

**LINE OF DUTY
DEATH REPORT
REPORT SLIDES**



F2023-10

Two Career Land-Based
Firefighters Die After Becoming
Lost and Running Out of Air
During a Marine Vessel Fire in
Port – New Jersey



Summary

- On July 5, 2023, two career land-based firefighters died after becoming lost and running out of air while conducting a fire attack during a marine vessel fire in port.
- At 07:00 hours, a 692-foot roll-on/roll-off (ro/ro) vessel with a crew of 28 commenced vehicle loading operations while dockside in a port.



A view of the marine vessel fire in port.
(Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard)



Summary

- At 21:00 hours, port workers and vessel crew members noticed a vehicle on deck 10 was on fire.
- Crew members immediately employed portable fire extinguishers and a shipboard water hoseline but were unsuccessful at controlling the fire.



A view of the vessel and the conditions at the time of the fire department arrival.
(Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard)



Summary

- At 21:22, after evacuating the cargo decks and activating the emergency ventilation stop, the vessel's fixed carbon dioxide system was discharged for 10 minutes into cargo decks 6 to 11.
- The vessel's crew members then formed fire teams and deployed hoselines to fight vehicle fires and conduct boundary cooling.
- At 21:25 hours, fire department units were dispatched to a reported fire aboard the ro/ro vessel: Engines 5, 14, 16, 27; Ladders 4, 5, 8; Rescue 11; Battalions 4, 5, and DC1.



Summary

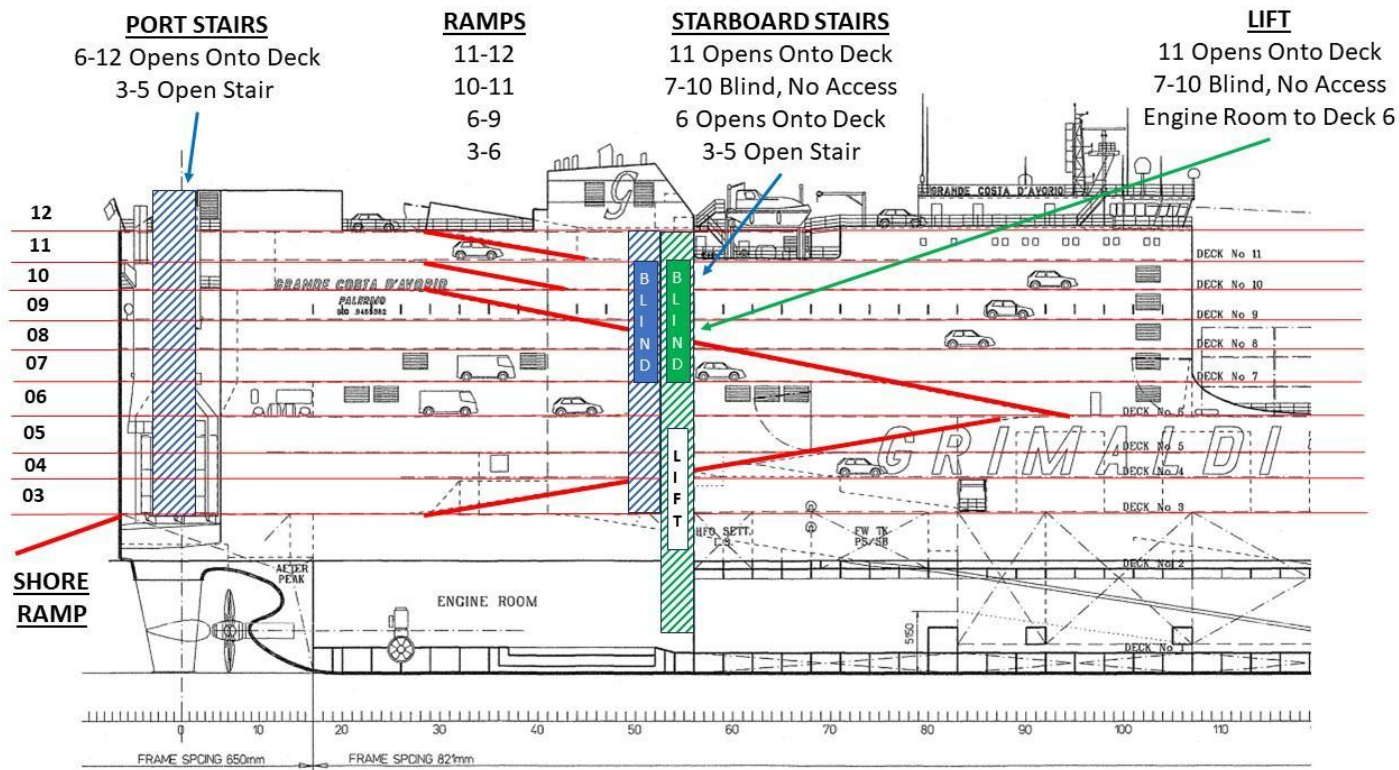
- The incident commander staged at the top of the rear/stern ramp on deck 3 and was joined by the vessel's Chief Mate to provide an update on the situation.
- The incident commander canceled all mutual aid at 21:47 hours.
- Between 21:36 – 22:04 hours, firefighters from Engine 27 and Ladder 4 entered deck 11 and 10 to assess the fire situation and report findings.
- They encountered heavy smoke conditions on deck 11 and active fire on deck 10.
- Firefighters discovered their fire department hose did not connect to the vessel's hose stations.



Summary

- They used the vessel's hoses to extinguish vehicle fires on deck 10.
- At 22:14 hours, Ladder 4's captain noticed structural damage, including a twisted/warped steel I-beam, and left the deck to provide an update on the conditions.
- At 22:17 hours, Engine 16's captain and firefighter (deceased firefighter) entered deck 10 and assisted the remaining Ladder 4 firefighter (deceased firefighter).
- Conditions rapidly deteriorated and all three firefighters were ordered to withdraw.
- While evacuating, Engine 16's captain realized he was no longer in contact with the other firefighters.

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View of the vessel showing the access between the various decks including ladderwells, the personnel lift (elevator), and vehicle ramps.
(Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard)



Summary

- At 22:23 hours, a Mayday was called by a firefighter stating they were lost.
- Ladder 5 and Rescue 1 were deployed to deck 10 to search for the missing firefighters.
- Engine 16 firefighter was located by Ladder 5 and Rescue 1 at 22:40 hours.
- From 22:41 to 23:58 hours, firefighters from several companies rotated in and out on deck 10 to facilitate the rescue of the Engine 16 firefighter.

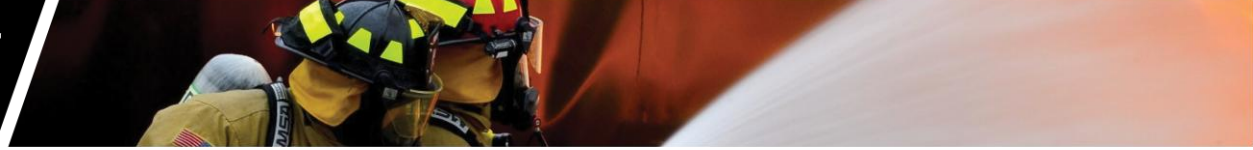


View of the vessel from the rear/stern with the deck levels noted. The rear/stern vehicle ramp is shown, which was used by all personnel during the incident to access deck 3. (Courtesy of NIOSH)



Summary

- Mutual aid resources were requested and began to arrive on-scene.
- Ladder 4 firefighter was located on deck 10 at 02:08 hours the next day, July 6, 2023.
- Both firefighters were removed from the vessel and pronounced deceased upon arrival to the hospital.
- At 06:40 hours, all onboard firefighting efforts ceased, and the vessel's crew abandoned the ship.
- The fire was finally extinguished by a private team of salvors/marine vessel firefighters on July 10, 2023.



Contributing Factors

- Pre-planning for marine vessel fires
- Training on marine vessel firefighting
- Coordination with marine vessel fire response efforts
- Request and use of mutual aid resources
- Unified command with marine vessel representatives.



Recommendations

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive pre-fire plan for marine vessels per NFPA 1405, Guide for Land-Based Fire Departments that Respond to Marine Vessel Fires.
- Train fire officers and firefighters in marine vessel firefighting.
- Coordinate with marine vessel crew members and fire teams.
- Request and utilize mutual aid resources for all marine vessel incidents, such as fires, as early in the incident as possible.
- Establish and maintain unified command with marine vessel representatives throughout the incident.

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