

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ABOARD *KODIAK ENTERPRISE*
NEAR TACOMA, WASHINGTON
ON APRIL 10, 2023

Accident No.: DCA23FM026

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Interview of: SAM FLORES, Repair Personnel
Trident Seafoods

Trident Seafoods Facilities
Tacoma, Washington

Tuesday,
April 25, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

GREGORY HELLER, Special Agent
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives

CAPT DAVID FLAHERTY, [REDACTED], Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

LARRY ALTENBRUN, Attorney
Nicoll Black & Feig
(On behalf of Trident Seafoods)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:24 a.m.)

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2
3 CWO [REDACTED]: This is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]. Last
4 name is spelled [REDACTED]. The date is April 25th; the time is 9:24
5 local. We're at Trident facilities to investigate the fire on the
6 *Kodiak Enterprise*.

7 Also in the room I have --

8 LT [REDACTED] Lieutenant [REDACTED], United States
9 Coast Guard. [REDACTED].

10 SA HELLER: Special Agent Greg Heller, Bureau of Alcohol,
11 Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF. My last name is spelled
12 Heller, H-e-l-l-e-r.

13 MR. FLORES: Sam Flores, F-l-o-r-e-s, and I am a lead for --
14 here at Trident, Tacoma Yard.

15 MR. ALTENBRUN: Larry Altenbrun. I'm Trident's attorney.
16 Last name is spelled A-l-t-e-n-b-r-u-n.

17 CWO [REDACTED]: And on the phone we have?

18 CAPT FLAHERTY: David Flaherty. Last name is spelled
19 F-l-a-h-e-r-t-y. I am the inspector -- investigator in charge for
20 the National Transportation Safety Board.

INTERVIEW OF SAM FLORES

21
22 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

23 Q. All right, Sam. So you stated you're the lead, lead what?

24 A. Well, I'm the lead of -- oh, I check all the ABS doors, make
25 sure all the watertight doors -- I inspect them and fix them, make

1 them work, that they function properly out at sea.

2 Q. Okay. And were you on board the vessel on Friday, April 7th?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No. Okay. All right. And what we've been told is that
5 either you saw or you performed vacuuming out the dryer vent line?

6 A. Yes. I did it myself.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And I vacuum it a lot. First, we were trying to locate what
9 that was because it was a -- it had a check ball on it and we
10 didn't know what it was because the check ball wasn't working
11 properly. So we had to cut that off with Sawzall.

12 And so we investigated with one of the chief assistants, I
13 guess, and we finally located that it was the dryer vent. Then we
14 knew what it was and we turned it on and there wasn't -- there was
15 no air coming out of it but he could smell that it was a dryer
16 vent. And so we turned it on and I start -- I got a snake, put it
17 down there and all that lint started coming out of there. I go,
18 okay, it is a dryer vent. So, and I got a lot of the lint out of
19 there and then I stuffed the hose of the shop vac down inside
20 there and it was just sucking up all kinds of stuff, but we're two
21 floors.

22 And then I go at that spot -- shortly after that, the port
23 engineer came by and I told him what I did. And I told him that
24 the rest of it still needs to be cleaned up because it could start
25 a fire. And that's how I put it to him. And he goes, yeah,

1 you're right, so I'll take care of it. And that's where it
2 stayed.

3 Q. Okay. So you were snaking it from --

4 A. The topside.

5 Q. Topside? Okay. And when you --

6 A. And I -- and then I got a good flow after that, so -- the
7 dryer being on and air flowing through.

8 Q. Okay. And just for the sake of the recording and for all of
9 us, what does a snake look like?

10 A. Oh, it's just a drain snake.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. So it's got barbs on it and --

14 A. Well, it's got a little curly, yeah, thing on the end and
15 then just -- and just like same snake that you would use on your
16 toilet, stuff like that.

17 Q. Okay. All right. And were you using a drill with it or just
18 hand?

19 A. It comes with a drill.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yeah. Yeah.

22 Q. All right.

23 BY SA HELLER:

24 Q. Okay. So the dryer vent that we're talking about, we're
25 looking at the general arrangement drawing here on the 03 deck.

1 Is it in this area?

2 A. Yes. It's the one right outside the handrail.

3 Q. Okay. And do you know what -- where it connects, to what
4 washer/dryer?

5 A. We just -- on the dryers, it's got two dryers and then
6 there's a box there, and then from there it goes into the wall.

7 Q. Okay. But --

8 A. In the bulkhead.

9 Q. Yeah, I think I looked a couple things here and I wasn't
10 clear. Is it associated with the laundry room or a washer and
11 dryer that's down in the dry stores?

12 A. The laundry room in the dry stores, the washing room that --
13 the clothes washers there in the dry stores.

14 Q. In the dry stores. Okay.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Perfect. And you said you stuck the snake down. How long is
17 that?

18 A. It's probably about a good 10, 15 feet, I think it was. I
19 don't know, somewhere around there.

20 Q. Okay. And then you said you stuck a shop vac in and --

21 A. The shop vac only goes about 4 feet.

22 Q. And both of those processes removed some lint?

23 A. A lot, a lot. And after that, like I said, it was flowing
24 very well then.

25 Q. Okay. And then you said you went down -- you mentioned that

1 it was getting flow well after that. Did you turn on the dryer or
2 how did you know that --

3 A. I turned on the dryer. As I was snaking it, I turned on the
4 dryer and that's why everything was coming out.

5 Q. I gotcha. Okay.

6 A. Because it was pushing it out.

7 Q. Okay. And so you noticed a change in the flow after you
8 cleaned it?

9 A. Um-hum. Before there was nothing there.

10 Q. Okay. I think you were pretty clear, but it sounds like you
11 just used the snake and the shop vac from the top and nothing down
12 in the --

13 A. Correct. And that's why I told the port engineer, because
14 that would require him getting somebody else to do it.

15 Q. Okay. And when did you do this? When was this?

16 A. That was on Thursday.

17 Q. Thursday. Okay. Thursday --

18 A. Thursday morning.

19 Q. -- April the 6th? Thursday, April 6th?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Okay. When you ran the dryer you said there was flow. Was
22 there anything else unusual -- or was there anything unusual when
23 you ran the dryer?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Did you run a whole cycle or just --

1 A. No, I just let it run -- once I got a good flow and then I --
2 that was it, I stopped it.

3 Q. Okay. Have you been involved in cleaning out dryer vents on
4 other ships? Is it a standard thing that you do?

5 A. Yeah, that's what I do. I'm a jack of all trades.

6 Q. Jack of all trades. All right. Are you a welder as well?

7 A. I'm a welder as well. I do anything and everything that
8 comes along here.

9 Q. Okay. You're the guy.

10 A. Yeah. I've been here 20 years, so I learned a lot here.

11 Q. Okay. And then do you know if the rest of the line was ever
12 cleaned out?

13 A. No. I don't know because I told him Thursday and then I
14 wasn't here for the weekend.

15 Q. Okay. And the person that you talked to who was the port
16 engineer, was it Kyle?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. All right. And then as far as the cutting off of the -- so
19 before you snaked it, you cut --

20 A. Cut the check ball.

21 Q. -- cut the check ball out. Okay. And so on that gooseneck,
22 how far in is that check ball? I'm not super familiar with it.

23 A. Oh, it just goes on -- it just threads on there, but it just
24 goes on about a couple --

25 Q. So it's not all the way in the --

- 1 A. Maybe not even a half an inch.
- 2 Q. Okay. I gotcha. Was on there. Okay.
- 3 A. And I cut it right where the top of the check ball is at.
- 4 Q. And you used a Sawzall for that?
- 5 A. Um-hum.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 BY LT [REDACTED]:
- 8 Q. Just kind of a question about the area. I know you said you
9 do doors and you walk around there and you were up on the front
10 deck. Do you recall looking in the line locker at all that day?
- 11 A. Oh, yeah. And that's how -- that's why I had them trace that
12 pipe where it went down.
- 13 Q. Okay. Can you kind of tell us what was in the line locker?
14 We're just trying to get a sense of what was in that space.
- 15 A. Oh, there was a bunch of line in there, spools of it.
- 16 Q. What type of line and how many spools?
- 17 A. I don't know. There was quite a bit. I mean, because I
18 couldn't crawl in there. I would've had to taken everything out.
19 But I could see in there. I could see where that pipe came down.
- 20 Q. Okay. So the entire line locker was --
- 21 A. Um-hum. That back area. There was a -- there's a -- where
22 the door is at, you can walk in there and then there's also a
23 hatch there beyond the -- just on the other side of that little
24 bump out there, and that goes down to the dry stores.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 SA HELLER: Does that hatch open?

2 MR. FLORES: It's always open, yeah.

3 SA HELLER: Okay.

4 MR. FLORES: From what I know.

5 BY LT [REDACTED]:

6 Q. Do you recall anything else in there or was it just all
7 completely lines or was there --

8 A. It was all lines, yeah. They're on spools. It's the lines
9 that they use on the net.

10 SA HELLER: And are those spools -- like is it a wooden
11 spool, is it a plastic spool?

12 MR. FLORES: I think so. Yeah, I think it was, either wooden
13 or plastic. But they were spools.

14 BY LT [REDACTED]:

15 Q. And what -- can you estimate what size are those lines?

16 A. Probably three-quarter maybe, maybe 1 inch. I didn't pay
17 that much attention to that. But it was big lines.

18 Q. Okay. Big lines.

19 A. Because all the twine and stuff, they keep it right as you go
20 in. That's where they keep their twine, and that's really small
21 line.

22 Q. Okay. And they keep that right when you go in the line
23 locker, you said?

24 A. Um-hum. That was -- the whole thing is a line locker, the
25 whole thing.

1 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Are those -- how many spools of twine?

2 MR. FLORES: Oh, I don't know. They use a lot.

3 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. And those are -- are those on like
4 cardboard spools or plastic?

5 MR. FLORES: I think the smaller ones are on cardboard.

6 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

7 BY LT [REDACTED]:

8 Q. But the twine wasn't in that locker, right? It was the --

9 A. It's in -- everything's all in there. You go in the door and
10 there are shelves there and there's line, different size lines.

11 And then you go back over here, there's the hydraulic tank with a
12 crane up above. Or the windlass, that (indiscernible). And then

13 just forward of that, there's the hatch that goes down to the dry
14 stores. And then there's a little opening there that takes it to

15 that other part that's kind of slanted like that. That was where
16 the pipe was that I was looking at and that was all full of line.

17 Q. Okay. So you could not walk all the way back there, right?

18 A. No. Just right to where that hatch was at.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Was about as far as you could walk.

21 SA HELLER: You mentioned some shelves. Were those wooden
22 shelves or --

23 MR. FLORES: Yes. Wooden shelves.

24 BY LT [REDACTED]:

25 Q. Was there any exercise equipment in that room?

1 A. Yes, there was.

2 Q. What was that? If you remember.

3 A. I think there was a treadmill and then maybe a pedal cycle.

4 Q. Exercise bike.

5 CAPT FLAHERTY: Yeah, I -- this is David Flaherty. I recall
6 seeing an exercise bike in there.

7 MR. FLORES: Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

8 BY MR. ALTENBRUN:

9 Q. And I'm going to show Mr. Flores a photograph. It's the
10 photograph that we've introduced in these discussions before that
11 shows the vent from the dry stores with a flame coming out of it,
12 just so that the record is clear. In this photograph do you see
13 that vent that you were working on, the dryer vent?

14 A. Yeah, it's right there; that white one.

15 Q. So the witness is pointing to the white vent that's on the
16 port forward side of that deck, right?

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Near the blue tarp? All right. Thank you.

21 BY LT [REDACTED]:

22 Q. And Mr. Flores, while you were working on the boat that day,
23 was the -- you mentioned that there's some hydraulics in that
24 space. Were those hydraulics being used?

25 A. Only when the crane gets run.

1 Q. Okay. Do you recall, do they regularly run the crane while
2 they're --

3 A. Yeah, when we got to get stuff up there. Yeah, when we need
4 to get equipment up to the bow there by the skiff.

5 Q. Okay. So I understand that they were doing some welding work
6 up there and I know you weren't a part of it, but that type of
7 welding work, would they regularly use a crane to get welding
8 equipment and everything like that on the deck?

9 A. Um-hum. Yeah. That's what we do, yeah.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. The forward crane.

12 BY SA HELLER:

13 Q. And then in -- was there -- when you cleaned out this dryer
14 vent and you said you're the jack of all trades, you do it on
15 different boats, was there anything unusual about the amount of
16 lint you pulled out or was it pretty much --

17 A. Yeah. It surprised me that it was blocked because they told
18 me that their -- when they were drying clothes it wasn't working
19 that well.

20 Q. Okay. So it was fairly clogged?

21 A. It was very clogged, right.

22 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

23 Q. When you -- you went down and you turn on the dryer -- after
24 you cleaned out, you turn on the dryer and then you got flow
25 coming out --

1 A. Well, actually, I turned it on before. That way I was
2 snaking and it would push it out.

3 Q. I see. Okay. And so eventually you snaked it out and you
4 got some good air flow coming out of that vent; is that right?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. And then you went back down into the laundry room, and did
7 you turn the dryer off?

8 A. Shut the -- um-hum.

9 Q. And after you turned it off, did you stop getting flow of air
10 through that vent?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Are you aware, and you may not be -- I'm not expecting you to
13 be, but are you aware that there's a sort of a booster fan setup
14 in that system?

15 A. Uh-uh.

16 Q. No? Okay. But you're sure that when you turned the dryer
17 off air stopped?

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. You're sure of that?

20 A. Um-hum. Yes, I am sure.

21 Q. So --

22 A. That was -- those were some of the things that we were
23 looking at to show us that that was the vent for the dryer.

24 Q. Right. But if there was a booster fan, you're of the opinion
25 that it probably was unplugged or turned off or not running --

1 A. I didn't even know --

2 Q. -- because you weren't getting air out of there constantly,
3 right?

4 A. I didn't even know that it -- when I turned it on it acted
5 just like a dryer vent.

6 Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you.

7 BY CAPT FLAHERTY:

8 Q. Hi. This is David Flaherty with the NTSB. So you mentioned
9 that the ball valve for that vent was not working. Can you
10 describe what was wrong, what was happening?

11 A. Well, I -- it was just -- it looked -- see, that was my task
12 of I was -- took all the ball checks off of the other vents from
13 the fuel and whatnot, the ones that needed work on them because
14 the screens were bad or missing screens and I had to fix those.
15 And this one, air was just -- once I found out it was a dryer
16 vent, I said, well, we don't need a check ball on a dryer vent
17 because we put flappers on all of them in the past, you know. And
18 that's what was my goal, to put a flapper on it. And I checked
19 with my supervisor and he goes, yeah, that's what we do. I said,
20 okay.

21 So they were making one Thursday, and I didn't know they had
22 it done by the weekend. Apparently they tacked it on there.
23 Because I knew that they tacked it on there because I talked to
24 the lead man after we got back. They let us come back and then I
25 looked at it. And after I had talked to him, I looked at it and I

1 saw that it was on there. I go, oh, I lied to that guy, you know.

2 Q. Okay. And the material that you're taking out, the lint and
3 stuff, was it dry, was it wet --

4 A. It was dry.

5 Q. -- moist?

6 A. It was dry.

7 Q. It was dry? Okay. So there was no moisture. And if I
8 remember correctly, there are actually -- excuse me -- two dryers
9 down in the dry store area. Am I correct?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Did you turn them both -- did you turn them both on and off?

12 A. No, just one of them.

13 Q. Oh, and which one was that?

14 A. The lower one.

15 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you.

16 BY MR. ALTENBRUN:

17 Q. And just to be clear, you don't know whether there was any
18 malfunction with the stop check valve; is that correct?

19 A. No. Not -- with the ball check, you're saying?

20 Q. Right.

21 A. It might -- the ball was loose, so it might've not been
22 anything wrong with it, it just looked horrible.

23 Q. You didn't test it, you just replaced it? You cut it off.

24 A. Yeah, I just cut it off. And then I looked inside and it was
25 just rust and stuff inside there.

1 Q. Okay. Thank you.

2 A. Because in my mind looking at that, if there's lint, if
3 that's a dryer vent, all that lint's going to get caught up in
4 there anyway, so it wouldn't have worked.

5 Q. It didn't make sense to have a ball check on?

6 A. No. It didn't make sense to have that check ball there.

7 Q. Okay.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Anything else, gentlemen?

9 BY CWO [REDACTED]

10 Q. Was that a hard pipe?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Three inch.

14 Q. Three inch. And it went from that 03 deck all the way
15 through the deck of the line locker?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Okay. And do you know if it was disconnected anywhere below
18 that?

19 A. Well, apparently, from what I was told, it was a -- used to
20 be a tank there. So it was a vent for that tank. So when the
21 tank got removed, they piped in the dryer to it.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But I didn't find that out till afterwards.

24 BY SA HELLER:

25 Q. Did you look actually behind the dryer? Does it connect

1 directly into a hard pipe or is there a flexible --

2 A. It looked like it went into a box, a little box there, and
3 then it went into the bulkhead.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But I -- it was hard to see.

6 Q. Okay.

7 BY CAPT FLAHERTY:

8 Q. And David Flaherty again. The connection between the hard
9 pipe and the dryer, how was that made?

10 A. I really don't know because I couldn't see back there. I
11 just saw that there was this box there and then it went into the
12 bulkhead.

13 Q. Okay. Thank you.

14 A. But there was a regular vent, dryer vent hose hooking up to
15 the box.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Like one of those metal, flexible kind
17 of thing?

18 MR. FLORES: I think it was like the white type, the little
19 vinyl type.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Any further questions? Hearing none, we
22 will conclude the interview. The time is 0941 local.

23 (Whereupon, at 9:41 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ABOARD *KODIAK ENTERPRISE*
NEAR TACOMA, WASHINGTON
ON APRIL 10, 2023
Interview of Sam Flores

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM026

PLACE: Tacoma, Washington

DATE: April 25, 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.

9

Kay
Tran