

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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FIRE ABOARD THE F/V NOBSKA *

NEAR CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS * Accident No.: DCA21FM027

ON APRIL 30, 2021 *

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Interview of: WILLIAM HARVEY, Deck Hand
Nobska

Via Telephone

APPEARANCES:

LTJG [REDACTED], Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard

DAVID FLAHERTY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 LTJG [REDACTED]: All right. So I'm Lieutenant Junior Grade,
3 [REDACTED]. Last name is spelled [REDACTED]. And I am here
4 with one of the crew members of the -- off the *Nobska*. If you
5 would just --

6 MR. HARVEY: William Harvey.

7 LTJG [REDACTED] And spell your name, please?

8 MR. HARVEY: W-I-L-L-I-A-M, H-A-R-V-E-Y.

9 LTJG [REDACTED]: And did you have a driver's license on you?

10 MR. HARVEY: It's on the boat, melted.

11 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay.

12 MR. HARVEY: Everything's on the boat, melted.

13 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

14 MR. HARVEY: -- everything --

15 LTJG [REDACTED] So can you --

16 MR. FLAHERTY: Oh, hey. You want to introduce me, too.

17 LTJG [REDACTED] Yep, just -- I was just going to try and get
18 his info real quick, and then I'll --

19 MR. FLAHERTY: Oh, sorry.

20 LTJG [REDACTED] Sorry. What's your phone number?

21 MR. HARVEY: My phone number is -- oh, jeez. Probably --
22 well, to get a hold of me right now would be best through my
23 girlfriend, which would be [REDACTED].

24 LTJG [REDACTED]: And what's your address?

25 Mr. HARVEY: It is [REDACTED].

1 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. And then David, if you want to introduce
2 yourself?

3 MR. FLAHERTY: Sure. Sir, I'm David Flaherty. I'm an
4 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. My
5 last name is spelled F-L-A-H-E-R-T-Y.

6 INTERVIEW OF WILLIAM HARVEY

7 BY LTJG [REDACTED]:

8 Q. And what was your position on the vessel?

9 A. Deck Hand.

10 Q. Deck Hand? Okay. And then I'll just have you kind of just,
11 kind of walk us through, like, getting underway, kind of what
12 happened, up through, like, getting picked up by the Coast Guard.

13 A. All right. Like, from the start, or --

14 Q. Right from the start, yeah.

15 A. -- throwing the lines? Yeah, we all come down, cutting
16 together. We actually ended up having a couple extra days off
17 because of the Freon. They had to do something with the Freon.
18 So we were supposed to leave Friday, but we ended up leaving
19 Monday, because they had to put the Freon, and just like a normal
20 trip, we all got ready. And I think we were out of here by, I
21 don't know, 2:00; 1, 2:00.

22 I think it was we caught the 1:00 bridge opening, and off we
23 went. And we started fishing, and I don't know, I think we were
24 three -- maybe three days into it, something like that. Then we
25 went to -- we started hauling back, we -- I was actually towing.

1 And I went down and got Brian up, because I think we got into some
2 gear or something. We slowed down, I had to go get the skipper
3 up, and we had to haul back. And we started hauling back, and all
4 the guys were down in the -- thank God we were in the engine room,
5 because then we saw -- we wouldn't have put out the first time.
6 We wouldn't have got it out the first time if we all wouldn't have
7 been down there. But our hydraulic hose blew right over the
8 exhaust, and ignited instantly. And we -- like I said, we put the
9 fire out, cleaned everything up. I mean, I think we spent four
10 hours down in the engine room cleaning.

11 And then we finally, after we got everything cleaned up, we
12 went up and started dealing with the fish on deck, and then, next
13 thing you know, Brian yelled down, someone check the engine room.
14 Within 15 seconds, the flames were so bad that there was no going
15 back in the wheelhouse whatsoever. Then, the whole wheelhouse was
16 engulfed, and we kept -- then we started -- at the point we
17 realized it was time to start thinking about survival here.

18 So we started -- I ran up, grabbed the EPIRB. The other guys
19 started working on getting the life raft to the back, and then I
20 knew we had to get the survival suits, so that was the main thing.
21 I went in and grabbed a couple survival suits, but the smoke was
22 so bad, I was throwing up. I could barely breathe, I had to go.

23 So then I went and grabbed Miguel and said, yeah, you got to
24 watch me, because I got to go get three more of these things.
25 Then I ran in, grabbed the rest of the survival suits, and then we

1 made our way to the stern, and pretty much all huddled back there.
2 Brian kept us all together. We waited for help.

3 Then the helicopter got there. I was the first one to jump,
4 and I jumped in, swam out. They came and grabbed me. Then I
5 think Miguel came up next. Then Ryan, then John, and then Brian
6 last. And they brought us in.

7 Q. Okay. So how long have you been with the company?

8 A. I've only been working here -- I guess my -- it's only my
9 third trip. Third trip with Blue Harvest, but I've been fishing
10 since I was 18. I worked for Shaftmasters for 20 years. I ran
11 the *Amy Michele* for 10 years. Yeah, I've been on the water a long
12 --

13 Q. Okay. So how long have you been -- how long would that be?

14 A. I've been fishing since I was 18. So I've been fishing 20-
15 something years.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Twenty-two years, 23 years.

18 Q. So -- and how long have you been doing this type of fishing?

19 A. Ground fishing? Like I said, this is only my third trip on
20 the *Nobska*.

21 Q. Okay. So before this, you did a different type of fishing?

22 A. Yeah, mainly lobster.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I've lobstered most of the way. I was actually -- I was
25 running the *Angela Michelle* for the past two years.

1 Q. So what type of training, education have you had doing
2 drills or just with the vessel itself?

3 A. Over the year -- I mean, over the years, I've been through
4 many, many courses. CPR courses -- I've done all the safety
5 training. Shaft -- I mean, we -- probably twice a year we'd go to
6 some type of survival or boat-sinking, whatever type of stuff.
7 But we'd at least do CPR once a year for sure.

8 Q. Okay. Do you have a Merchant-Mariner credential?

9 A. I have my Operator's Permit.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But that -- like I said, I'd show it to you, but that melted,
12 too, so --

13 Q. Okay. So just kind of describe what a normal work day is for
14 you.

15 A. Well, being the Deck Hand was -- just getting the fish put
16 away, getting up, hauling back. Like I said, got everything,
17 getting it down in the fish hole, put away, and pretty much,
18 you're hauling back again, so, dragging. You haul back anywhere
19 from every five to six hours.

20 Q. Okay. How would you say the vessel was operating?

21 A. Great. It was great. That's why it's so devastating. I
22 mean, it's one of the best boats I've ever been on.

23 Q. Okay. And have there -- there had never been any other
24 issues?

25 A. No. No, never. Never been any other issues. Brian's like a

1 father to me --

2 Q. So what was the weather like that day?

3 A. It was -- I mean, I bet it was probably blowing, I don't
4 know, 25, if I was to guess; 20 to 25. It was probably a six to
5 eight-foot swell. A pretty clear day, sunny. It was -- I don't
6 know, temperature-wise, pretty warm. It was a decent day, thank
7 God.

8 Q. Did you feel like the weather conditions were favorable?

9 A. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, for sure.

10 Q. And how did you come to that conclusion?

11 A. I mean it's just -- like I said, I've been out there for
12 years and years. I know when it's -- you're capable of working
13 and when people are in danger.

14 Q. Okay. Do you work in accordance with any sort of
15 professional standards or company policy?

16 A. Yeah, I don't know. Can you rephrase it? I don't --

17 Q. Do you -- like, is there any sort of like regulations or
18 policies that you have to operate by, or that you work --

19 A. Yeah, I mean -- always going to be on a clean ship. I don't
20 do the fucking junk -- excuse my language, but I work on clean
21 boats. I know there's a lot of boats down here that, not so much,
22 but I won't work on nothing but a well-run operation. We've done
23 this long enough to know what's safe and what's not.

24 Q. Okay. So would you say the company's commitment to safety is
25 good?

1 A. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I'd have to say. I mean, I
2 think there was a safety guide down on the boat right before we
3 left. We had a guy come down. He went through -- pretty sure he
4 went through every -- yeah, he did a safety check or whatever they
5 do the day that we left.

6 Q. Okay. Was there any sort of drugs or alcohol on the trip?

7 A. Nope. Nope. Like I said, I mean, we -- I work on tight
8 ships.

9 Q. Were you familiar with the equipment on the vessel?

10 A. Yep. Yep.

11 Q. And did you do any -- ever do any sort of maintenance on the
12 vessel?

13 A. Yeah. I mean, we always do upkeep. Always on the ride out,
14 greasing everything, and always checking all our EPIRBs, checking
15 survival suits, checking -- we always do a safety check on fire
16 extinguishers, pretty much on the way out, we'll -- we do a pretty
17 thorough run-through, make sure everything's up to scuff.

18 Q. Okay. So did you inspect all the equipment and stuff that
19 morning?

20 A. Yep. Every morning. Every time when we get up, we do a
21 little. You just always check around; it's always good to just
22 take a peek at everything.

23 Q. And did you note any sort of issues?

24 A. No. No.

25 Q. So what was the plan for that day?

1 A. Just a normal day; just a normal tow -- towing -- trying to
2 get our fish and come home.

3 Q. So you said that you left New Bedford Monday, sometime
4 between 1:00 and 2:00 in the afternoon?

5 A. Yep.

6 Q. How long were you planning to be out for?

7 A. We've been doing nine, ten-day trips, so I'm assuming
8 somewhere in there, probably ten days.

9 Q. And you were fishing for ground fish? Is that what you're
10 saying?

11 A. Yep, ground fishing. Yep, dragging.

12 Q. And when did you arrive to start fishing?

13 A. It would be -- we probably started towing Tuesday morning at
14 5:00, 6:00 in the morning.

15 Q. Okay. And about how many sets do you --

16 A. We do probably -- like I said, six -- about every five to six
17 hours we haul back, so we were probably doing -- what'd that make
18 in a day? I don't know, five -- four to five haul backs a day?

19 Q. And then about how long does it take to set the gear?

20 A. Set the gear? Probably 20 minutes.

21 Q. And then how long would it take to haul back the gear?

22 A. Oh, boy; half an hour?

23 Q. And was there anything to indicate that something was wrong?

24 Like --

25 A. No. I mean, once the -- we knew that once the hydraulic hose

1 burst, but -- I mean, like I said, everything was running tip-top.

2 Q. So the first indication was when the hydraulic --

3 A. -- when the hydraulic hose let loose, yep. Yeah. Yeah, I
4 just think it's a piss-poor design. There's no way they should
5 have hydraulic hoses running over exhaust pipes.

6 Q. So about what time did the fire start?

7 A. I'm trying to -- I'm guessing probably mid-day, maybe 11:00?
8 Maybe 11:00 in the morning?

9 Q. And where exactly was the fire located in?

10 A. In the engine room, right above the main engine. Like I
11 said, that hose blowing, it just literally dumped hydraulic fluid
12 all over the exhaust.

13 Q. So where did it blow at?

14 A. It blew just maybe two feet up above the engine room ceiling.
15 There's like a -- pretty much everything run up through the center
16 of the bulb and the hydraulic hose blew just -- like I said,
17 probably two feet above the engine room ceiling.

18 Q. And it was inside of the trunk?

19 A. Yep, yep, yep. Inside where all the stacks and everything --
20 pretty much everything run up through the center of it.

21 Q. And what were the actions that you took?

22 A. Like I said, the first thing I went and grabbed was the
23 EPIRB. All the other boys worked on the --

24 Q. For that first fire, what --

25 A. Oh. Oh, yeah. Nope, just extinguishers. We grabbed

1 extinguishers, put the fire out, and then, like I said, we spent
2 four hours down in the engine room cleaning.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. We cleaned it right, spotless. Took all of the -- on the
5 exhaust they had those heat covers and stuff.

6 Q. Mm-hmm.

7 A. We ripped all them off. We had it stripped right down.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- I totally -- and I don't know where the -- like I said,
10 it's not -- he didn't even start the haul back engine or anything,
11 when it went. I don't know what ignited, but --

12 Q. And then did you fix the hose?

13 A. Yep. Yep. We all pulled the hose out, put a new hose --
14 yeah. Well, we used -- I think we just used a different line. We
15 used one of our -- one of the outrigger lines. But yeah, yeah, we
16 were all -- all of us were working on that, replaced the line, put
17 the new one in.

18 Q. And what exactly was that -- the line that burst for?

19 A. It was hydraulic -- it must have been for one of the main
20 wenches, I'm assuming, because -- yeah. Yeah. Probably from the
21 main wench if I was to -- main haul-back wenches.

22 Q. Okay. What other equipment runs on the --

23 A. Pretty much on the haul back motor, all your hydraulic
24 systems run on that. I think even -- I think your net reels,
25 yeah. Pretty much all the -- just all the hydraulic systems run

1 on the haul back motor.

2 Q. Okay. And that's separate from the main engine?

3 A. Yep.

4 Q. And it's in the engine room?

5 A. Yep. And it's on the starboard side. The two generators
6 were on the port side.

7 Q. So after you got everything cleaned up, you fixed the hose;
8 about how much time before the next time there was an issue?

9 A. Probably -- like I said, we were down cleaning probably four,
10 four and a half hours, if I was to guess.

11 Q. Okay. And then where were you when the second fire started?

12 A. I was on the cutting machine.

13 Q. And how did you know this, the second fire started?

14 A. Brian yelled, check the engine room.

15 Q. And what did you see after the --

16 A. Well, we run around the corner. Like I said, we ran down to
17 go check it and the flames were already rolling up about of the
18 engine room. They were rolling right up out of the stairs. They
19 looked up in the wheelhouse and the wheelhouse was completely
20 engulfed in smoke. Within 30 seconds, the fire was out of
21 control.

22 Q. Okay. Did you guys attempt to extinguish it?

23 A. Yep, yeah. We dumped a full fire extinguisher at it and it
24 didn't even phase it. It didn't even slow it down at all.

25 Q. What other actions did you take?

1 A. Well, like I said, after we dumped a whole fire extinguisher
2 on it, it was -- and I know there was no putting it out. It was
3 -- we went right into survival mode, getting what we needed;
4 survival suits, EPIRBs, and the life raft.

5 Q. Okay. What color was the smoke and flames?

6 A. Black.

7 Q. For both?

8 A. Well, the flames were red, of course, but the smoke was dark,
9 dark black.

10 Q. For the first fire, same?

11 A. Yeah, yeah. Yep.

12 Q. Okay. So what type of materials would you find in that
13 engine room? Like, are -- is it all steel, wood?

14 A. Mostly steel. Mostly steel everything, yeah; steel, maybe
15 some plastic, a few rubber gaskets, but mainly steel -- 90 percent
16 steel.

17 Q. Do you know what was running when the first fire started for,
18 like, machinery?

19 A. The main engine and the wench engine and the generator.

20 Q. And what about for the second?

21 A. Just the generator and the main engine.

22 Q. Have you ever done any sort of fire drills with the crew?

23 A. Yeah. Yep, every trip.

24 Q. Did -- had you done one for this trip?

25 A. We hadn't done it yet. We hadn't done one yet. But we

1 usually do it half -- during the course of the trip.

2 Q. Okay. And do you happen to know how much fuel was onboard?

3 A. I don't know. I don't have -- I mean, she had to be pretty
4 -- I don't know, three days into the trip, I'm assuming. We were
5 probably three-quarters full.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I don't know what she holds for gallons or anything like
8 that.

9 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. David, did you have any other questions?

10 MR. FLAHERTY: Yes, thank you.

11 BY MR. FLAHERTY:

12 Q. Sir, how you doing?

13 A. How we doing?

14 Q. Doing good, thank you. Hey, who was the safety guide that
15 went into the vessel prior to its departure?

16 A. I don't know his name. I don't --

17 Q. Was he an employee of the company, or some other
18 organization?

19 A. I'm thinking some other organization but don't quote me on
20 that. I'm not sure if it was a company man or not, but I know he
21 was down there checking our survival suits and EPIRBs and -- what
22 else did he have me grab? Checked our flares, and he checked --
23 checked all that stuff.

24 Q. Okay. What do you mean that the exhaust or the hydraulic
25 lines went over the exhaust pipes?

1 A. I mean, everything runs -- everything ran right up through,
2 -- there's like, this main shaft where everything run up through
3 it; all the exhaust pipes, every -- all the hydraulic hoses. Like
4 I said, I think it's a -- not a very good design, that many --

5 Q. Do you know if that design had caused similar problems?

6 A. Yeah, well, the -- I've got -- John, who -- he's been through
7 -- this is the second time, and it's the same exact thing happened
8 to him the time before. A hydraulic hose blew, fell on the
9 exhaust, I guess it's the same scenario happened to him about
10 three years ago, so --

11 Q. On the same boat?

12 A. Nope, a different boat. I'm not sure exactly, even, the name
13 of the boat, but I know this was his second encounter, and he said
14 it was basically the same exact thing.

15 Q. Same company?

16 A. Again, don't -- I'm not positive on that.

17 Q. Okay. So the -- so after the first fire, you fixed the hose
18 by taking an existing line from a different part of the hydraulic
19 system, correct?

20 A. Yep.

21 Q. All right.

22 A. Yeah. We just -- we stole a hose off of one of the
23 outriggers.

24 Q. All right. And then how did you ensure that it was operating
25 properly? What did you guys do?

1 A. Just -- there was no leaks. It was -- replaced the hose. It
2 was -- we just switched hoses. The other -- we had another hose,
3 it's just the -- adapters weren't correct.

4 That's why we ended up having to steal one off of the
5 outriggers, just because we knew we weren't going to be -- the
6 outriggers stay right down until you get into, and we were just
7 going to switch it back when we got in -- close to the harbor to
8 get the outriggers up.

9 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay. All right. Yeah, that's all the
10 questions I have. Thank you very much, sir.

11 MR. HARVEY: No problem. Thank you.

12 LTJG [REDACTED]: All right. Thank you.

13 (Whereupon, 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 F/V NOBSKA
NEAR CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS
ON APRIL 30, 2021
Interview of William Harvey

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA21FM027

PLACE: Via Telephone

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.



Transcriber