

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

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Interview of: JEFFREY TAYLOR, Director, Marine Operations
Boston Harbor City Cruises

Via Microsoft Teams

Friday,
April 14, 2023

APPEARANCES:

BRIAN YOUNG, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Lead Investigator
United States Coast Guard

KEITH FAWCETT, Investigator
United States Coast Guard

LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
United States Coast Guard

ERIC DENLEY, Esq.
On behalf of City Cruises

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:02 a.m.)

1 MR. FAWCETT: Do you know that it's being recorded?

2 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I understand the interview is recorded.

3 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. So this is a joint U.S. Coast
4 Guard/NTSB investigation. The Coast Guard is the lead federal
5 agency and we're conducting this investigation under the rules of
6 the applicable Coast Guard regulations. Today is April 14th, the
7 time is 09:02 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. We're conducting an
8 interview with Mr. Jeff Taylor and we're doing it via Teams.
9 We're examining the events surrounding the fire that occurred on
10 the *Spirit of Boston* on March 24th, 2023 in Boston Harbor.

11 We'll go ahead and go around the room and introduce the Coast
12 Guard, the NTSB. I will ask you to spell your last name for the
13 record. So my name is Keith Fawcett, nice to meet you, sir. I am
14 a civilian marine accident investigator and I'm part of the
15 District 1 formal investigation team.

16 LCDR [REDACTED] Good morning, sir, my name is Lieutenant
17 Commander [REDACTED] last name is spelled [REDACTED], and
18 I'm the legal advisor to the investigation.

19 MR. YOUNG: Good morning, Mr. Taylor, my name is Brian Young,
20 Y-o-u-n-g, and I'm an investigator from the National
21 Transportation Safety Board.

22 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. Mr. Taylor, if you'll state your
23 full name and spell your last name.

1 MR. TAYLOR: My name is Jeffrey Taylor. Last name
2 T-a-y-l-o-r.

3 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. And Counsel.

4 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, I'm Eric Denley, D-e-n-l-e-y, counsel for
5 City Cruises. So just one question. So Mr. Fawcett, Commander
6 [REDACTED] will not be joining us for this interview?

7 MR. FAWCETT: He will be joining, sir. He's not on the line
8 at the moment. He will be introduced when he arrives to the
9 meeting.

10 MR. DENLEY: Okay, thanks.

11 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah. Thank you. So Mr. Taylor, I just want
12 to let you know that in the investigations world we recognize that
13 memory is perishable and you have the opportunity, if you think
14 about at a later time, anything you want to change, add, any new
15 information based on the interview today, you can let Mr. Denley
16 know, Mr. Denley will let us know.

17 And then we're going to produce -- the Coast Guard will
18 produce a report of investigation and if you see that report and
19 you have additional information or you find very conflicted
20 information, let Mr. Denley know and he will approach the Coast
21 Guard because there is a process to appeal the results that are
22 contained in the report of investigation. And then finally, we
23 use a document, it's a procedure manual called the "Marine Safety
24 Manual, Volume V," you could Google it, it explains why we do what
25 we do, but also Mr. Denley can point you to it so that you know

1 why we're doing what we're doing and understand the process
2 itself. So without any further ado, I will go ahead and start
3 your interview, okay, sir?

4 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir

5 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.

6 INTERVIEW OF JEFFREY TAYLOR

7 BY MR. FAWCETT:

8 Q. So all of my questions are directly related to the events
9 leading up to the fire which occurred on March 24th, 2023, unless
10 I state differently. And then we're going to talk to you, you
11 know, if you need a break, let us know. We're going to focus on
12 your role as the port safety officer for the Port of Boston. So
13 just generally, lay the groundwork for us and talk about your
14 marine background, you know, licenses you hold, held, training,
15 and the kind of work you've done in your career.

16 A. Okay. I'm a 100-ton master, near coastal. That is my
17 license that I have, that I hold. I started working Boston Harbor
18 Cruises back in 1986 as a summer-type job. I was in the Coast
19 Guard for a few years. After the Coast Guard, I went to Wentworth
20 Institute of Technology and then I started in '90 working for
21 Boston Harbor Cruises, '91 I went full time with Boston Harbor
22 Cruises working on the Deer Island project, the role as captain,
23 and we transported passengers from Boston South Shore out to Deer
24 Island project, it was part of the Boston Harbor cleanup. After
25 that was -- the project was done, I went to work for Boston Harbor

1 Cruises in the offshore -- excuse me, in the sightseeing -- not
2 sightseeing, but whale watching and commuter boats, running the
3 catamarans that they have going from Hingham to Hull and doing
4 whale watching. After that, I went to work for Odyssey Cruises, I
5 was a captain there for approximately 1 year, then moved up to the
6 position that they had of director of marine operations for
7 Odyssey, which was under Premiere Yachts, and then eventually
8 became City Cruises.

9 In 2010, I left that job to go work for, again, Boston Harbor
10 Cruises, who had started what they called the offshore division
11 and it was -- we had three -- at one point we had three offshore
12 supply vessels, I was a captain there for roughly about seven and
13 a half years, and then I became kind of the assistant operations
14 manager in charge of overseeing safety and compliance as we
15 decided to pursue some of the contracts and some of the
16 opportunities that were coming up in offshore wind.

17 And when the company was sold, City Cruises decided not to
18 purchase the offshore division, so it was purchased by another
19 company called Semper Offshore and I worked over there as the
20 safety and the HSQE person, health and safety quality, for them
21 for just probably under a year and then I was hired back by Boston
22 Harbor City Cruises to be the director of marine operations for
23 the ferries and excursions.

24 Q. And just to differentiate, when you say Boston Harbor City
25 Cruises, you're talking about the company that now operates the

1 *Spirit of Boston?*

2 A. When I say Boston Harbor City Cruises, I worked with the
3 ferries and excursions, so that's all the ferries that go from
4 Boston to Provincetown to Long Wharf, all the MBTA service
5 contracts and all the sightseeing contracts that are done,
6 sightseeing vessels that go in and out of Long Wharf. I don't
7 really have a direct control over anything with the *Spirit of*
8 *Boston* or *Odyssey*, that's a different division that's called the
9 dining division. I work for the ferries and excursions divisions.

10 Q. And then are you a lead auditor with training and safety
11 management systems for subchapter T and L vessels?

12 A. I went to Maine Maritime and I received training for ISM
13 auditor, excuse me, ISM safety management systems, and I received
14 training as an ISO 9001 auditor, too.

15 Q. And how is that certification incorporated into operations
16 within City Cruises Boston and by that, I mean the entire fleet.

17 A. That training was provided to me by Boston Harbor Cruises
18 back in around 2018 and that training was to help develop safety
19 management systems for the offshore supply vessels. It's a tool
20 set that I use as I help develop safety management systems and
21 safety practices in my role now.

22 Q. And which vessels in the fleet have a safety management
23 system?

24 A. We don't have safety management systems in the fleet now, it
25 is something that will be coming into play as, I think as time

1 moves on and so -- but as of now we don't have any official type
2 safety management system. When I say official, I mean, you know,
3 regulated by a -- by a regulation type of entity, so --

4 Q. And by that, you mean Coast Guard or third party like ABS or
5 some similar third party?

6 A. Yes. Yes, sir. Exactly.

7 Q. Now, if you would, in as much detail, help me understand your
8 role as port safety officer for Boston Harbor.

9 A. For Boston Harbor, I am -- my job is director of marine
10 operations and for the port safety officer for Boston, the way it
11 works on the ferries and excursion side is Mike, Captain Michael
12 Kerr is my port captain and it's his role to be the port safety
13 officer. He oversees the -- all the safety items on the vessel
14 and does safety inspections. It's more -- I delegate that
15 responsibility to him with my oversight and my review of what he
16 does.

17 Q. Are you responsible for the function of the port safety
18 officers in any other component of the Boston vessels, for
19 example, the dining fleet?

20 A. I am not responsible for the oversight of the safety of the
21 dining fleet, I'm responsible for the oversight of the ferries and
22 excursion division.

23 Q. Do other port safety officers in Boston report to you?

24 A. No, they don't. They report to their director of marine
25 operations.

1 Q. So do you participate in safe cruise meetings?

2 A. Yes, I do and I have, so -- can you define a little bit more
3 what you mean by safe cruise meeting?

4 Q. Well, there are regularly -- well, all right, first of all,
5 I'll differentiate. The marine operations calls, do you
6 participate in those at the local or the national level?

7 A. Yes, I do.

8 Q. Can you talk about what goes on within those meetings?

9 A. We actually just had one this week and we will cover a
10 variety of different topics, anything from drug testing, which
11 seems to be a hot topic now, several audits going through the
12 fleet.

13 We also talk about any safety incidents that occur and any
14 directives that come about from corporate, one of them being, you
15 know, do a review of all your trash cans and your trash
16 receptacles and make sure that they're compliant, that was one of
17 the directives talked about.

18 We also talk about any other safety incidents that occur,
19 kind of -- kind of a big picture of looking around at best
20 practices shared. We also look at upcoming projects, any labor,
21 shipyard projects, kind of a quick review of those. And so --

22 Q. So there's another -- I'm familiar with some of the
23 operations at City Cruises because of the *Spirit of Norfolk* fire,
24 in that investigation, but there's another type of meeting, it's
25 called a safe cruise meeting and there's an agenda published for

1 those. One example of an agenda was the identification of the
2 need for port safety officers, are you familiar with that?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And then there was the list of duties that the port safety
5 officer would fulfill.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And do you get the agendas for those meetings?

8 A. Yes, I do.

9 Q. And I believe it was either Captain Schuler (ph.) or perhaps
10 the director of marine operations said that there were local safe
11 cruise meetings and then there were national meetings. Are you
12 familiar with like local safe cruise meetings for Boston Harbor?

13 A. For Boston Harbor City Cruises and the ferries and
14 excursions, yes, I am.

15 Q. And talk about how the meetings go at the local level.

16 A. Usually on a Teams meeting, they'll discuss the incidents
17 that happen and they'll review it and then Captain Mike will take
18 all that information and then he'll be on the national harbor safe
19 committee meeting.

20 Q. And Captain Mike is who?

21 A. Captain Michael Kerr is the port captain for Boston Harbor
22 City Cruises ferries and excursions.

23 Q. And just so I know, how do you spell his last name, do you
24 know?

25 A. K-e-r-r.

1 Q. All right, so you have a Teams meeting, one of the duties of
2 the port safety officer is to prepare minutes of the meeting and
3 forward them to corporate, is that done?

4 MR. DENLEY: Objection, it calls for speculation. I think
5 you can ask him if he knows what one of the duties are, but I
6 don't believe you're on -- I don't believe you're on the
7 committee, Mr. Fawcett.

8 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.

9 BY MR. FAWCETT:

10 Q. Is one of the duties of the port safety officer to prepare
11 minutes of the meetings and forward those minutes to corporate?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And is that done, to your knowledge?

14 A. I had talked with Mike, Captain Mike, yesterday and just to
15 ask him, you know, what had been done and over on our ferries and
16 excursion sides, we're kind of in the process of getting our team
17 together. He's had one meeting, has another one scheduled, and he
18 did not take minutes on that particular meeting, but he will going
19 forward.

20 Q. Now, this interview that we're conducting, we do it via Teams
21 and we have the ability to record the meeting. Do you know if
22 those meetings are physically recorded with the Teams software?

23 A. I do not know if they are recorded or not.

24 Q. The marine ops calls, do you know if minutes are prepared of
25 the marine ops meeting?

1 A. I do not know.

2 Q. And then, there was a fire on board the *Spirit of Norfolk* on
3 June 7th, 2022. Was that fire event discussed at either of these
4 two meetings? And let me correct that, these two types of
5 meetings, either the safe cruise meetings that you attended or the
6 marine operations calls that you attended.

7 A. Yes, it's not in detail, that I can remember, but yeah, they
8 were discussed.

9 Q. Do you recall if they -- in those meetings, they told you any
10 enhanced fire prevention, fire safety or firefighting content, in
11 other words, did they discuss like how to fight a fire, how to
12 prevent a fire, or if a fire occurred, firefighting? For either
13 of those meetings, did they give you guidance on how you were
14 supposed to enhance that?

15 A. Can I take a break?

16 MR. FAWCETT: Sure.

17 MR. TAYLOR: Okay.

18 MR. FAWCETT: I mean, the break, do you want to step out?

19 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, we're going to -- we're going to jump off
20 the -- jump out of the meeting, Keith, and then we'll dial right
21 back in.

22 MR. FAWCETT: All right, we're going to keep the recording
23 going.

24 MR. DENLEY: Or we'll just go on -- we'll just go on mute.

25 MR. TAYLOR: Mute, yeah, mute.

1 MR. DENLEY: Just go on mute.

2 MR. FAWCETT: You can turn your camera off, sir.

3 (Pause.)

4 MR. FAWCETT: You ready to continue, Mr. Taylor?

5 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

6 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, if you can -- if you can repeat the
7 question.

8 BY MR. FAWCETT:

9 Q. Yes. In either the safe cruise meetings or the marine ops
10 calls, did they talk -- after June 7th, when there was a fire on
11 the *Spirit of Norfolk*, did they give you guidance or give the
12 marine operations personnel on the calls guidance on how to
13 prevent fires, fire safety, or firefighting as a result of the
14 complete and total loss of the *Spirit of Norfolk* caused by fire?

15 MR. DENLEY: I'm going to object to the -- I'm going to
16 object to the question on a number of grounds, relevance and --
17 well, relevance being the first one, but, Jeff, go ahead and
18 answer the -- go ahead and answer the question.

19 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. I don't recall exactly what was discussed
20 in those meetings. You know, I do know that we do our training
21 and we have resources for our training to teach our crews how to
22 deal with fires and emergency response.

23 BY MR. FAWCETT:

24 Q. Did you receive any e-mail correspondence that you're aware
25 of related to firefighting, fire safety, or fire prevention after

1 the *Spirit of Norfolk* fire?

2 A. I don't recall any e-mails to change any type of procedure
3 for fighting any type of fires that we might have on board, you
4 know, we have our training that we do with our crews.

5 Q. Was there any conversation in those meetings that you recall
6 -- and you can take a moment to sit carefully and think about it
7 -- related to the cause of the fire on the *Spirit of Norfolk*? Or
8 potential cause.

9 MR. DENLEY: Objection, relevance. Mr. Fawcett, you started
10 this interview by saying that you're here to investigate the fire
11 on board the *Spirit of Boston* on March of this year and --

12 MR. FAWCETT: Noted, Mr. Denley.

13 MR. DENLEY: -- there hasn't been one -- there hasn't been
14 one question about --

15 MR. FAWCETT: Mr. Denley.

16 MR. DENLEY: -- about that particular fire.

17 MR. FAWCETT: Mr. Denley, thank you. Noted for the record.

18 BY MR. FAWCETT:

19 Q. So Mr. Taylor, you talk about crews, c-r-e-w-s, can you tell
20 me what is -- what does the crew consist of? In other words, we
21 know on the *Spirit of Boston* there's a hospitality crew and then
22 there's a marine crew. Together, are they described as the crew?

23 MR. DENLEY: I'm going to object to this, as well. I mean,
24 Mr. Taylor is here to talk about his role as the port safety
25 officer --

1 MR. FAWCETT: That's fine.

2 MR. DENLEY: -- within the Port of Boston and --

3 MR. FAWCETT: Noted, sir. I'll continue.

4 MR. DENLEY: And he's talked about that he does not have
5 anything to do with --

6 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.

7 MR. DENLEY: -- the marine operations on the *Spirit of*
8 *Boston*. So I would just ask that -- again, we're cooperating with
9 this investigation and I would just ask that the Coast Guard stay
10 within the scope of the investigation.

11 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. And we'll determine the scope.
12 Thank you, sir. The reason --

13 MR. DENLEY: I think you did, when you started the -- when
14 you started the interview.

15 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.

16 LCDR [REDACTED] Mr. Denley, you're going to have the
17 opportunity to ask questions, as you know, after Mr. Fawcett's
18 concluded, so if there's anything you want to follow up on, you'll
19 have your opportunity, but for now, if you'd let Mr. Fawcett ask
20 his questions, we'd appreciate it.

21 MR. DENLEY: Okay, thank you. I'll just lodge -- I'll lodge
22 my objection based on relevance.

23 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.

24 BY MR. FAWCETT:

25 Q. So do you attend or take training in the marine university?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Now, in there they talk about, in the training section, it
3 says, for example, man overboard, it says "Minimum standards.
4 Captains must provide sufficient training and drills so that all
5 crew are familiar with their duties." What do they mean by all
6 crew?

7 A. I can tell you what it means for Boston Harbor City Cruises
8 is all, all our crew. All our crew on board are considered safety
9 sensitive passengers. Excuse me, safety sensitive crew. All of
10 our crew at Boston, over on the ferries and excursions, even the
11 bartenders and -- are trained in those areas.

12 Q. Including the bartenders?

13 A. We use our deckhands as bartenders. They're considered part
14 of the crew, it's -- that's how we do it at -- on ferries and
15 excursions.

16 Q. And then how does the port safety officer track compliance
17 with company policy?

18 A. We have a spreadsheet that -- and checklists and lists of
19 competencies that people are required to be able to complete. We
20 also have a vessel familiarization, which is new to vessel
21 training for all crew members that come on board. And then we
22 have what we call Stage 2 training, which is more job specific,
23 more detailed training, and then we have different levels after
24 that. That's basically how we do it on -- with ferries and
25 excursions, so -- and this has all been developed through Boston

1 Harbor Cruises and it's been some -- with it we have plans to
2 incorporate this more into an electronic tracking system, that's
3 coming down for us, so --

4 Q. So there's an e-mail that you might receive, and tell me if
5 I'm wrong, that it comes from an e-mail address -- and I'm asking,
6 I'm not trying to imply that you receive it, but I'm going to ask,
7 it's from ATA-ATA and it will say something like, you know, "Hi,
8 Jeff" -- it could say -- "we notice that you haven't completed the
9 most recent installment of your certain training." Do you get
10 electronic emails to prompt you to complete required company
11 training?

12 MR. DENLEY: Objection, relevance. Objection, calls for
13 speculation.

14 BY MR. FAWCETT:

15 Q. Well, I mean, do you get electronic -- you know, e-mails that
16 remind you to comply with company training? For example, security
17 training, sexual harassment training, safety training and so
18 forth.

19 A. I do all my training, so I don't get a reminder of -- to
20 complete anything.

21 Q. Do you get a reminder if people that work for you haven't
22 completed their training?

23 A. That is done -- I think there's different -- I'll say I don't
24 know.

25 Q. So are you familiar with the emergency operation plan that

1 City Cruises has?

2 A. Yes, I know.

3 Q. And do you know if it's -- like, is it like fleet specific
4 and by that I mean is there a different plan that you have for
5 ferries and excursion versus dining fleet or is it just the same
6 document?

7 A. It is the same document.

8 Q. So in that plan they discussed a serious marine incident and
9 it's a different definition than the Coast Guard uses to describe,
10 it says, "As used in this manual, a serious marine incident is
11 defined as death, serious injury to a person, a vessel fire,
12 grounding, flooding, collision, mechanical failure, structural
13 failure, a pollution incident, and all other events with the
14 potential to negatively impact or disrupt normal operations."
15 Would you agree that that's the definition within the company of a
16 serious marine incident?

17 A. That's in the manual, right?

18 Q. Yes.

19 MR. DENLEY: Jeff, you can -- you don't have to take his word
20 for it. I mean, if you know, I mean, do you have the manual in
21 front of you?

22 MR. TAYLOR: I don't have the manual right in front of me,
23 I'd have to --

24 MR. DENLEY: Okay. Don't feel like you need to guess, but
25 you can --

1 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

2 MR. DENLEY: -- answer the question.

3 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, okay.

4 BY MR. FAWCETT:

5 Q. And then if there -- just to understand from a port safety
6 officer role, if there is something that disrupted normal
7 operations or negatively impacted normal operations, what would be
8 the requirement to follow up? In other words, would that be an
9 incident that would be required to be logged in the vessel log?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And would there be an incident investigation which would be
12 tracked in your IndustrySafe tracking system?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And could it lead to interviewing the personnel involved?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. So the Coast Guard issues marine safety information
17 bulletins, does the company send those to you?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And there was one in February of 2020 regarding the tragic
20 fire aboard the -- the Coast Guard published one about the tragic
21 fire aboard the small passenger vessel *Conception*, and one of the
22 aspects was electrical safety and in the *Spirit of Boston* and in a
23 lot of vessels, Mr. Scott Smith sent out an e-mail and in there he
24 -- there were some images of electrical issues in that e-mail.

25 Are you familiar with --

1 MR. DENLEY: I'm going to object to the -- I'm going to
2 object to the question. Could you maybe -- maybe ask a question,
3 Keith?

4 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah, I'm going to.

5 MR. DENLEY: I don't know what you just said.

6 MR. FAWCETT: That's fine.

7 MR. DENLEY: You asked him about MSIBs --

8 MR. FAWCETT: Yes.

9 MR. DENLEY: -- and then you asked him about e-mails, maybe
10 we could just --

11 MR. FAWCETT: Yes, we'll part it down, sir. Thank you.

12 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, if you could just --

13 BY MR. FAWCETT:

14 Q. So are you familiar with the marine safety information
15 bulletin that talked about small passenger vessels and electrical
16 safety?

17 A. When was that sent out? What's the date?

18 Q. Late 2019.

19 A. Let's see.

20 MR. DENLEY: Jeff, you can just -- based on your --

21 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah, you don't have to look it up.

22 MR. DENLEY: -- memory. You don't need to --

23 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

24 MR. DENLEY: You don't need to look it up.

25 MR. TAYLOR: I'm trying to think, you know, was I working for

1 the company at that time, I think it was just right around the
2 time when I started to work here that -- I wasn't here at the
3 company at that time. Actually, I was working for Semper
4 Offshore.

5 MR. FAWCETT: Right, well, it wasn't directed to --

6 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

7 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, so --

8 MR. TAYLOR: But I --

9 MR. FAWCETT: -- a particular company.

10 MR. DENLEY: So the answer's no.

11 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

12 LCDR ██████████ You can give an answer, Mr. Taylor, you don't
13 have to let Mr. Denley answer for you.

14 MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

15 BY MR. FAWCETT:

16 Q. Have you seen one regarding electrical safety on small
17 passenger vessels?

18 A. Yes, I have.

19 Q. So since you've been employed in your present position with
20 City Cruises, has anyone done audits, that you're aware of, on
21 electrical safety on board vessels?

22 A. I don't recall.

23 Q. And you have to pardon me a little bit, because when we set
24 up for interview, probably the most appropriate witness is
25 Mr. Kerr as the port safety officer for the Port of Boston and I

1 appreciate --

2 A. Can I go back to the electrical safety?

3 Q. Yes, sir.

4 A. Okay. So, you know, we do have a maintenance team that does
5 -- you know, goes through and follows their procedures and -- in
6 vessel maintenance and repair, so -- and we have -- as I go back,
7 I remember, I think I do remember our port -- let's see, our
8 director of engineering looking at electrical safety on board the
9 vessels. You know, we also review all this when the Coast Guard
10 comes on board and does their COIs.

11 They are, you know, more than helpful and we appreciate when
12 they point out electrical issues. They had looked at one of our
13 vessels and found some issues that we addressed and took -- had
14 taken care of. So, you know, we do look at electrical safety on
15 board the vessels.

16 Q. Are you aware of any outside experts in electrical safety
17 that have done inspections and provided reports of electrical
18 safety for your vessels?

19 A. I'm not aware of any inspections like that.

20 Q. And then going back to these safe cruise and marine ops
21 calls, just how often -- just so I can understand, how often do
22 you have the safe cruise meetings in Boston itself? Within the
23 Boston group.

24 A. Once a month.

25 Q. And that would've been throughout 2022?

1 A. No. We weren't fully up and ready for -- to do those in
2 2022.

3 Q. When would you say that you were up and ready to do them in
4 Boston? Just approximate month would be fine.

5 A. Let's see. Well, with our -- with our -- we have our monthly
6 marine operations call, which is a fleet-wide call where a lot of
7 things are discussed, and then I have a -- what we call a DMO
8 check-in monthly and that is more vessel specific where some of
9 the upper management will talk with myself and the -- a few of the
10 port directors and engineering and then we go over that. The port
11 safety committee meetings are being done once a month for -- you
12 know, being spearheaded by Michael Kerr.

13 Q. And just to understand your role in the organization, so
14 within the port safety officer world, you report to Mr. Kerr.

15 A. No, Mr. Kerr reports to me. I'm the director of marine
16 operations and he's one of my -- he's one of the people that
17 report to me.

18 Q. But as port safety officer, he reports to you?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. So you are the port safety officer for the entire Boston
21 Harbor, is that correct?

22 A. No, I am the port -- I oversee the operations and the safety
23 of the ferries and excursions side of City Cruises in Boston.

24 Q. Is there an overall port safety officer for the Port of
25 Boston or are there just individuals for each component of the

1 fleet?

2 A. There are individuals.

3 Q. Okay. And then who, within the national leadership team, who
4 is responsible for safety of operations?

5 A. For the person responsible for safety operations, you know,
6 that would be -- you know, comes from the top and that would be
7 Scott Smith.

8 Q. So in the national marine team is there someone whose
9 responsibility, other than Mr. Smith, is training, or correction,
10 safety?

11 A. Not that I know.

12 Q. And how about is there someone within the national marine
13 team that is responsible for training?

14 A. Yes,

15 Q. And who is that?

16 A. That is Bob Langlais.

17 Q. And that is relatively recent?

18 A. No.

19 Q. How long has that gentleman been in the position? Just
20 approximate number of months.

21 A. Twenty-four.

22 Q. Twenty-four months?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. And then who at the national marine team is responsible for
25 maintenance?

1 A. Gary Frommelt.

2 Q. And then if you had an employee who had an important safety
3 concern and his either captain or mate or anybody weren't
4 addressing it, do they have the opportunity to send an e-mail
5 directly to the corporation with their safety concerns?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And is there a specific e-mail address for that?

8 A. For Boston Harbor City Cruises, what I have developed is a QR
9 code using Microsoft forms and I have posted on all the vessels
10 that I'm in charge of is a QR code that scans them and takes them
11 to a form and in there they can anonymously report any type of
12 safety hazard they see.

13 Q. And then if there was a person on the fleet that you're
14 responsible for and they saw a small fire, what would be your
15 expectations for them to do if they saw a small fire?

16 A. Move passengers to safety, inform the captain, and if
17 possible, to deal with the fire situation.

18 Q. And how would you deal with it? In other words, a small
19 trash can fire.

20 MR. DENLEY: Objection, calls for speculation.

21 BY MR. FAWCETT:

22 Q. How would you deal with a small trash can fire if you were
23 aboard a vessel?

24 A. Me, myself, if I was a crew member on board?

25 Q. Yes, correct.

1 A. Well, I'd --

2 MR. DENLEY: Let's be -- if you're a marine crew member?

3 Could we be a little bit more specific, Mr. Fawcett?

4 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah. Marine crew --

5 MR. DENLEY: If you're going to give him a hypothetical, can
6 we please be specific?

7 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

8 BY MR. FAWCETT:

9 Q. You don't have hospitality workers on your fleet, correct?

10 A. No.

11 Q. So if it's a marine crew member, yourself, how would you deal
12 with a small trash can fire?

13 A. Grab the nearest fire extinguisher, if it was safe to do so,
14 and then try to extinguish it.

15 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. You've been very helpful, that's
16 all the questions I have.

17 Mr. Young.

18 MR. YOUNG: Thanks, Mr. Fawcett.

19 BY MR. YOUNG:

20 Q. Thank you, Mr. Taylor, just a few follow-up questions, unless
21 you need a break. You all right to continue on?

22 A. Yeah. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Just to kind of clarify one of the statements that have been
24 made before, speaking about, I think it was the port safety
25 committee was up and running and not up and running for a while in

1 2022, can you talk about why that was not up and running?

2 A. Our -- let's see. I have no answer for you.

3 Q. Okay, okay. And I understand you're the director of marine
4 operations and concentrating on the ferry and excursion vessels.
5 Are safety incidents and lessons learned shared between the dining
6 division and your division?

7 A. I'd say no.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. We do share them amongst ourselves and some best practices.

10 MR. DENLEY: Just answer no or yes, it sounds like --

11 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

12 MR. DENLEY: -- I think it might've been yes.

13 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. So we share the -- I do a weekly report
14 and we have some best practices that come in from the drills that
15 they do, the crews do, and then they report in to -- you know,
16 there's another electronic form that they report in to. I'll take
17 those breast, best -- excuse me, best practices and share those
18 with -- with the whole marine team that I have on my side and then
19 I share them with -- I have shared them with the dining side.

20 BY MR. YOUNG:

21 Q. Okay. And would that be reciprocal where you have been
22 shared lessons learned and incidents from their side?

23 A. No.

24 Q. You had talked about a discussion in a safety meeting
25 recently about compliant trash receptacles, can you give me some

1 more information on that, when it was held and maybe the reason
2 why this was discussed?

3 A. The reason why it was discussed is because -- actually, I
4 can't tell you why it was discussed, I know that was passed down
5 to me from the -- from Gary Frommelt that he wanted a list of all
6 trash cans that were, you know, either plastic or it could be
7 something combustible and then we were told to make a list of what
8 we need and to start the process of making sure all our trash cans
9 were -- met the requirements of non-combustible or -- and that is,
10 I'm not clear on the regulation, that's what I'm looking into to
11 make sure we get the exact right trash can.

12 Q. And would that be for all the vessels under your jurisdiction
13 in ferry and excursion?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Can you recall a ballpark time frame when this occurred?

16 A. It was within the past few weeks, there's -- you know, after
17 the *Spirit of Boston* fire.

18 Q. Okay. Is there a company-wide smoking policy that would
19 encompass both ferry and excursion vessels and the dining vessels
20 that you're aware?

21 A. I am not aware of a company-wide smoking policy.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. On our boats, there's no smoking on our boats. And that
24 comes from MBTA requirements, Mass Bay Transit Authority.

25 Q. And is that because you're running ferries?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. And do any of your excursion vessels use Sternos for
3 heating chafing --

4 A. No.

5 Q. How about candles on tables?

6 A. No.

7 Q. And I understand that you are developing an SMS, safety
8 management system, for your ferry and excursion vessels. Are you
9 working with anyone on the dining side to replicate this effort?

10 A. No.

11 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Thank you very much for your time today, I
12 appreciate your assistance.

13 MR. FAWCETT: Mr. Denley, Commander [REDACTED] has entered the
14 space. Commander, if you could spell your name and for the
15 record, please, introduce yourself?

16 CDR [REDACTED] Sure. Apologize for my tardiness. My name is
17 Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I've been on the call since
18 about 9:35. I'm the lead investigator for the case. I had two
19 questions, but I wasn't sure if Mr. Young -- oh, you're done,
20 Mr. Young. Mr. Denley, if you want to go or you'd rather me, I
21 just had two quick questions, if you prefer.

22 MR. DENLEY: No, go ahead. Go ahead, sir.

23 CDR [REDACTED] Okay.

24 BY CDR [REDACTED]

25 Q. And excuse me if it was asked or went down that, I don't

1 think it was yet. When your mechanics or technicians are doing
2 work on the vessels, do you know of any qualifications they have,
3 in particular, such as like an ABYC or credentialed engineer from
4 the Coast Guard?

5 A. Let's see. Our engineerings (sic) have -- our lead
6 engineers, anyway, are all maritime grads and have had Coast Guard
7 licenses.

8 Q. Okay. Is your office familiar or normally follows a process
9 for working with the OCMI or the Marine Safety Center for any
10 modifications or adjustments to systems on board the vessel or
11 sometimes do you feel like when it's a small enough situation,
12 that you just take care of it and go on with life?

13 MR. DENLEY: Objection, calls for speculation. I guess the
14 first part of the question.

15 BY CDR [REDACTED]

16 Q. All right, forget the "goes on with life" part, then. Are
17 you familiar with the process of working with the OCMI and the
18 Marine Safety Center for electrical upgrades, changes?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Has there been situations where you know of that one of your
21 mechanics or technicians did some work and just moved on with life
22 even though it should've probably been consulted with the OCMI?

23 MR. DENLEY: Objection, it calls for speculation.

24 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

25 CDR [REDACTED] Okay. That's all I have.

1 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. Mr. Denley, follow-ups, please.

2 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, sure. Thank you.

3 BY MR. DENLEY:

4 Q. So Mr. Taylor, the Coast Guard asked you quite a bit about,
5 you know, some internal policies and procedures related to safety
6 and related to marine operations. One of the things that the
7 Coast Guard asked you about was a safety management system. I
8 guess I'd like to ask you some specific questions. Isn't it true
9 that you implement a vessel management system, is that correct?

10 A. Yes, we use a vessel management system.

11 Q. Okay. And that vessel management system tracks, you know,
12 maintenance, it tracks different operational items on the vessels,
13 is that correct?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And that's a tool to ensure that systems are maintained and
16 kept up to speed?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. And that, to your knowledge, that's not required by
19 the Coast Guard, is it?

20 A. No.

21 Q. That's been implemented, you know, again, to your knowledge,
22 that's been implemented as a tool to enhance the vessel's safety
23 and the professional operation of the vessel, is that correct?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And then you have an incident management tracking system, as

1 well, is that correct?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And that incident management system or that incident
4 management tracking tool tracks incidents and has the ability to
5 log lessons learned in that system?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And that's implemented across the fleet, to your knowledge?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And is that required by the Coast Guard at all, to your
10 knowledge?

11 A. No, it's not.

12 Q. And so, to the best of your knowledge, you've implemented
13 that to enhance the safety of the operations there at Boston
14 Harbor Cruises?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. You talked about the safety committee and port safety -- the
17 port safety officer role. Is that a relatively new position that
18 the company has kind of rolled out?

19 A. Yes, it's within -- I believe that's, you know, within the
20 past 1 to 2 years, I think that's been in play.

21 Q. And to your knowledge, is that required at all by the Coast
22 Guard or has that been done to enhance safety across the fleet?

23 A. As far as I know, it's not required by the Coast Guard and
24 it's been done to enhance safety, to get people to talk about
25 safety.

1 Q. And those safety committee meetings, is it just marine or is
2 it kind of cross-functional, do you have representation from or is
3 the plan to have representation from across the different
4 divisions?

5 A. Across the different -- the plan is to have it across the
6 different divisions.

7 Q. So you'd be identifying not only marine safety issues, but
8 also safety issues ashore or safety issues with shoreside
9 personnel, as well?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And to your knowledge, is that required by the Coast Guard at
12 all?

13 A. No, that's not required.

14 Q. And so the marine directors meetings, you're a part of those
15 marine directors meetings on a regular basis?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And you indicated briefly that that -- there was an -- you
18 know, there was a general flow of information of that. If you
19 identified any kind of safety issues or concerns from a marine
20 operations perspective, do you feel like you have the ability to
21 voice that and voice that with other -- either other ports or
22 other members of -- other members within the marine team, within
23 the company?

24 A. Yes, yes.

25 Q. Now, I believe in your background, you indicated that you've

1 actually worked within the dining division in the past, is that
2 true?

3 A. Yes, I did.

4 Q. And have you worked on the *Spirit of Boston* in the past?

5 A. No, I haven't.

6 Q. Have you worked on other vessels within the dining fleet in
7 Boston?

8 A. Primarily, the *Odyssey*.

9 Q. And you've got -- you said you've got quite a bit of marine
10 experience, since 1986 you've been working in various aspects of
11 the marine fleet?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And have you been a captain aboard the *Odyssey*?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And so just in general, do you feel that these vessels are
16 operated, as a mariner, you've been -- you know, you've provided
17 some testimony and some comments today about your experience since
18 1986, but do you -- are you -- do you believe that these vessels
19 are safe and operated in a safe and efficient manner based on your
20 skill and experience?

21 A. Yes, I do. There's a --

22 Q. And --

23 A. -- focus on safety.

24 Q. Go ahead.

25 A. There's a focus on safety.

1 Q. So obviously, you're here to talk about BHC, but, you know,
2 do you feel that there's a focus on safety within the dining
3 division as well as BHC?

4 A. Yes, I do.

5 Q. And Captain Thayer Harris, you know, this interview, this
6 group, you know, interviewed him earlier as the director of marine
7 operations. Does he participate in these marine directors
8 meetings?

9 A. Yes, he does.

10 Q. And so you've observed him participating, you know, do you
11 believe that Captain Harris is implementing -- you know, has done
12 a good job implementing his role as the marine director?

13 A. Yes, I do.

14 Q. And do you believe that he's focused on safety and
15 implementing -- implementing the requirements in his role as the
16 marine director?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So the Coast Guard indicated that we were going to talk about
19 the fire on the *Spirit of Boston*. Do you have any knowledge of
20 the fire on the *Spirit of Boston*?

21 A. The only knowledge I have is that I reported there to help
22 out, I have no knowledge of -- I saw the damage and that's
23 basically the only knowledge I have of it.

24 Q. So you were not on board the night of the fire?

25 A. I was not on board.

1 Q. And you're not responsible for the operation of that
2 particular vessel?

3 A. No, I'm not.

4 Q. You know, are you aware of any -- are you aware of any -- are
5 you aware of any issues -- let me ask it this way. Were you aware
6 of any -- any machinery that was not functioning properly on the
7 *Spirit of Boston*?

8 A. No, I'm not aware of any -- any of that.

9 Q. Were you aware of any -- you know, the Coast Guard has
10 brought up latent unsafe conditions, were you aware of any latent
11 unsafe conditions on board the *Spirit of Boston* before the fire?

12 A. No, I was not.

13 MR. DENLEY: Thank you, I have no further questions.

14 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you, sir. This is Keith Fawcett with the
15 Coast Guard for some follow-ups.

16 BY MR. FAWCETT:

17 Q. Just for the record, when did you last serve as captain on
18 the *Odyssey*? Just general.

19 A. May 2010.

20 Q. And then how many vessels in your fleet are your
21 responsibility as marine director?

22 A. That's a tough number. We have vessels that are operational
23 vessels that are in layup status, so all of them -- this is
24 approximately 35, 40.

25 Q. Have you recently -- Mr. Denley asked you about lessons

1 learned across the company. Have you received any information
2 about the storage of combustible material in the engine rooms?

3 A. We have -- let's see. So part of our operations, you know,
4 as we look at vessels, is to make sure that the crews are not
5 keeping any extra equipment in there or extra combustible
6 materials in there, to make sure that they're, you know, taken out
7 of the engine room, make sure there's no extra oil buckets, no --
8 nothing that doesn't need to be there.

9 Q. And then specifically, since June of 2022, have you received
10 any guidance or correspondence or been involved with meetings
11 where they've told you to examine the removal of combustible
12 material from engine spaces?

13 A. I don't remember any meetings where that was discussed.

14 Q. Or e-mails.

15 A. I don't remember any e-mails.

16 Q. How about anything related to crews entering engineering
17 spaces if they suspect a fire or unusual occurrence in progress?

18 A. Let me see. Can I go back to that other question?

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. Just to, you know, clarify and make sure that, you know, the
21 combustible materials in the engine rooms, it's part of our job,
22 it's part of the roles and responsibilities of captains and crews
23 to make sure that, you know, minimum items are kept in the engine
24 room and bilges are kept clean and free.

25 Q. And then going back to the entering of the engine room by

1 personnel if there's an unusual occurrence in the engine room, has
2 there been any guidance --

3 MR. DENLEY: Objection, it calls for speculation. I don't
4 know what unusual means.

5 MR. FAWCETT: Well, fire.

6 MR. DENLEY: I mean, you're --

7 MR. FAWCETT: All right, how about -- how about a fire in the
8 engine room?

9 MR. DENLEY: And who? And on what vessel? I mean, it's --

10 MR. FAWCETT: On any -- on any vessel.

11 MR. DENLEY: It's too broad of a question, Mr. Fawcett.

12 MR. FAWCETT: Noted.

13 BY MR. FAWCETT:

14 Q. So Mr. Taylor, have you received any guidance about crews on
15 vessels within Hornblower about entering engine rooms if they
16 suspect a fire?

17 A. I believe we address that in our training when, you know,
18 fires are on board. We -- you know, the crews are trained to, you
19 know, isolate the fire and so, yeah, your question, I find it -- I
20 find it kind of broad.

21 Q. Since June of 2022, has there been any guidance about the
22 safety of personnel if there's a fire aboard a vessel?

23 A. I can't -- I don't recall.

24 Q. And then, Mr. Denley, I just want to clarify, because you
25 used the word and he used the word "plans." So up until the fire

1 on March 24th, were the safety meetings just marine personnel?
2 Because the question and the answer was about the plan is to
3 incorporate shoreside personnel, sort of, you know, cross back and
4 forth marine and shore and my question is what existed on March
5 24th, was it just marine personnel?

6 A. Is that -- that question's for me?

7 Q. Yeah, that's -- yeah.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. There was a back and forth with Mr. Denley just now about a
10 plan to incorporate like other facets of the company in the marine
11 ops and the safety meetings to include shore personnel and I don't
12 want -- what I want to know is it a plan or what existed on
13 March 24th, was it just marine personnel?

14 A. For ferries and excursions, where we don't have -- okay.
15 I'll say for ferries and excursions, no.

16 Q. So shoreside personnel were involved?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Thank you. And then Mr. Denley also asked you about the
19 vessel management system, and I'm pretty familiar with that, and
20 it discusses generally mechanical -- is that the Vanguard system?
21 Or it used to be called Vanguard?

22 A. No, it's -- yeah, I forget the name before. It's Vessel
23 Vanguard now.

24 Q. Yeah, does that talk about operations or does it talk about
25 maintenance?

1 A. Talks about maintenance.

2 Q. So it's a maintenance tracking system, it's not an operations
3 tracking system, is that correct?

4 A. That is correct.

5 Q. And then Mr. Young asked you about lessons learned and we
6 talked about incidents. Do you recall any meeting that you were
7 involved with that talked about a serious marine incident or an
8 incident where a sailboat was on fire drifting down on the *Odyssey*
9 and proactively, the crew of the *Odyssey* disembarked all
10 passengers shoreside as a proactive step?

11 A. I don't recall that incident.

12 MR. DENLEY: Objection, relevance.

13 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you, sir, noted.

14 BY MR. FAWCETT:

15 Q. And then you have access to the IndustrySafe program,
16 correct?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And do you recall seeing it in that program, as an incident?

19 A. I don't recall that.

20 MR. FAWCETT: That's all I have. I'll go around the room and
21 see if anybody has any follow-ups. Coast Guard?

22 (No response.)

23 MR. FAWCETT: NTSB?

24 MR. YOUNG: No, thank you.

25 MR. FAWCETT: Mr. Denley?

1 MR. DENLEY: No, thank you.

2 MR. FAWCETT: The time is 10:08 Eastern Standard Time, we
3 have completed the interview with Mr. Jeffrey Taylor. Thank you
4 very much, Mr. Taylor, we appreciate all your help today.

5 MR. TAYLOR: Great, thank you.

6 MR. DENLEY: Thanks.

7 (Whereupon, at 10:08 a.m., the interview 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 Jeffrey Taylor

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM022

PLACE: Via Microsoft Teams

DATE: April 14, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber