recording  
3 and --

4           (Whereupon, at 12:32 p.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:            FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON*  
                                      NEAR THE BOSTON SPORTS DISTRICT  
                                      IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
                                      ON MARCH 24, 2023  
                                      Interview of Rob Schuler

ACCIDENT NO.:                DCA23FM022

PLACE:                         Boston, Massachusetts

DATE:                         April 6, 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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Hanna  
Transcriber