

Casualties: NTSB cites poor communication, erratic steering in Sabine Pass collision

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Capt. Cooper prepares to get underway from Southport, N.C., as the sun comes up on a clear morning.

Photo by Jeff Norris



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BY NICK KEPPLER



Signals



The Port of Tacoma is one of four West Coast port operators working to fully eliminate shipping-related emissions.

Port of Seattle photos

Northwest Ports aim to eliminate shipping-related emissions by 2050

By Guthrie Scrimgeour

Port operators in Seattle, Tacoma and Vancouver, British Columbia, have set a goal to eliminate shipping-related emissions throughout the broader Georgia Basin-Puget Sound waterway by 2050.

The effort involves the Port of Seattle, Port of Tacoma, Northwest Seaport Alliance, and the Port of Vancouver. The governing bodies of these port organizations in April

formally approved the Northwest Ports Clean Air Strategy 2020, which builds on an earlier clean air plan enacted in 2008.

The updated document calls on these ports to voluntarily reduce air and greenhouse gas emissions in support of the 2050 emissions goal. More detailed port-specific plans to meet that goal will be released in the future, and progress will be charted

along the way.

“Ports are a place where a lot of these emissions happen,” said Steve Nicholas, the senior project manager of air quality and sustainable practices at the Port of Tacoma and the Northwest Seaport Alliance. “A lot of big ships are coming into these ports and we’re using heavy equipment that has been historically diesel-operated. We happen to be an

epicenter of emissions.”

Ports, not unlike the ships that call on them, can be a major source of greenhouse gases. Areas targeted for emissions reductions include oceangoing ships, drayage trucks, cargo-handling equipment, railroad connections, harbor support vessels and port facilities themselves.

According to a 2016 report from the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Office of Transportation Air Quality, “port-related diesel-powered vehicles, equipment, and ships produce significant [greenhouse gas] emissions that contribute to climate change.”

Fallout from these emissions most severely affect people who live close to port facilities. These residents “can be exposed to air pollution from diesel engines at ports and be at risk of developing asthma, heart disease, and other health problems.”

Data show these impacts disproportionately affect poor and minority communities, which are more likely to live in areas of high pollution, according to the Northwest Ports

Clean Air Strategy 2020 plan.

“We recognize that there are certain populations that have borne disproportionate impacts from air pollution, and we recognize that it is very important to eliminate port sources of emissions,” said Alex Adams, interim director of maritime environment & sustainability at the Port of Seattle.

All told, emissions figures from the shipping industry are trending in the wrong direction. According to the International Maritime Organization, greenhouse gas emissions from shipping increased 10 percent between 2012 and 2018. They are projected to increase by another 50 percent by 2050 if no additional actions are taken.

“We need to be moving towards zero climate pollution and yet international shipping is projected to actually increase its emissions unless we do something really different,” Nicholas said.

Efforts to cut port-related emissions in these four ports began with adoption of the first clean air strategy

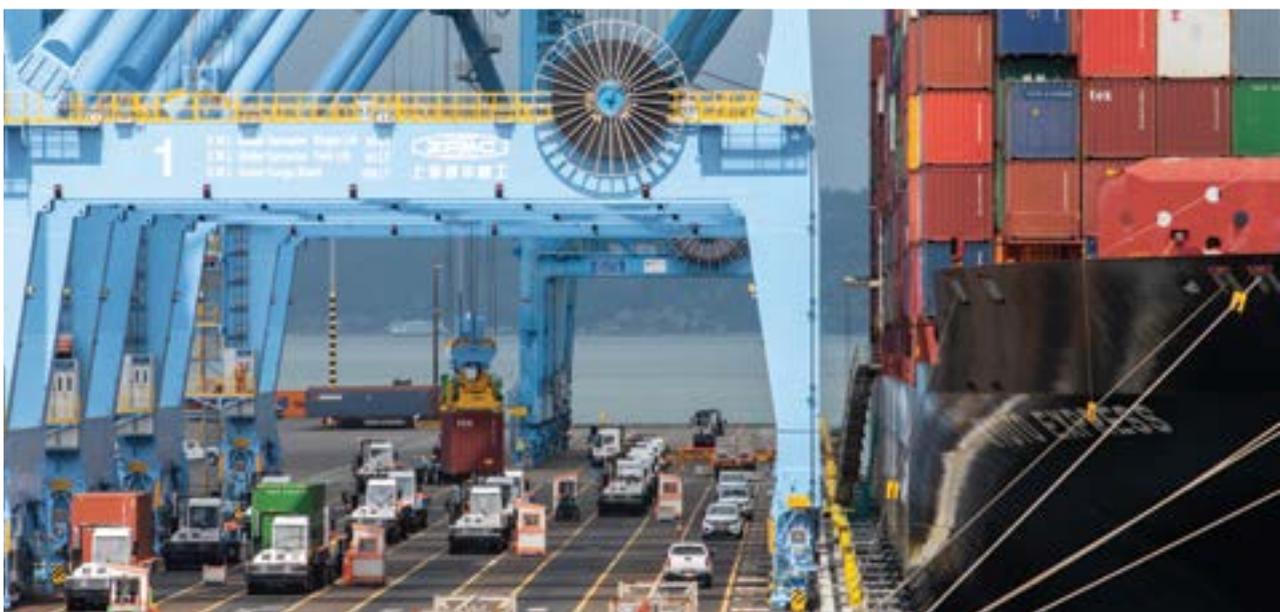
“We recognize that there are certain populations that have borne disproportionate impacts from air pollution, and we recognize that it is very important to eliminate port sources of emissions.”

– Alex Adams, Interim Director,
Maritime Environment
& Sustainability
Port of Seattle

in 2008. At the Port of Seattle, one of the first steps toward implementing this plan was introducing two shore-power connections at their cruise terminal in 2009. Cruise ships can connect into the electrical grid rather than running generators.

The electric supply around Seattle incorporates renewable energy, help-

Trucks and other cargo handling vehicles have been identified as a key source of port emissions.



ing to reduce the cruise ships' emissions while docked in the harbor. The port is in the process of installing shore power at its third cruise terminal.

"We see the provision of shore power as the biggest opportunity within our control at our port to reduce emissions from ocean-going

diesel emissions in their truck fleet, instituting a rule that disallows older, less environmentally friendly trucks from operating in its port. This regulation has seen impacts already, reducing the pollution from the diesel truck fleet by about 9 percent.

"Obviously, there's still lots to be done," Adams said. "But the strat-

initiating government-funded clean air programs.

In California, which has more stringent emissions rules, major ports in Oakland, Los Angeles, and Long Beach have taken many of these recommended steps. Elsewhere in the country, where regulations are less strict, many ports have been slow to



Trucks and railroad connections that bring containers to and from the port could face scrutiny under efforts to eliminate emissions.

vessels," Nicholas said.

The port also provided an incentive program for cruise ships to use cleaner-burning low-sulfur fuels. Through these programs, the port was able to achieve the previous strategy's emission-reduction targets about four years early.

Tacoma's port has instituted adjustments to cargo-handling equipment, transitioning diesel-powered equipment to cleaner energy sources. They are currently working with one tenant to transition six yard tractors from diesel to fully electric propulsion.

Additionally, they have targeted

egy has really demonstrated that, by working together, we can both stay competitive and get more done."

While their strategy is based on voluntary participation, representatives from the Northwest Ports agree it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reduce shipping emissions without industrywide, mandatory government regulations.

For now, the EPA has taken steps to encourage voluntary portside emissions cuts. The agency's website shows what steps ports have taken to address emissions, such as taking an emissions inventory, setting up targets for emission reductions and

adopt these strategies.

"I'm going to come out and flatly say, there's no way these goals can be reached if it is strictly voluntary," Nicholas said. "We need more from the federal government. We have to remember — this is a competitive industry, and we need to have a level playing field. We're competing with ports that are doing next to nothing and that gives them an unfair competitive advantage."

Until any such industry-wide regulations come down, the Northwest ports can only hope that other shipping hubs will follow their lead.



Construction on the first U.S. Coast Guard heavy icebreaker at Halter Marine is now slated to start in 2022, although the projected delivery date has not changed.

VT Halter Marine/Technology Associates Inc.

Canada orders two more icebreakers as US work is delayed

By Michael Joe

Construction on the U.S. Coast Guard's first heavy icebreaker by Halter Marine has been delayed until 2022 due to design revisions and the coronavirus pandemic, the Coast Guard said.

Halter Marine originally planned to start production on the first polar security cutter (PSC) in early 2021, Halter officials said in 2019. The work is now expected to start sometime next year. The projected delivery date of May 2024 has not been changed.

"The Coast Guard is working with the shipbuilder to assess the impacts of covid-19 on (the) design and how that will affect the overall production and delivery of PSC," Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Brittany Panetta said in an email.

The contract with Halter has not

been modified, she added. Based on current projections, the lead ship's operational schedule will not be impacted.

Congress provided full funding for the second PSC this fiscal year, and the Coast Guard's fiscal 2022 proposed budget requests \$170 million to procure materials for the third.

"The new PSCs will enable the U.S. Coast Guard to exercise leadership through effective presence; enforce treaties and other laws needed to safeguard both industry and the environment; and provide logistical support — including vessel escort — to facilitate the movement of goods and personnel necessary to support scientific research, commerce, national security activities and maritime safety," Panetta said.

Halter did not respond to a request for comment.

Meanwhile, Canada announced in May it will construct two polar icebreakers with capabilities beyond its current heavy icebreaker, *CCGC Louis S. St-Laurent*, which was commissioned in 1969 and will retire when the first new ship is delivered by 2030.

The larger icebreakers are equipped with bigger fuel tanks and will have a 30,000-nautical-mile range and 270 days of endurance, about 7,000 more miles and 65 more days than *Louis S. St-Laurent*.

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industry signals

waters 12 months a year, which is a huge improvement for us,” said Chris Henderson, deputy commissioner of operations for the Canadian Coast Guard.

“A really big piece is going to be on the scientific front. We will be able to do science missions year-round,” Henderson added. “Those science missions are varied. They are going to be anything from oceanography issues — salinity, temperature, pressure depth, the nature of the water column, which is very important for understanding the nature of climate change — to the ability to support fish science and biological science as well.”

Last summer, researchers measured the second-lowest extent of Arctic ice since satellite recording began in 1978, near the record in 2012. The 14 lowest ice years have occurred in the past 14 years, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Colorado.

As ice diminishes in the polar regions, human activity is increasing there. Arctic nations are preparing for more shipping activity, fossil fuel and mineral exploration, tourism, and naval activity as competition among nations for resources increases.

Amid this pressure, scientific research missions in the Arctic and Antarctic are trying to assess rapid climate change and its consequences for global weather patterns, large fisheries and vulnerable indigenous populations, among other impacts.

Even with climate change, there will still be plenty of ice in the Arctic, increasing demand for heavy, long-

range icebreakers capable of working year-round in high-latitude environments.

To meet the demand, the U.S. Coast Guard is upgrading its capability with three new heavy icebreakers and three medium ones. The Canadian Coast Guard is slated to receive 30 new ships under Canada’s National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS) to modernize its aging fleet and the Royal Canadian Navy fleet.

The two new polar icebreakers for Canada are in addition to six new medium icebreakers announced in 2019. Other ships included in the NSS are three offshore fisheries science vessels already delivered to the fleet; an oceanographic science vessel under construction; two Arctic offshore patrol ships; and 16 multi-purpose vessels.

The NSS also aims to revitalize Canada’s shipbuilding industry by adding predictability to federal vessel procurement to avoid boom-and-bust cycles that have affected shipbuilding in the past.

One of the polar icebreakers will be built by Seaspan Shipyards in Vancouver, British Columbia. The second will be built by Davie Shipbuilding in Levis, Quebec, pending Davie’s completion of the selection process to be the nation’s third strategic partner for large ships under the NSS, the government said in May. Irving Shipbuilding in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is the other strategic partner.

“That third shipyard,” Henderson said, “allows us to increase the output and shorten the timeline to recapitalize the fleet.”

Cruise ships return to service, restoring important maritime sector

By Will Van Dorp

Passengers lined the decks of *Celebrity Edge* as it inched away from the dock in Port Everglades for a cruise to Mexico and the Bahamas.

Capt. Kate McCue, the first American female captain of a large cruise ship, guided the 1,004-foot vessel out to sea under cloudy skies, signaling the return of the United States large cruise industry.

Celebrity Edge, which left on June 26, was the first large cruise ship to depart any U.S. port since March 2020. Several other cruise ships were set to depart from the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., port later in July.

“The significance of this moment is not lost on anyone on our team or the industry. We have longed for this day ... because we know that for many the return of cruising is a symbol of the world’s return to normalcy,” Brian Abel, senior vice president of hotel operations for Celebrity Cruises, said

before ship left Fort Lauderdale.

The U.S. cruise industry is coming back to life following a 15-month shutdown during the worst of the covid-19 pandemic. Its return has important ripple effects for the broader U.S. economy and the maritime industry.

The cruise industry employs thousands of Americans in many roles, including some as deck officers. The industry supports port operations, bunkering providers and the occasional tugboat or two during port calls. Cruise visits also provide an economic boost to host communities.

The shutdown of the cruise industry was felt acutely in Port Everglades, one of the country’s leading cruise ports. The port lost 50 percent of its revenue in 2020 from the lack of cruise ships, which typically generate \$60 million a year, officials said.

Matt Godden, President and CEO of Centerline Logistics in

“The significance of this moment is not lost on anyone on our team or the industry. We have longed for this day ... because we know that for many the return of cruising is a symbol of the world’s return to normalcy.”

– Brian Abel
Senior Vice President
Celebrity Cruises

Seattle said bunker volume has been off by 10 or 20 percent, driven in part by the decline in cruise travel.

“We have a lot of customers really excited about the return of the cruise ships,” Gooden said in an email. “As a side effect of a reduced



Local dignitaries met American Constellation at the dock when it called on Haines, Alaska, in June. It was the first such cruise ship visit for the small town in 20 months.

American Cruise Lines

number of cruises, certain markets, such as Hawaii, are seeing much more jet fuel and clean product demand due to the higher number of visitors using airplanes rather than reaching the islands from vessels.”

Vane Brothers, another large bunker supplier, is actively monitoring the return of cruise travel in New York City, the largest cruise port it serves. “There are times when we will be bunkering up to

five cruise ships in one port in a single weekend,” Brendan MacGillivray, Vane Brothers vice president for chartering & scheduling said, referring to pre-covid times.

Although Florida has a head start on cruise travel, large ships are slated to begin calling in California this fall, and Cunard has cruises scheduled for New York beginning in the fall as well.

Although *Celebrity Edge* was the first large ship to return since the pandemic, smaller U.S.-flagged ships started sailing again this spring. Six of American Cruise Lines’ (ACL) 13 ships were operating by early summer, albeit with reduced capacity. The company expects all its vessels to be sailing by fall.

ACL’s *American Constellation* arrived in Haines, Alaska, on June 11, and a welcoming party of local officials and Chilkat traditional dancers met the 80 passengers on the pier. It was the first cruise ship to arrive in 20 months, and the first of 12 ACL stops planned for 2021.

American Queen Steamboat Company (AQSC), meanwhile, is operating three paddlewheelers on the Mississippi, Ohio and Columbia rivers, and its flagship, *American Queen*, is set to return to service this summer. Nearly 500 American officers and crew members work aboard these vessels.

Victory Cruises, an AQSC company, won’t resume operations until 2022 on the Great Lakes. That’s because its itineraries involve Canadian as well as U.S. ports, and these are not possible until the US-Canada border is fully reopened.



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Mariner turned sculptor designing *El Faro* memorial in Maine

By Guthrie Scrimgeour

It has been nearly six years since *El Faro* sailed into Hurricane Joaquin's path and sank in the Atlantic Ocean with 33 sailors on board.

In Rockland, Maine, where two *El Faro* sailors lived, a memorial is planned to commemorate the victims. Maine sculptor and former mariner Jay Sawyer has been commissioned to complete the project known as "El Faro Salute."

"I could see the hurt locally here," Sawyer said in a recent interview. "The main goal of this piece is to memorialize the crew, to foster healing for these family members and to bring attention to the trade."

El Faro sank on Oct. 1, 2015 east of Crooked Island in the Bahamas with 28 American sailors and five Polish technicians on board. Separate memorials to *El Faro*'s crew have been built in Jacksonville, Fla., and San Juan, Puerto Rico. *El Faro* sank while on a regular cargo run between those two cities.

In Maine, the tragedy struck close to home. Five crew members graduated from Maine Maritime Academy, and four lived in the state. The Maine-based victims were Capt. Michael Davidson of Windham, Danielle Randolph and Dylan Meklin of Rockland, and Michael Holland of Wilton.

Sawyer is a Maine Maritime Academy graduate who spent his early life sailing for Exxon Shipping Co. Later in life, he found a passion for sculpture and now makes his living through art. He experienced

storms, fires and "all kinds of crazy things" at sea that now inspire his sculptures.

"On a personal level, I'm really glad to have been able to get out of that career and use it as I did," Sawyer said.

The memorial is expected to cost \$135,000, and as of June, the fundraising effort has yielded about \$72,000. The Penobscot Marine Museum, Maine's oldest marine museum, is the primary financial sponsor. Donations toward the memorial can be made on the museum's website.

"When Jay approached us, it felt like a natural fit," said Karen Smith, museum director for Penobscot Marine Museum.

"It is important for us to capture and share the ongoing maritime history and culture of Maine and Penobscot Bay," she continued. "The *El Faro* is an important part of the story of Maine and its maritime culture. This is a beautiful tribute to those who were lost."

The design will feature two empty maritime officer uniforms in a salute position, constructed out of 1/8-inch-thick steel. The absence of bodies inside the uniforms is intended to capture the diversity of those lost in the sinking. At the base, a plaque will commemorate the names of each crew member.

"There are few things that better symbolize respect than a full salute,"



Courtesy Jay Sawyer

Maine Maritime Academy graduates Jay Sawyer, left, and Mark Curtis, show the location of a memorial to *El Faro* victims planned for Rockland, Maine.

Sawyer said.

He recently adjusted the design, adding a profile of *El Faro*'s stern made from a sheet of three-quarter-inch steel, to the base of the sculpture.

Depending on fundraising, Sawyer hopes the memorial can be finished by next year. He envisions hosting a dedication ceremony on June 25, 2022, the International Day of the Seafarer.

When complete, the memorial will be located against a backdrop of Penobscot Bay with the Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse in view. "If the timing is right," Sawyer said, "viewers could see shipping traffic way off in the distance. It really is very fitting."



NOAA

Gulf of Mexico speed limits proposed to protect rare whales

By Eric Colby

Environmental groups want the federal government to set speed limits for large ships in the Gulf of Mexico south of Florida's panhandle to help protect an endangered whale species.

The National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) in May filed a petition with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requesting speeds no higher than 10 knots across an 12,000-square-mile area. The rules, which would be in place year-round for vessels 65 feet and longer, are intended to protect the Rice's whale.

"What we've called for here is essential to the recovery of the species," said Michael Jasny, director of marine mammal protection for the NRDC. "We're looking at a species that doesn't have a lot of time, and we're hoping the agency will

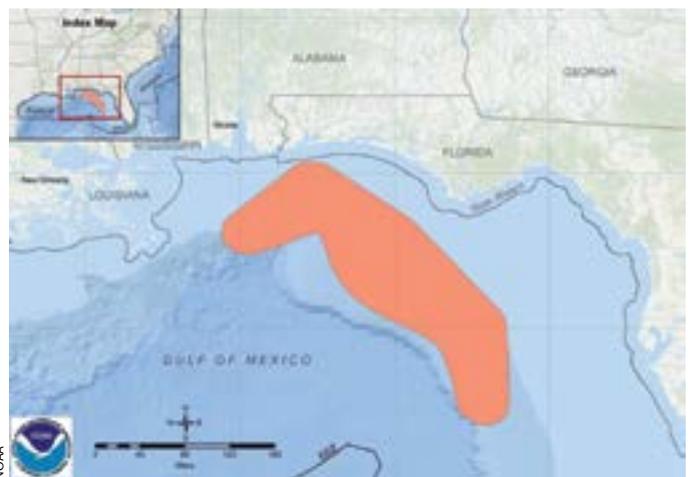
act expeditiously on the plan we've submitted."

Healthy Gulf, Defenders of Wildlife and the Center for Biological Diversity are among the groups supporting the petition. It argues NOAA Fisheries is obligated under the Endangered Species Act to protect the Rice's whale, of which only about 50 remain.

NOAA Fisheries established some restrictions last year for oil and gas industry vessels operating in the core habitat areas for the Rice's whale south of Florida and Alabama, the NRDC said. The petition asks for similar rules to be expanded to other vessel classes across a wider area.

The Rice's whale is named for American biologist Dale Rice, who

Above, Rice's whales can grow to be 42 feet long and weigh 60,000 pounds. Right, speed limits aimed at protecting the Rice's whale would cover the area shown in red.



was the first scientist to discover this whale species in the Gulf of Mexico. They can grow to 42 feet long and weigh up to 60,000 pounds. A section of the Gulf known as Desoto Canyon is a core habitat for these whale.

Research following the Deep-water Horizon disaster in 2010 led to the whale's discovery. Scientists trying to assess exposure to the spill took tissue samples from the whales. These samples helped prove the Rice's whale was a unique species, distinct from other baleen whales. The new species was protected under the Endangered Species Act in 2019 and formally recognized as a distinct species in 2021.

Following that determination, Rice's whales immediately became one of the most endangered whale species anywhere in the world. "Roughly 50 of the whales are left in existence and many are concentrated in this one submarine canyon that leaves them vulnerable to activity taking place there," Jasny said.

The NRDC arrived at the 10-knot speed based on research done on ship-strike prevention efforts concerning the North Atlantic right whale. A speed limit was imposed in 2008 in its habitat along sections of the East Coast of the United States. A federal analysis found that compliance was high, with approximately 85 percent of vessels keeping speeds below 10 knots in the designated area.

"If you reduce the speed of a vessel to 10 knots or below, you significantly reduce the likelihood of a strike,

and if the whale is hit, you're reducing the lethality risk," Jasny said.

He added that a vessel moving a lower speed will have improved fuel efficiency, lower greenhouse-gas emissions and lower levels of under-sea noise.

The proposal within the Gulf would primarily apply to commercial vessels, although Jasny acknowledged that it would apply to some recreational vessels as well. Enforcement would be conducted via AIS by federal authorities such as the Coast Guard and NOAA.

Shipping interests and Gulf of Mexico energy exploration groups declined to comment on the pro-

the water's surface within the draft of commercial vessels and is often resting at night. These factors make the whales susceptible to being hit by passing ships.

As such, the NRDC petition asks that commercial vessels not transit through the whales' habitat at night. It also asks that vessels stay at least 500 meters away from any Rice's whales they see while underway in areas subject to the proposed restrictions.

These proposals are not merely academic in their origins. In recent years, at least one Rice's whale has died, and another suffered injury consistent with blunt trauma from a



posal. NOAA is currently reviewing the petition.

Jasny said the NRDC has not received significant feedback from industry groups since filing the petition.

The Rice's whale, also known as the Gulf of Mexico whale, lives in relatively shallow water for marine mammals. It spends much of its time feeding or resting just below

There are only about 50 Rice's whales left in the Gulf of Mexico. The species spends much of its time feeding near the surface, within the draft of many commercial ships.

vessel collision.

With so few of the species left, the NRDC is hoping NOAA will move fast to enact the restrictions. "It's evident," Jasny said, "that strikes represent a significant threat to the species' survival."

Crowley Maritime will build first U.S. all-electric tugboat

By Casey Conley

Crowley Maritime Corp. has announced plans to build the first zero-emissions tugboat in the United States.

The 82-by-40-foot *eWolf* will perform ship assist work in San Diego using a fully electric propulsion system. It will be powered by twin 2,100-kW (2,816-hp) motors drawing electricity from battery banks installed below deck. Bollard pull is estimated at 70 tons.

The machinery space on an electric tugboat has little resemblance to one on a conventional diesel-powered vessel. The main engines, of course, are absent. Forward, the tug will have six racks of Corvus batteries that store energy.

Moving aft, the tug will have switchboards and other components supplied by ABB that manage the electrical supply and deliver it to twin 2,100-kW Ramme motors.

propeller as slowly as 1 rpm, offering captains far more control in close-quarter situations, or while operating in areas sensitive to prop wash.

“For its intended purpose I don’t think we are making any tradeoffs,” said Porter Sesnon, Crowley’s director of business development. “We have two 60-plus-ton (bollard pull) vessels in San Diego now, so it will be more powerful.”

Much like an electric car, *eWolf* will generate zero emissions when underway. Crowley estimates the tugboat will save 30,000 gallons of diesel fuel each year. Over a decade, the company estimates it will generate 178 fewer tons of nitrogen oxide (NOx), 2.5 fewer tons of diesel particulate matter, and 3,100 fewer metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) versus a conventional tug.

“Crowley’s first-of-its-kind electric tugboat is a game changer. It checks all the boxes by providing environmental, economic, and operational benefits for our communities and maritime industry,” Michael Zuchet, chairman of the Port of San Diego Board of Port Commissioners, said in a prepared statement.

Crowley has partnered with multiple federal, state and local organizations on the project, including the EPA, the U.S. Maritime Administration, the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District and California Air Resources Board (CARB). These agencies provided millions of dollars in grant funding toward the *eWolf* project.



Crowley Maritime Corp.

Crowley's all-electric *eWolf* will deliver 70 tons of bollard pull while generating zero emissions. In normal operations, *eWolf* will run completely on battery power.

Two 400-hp diesel-powered generators on the main deck will be available to charge the batteries during long voyages, although Crowley does not expect to need them during typical operations.

“It is designed with enough battery power to do its work totally on electric,” said Ray Martus, vice president for Crowley Engineering Services.

ABB designed the propulsion package for the new tugboat, which will be built in Alabama by Master Boat Builders. Crowley Engineering Services provided the tug’s design, which is available to other operators considering electric propulsion.

Those will be installed atop Schottel L-drives that propel it like a traditional azimuthing tugboat. Markey Machinery will supply the electrically-driven winch.

Cochran Marine will develop a shoreside charging station using renewable energy to replenish the tug’s batteries between jobs as needed. Crowley intends to do most of the recharging during off-peak hours.

Despite the new propulsion system, *eWolf* should perform similarly to a conventionally-driven tugboat — but with some notable enhancements. The tugboat has no exhaust stacks, improving visibility aft, Martus said. Electric motors can turn the



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Orsted photos

Offshore wind aspirations constrained by lack of specialized U.S.-flagged vessels

By Nick Keppler

Above, the United States lacks vessels needed to support large-scale offshore wind development like that of the Anholt Offshore Wind Farm near Denmark. Right, Orsted and Eversource are partnering with Edison Chouest Offshore on the first Jones Act-compliant service operation vessel.

The Dutch-built wind turbine installation vessel *Aeolus* carries a top-range crane that can lift 1,600 tons. It can work in 135 feet of water thanks to 279-foot legs, each weighing 1,280 tons.

These capabilities are necessary to handle next-generation offshore wind turbine towers measuring over 850 feet and weighing 500 tons. Installing one on the ocean floor requires a vessel with retractable legs allowing the ship to transition from boat to offshore platform.

Aeolus is a rare kind of ship. In November 2020, the research firm Rystad Energy counted 32 active turbine

installation vessels (WTIVs) in the world. None are U.S.-flagged.

This lack of U.S.-flagged WTIVs could hinder growth in America's offshore wind industry. The Biden Administration wants 2,000 turbines

up and running by 2030, and it has eased regulatory and permitting processes to help reach that goal. With a wind farm near Martha's Vineyard already approved, and the administration looking to lease other areas, the U.S. has no



Orsted

WTIVs or other large wind farm support vessels that meet Jones Act requirements.

To put it simply, the industry wants to put down turbines soon, but for now it has none of the specialized and very expensive ships to do it.

Still, industry groups are not panicking yet, for several reasons.

First, there is much work to be done before turbines can be installed. With few exceptions, most offshore wind farm projects are still in the earliest stages. Leaseholders must survey the sites and assemble the turbines, meaning installation might not begin for years. The few ports capable of handling a wind turbine installation operation must be expanded or upgraded.

“In 2023, they might be going into the water,” predicts Ross Gould, vice president for supply chain development for the Business Network for Off-

shore Wind. Also, the industry needs only a few ships, open to leasing, for the number of windfarms feasible for the East Coast in this decade. “We are talking about three to four ships,” he said.

It’s a manageable goal, and several companies have announced plans to build WTIVs in the U.S., at a cost of \$200 to \$500 million per ship. Investing in a highly specialized ship of this kind was a prohibitively expensive investment, Gould said, until the federal government, which regulates construction in the seas, showed a commitment to wind power.

Dominion Energy, a power utility based in Richmond, Va., announced plans in December to build its own WTIV. That vessel will service Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind, the utility’s large scale wind farm planned for 27 miles off Virginia Beach.

Eneti, a Monaco-based company specializing in offshore wind construction, is looking for American partners to build U.S.-flagged installation vessels, its CEO said in a conference call. Lastly, Lloyd’s Register North America and Northeast Technical Services Co. are exploring whether existing vessels can be modified into WTIVs.

If Jones Act-compliant vessels are not available, companies have a work-around: The law does not regulate construction. A turbine could be delivered from a foreign port by a foreign-flagged vessel, which then installs it in U.S. waters. Builders of American windfarms could then use “feeder” ships to deliver everything necessary for construction. Never would a non-U.S.-flagged vessel deliver anything from one U.S. port to another, thus bypassing Jones Act rules.

Out of necessity, builders

The Anholt Offshore Wind Farm off Denmark is one of the largest in the world. Building a project of that size off the United States would require a fleet of specialized vessels.



of early offshore wind power projects utilized this loophole. To create the Block Island Wind Farm, the nation's first, parts were constructed in France and delivered to the project site off Rhode Island by a Dutch-owned ship that installed the turbines.

Vineyard Wind, a 62-turbine project approved in May, will go this route. Its builders will contract with the U.S. branch of Belgian wind developer DEME to bring in the turbines, and the vessels to install them, from the company's operations in Belgium. U.S.-flagged ships will be used for the rest of the operation, a spokesperson said.

Dominion Energy did something similar for its two-turbine pilot program off Virginia Beach. The turbines were constructed in Nova Scotia and transported on a Luxembourg-flagged WTIV.

The process convinced Dominion to build its own vessel. The company concluded it was not feasible to install dozens of turbines that way, waiting on foreign ships, foreign ports and foreign builders. Dominion, which plans to spend \$500 million on the ship, found the benefits of building their own WTIV outweighed the costs.

The adage that time is money is especially true at sea,

said Claire Richer, director of federal affairs for the American Clean Power Association. Labor, logistics and fuel costs add up fast. "Companies have every incentive to minimize the time at sea," she said.

While WTIVs have an indispensable role, a wind turbine installation requires an entire fleet: Vessels that service turbines, move people and supplies, and house crew and workers, Richer said. An entirely U.S.-based wind turbine installation infrastructure, with U.S.-flagged WTIVs, would limit the amount of time these other ships and their crews are transiting to and from the job site,



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and the amount of time working at a specific installation.

All told, more than a dozen different vessels can be used in an offshore wind turbine project from start to finish. These include everything from highly specialized WTIVs, service

operations vessels (SOVs) and crew transfer vessels (CTVs) to more traditional vessels already within the U.S.-flagged fleet such as tugboats and barges, survey vessels, supply vessels and heavy-lift ships.

According to Matthew



The Walney Wind Farm in the Irish Sea has grown to nearly 200 turbines. The United States currently has seven offshore wind turbines spread across two projects. Many more are planned.

Tremblay, senior vice president of global offshore markets for the American Bureau of Shipping, there is one silver lining to the underdeveloped state of the American offshore wind market: Developers in Europe and Asia have already mastered the process.

“Coming from Europe, I think the installation process itself has been developed and is clearly understood and the ins and outs of doing these installations offshore are no longer a question,” Tremblay said. “The developers have come to understand that clearly, and they got that process down.” •



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At Work

Capt. Cooper delivers time and again for North Carolina resort island

Story and photos by Casey Conley

This time of year, Bald Head Island in North Carolina is packed with vacationers drawn to its world-class beaches, fishing and golf.

The job of keeping the island fully stocked and running smoothly falls to Rusty Terry, captain of the 850-hp *Capt. Cooper* for Bald Head Island Limited.

Up to five times a day, *Capt. Cooper* pushes the 100-foot deck barge *USS Brandon Randall* the 4 nautical miles separating Southport,



N.C., and Bald Head Island, across the Cape Fear River. Typical runs carry heavy equipment, trash trucks, building supplies, food and beverage, and delivery vehicles. Almost everything needed to keep a resort island going arrives via barge. Visitors come and go on personal boats or the island's passenger ferry.

When deliveries stop for an extended period, due to weather or mechanical issues, island residents and businesses feel it almost immediately, Terry said. "It means a contrac-

tor is not getting his lumber and the grocery store is running out of produce."

Maintaining the service day in, day out is the primary objective for Claude McKernan, vice president of

Bald Head Island Transportation.

McKernan oversaw construction of the 50-foot *Capt. Cooper*, designed by CT Marine of Maine and built by Metal Trades in South Carolina. Everything about the vessel, including its unpainted aluminum house, was designed for reliability and ease of upkeep.

"We want low maintenance, low repair, reliability and safety, and that is what I think we've got," he said during a recent voyage to the island.

Capt. Cooper entered service four years ago. CT Marine custom-designed the vessel to operate in the extremely tight quarters at Bald Head Island Marina. The hull tapers from 24 feet amidships to 17 feet at the transom to facilitate the 45-degree turn toward the landing.

Maintaining a 5.5-foot maximum draft led to the tug's unique design. Adding another deckhouse level would have made the tug too heavy



Above and left, *Capt. Cooper* pushes the 100-foot deck barge *USS Brandon Randall* toward Bald Head Island.



Left, deck hand Tom Goldner directs truck traffic loading onto *USS Brandon Randall*. Right, Capt. Cooper is outfitted with Patterson deck winches and John Deere main engines.



and exceeded the draft requirement. Instead, the wheelhouse sits atop four 8-foot supports, creating a spiderlike appearance.

Propulsion comes via two 425-hp John Deere engines turning five-blade nibral propellers through ZF gears. Two Northern Lights gensets provide electricity. Patterson deck winches help secure the tug and barge using Samson rope.

“We really talked it up when we got it, and we are still talking it up four years later,” McKernan said of *Capt. Cooper*.

Perched at the controls on a sunny late spring morning, Terry guided the

vessel toward a lighthouse on Bald Head Island known as Old Baldy. The tow made about 4 knots against a 2-knot tidal current.

The voyage was uneventful, save for a containership that passed the tow inbound for Wilmington, N.C. Terry steered the tow toward the edge of the channel to make way for the 544-foot Portugal-flagged *AS Faustina*.

Asked about the perks of the job, Terry didn't hesitate.

“The environment. The scenery,” he said, gesturing toward the islands and sounds visible in every direction.

“People spend big bucks to visit this place, and I am here every day,” he continued. “It is a beautiful part of the world.”

Capt. Cooper

SPECIFICATIONS

Owner/operator: Bald Head Island Limited LLC
Dimensions: 50'x24'x5.5'

Propulsion:

- Engines: (2) John Deere 6135AFM85, 425-hp
- Propellers: (2) ZF 48" X 39" 5-blade nibral
- Gears: (2) ZF W350-1 at 3.96:1 ratio
- Auxiliary generators: (2) Northern Lights, 40 kW

Navigation gear:

- Radar: Furuno 1934C NT
- Chart plotter: Furuno MF08
- AIS: Furuno FA50
- GPS: (2) Furuno GP330B
- Radio: (2) Icom M234 VHF

Deck equipment:

- Deck winches: (2) Patterson WPP30E
- Cordage: Samson Saturn12

Right, Capt. Rusty Terry looks up after steering *Capt. Cooper* and *USS Brandon Randall* into the landing at Bald Head Island. The tug was designed specifically to make the tight turn into the marina.



Casualties



Coast Guard photos

Salvage crews work to free riverboat stuck in Kentucky lake

By Casey Conley

A small cruise ship carrying 120 passengers and 49 crewmembers ran aground in the Cumberland River near Canton, Ky., and remained stuck for more than a week.

The 269-by-69-foot *American Jazz* grounded on a sandbar outside the navigation channel at about 1300 on July 7. The grounding happened at mile 62, which lies within a dammed section of the river known as Lake Barkley.

The grounding was not reported to the Coast Guard until 0800 on July 8, said Jonathan Lally, a Coast Guard spokesman. The service is investigating the incident but has not yet determined the cause.

“*American Jazz* continues to rest on the soft, muddy bottom (of the river),” Alexa Paoella, spokeswoman for ship operator American Cruise Lines (ACL), said in a prepared statement on July 10. “American remains fully committed to work-

ing together until our riverboat can be freed from the sandbar and we anticipate that when it does, it will be able to sail under its own power and resume all normal operations.”

American Jazz was delivered by Chesapeake Shipbuilding in 2020

The American Cruise Lines ship *American Jazz* remained aground in Lake Barkley for more than a week.



and can carry 190 passengers. It was halfway through a “Music Cities Cruise” between the Tennessee cities of Memphis and Nashville when it grounded. The eight-day voyage takes the vessel up the Mississippi River to Cairo, Ill., where the waterway joins the Ohio River. The riverboat then transits the Cumberland River en route to Nashville.

It’s not clear what part of the ship became stuck in the river bottom, or whether the initial grounding occurred outside the navigation channel. Lally said those details will emerge during the investigation.

ACL did not explain the almost 19-hour gap between the time of the

grounding and when it was reported to authorities.

Passengers disembarked from the ship on July 9 into pontoon boats that transferred them back to shore. Eight crewmembers left with the passengers, and others got off on subsequent days. Passengers were later transported to Nashville.

ACL hired Donjon-SMIT to lead the salvage effort, which the cruise operator acknowledged took longer than expected. Divers were in the water on July 11 to assess the ship’s position and gain insights needed for a salvage plan.

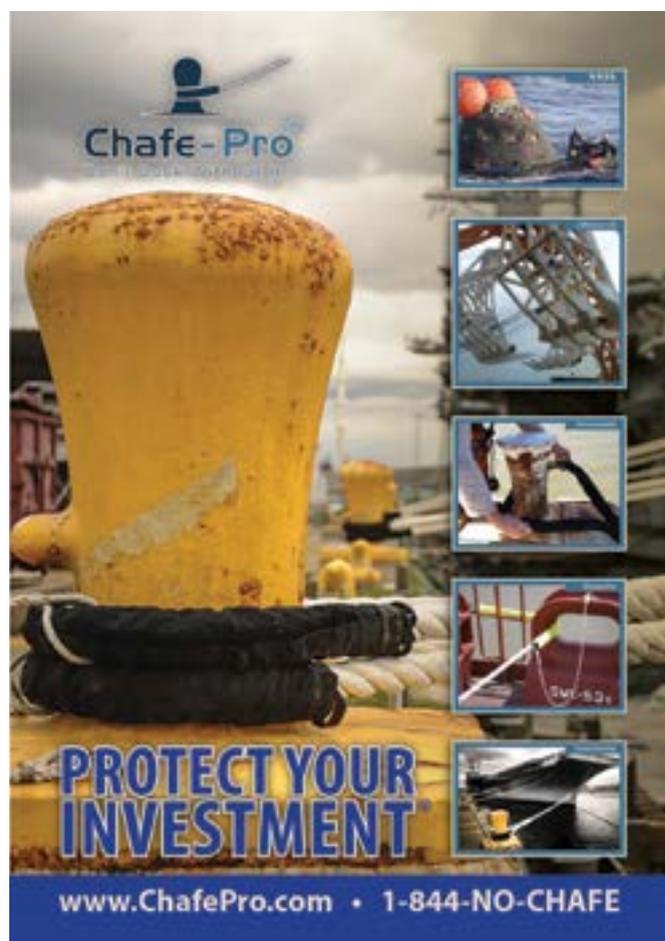
Multiple towboats attempted to free the ship on July 9 but were not

successful, Lally said. The names of the assist tugs were not available.

Paolella said *American Jazz* was safe and well stocked during the grounding. Its critical onboard systems continued to operate while the ship was stuck.

The Coast Guard established a unified command to oversee the grounding response. The service also established a three-mile safety zone around the ship between mile 61 and mile 64.

There were no injuries, pollution or damage to the ship reported during the episode, which remained unresolved as *Professional Mariner* went to press.



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NTSB cites poor communication, erratic steering in Sabine Pass collision

By Michael Joe

The mate piloting an out-bound offshore supply vessel in Sabine Pass steered erratically and ignored crew warnings in the minutes before a collision with an articulated tug-barge (ATB), federal investigators said.

The mate helming the supply boat tested positive for alcohol after the incident, although

portation Safety Board (NTSB) said in its accident report.

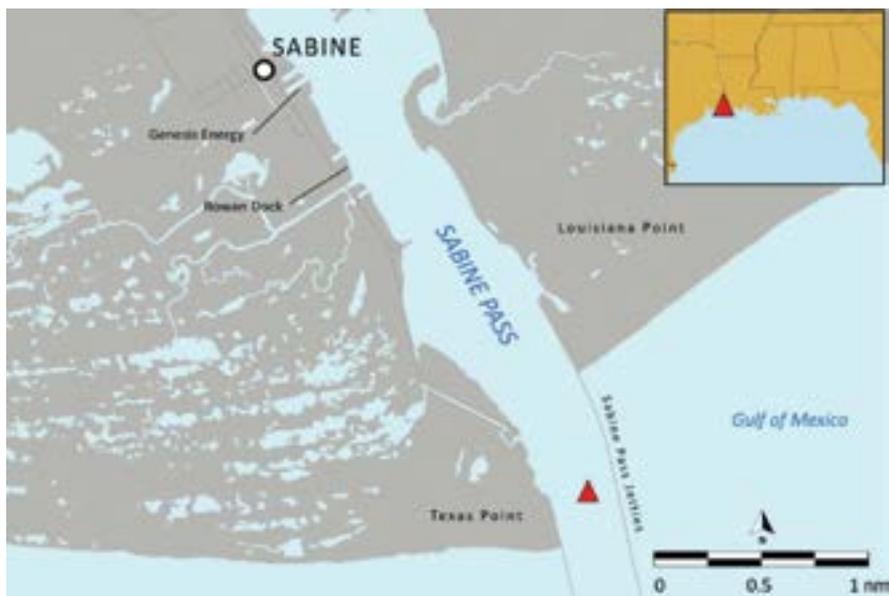
The collision happened near Texas Point within the Sabine Pass Jetty Channel at 0415 on Nov. 14, 2019. No injuries were reported among the five crewmembers on *Cheremie Bo Truc* or the nine crewmembers and one Sabine Pilot aboard *Mariya*

Moran.

The mate's abrupt turn to starboard across the ATB's bow was the immediate, probable cause of the collision, the NTSB said. But poor communication contributed to the accident, which the NTSB said might have been avoided had personnel aboard the 6,000-hp *Mariya Moran* communicated their intention to meet *Cheremie Bo Truc* starboard to starboard.

"Although both vessels were aware of each other, no VHF radio passing arrangement or maneuvering signals were made," the report said. "Inland Navigation Rules require either a port-to-port passage or communication either by radio or whistle signal for an agreed-upon alternate passage between two vessels."

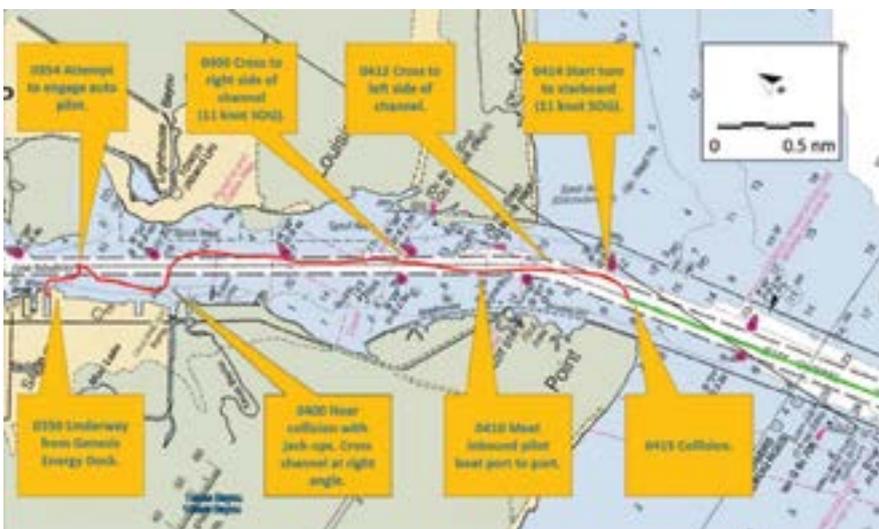
"A radio call from the ATB prior to the pilot relieving the mate to confirm the offshore supply vessel's intentions may have



Above, the collision happened near Texas Point in Sabine Pass. Right, the mate piloting *Cheremie Bo Truc* steered an erratic course before colliding with the ATB.

authorities could not say conclusively that he was impaired during the accident voyage.

The 167-foot *Cheremie Bo Truc No. 22*, worth \$1.2 million, was totaled in the crash with the inbound ATB *Mariya Moran/Texas*, a 580-foot-long ATB that sustained more than \$650,000 in hull damage, the National Trans-



kept the *Cheramie Bo Truc* No. 22 mate from steering across the ATB's bow," the report continued.

Cheramie Bo Truc's voyage appeared troubled from the start. After leaving the Genesis Energy dock at 0352 and entering the channel, the mate tried to use the autopilot feature in the busy waterway but was unsuccessful. "As a result, he struggled to maintain a safe course during the first 12 minutes of the passage, nearly striking a stationary jack-up before returning to manual steering," the report said.

To avoid the rigs on the west bank, the supply vessel turned to port at a near right angle at 0400, then followed the channel's east side. Minutes later, the vessel went back to the west side and passed a pilot boat port to port. It stayed on the west side until reaching a bend near buoy 27 at 0412, then crossed the channel again to the east side, the report said.

The inbound *Moran Mariyal Texas* was about a mile ahead. As the vessels approached, the able seaman on watch reported seeing the approaching ATB. The mate acknowledged, "That's a ship."

On the *Mariya Moran/Texas*, the chief mate and pilot had completed a master/pilot exchange. The pilot checked in with vessel traffic service and he acknowledged being advised of the outbound *Cheramie Bo Truc*. The ATB maintained a course in the center of the channel at 8 knots, the report said.

Jacob Frisbie, a senior deputy pilot with the Sabine Pilots, told investigators he first saw the *Cheramie Bo Truc's* masthead lights about a mile away, maintaining a course on the east side of the channel. He said this was common for vessels heading east after the jetties and not unusual to meet starboard to starboard.

At about 0414, the able seaman and engineer on *Cheramie Bo Truc* saw the mate start to turn starboard. They warned him to come left instead to avoid the *Mariya Moran/Texas* but were ignored.

About 23 seconds before the collision, the *Mariya Moran/Texas* pilot hailed, "Come in on *Cheramie Bo Truc*."

"Bo Truc. Go ahead," the mate said.

"Hey Capt. ... you see me?" the pilot said.

"Yes, sir, uh-oh, [expletive]. Hold on. Uh-yeah, hold on," the mate said.

The collision happened 12 seconds later. *Texas's* bow rammed into *Cheramie Bo Truc* at nearly a right angle, making contact aft of the superstructure, the report said. The force of impact threw the mate helming the supply boat from his chair. The vessel's no. 1 and no. 2 fuel tanks breached, allowing roughly 6,600 gallons of diesel to escape into the waterway.

Post-casualty saliva swab test showed the mate's blood alcohol concentration was at least 0.02 grams per deciliter. But because the swab test does not provide

the actual blood alcohol content, investigators said the test can only indicate the mate drank beforehand, and is not conclusive that he was impaired by alcohol. The regulatory limit for commercial mariners is 0.04 g/dl.

"However, attempting to use the autopilot in a channel, nearly colliding with stationary jack-ups, weaving across the channel, ignoring the warnings from the on-watch AB and engineer in the wheelhouse, and suddenly turning in front of the ATB all indicate a degree of misjudgment, impairment, and/or incompetence."

Investigators noted that although the AB and engineer corrected the mate's erratic steering twice during the voyage before his sudden turn, they did not summon the captain.

"Safe and effective navigation is not one person's job," the report advised. "Bridge resource management includes the concept of teamwork, which is an essential defense against human error. A good team should anticipate dangerous situations and recognize the development of an error chain. If in doubt, team members should speak up or notify a higher authority."

Authorities did not name the *Cheramie Bo Truc* mate. Its operator, L&M Botruc LLC, did not respond to a request for comment. Moran Towing Corp. declined to comment.

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Engine fire disables Dole reefer ship near Delaware port

By Casey Conley

A refrigerated cargo ship operated by Dole was disabled by an engine room fire that started shortly after departing from a Delaware port.

The fire aboard the 672-foot *Dole Colombia* happened shortly before midnight on June 28 after the ship got underway from the Port of Wilmington, the Coast Guard said. None of the 30 people on board were injured, and authorities reported no pollution.

“The fire occurred in the vessel’s engine compartment,” said Coast Guard spokeswoman Tara Molle-

mid-Atlantic distribution hub from Wilmington, which also hosts a large Chiquita operation. The port describes itself as “the No. 1 banana port in North America.” It also is a hub for importing fruit from Chile each winter. Dole did not respond to an inquiry about the engine fire.

Dole Colombia arrived in Wilmington on June 27 following port calls in the banana-producing countries of Colombia, Costa Rica and Honduras, according to AIS data. The fire started shortly after the ship got off the pier after unloading its cargo.

propeller. Bow and stern thrusters generating 1,950 hp also were installed on the ship, which has a sophisticated electrical plant to run the refrigeration system. The make and model of the main engine were not available.

The Coast Guard continues to investigate the fire and declined to discuss a possible cause. However, the service praised the crew for its quick activation of the engine room’s CO2 system, which deprived the fire of oxygen.

“I believe three things saved the crew and prevented this fire



Crew aboard *Dole Colombia* used the ship’s fixed CO2 system to extinguish an engine fire that happened soon after leaving port.

Robert Barolin

Carr, who is based in Baltimore, Md. “The origin of the fire was the vessel’s main engine. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.”

Crew aboard the Bahamas-flagged containerized fruit carrier used the ship’s fixed CO2 firefighting system to extinguish the fire soon after it started. Molle-Carr said the engine room sustained minimal damage.

Dole Fresh Fruit Co. runs its

“The vessel still had tugs alongside at the time of the fire,” Molle-Carr said. “With the assistance of the vessel’s bow thruster, they were able to safely moor back at the dock.” The names of the tugboats that assisted the ship were not identified.

Dole Colombia was built in 1999 in Europe and originally equipped with a single 32,000-hp main engine turning a 22-foot fixed-pitch

from turning into a major incident: the crew’s immediate actions when the fire erupted, integrated safety systems, and robust partnerships across the port,” Chief Warrant Officer Todd Wardwell, acting as the lead federal on-scene coordinator, said in a prepared statement.

Dole Colombia left Wilmington on July 9. Publicly available AIS data did not show its destination.

NTSB traces bulker's pier strike at Soo Locks to screw failure

By Michael Joe

The Great Lakes freighter *Atlantic Huron* was downbound in the St. Mary's River when its captain began slowing for the approach into the Soo Locks. Instead, the vessel unexpectedly gained speed.

Huron and the west center pier at Soo Locks was not following the manufacturer's requirement to use thread-locking fluid during installation of the feedback ring locking pin set screw on the vessel's controllable pitch propeller system,"

can propel the ship ahead or astern without changing the shaft direction. The ship was in ballast as it approached the Soo Locks headed for Meldrum Bay, Ontario, in Lake Huron. The captain slowed to 3.8 knots at 0245, when the ship was a half-mile from the western end of the west center pier.

The captain ordered full astern but noticed the CPP indicator on the bridge was "erratic" — fluctuating from full ahead to full astern to zero. A wrong-way alarm indicated the requested propeller pitch did not match the actual pitch, the report said.

The captain called the engine control room. The engineer on watch reported no such alarms, and that the pitch indicator showed full astern. Moments later, the captain noticed the vessel was accelerating even as the bridge pitch indicator showed full astern.

The chief engineer and watch engineer went to inspect the controllable pitch propeller control valve assembly in the lower engine room. They intended to verify the pitch and alter the pitch manually if needed. The assembly is mounted atop the oil distribution (OD) box, a critical part of the CPP hydraulic system.

"Normally, the OD box sat on the shaft with bearings, and a 'torque stay,' or locking pin, prevented the box from rotating. The chief engineer discovered that the OD box assembly had rotated on



CSL Group

The captain's attempts to regain control or stop the ship before the locks were not successful. The 736-foot self-unloading bulker hit the south side of the Soo Locks' west center pier at nearly 7 knots at 0250 on July 5, 2020. The ship stopped well short of the lock gates.

The impact caused \$1.6 million in damage to the ship's forward portside hull. The lock pier required \$573,000 in repairs. None of the 25 crew members reported injuries.

"The probable cause of the contact between the *Atlantic*

the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said in its accident report.

"As a result, the set screw was able to back out, beginning a sequence of mechanical failures that resulted in the ship moving ahead when it was supposed to be doing the opposite, while still indicating an astern pitch on the ship's bridge," the agency said in a news release summarizing the report.

The Canada-flagged *Atlantic Huron* is powered by a single diesel engine paired with a controllable pitch propeller (CPP) that

the drive shaft and was no longer retained by the torque stay,” investigators said.

Meanwhile, *Atlantic Huron* continued to gain speed, reaching 6.5 knots when the captain sounded the general alarm and ordered crew to drop the stern anchor. About 600 feet from the pier, the vessel’s speed increased to 7.1 knots. The captain dropped two bow anchors remotely from the bridge.

Around this time, the chief engineer called the captain for approval to shut down the main engine. At 0250 the *Atlantic Huron’s* port bow struck the pier at 6.8 knots, slowing as it slid alongside the pier.

A post-accident inspection of the OD box discovered “severe damage” to the unit’s valve assembly, including the feedback arm, the report said. The technician also found the pin holding the feedback ring in place and the set screw holding the pin in place had both backed out.

“Inspection of the set screw by the technician revealed that it was ‘not damaged’ and that there was

‘no evidence’ of thread-locking fluid having been applied,” investigators said.

Maintenance records showed the feedback ring pin set screw had been removed and reinstalled in 2016 for maintenance to the tail shaft.

CSL Group Inc., which owns the vessel, told investigators the way “the OD box and control valve assembly failed would have caused hydraulic fluid to be inadvertently directed, producing a full ahead pitch on the propeller blades when an astern pitch was ordered,” according to the report.

Investigators learned the OD box had been repaired a few days earlier following a similar incident when the vessel tried to slow in open water. But the problem was determined to be a worn torque stay that was replaced. A class surveyor who inspected the repair deemed it acceptable in the short term.

The previous incident was likely caused by the same type of mechanical failure. But because the repairs solved the problem without having to disassemble the

OD box, investigators considered it understandable that the underlying problem was not identified.

The NTSB determined the captain could have stopped the main engine once he noticed the erratic pitch indicator and the vessel increase speed. However, they acknowledged he had a short time to act during a period of stress and confusion about the propulsion problem.

“Loss of propulsion control in a critical phase of operation demands crewmembers act quickly to mitigate potential accidents,” the report said. “Part of a safety management system should address potential emergency ship-board situations, including loss of propulsion, collision, and contact, and establish ways to respond to them.”

Following the accident, the CSL Group said it was reviewing its safety management system to develop ship-specific contingency plans for emergencies.

The CSL Group, parent company of Canada Steamship Lines, did not respond to a request for comment.



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Hawaii container loss attributed to lack of stowage plan

By Michael Joe

The loss of shipping containers from a Young Brothers deck barge last summer off Hawaii's Big Island stemmed from insufficient loading practices at the company's Honolulu cargo hub, federal investigators said.

Fifty containers loaded on the aft deck of *Ho'omaka Hou* collapsed and 21 fell overboard on June 22, 2020 while under tow to Hilo by the tugboat *Hoko Lua*. Eight containers were recovered and 13 remain missing.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) attributed the collapse to Young Brothers "not providing the barge team with an initial barge load plan, as well as inadequate procedures for monitoring stack weights, which led to undetected reverse stratification of container stacks that subjected the stacks' securing arrangements to increased forces while in transit at sea."

The barge team "consistently" stacked containers with heavy weights atop containers with lighter weights, the NTSB said in its accident report. Seven of the 10 stacks in the toppled row had vertical centers of gravity closer to the highest possible center of gravity for the stack.

In describing the physics involved, the NTSB said "reverse stratification results in stacks having a higher center of gravity than stacks created by placing the heaviest containers on the deck, with progressively lighter containers above — referred to as normal stratification."

Dozens of containers toppled from a cargo barge en route to Hilo, Hawaii. Rolling seas impacting the beam likely caused the containers to fall over, the NTSB determined.



"An initial barge load plan showing stratified container weights would have been a useful tool to assist the barge team machine operators in stacking containers on the barge to reduce or eliminate reverse stratification," the report said.

Two days before the accident, on June 20, the Young Brothers barge team in Honolulu drove cargo aboard the 340-by-90-foot *Ho'omaka Hou* and secured the stacked containers with lashings and locking and stacking cones. Dry and refrigerated containers, ISO tank containers, wheeled vehicles, flatracks and palletized cargo were stowed facing fore and aft and athwartship across the beam.

The 40-foot containers in the toppled row of 10 stacks faced fore and aft on the stern, stacked five high except for a four-high stack on the starboard side. Weighed by their shippers, the containers' gross weights were chalked on their sides

and visually inspected in the yard.

Machine operators acknowledged to investigators that the general rule was to stack lower-weight containers on top of heavy containers. "However, numerous barge team members stated that heavy containers could be loaded over light containers if some 'heavies' came into the yard after the lighter containers had already been loaded," as they had in the past, the report said.

A barge superintendent told investigators load planning was done "as the day goes on," so an initial barge load plan wasn't prepared for the loading team.

There are no regulatory requirements for loading and securing cargo on unmanned barges, and the *Ho'omaka Hou* did not have a cargo securing manual, nor was it required to. Stacking heavy containers over light containers can be done but calculations are needed to ensure a secure arrangement,

investigators said.

The barge superintendent finalized the stow plan at 1830 that evening and told the company dispatcher it was ready to depart. This plan included the locations of containers but did not show their weights, the report said. *Hoku Loa* got underway with *Ho'omaka Hou* at 2028 with six crew for a scheduled 32-hour voyage.

At about 0000 on June 22, the tug and barge were about 12 miles north-northwest of Pepeekeo Point on a 128-degree course when a nearby weather buoy recorded steep seas from the east with 6-foot waves. The vessels reportedly started rolling fol-

lowing a turn to the south-southeast at 0200 for the final approach into Hilo. Investigators said the container stacks with the greatest reverse stratification likely toppled over following this course change from forces produced by "dynamic rolling from the seas" on the barge's beam.

No one knew the containers had collapsed until an assist tugboat notified the captain near Hilo. Eight of the 21 containers that fell overboard were salvaged about 3 miles off Pepeekeo Point, roughly 10 miles north of Hilo.

Investigators said it's unlikely a structural failure caused the collapse. The containers' corner casings

could withstand more compressive force than the weight of each stack. An inspection showed no problems with fixed securing points. And the concrete deck showed no significant scraping from sliding containers to indicate a lashing gear failure.

The cost of the lost and damaged cargo was estimated at more than \$1.5 million. Repairing and replacing the recovered and lost containers cost \$104,885. Damage to the barge was estimated at \$25,000.

Young Brothers, a Hawaii interisland cargo company based in Honolulu, did not respond to a request for comment. •

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Correspondence

by Drew Casey, CDR, USCG (ret.), CEM

Restoring Coast Guard search and rescue proficiency

The U.S. Coast Guard is experiencing a gradual erosion of proficiency at all levels of the search and rescue (SAR) chain of command, including core leadership positions at district and sector commands. The service must re-dedicate itself toward ensuring key personnel have the training and experience to lead this critical life-saving mission.

As a signatory to the International Search and Rescue (SAR) Convention of 1979, the U.S. Coast Guard is obligated to “ensure that necessary arrangements are made for the provision of adequate search and rescue services for persons in distress at sea.” To assist with meeting this obligation, the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manuals Volumes I through III were developed. These manuals, along with the U.S. National SAR Supplement and the Coast Guard SAR Addendum, serve as foundational guidance documents for the Coast Guard’s maritime search and rescue mission.

As described in these documents, the SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) is the “person assigned to carry out all aspects of planning, coordinating and managing the response to a SAR incident.” A role normally held by



Coast Guard photos

more senior active-duty members and civilians in the SAR chain of command, an SMC is assigned to every search and rescue case. This position is not part of the command center watch team to maintain an unbiased, independent perspective.

Maritime search and rescue is one of the service’s highest priority missions. As such, it makes sense to institute the most rigorous, standardized field training and qualification process for any individual pursuing this designation. However, the Coast Guard has not created a formal, on-the-job qualification standard. Some forward-thinking district and sector commands have created their

Search and rescue is one of the Coast Guard’s most important functions. The service conducts drills and year-round to be ready in emergencies.

own local training programs. But not all of them. Many commands only require the bare minimum of on-the-job training. For some, this can be as little as a few weeks of experience managing a handful of search and rescue cases before they earn the SMC designation.

As a result of this non-standardized approach, there is a broad range of competency across the service in terms of knowledge, experience, and judgment among the dozens of qualified SMCs nationwide.

Such inexperience and lack of

proficiency can lead to mismanagement, poor decision-making, and the inefficient use of search and rescue assets. Those with less experience may overcompensate and search for hours, or even days, longer than necessary and ignore search planning software outputs as well as other measures of search effectiveness. They might allow themselves to be disproportionately influenced by less important or even irrelevant factors. Approaching major search and rescue cases in this conservative and perceived low-risk manner is not a reduction in risk. It is a transfer of risk, from an individual or unit to the crews of assigned search assets, including aircraft, cutters and/or small boats.

Searching much longer than necessary, without clear articulation of the potential gain in terms of probability of success, increases the risk to Coast Guard crews searching in often dangerous and unpredictable maritime conditions. Quite simply, this should never occur under the supervision of a qualified SMC.

Deterioration of District Command SAR Proficiency

Coast Guard district commands, which oversee mission areas and activities across multiple states and large offshore areas of responsibility, represent the top of the search and rescue chain of command. District commanders serve as SAR coordinators, and senior staff fill critical

leadership roles, including SMC for district search and rescue cases. They also exercise authority to suspend search and rescue operations during major cases.

District Commands perform critical roles: They maintain SAR program oversight, perform the essential function of “quality control,” and serve as the last line of defense for major district and sector search and rescue cases. To support these activities, district command centers facilitate efficient coordination of all SAR activities within their respective areas of responsibility.

For decades, each District Command had an Office of Search and Rescue (OSRs) that housed dedicated staff officers and civilians. These personnel provided SAR subject matter expertise and program oversight across their respective rescue regions within a district area of responsibility.

Following the creation of Sector Commands, Coast Guard Headquarters eliminated District OSRs and created a new position, the district chief of incident management. These new roles, which are usually assigned to senior Coast Guard aviators at the rank of captain, oversee Coast Guard Air Stations, as well as several core missions and programs, including search and rescue, command center operations, incident management, and marine environmental response. For many of these senior officers, as well as other individuals in district search

and rescue leadership roles, this is their first exposure to planning, command center operations, search and rescue mission coordination and, ultimately, decisions to suspend an ongoing search.

How To Restore Coast Guard SAR Proficiency

At Coast Guard District and Sector commands, Master SAR Controller civilian positions were created, for the purpose of serving as the lead search and rescue subject matter experts. While this decision helped bridge knowledge and experience gaps, persistent service-wide proficiency issues among senior leadership remain.

Any individual who fills these key leadership roles should have



The U.S. Coast Guard conducted search and rescue exercises with the Armed Forces of Malta earlier this year.



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adequate command center qualifications and SAR planning experience prior to beginning their training as an SMC. In the same context, anyone with authority to suspend a search should have the relevant experience needed to make these difficult decisions. Furthermore, sufficient search and rescue planning, mission coordination, and experience determining when to suspend an active search should be prerequisites for assignment to key senior leadership and program management positions.

It takes years of experience to attain the minimum level of proficiency to oversee the Coast Guard's SAR mission and perform the carefully orchestrated roles involved in this effort. The Coast Guard can bring the mission back to prominence as a core life-saving mission, instead of treating it like a collateral duty. The service should expect nothing less than the most highly trained and experienced search and rescue practitioners. Any person in distress at sea, hoping that the Coast Guard will locate, rescue, and reunite them with their loved ones, deserves nothing less.

Drew Casey retired from the U.S. Coast Guard in June 2021. A legacy Marine Safety Officer and career Response-Ashore Officer, he has several years of SAR Mission Coordinator and Active Search Suspension Authority experience on the Gulf Coast. He served as the Lead Project Officer for the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Incident Specific Preparedness Review (ISPR).

Book excerpt

By Tyler J. Kelley

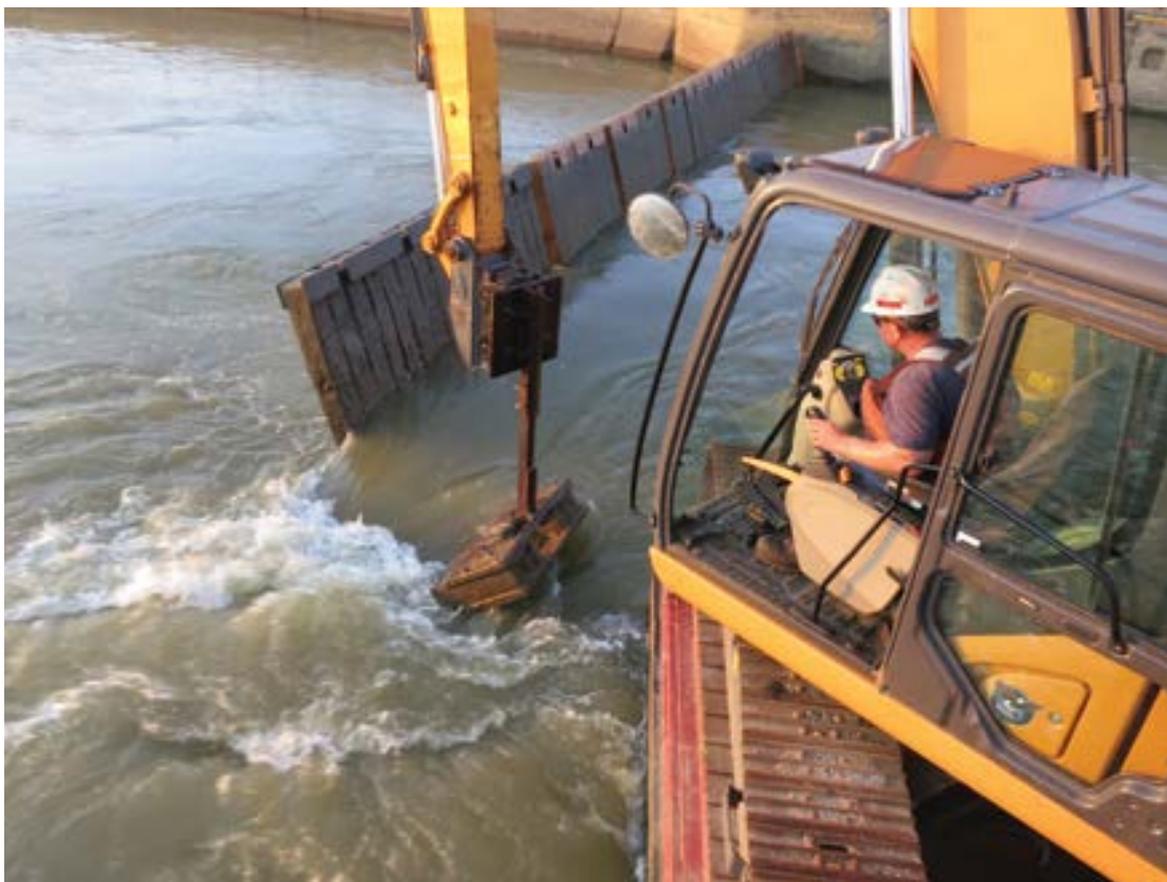
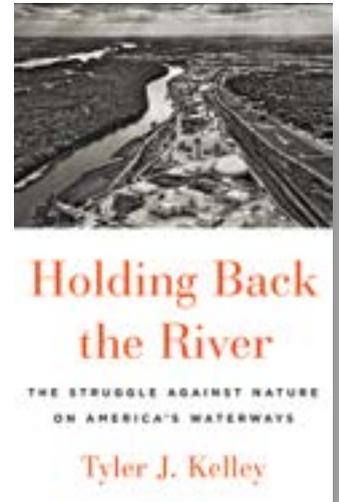
'Holding Back the River' brings challenges of inland commerce to life

After finishing his T-bone, Capt. David Stansbury went to bed. Jackson "Bubba" Walker, the pilot, sat before the stainless-steel levers that controlled *William Hank's* rudders, preparing to "make the lock." Walker, a fifth-generation towboat, could remember float-

ing past No. 52 on the Ohio River in the pilothouse of a towboat captained by his father. As the chambers filled and emptied and filled again, Walker smoked cigarettes and squinted through his glasses at the dam. Finally, *William Hank* was cleared to approach the lock.

Walker pushed the throttles forward and the boat chugged slowly toward the narrow concrete wall.

In front of him at the head of the tow, a deck hand guided him in over the radio: "All right, Bubba, sitting down here about 1,000 (feet) below ... four



Zach Tirey uses a barge-mounted trackhoe – the latest in wicket-lifting technology – to raise the dam at Lock and Dam No. 52 on the Ohio River in September 2017. The dam was falling apart during this lift sequence and vessel traffic was halted for eight days.

Tyler Kelley

more feet you be looking at daylight on that long wall ... points comin' to the good, about a foot or two to the good." The voice drawled in rhythmic monotone. "To the bad" meant Walker was going to hit the lock. "To the good" meant he was clear. The pilot had eased in close to the shore early in his approach to avoid being caught in a slide that might ram him into the bank or the lock. With the power of 4,200 horses, he was driving something longer than

the Chrysler Building is tall. He wanted to get it right the first time.

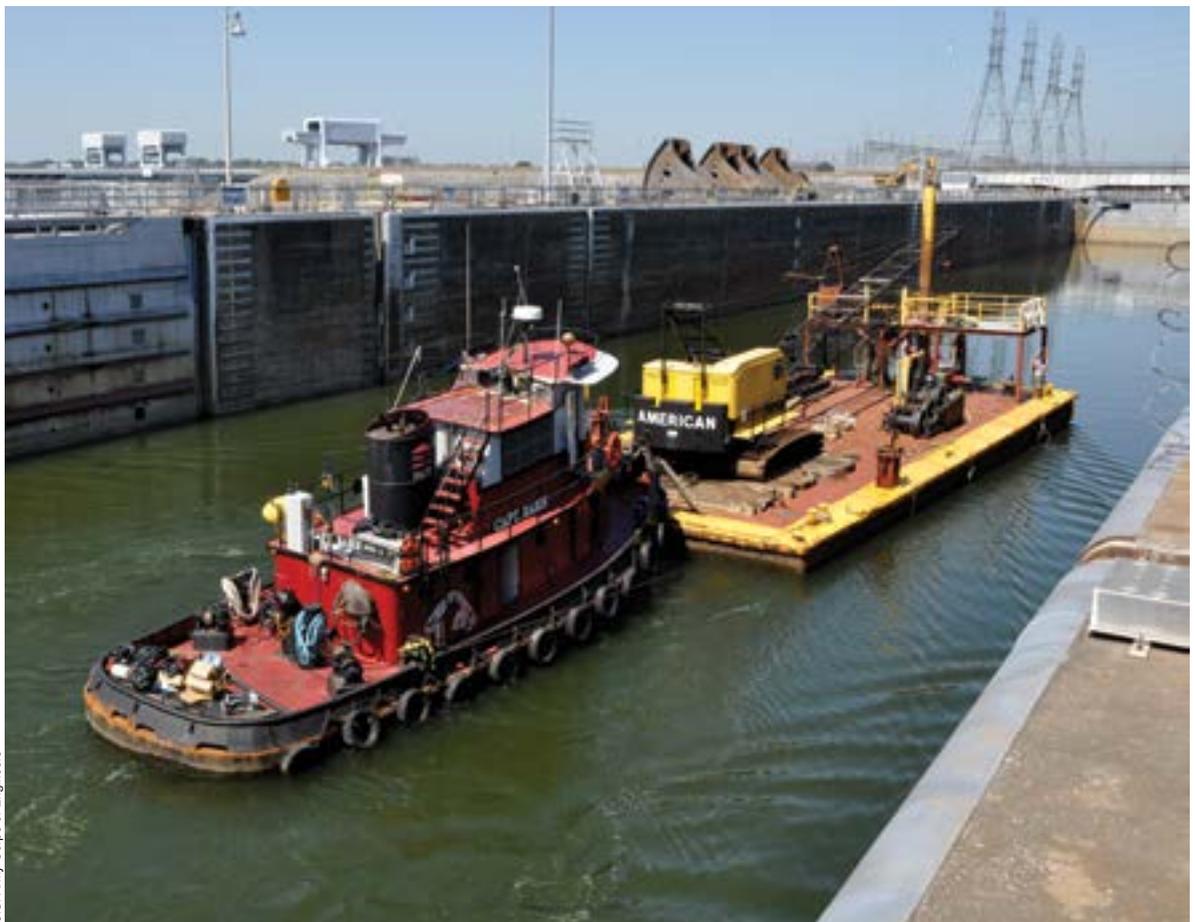
Walker maneuvered *William Hank* snugly into the 1,200-foot chamber, a "temporary" addition built in 1969 to help No. 52 accommodate bigger tows. Instead of a smooth wall, the chamber was made out of poured-concrete cylinders encased in rusty sheet piles. The setup almost seemed designed to catch the front of a barge. "You can easily get quartered just enough that you

can jam up in here and do a bunch of damage," Walker said, laughing. His tow was 105 feet wide, the lock chamber was 110. To park his 1,130-foot tow, he had as much wiggle room as a car in a Walmart parking lot.

Gently tapping the rudder levers and pulling back and forth on the two throttles, Walker steered, came ahead and stopped in the center of the chamber. An operator in a neon-green vest appeared. He rode a yellow scooter to the

end of the chamber wall, got off and leaned bodily against a long metal lever. The lock groaned. Its sector gears turned, its strut arms stretched out, and its miter gates slowly closed behind *William Hank*. A lock operator could close the gates and fill or empty the chamber by himself, using the levers and a set of buttons inside two sheet-metal shacks a little bigger than Porta Potties. At a newer lock, it might have taken 15 minutes to move a tow through, but so much

M/V Capt. Babin pushes a barge into Kentucky Lock in 2012. The small size of the lock means most tows have to be divided to pass through, adding time and expense for operators.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

water leaked out of No. 52 that it took an hour.

That made nine, since *William Hank* had waited eight hours to get here. “This is one of the fastest I’ve seen it,” Walker said. “I have actually sat on both sides of this lock for a week.”

•••••

The sun had set, the infamous lock was behind them, and Capt. Stansbury was back in the pilothouse, guiding the towboat as it churned up the Tennessee River. Walker had taken it up to the Paducah waterfront, where the crew exchanged a few barges and took on fuel and water. Stansbury’s craft was still 1,130 feet long — 247 feet longer than *Titanic*. To steer, he focused on a blue light on the jack staff, three football fields in front of him on the head of his tow.

A harvest moon rose from behind the woods. Stansbury turned off his spotlights and steered by the moon alone. At 10 p.m. he was approaching Kentucky Lock and Dam, the last control structure on the Tennessee River and another bottleneck. Over the past 130 years, barges and towboats have gotten a lot bigger, but the

chamber at Kentucky Lock was 600 feet by 110 feet, the same size as the first lock chamber ever built on a major American river. As Stansbury neared the lock, 10 other towboats were lined up ahead of him. Because the chamber was small, most would have to break their raft of barges in half and lock through twice — a three-hour process. *William Hank*, its crew and the millions of dollars’ worth of goods it was pushing were looking at a 27-hour wait.

A larger lock chamber has been under construction here since 1998. The projected cost, revised upward several times, tops \$1 billion. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains all of the navigation infrastructure on the inland waterways and designs and builds improvements, but money for these projects comes from Congress and from a special tax on gas burned by towboats. Before 2016, there weren’t enough gas tax funds to efficiently finance the Kentucky Lock addition. In 2013 and 2015, it

received no money at all. By the latest estimate, the newchamber will be operational in 2023. Until then, tows will have to keep waiting.

“This industry, people just don’t see it every day,” Stansbury had said earlier. “They don’t understand where a lot of these products come from that they use every day. If the public was aware of the commodities we push, we’d probably get more funding. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” It was easy to see why the river didn’t squeak. Beyond the pilothouse windows there were no lights for mile after mile. With few towns and fewer homes, no one saw what happened here. Practically the only lights Stansbury passed came from dry docks, coal terminals and chemical plants. Compared to roads, where the average American drives 11,498 miles a year, rivers are almost invisible.

Stansbury listened with amusement as the lock operator, overwhelmed by unseen voices from unseen towboats waiting in the blackness, called out over his radio to reassure each

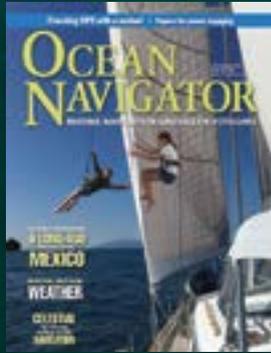
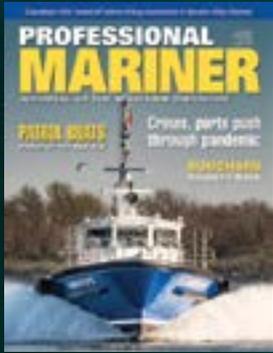
one of its place in line. After securing his spot, the captain nosed *William Hank* into the bank for the night. Throttles a touch forward, rudders turned just a little, he could wait indefinitely without tying up. Fog rolled in and soon he couldn’t see the head of the tow. Stansbury had stood the front watch. His six hours were almost up. Walker was awake, brewing coffee under a dim red light. It could take five days to move 100 miles on these stretches of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers. Stansbury would sleep six hours and be back on watch before his boat moved again. •

Editor’s note: Lock No. 52 and Lock No. 53 on the Ohio River were replaced by the Olmsted Locks and Dam, which opened in 2018.



Excerpt from Holding Back the River: The Struggle Against

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mariners sharing a room.

Once, while working as a mate on an oceanographic ship taking coring samples off the Florida coast, Bill the able seaman on my 8-12 watch shared a room with the 12-4 AB Eddie. He constantly complained about his roommate. "He slams the door when he comes down after watch and wakes me up, never cleans our head, and leaves pubic hairs on the soap. He's gross." One morning, after being awakened once again, Bill got up and went after his roommate — shoving him into a bulkhead and threatening to "kick him in the seat of his pants from stem to stern."

Word of their scuffle travelled around the ship, and before long the chief mate wisely split them up, rooming Eddie with another seaman. The "bad blood" between the two continued for weeks afterward, however, and didn't make for a pleasant trip for anyone onboard.

Even the authorities recognize

the importance of getting along with other crewmembers. During my first STCW (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers) Basic Training class, we were essentially taught the same information John told me on my first trip. In the Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities Module, we were instructed to be sensitive and courteous to roommates in shared rooms.

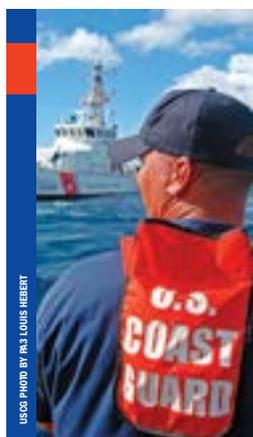
Minimizing shared room problems onboard commercial vessels requires effort by the roommates themselves and the senior officers onboard as well. The captain or chief mate should ensure that any crewmembers in a shared room are on a watch schedule that doesn't interfere with the others in the room; that all have taken the Personal and Social Responsibilities module of the STCW Basic Training course; and that those sharing a room fully understand how to treat each other professionally, thoughtfully and respectfully at

all times.

Living together in close quarters is an inherent part of being a merchant mariner. While these aforementioned "room rules" are not official, and carry no legal ramifications, they can help things run more smoothly while on board. With ship crews having been cut to bare-bones levels, and 12-hour days the standard, there is no time for confrontations onboard. Until the U.S. Coast Guard and ship designers ensure all crewmembers are provided unshared personal space on all merchant vessels, we'll just have to deal with the situation ourselves.

Til next time I wish you all smooth sailin.'

Capt. Kelly Sweeney holds the license of master (oceans, any gross tons) and has held a master of towing vessels (oceans) license as well. He has sailed on more than 40 commercial vessels and lives on an island near Seattle. He can be contacted by email at captswsweeney@outlook.com.



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A Mariner's Notebook

by Capt. Kelly Sweeney

Remembering 'John's rules' when sharing a room at sea

After a series of fortuitous occurrences, and a frenzied trip from San Francisco to Long Beach, Calif., the cab pulled up at Pier 48 at 1800 on the dot — the exact time I was supposed to join the vessel. It was my first job as a merchant mariner, hired as an ordinary seaman on a towing/



landing craft, running military ro-ro cargo between San Nicholas Island and Port Hueneme.

I grabbed my seabag and hopped aboard, then went to the wheelhouse to report to the captain. An old timer who'd been going to sea for decades, he told me, "You're on my 6-12 watch. Go down to your room, change into your work gear, grab

some supper and then get back up here to the wheelhouse." After the mate told me where my room was, I lugged my seabag down and opened the door, looking forward to a few minutes by myself to clean up and regroup after the crazy travel day. Unexpectedly, a tall guy in coveralls was sitting on one of the two beds in the room, lacing up his boots. He reached out his hand in greeting. "I'm John, the AB. We're roommates." Then, pointing to the bare mattress next to the interior bulkhead on the opposite side of the stateroom, he said, "And that's your rack over there."

Many mariners at the beginning of their career do not think about the possibility of sharing a room onboard the vessel. I certainly didn't. In school, all the books I'd read told me that having your own

stateroom is just part of a mariner's life at sea. What I don't recall those books ever mentioning is that usually only officers get their own staterooms. Unlicensed crewmembers can legally be stuffed four or more to a room. When I was a cadet, I did my senior training cruises on two different container ships. Being a third officer-in-training, I was given a huge stateroom with my own head. So, a mere few months later after graduating, the idea of having to share a room on the tug/landing craft was not something I anticipated.

My roommate John, the AB, taught me about "shared room etiquette." That included such things as keeping my gear stowed in my room locker and not strewn all over, avoiding turning on lights when he was sleeping, keeping the noise level down when I came back

from watch, making sure I didn't wake him when I was off-watch, and doing my part to keep the stateroom and attached head clean. I learned a lot about "shared room etiquette" on that trip. I think that it made the job go much more smoothly, by enabling me to avoid "roommate issues" with John. In fact, we're still friends.

After sailing on over 40 commercial vessels, I can say with certainty that nearly every merchant mariner will have to share a room sometime during his or her sea-going career. I've shared a room on tugs, large oil spill response vessels, and fish factory ships, and can say from experience that having a roommate, or roommates, is not always easy. In fact, some of the biggest conflicts I've seen onboard started as a problem between two

continued on page 47



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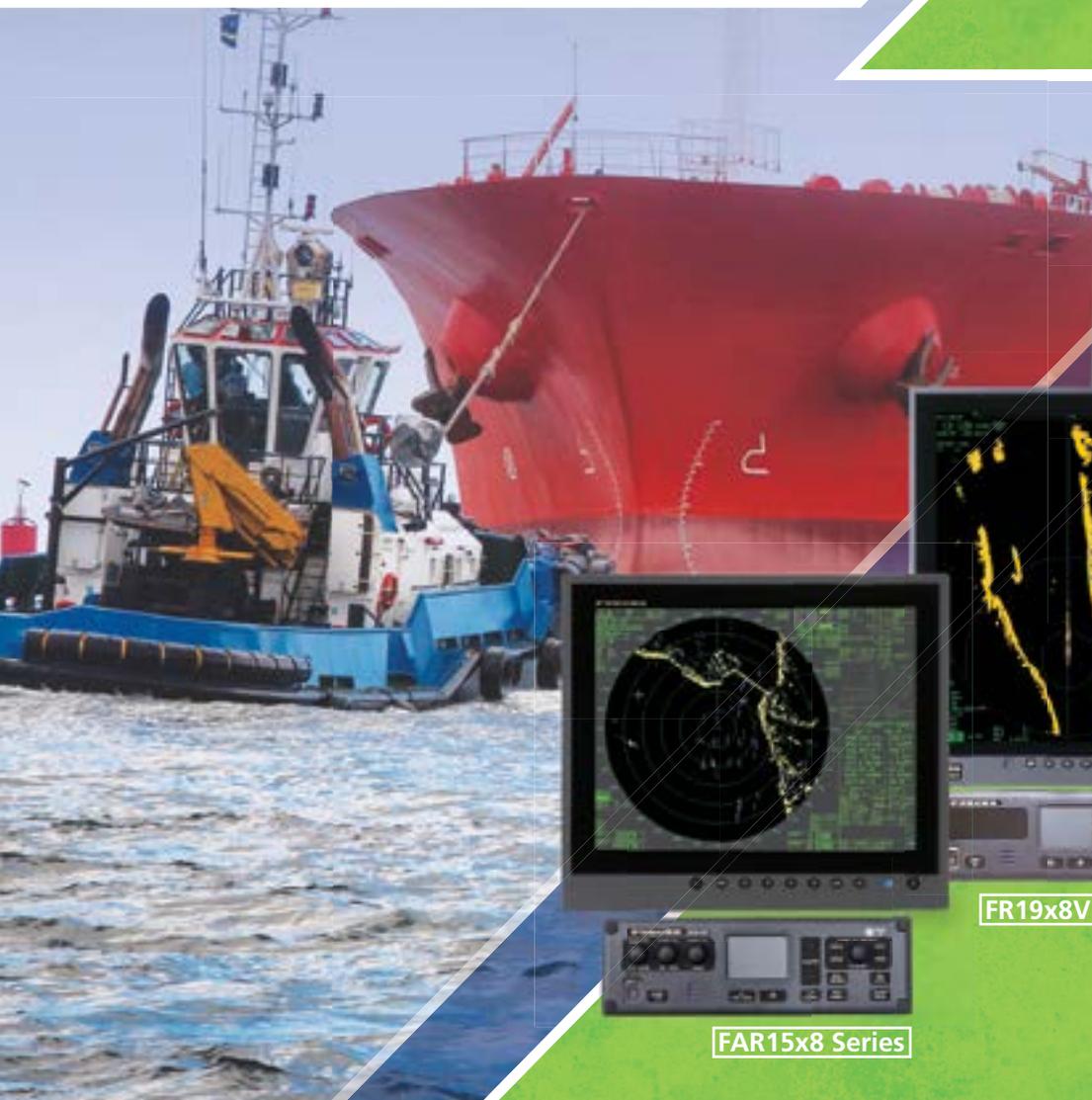
BUT FURUNO RADARS ARE A SIMPLE CHOICE

Your objective is simple...Deliver your vessel and its contents safely and on time. While it might sound simple, we know it's not easy!

Whether you're navigating the open ocean, busy harbors, or through congested inland waterways, being aware of your surroundings is paramount. Your number one line of defense is a Radar you can rely on, from a company you can depend on. Furuno's award winning Radar technology is built to perform and withstand the harshest environments, keeping you, your crew and your precious cargo safe. With unique application features like ACE (Automatic Clutter Elimination), Target Analyzer, and Fast Target Tracking, Furuno Radars will help make that simple objective easier to achieve.



UHD
Ultra High Definition Radar



FAR22x8BB Series



FR19x8VBB Series



FAR15x8 Series

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