

1. On May 3, at approximately 8:05PM, a fire was reported on board the Steamboat Natchez. The Natchez was docked at 7300 Jourdan Road, New Orleans, LA. The Natchez is owned by the New Orleans Steamboat Company and provides cruises along the Mississippi River. The New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD) responded and extinguished the fire.
2. The fire resulted in major fire damage to the generator / electrical room located in the aft section of the first-floor deck. The dollar amount of the loss can be obtained from owners and insurance companies. No injuries were reported.
3. On May 6, 2022, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) requested assistance from ATF Special Agent / Certified Fire Investigators in determining the origin and cause of the fire. On May 9, 2022, a fire scene examination was conducted. The fire scene investigative team consisted of the members from ATF, USCG and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Additionally, numerous private fire investigators were present. The following investigators participated in the fire scene examination:

Name	Agency
Henry Meyer	ATF SA/CFI
Devin O'Brien	ATF SA/CFI
Sean Trimber	ATF SA/CFI
[REDACTED]	USCG Lt
David Flaherty	NTSB Investigator

4. The fire scene examination was conducted under the authority of the USCG and with the consent of the representatives of the New Orleans Steamboat Company.
5. A systematic fire scene examination of this vessel was initiated beginning on the exterior of the vessel and working inward towards the generator room. This systematic examination utilized the Scientific Method as its foundation for analysis, testing, and conclusion. The exterior examination of this structure started with the dock side elevation and continued around the perimeter of the vessel.
6. All fire related damage was limited to the generator / electrical room (and surroundings) which was confirmed with the viewing of open-source photographs and video. The fire produced heat and gases which engulfed the room and left soot deposits throughout the room with a line of demarcation positioned approximately three (3) feet from the floor. The generator room contained a Cummins diesel motor with an attached generator positioned midship in the room. A newly installed Caterpillar diesel motor and attached generator was positioned on the starboard side in the room. All (vessel) electrical power to the generator room was off during the time of the fire. An electrical cord was located strung throughout the room which was powered from a source outside the generator room and terminated at a water pump in the aft section in the lower deck. A additional electrical conductor was located and powered from a source outside the generator room to supply

electricity to a set of lights configured in a daisy chain circuit. A metal frame base that was formerly the Electrical Panel was positioned on the floor on the port side of the room. A large set of voltage regulators (confirm name) hung from the ceiling positioned just above the metal base plates on the port side of the room.

7. Investigators examined pre fire photographs and observed cardboard boxes, wooden shelves, and other combustible materials positioned in the corner on the port side and forward wall. Additionally cardboard boxes and combustible materials were stored on shelves on the aft wall of the room on the port side just below the exterior vent.
8. Investigators examined pre fire photographs and observed a contractor using a torch type device producing extreme heat and flames (torchworks) underneath the voltage regulators in the forward port side area of the room. This contractor was working approximately twenty-four (24) inches away from the aforementioned combustible materials. Investigators were advised that the contractor positioned a metal plate between the torchworks and the centerline diesel engine but did not shield or protect the combustible materials positioned along the forward and starboard walls.
9. Investigators observed a distinctive ‘V-shaped’ fire pattern located on the forward wall near where the subject was using the torch and near the stored combustible materials. Clean burn patterns were also observed on the wall above the identified patterns as well as below the vent along the port wall. Investigators determined that the clean burn patterns are consistent with the type and size of available fuels that ignited in close proximity. The fire patterns are consistent with a fire originating near the floor along the forward wall adjacent to where the contractor was performing torchworks and the available fuel package.
10. Investigators are fully aware that the area of lowest and greatest damage is often not the area of fire origin. However, fire generally develops in and up and out fashion. The small fire located along the forward wall spread quickly. Once the fire initiated below and adjacent to combustible materials - it spread upward between the port and forward walls. Additionally, the open rear wall design of the room enabled cool air to entrain and feed the fire additional oxygen. Flames, heat and hot gases exited the generator room through the forward and port side vents.
11. Weather was eliminated as a cause of this fire pursuant to data obtained from Weather Underground. Before and at the time of the fire no adverse weather conditions were noted that would contribute to the cause of the fire.
12. No evidence of smoking materials was located inside the room.
13. An accidental electrical event or appliance malfunction was considered as a cause of the fire and could not be ruled out. The electrical conductor providing power to the daisy chain circuit was located in the area of origin.
14. An intentional fire was considered and could not be ruled out.

15. An ignition source was not recovered. However, based upon witness interviews, analysis of fire patterns and considering fire dynamics, the presence of an ignition source can be inferred.