



U.S. COAST GUARD WITNESS / INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT FORM

(Please Print Clearly)

Witness Name:	LT [REDACTED]	Employer Name:	USCG
Street Address:	[REDACTED]	Employer Address:	[REDACTED]
City/State/Zip:	[REDACTED]	City/State/Zip:	[REDACTED]
Phone No:	[REDACTED]	Phone No:	[REDACTED]
Position:	MSD Supervisor	License/Doc. #	N/A

I, the undersigned, make the following statement voluntarily, without threat, duress or promise of reward:

On 09 November 2021 at approximately 1100 local time, I arrived on-scene in Aurora, Indiana to respond to a report of a towing vessel fire aboard Florida Marine Transporters vessel Capt. Kirby Dupuis (ON 1229999). There were multiple agencies already on-scene including: Rising Sun Fire Department, Ohio County, IN EMS, Lawrenceburg, IN Fire Department, Dearborn County Water Rescue, Covington, KY Fire Department, and Cincinnati Fire Department. The vessel was still producing smoke from the engine room and firefighters from the Cincinnati Fire Department were actively deploying water to extinguish remaining fire. Following approximately 1.5 hours of continued work, the fire was completely out and overhauling began to ensure all embers within the wooden framing of the engine rooms interior were extinguished. At about 1300, overhauling was complete and the crew began to shift food stores to another FMT vessel. With the assistance of Assistant Fire Chief Greg Salmons of Covington Fire Department, we began taking photographs of the engine room and sought to determine a cause for the fire. The fire appeared to have started around the port main diesel engine and worked its way to the main deck where a large pile of oil filters were being stored and then spread to port generator area. Much of the engine room both below and on the main deck outside of these areas was left unaffected by the fire. A good portion of the electrical conduit in and around the three areas was severely impacted as were switches and panels associated with the equipment. Significant repairs will need to be made to the vessel.

Following the walk around of the engine room, Assistant Chief Salmons and I conducted interviews with the vessel crew to determine their course of action in response to the fire. A summary timeline of the crew's actions is as follows:

On the morning of 09 November 2021 (approximately 0705) deck hand Eric Levin and Master Clayton Hunt are on the bridge of the Capt. Kirby Dupuis when the captain notices a flash on the camera showing the engine room. Immediately following the flash the smoke alarm sounds and the captain peers back at the screen to see a large fire in the engine room. At this point, the captain sounds the general alarm and instructs Eric Levin to notify all crew members of the fire and to begin fire protocol. At this time, the duty engineer for the vessel, Mr. Richard Washington is able to view the fire from a window facing aft from an office adjacent to his state room on the main deck. It is discovered that the fire is in the vicinity of the port engine. Mr. Washington grabs a portable extinguisher and attempts to enter the space to fight the fire from the main passageway entrance to the engine room, but discovers too much smoke and proceeds to the vessel exterior to attempt to fight the fire from the outside. There is an attempt to use the fire hose from the port side of the vessel, but they are unable to start the fire pump. At this point, Mr. Washington radios the bridge to request permission to deploy one of the two fixed firefighting banks. Following the securing of the space, authorization to deploy one bank is granted and Mr. Washington does so. Approximately ten minutes elapse and Mr. Washington notices that there is still fire on the starboard side of the engine room in the vicinity of where there was a stack of oil filter boxes prior to the fire. Mr. Washington states in his interview that the fire most likely traveled from the port engine to these boxes due to the port blower remaining on during the initial stages of the fire. Noticing the blower is still on, Mr. Washington secures the blower and then proceeds to the starboard side door of the engine room where he and Mr. Levin begin an attempt to extinguish the remaining fire with multiple (8-9) portable fire extinguishers. Unsuccessful in their attempt, Mr. Washington and Mr. Levin notice that the fire has started back up on the port side and decide to secure the space again and again request permission from the bridge to deploy the second of the two fixed firefighting banks. This is completed and at this point Mr. Washington

stated that he activated the emergency fuel shut offs.

While the firefighting effort was taking place, personnel on the bridge Mr. Hunt and pilot Mr. Travis Roberts were making required company notifications and communicating with the Coast Guard. It was explained that the starboard engine was the first to shut down, followed by the port engine, and finally the generators. The vessel and tow was able to be safely navigated to the right descending bank (Indiana side) of the river without any break in the tow or structural damage to any of the barges or tug.

Multiple other towing vessels arrived to assist with firefighting efforts and controlling of the Capt. Kirby Dupuis' tow. Following the deployment of the second fixed firefighting bank, the vessel Kentucky (ON1219823) commenced cooling the outside of the engine room and stacks with their fire monitors/hoses. The fire was slowly overhauled to completion at approximately 1300 with the assistance of multiple fire departments.

The following day (10 November 2021) I returned to the vessel for further investigation of the main engine room with CWO [REDACTED]. The vessel's port captain was working on getting power to the bridge to provide investigators with the video feed from the engine room at the time of the fire. During a walk around of the engine room, it was discovered that the fixed firefighting bottles gauges still showed that they were in the green and charged. The vessel's port captain was provided with this information and instructed to ensure that a fire tech was to come out and provide an assessment as to whether the system actually deployed. Associated paperwork with the vessel to include vessel logs and appropriate TSMS documents related to main space fire were requested.

The vessel was allowed to travel in tow to the company's shipyard in Louisiana due to the cost of remaining at another company's dock. The engine space will not be altered and left for NTSB investigators to view. Following the visit, the vessel port captain was able to access the video of the engine fire. The video shows that at 0708 on 09 November 2021, oil begins to spray inboard from the port engine in the vicinity of what appears to be an oil fill. A small flame appears atop the engine and then that flame turns into an approximately ten foot by four foot torch blowing

inward until the conclusion of the video, which lasts approximately one minute. Further investigation into the cause of the oil leak will need to be conducted.

I have read my statement as documented above (and, if applicable, on continuation pages), and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true and correct.


SIGNATURE

19 November 2021
DATE



U.S. COAST GUARD WITNESS / INVESTIGATOR
STATEMENT FORM CONTINUATION PAGE

(Please Print Clearly)

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

SIGNATURE

DATE