



U.S. COAST GUARD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Matter Under Investigation: Fire on the Small Passenger Vessel QUALIFIER 105 in Northern Enterprises Boatyard in Homer, AK, on 19 January 2023

Interview Of: Phillip Dovich, Marine Chemist

Date/Time: 23JAN2024 / 1112

Location: Telephonically at [REDACTED]

Interviewed By: LCDR [REDACTED]

Others Present: None

Mr. Dovich stated that as a marine chemist of 36 years, he was hired by the legal representative of welder Ken Willis to gas-free the QUALIFIER 105 so a fire investigator could safely access the interior of the vessel for his investigation as well as to assess the area where the hot work was being conducted to see if there was any evidence that the hot work may have ignited the fire that destroyed the vessel.

After he gas-freed the vessel, he proceeded into the bilge where the hot work was occurring to look for any signs that it started the fire. He could not identify any evidence in the bilge that the fire had started from the hot work. He had shipyard workers drill into some of the hollow structural members in the bilge and used his gas detection equipment to determine whether any combustion byproducts had been trapped in them and was not able to detect any trapped byproducts indicative of the fire starting in the hot work area.

Mr. Dovich also stated that he overheard the fire investigator, Tom last name unknown, stating that there was speculation that the grounding strap from the welding machine somehow ignited the electrical wiring inside the vessel. Mr. Dovich stated that since there was an 80% full diesel tank only 6 to 8 feet from the grounding strap, he would have expected the vapors in the diesel tank to ignite if the grounding strap had overheated to that degree. When asked if hot work occurring so close to a full diesel tank was a concern, Mr. Dovich replied that the standard is hot work can occur no closer than 12 inches to an adjacent tank that is not gas-freed, so the approximately 8 foot distance from the full tank was acceptable per OSHA regulations.

Mr. Dovich further stated that while he was onboard the vessel, the fire investigator found melted plastic behind a breaker panel that was indicative of shorting or overheating.

Mr. Dovich summarized his findings that in his expert opinion, the hot work on the QUALIFIER 105 was not the cause of the fire. When asked if he had produced any formal summary or report, he stated he had provided a report to Mr. Willis' attorney with his findings.

Name/Signature of Investigator LCDR [REDACTED]

Date 23 January 2024