

M/V LECONTE UNIFIED COMMAND AFTER ACTION REPORT



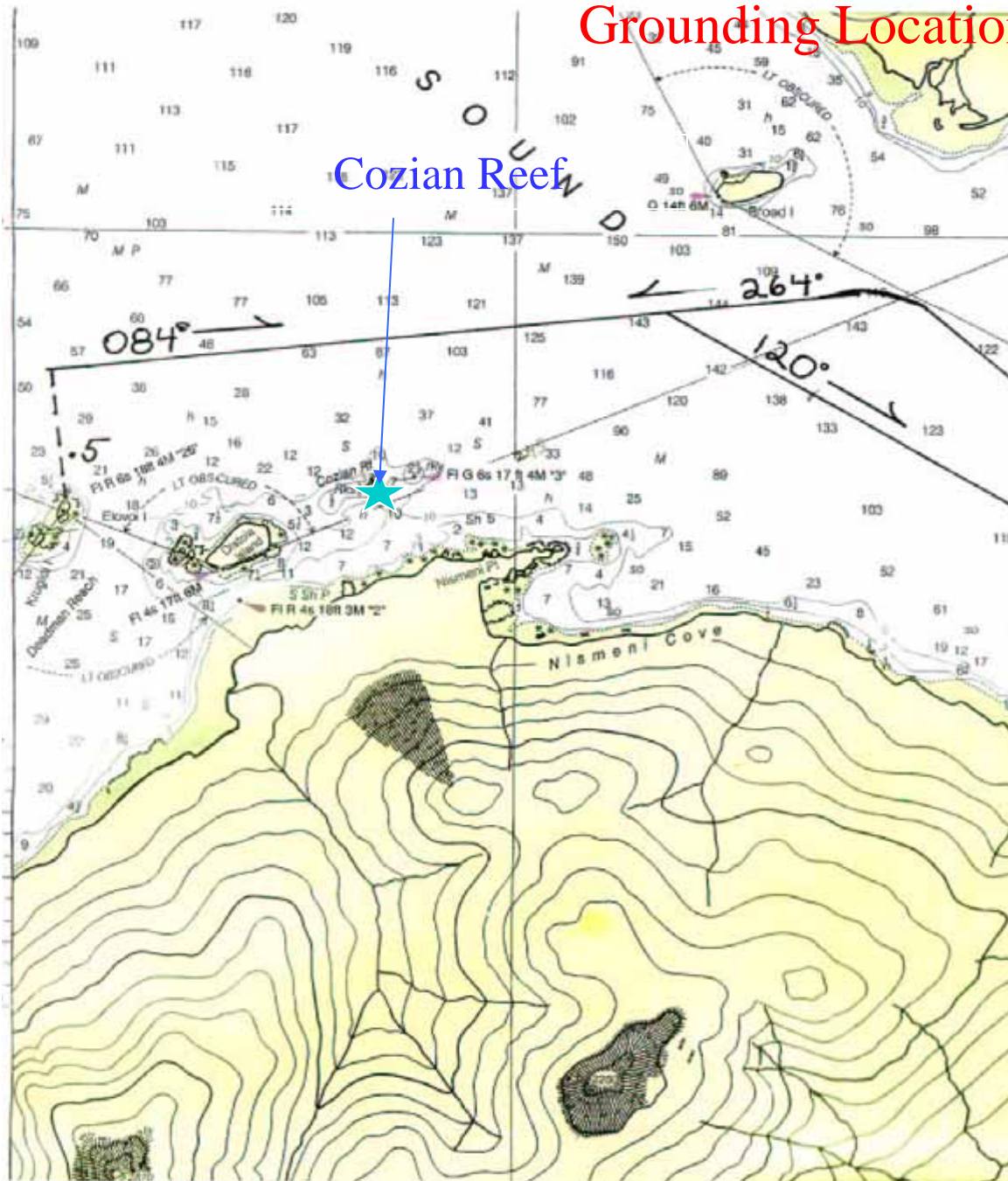
Summary



- May 10, 2004
Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) vessel M/V LECONTE grounded on Cozain Reef in Peril Strait.
- Vessel reported flooding in five areas—two outer voids, bow thruster room, MSD space, and ballast tank.
- Command post was established at MSO Juneau . AMHS, ADEC, and MSO Juneau established a Unified Command and jointly staffed the command post.
- AMHS activated their contract with Alaska Steamship Response (ASR) to assist with response management, and with SEAPRO to support both command post requirements and to provide on scene pollution response capability.

Grounding Location

Cozian Reef



Search And Rescue

109 Passengers (86) and crew (23)

Evacuation of passengers and crew completed safely utilizing LECONTE's Lifeboats and rescue boat.

Only a couple minor injuries during evacuation

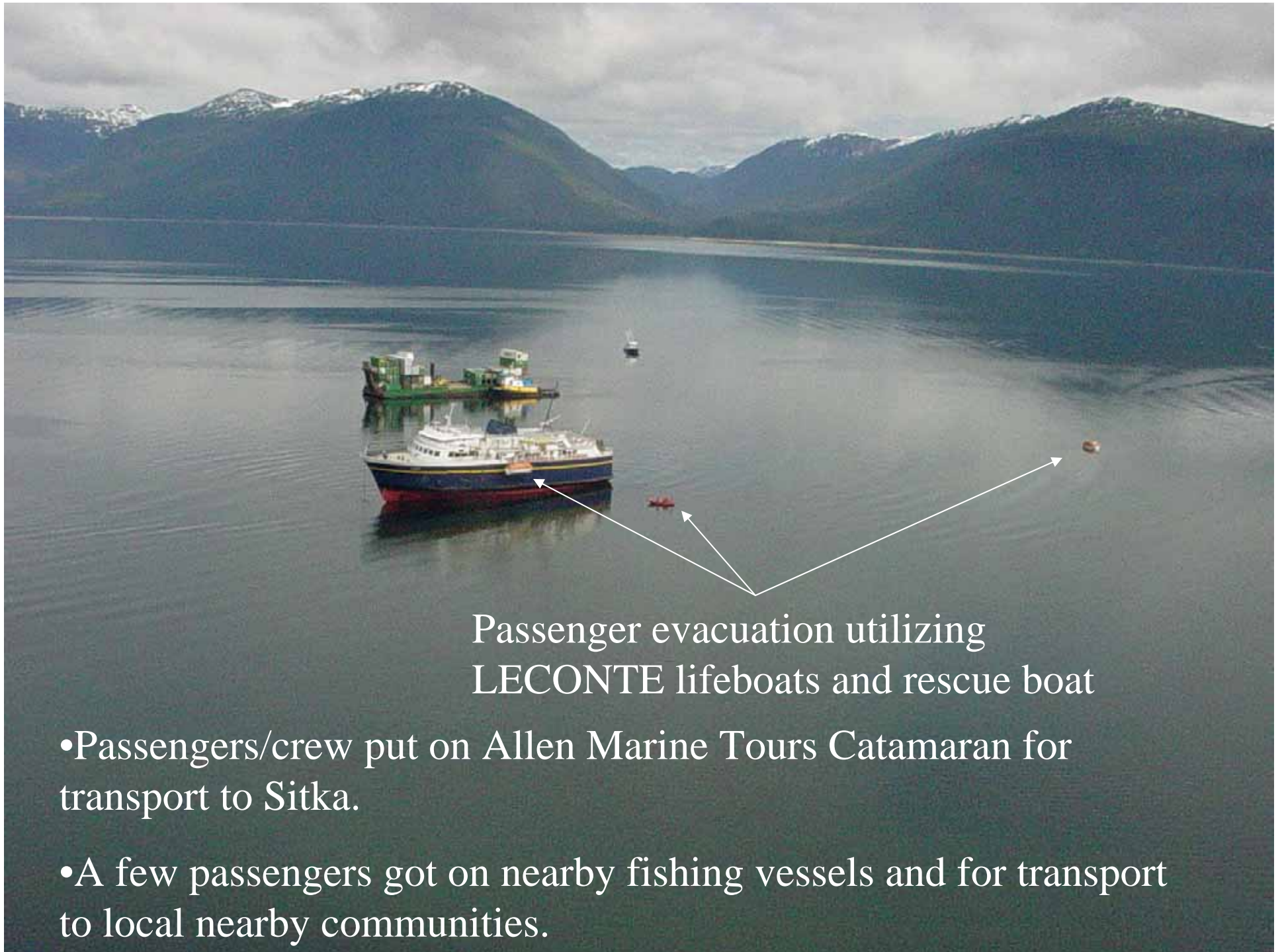
The NOAA vessel M/V FRED COBB was appointed On Scene Commander by the USCG Command Center, and coordinated with Good Samaritan vessels for transport of Evacuees to Sitka.

Passenger accountability difficult due to fishing vessels departing scene with passengers before full accountability of passengers was completed.

CG HH60 JAYHAWK



Tug Western Mariner with Container Barge
Stood by following grounding & assisted with evacuation



Passenger evacuation utilizing
LECONTE lifeboats and rescue boat

- Passengers/crew put on Allen Marine Tours Catamaran for transport to Sitka.
- A few passengers got on nearby fishing vessels and for transport to local nearby communities.

POLLUTION RESPONSE



- Vessel surrounded by boom - approximately 1000 ft
- Vehicles removed from ferry onto Landing Craft
- Fuel Lightered to Landing Craft – approximately 23,000 Gallons

Boom Deployment



Lightering Operations



Salvage planning was initiated by AMHS early which was critical to response.



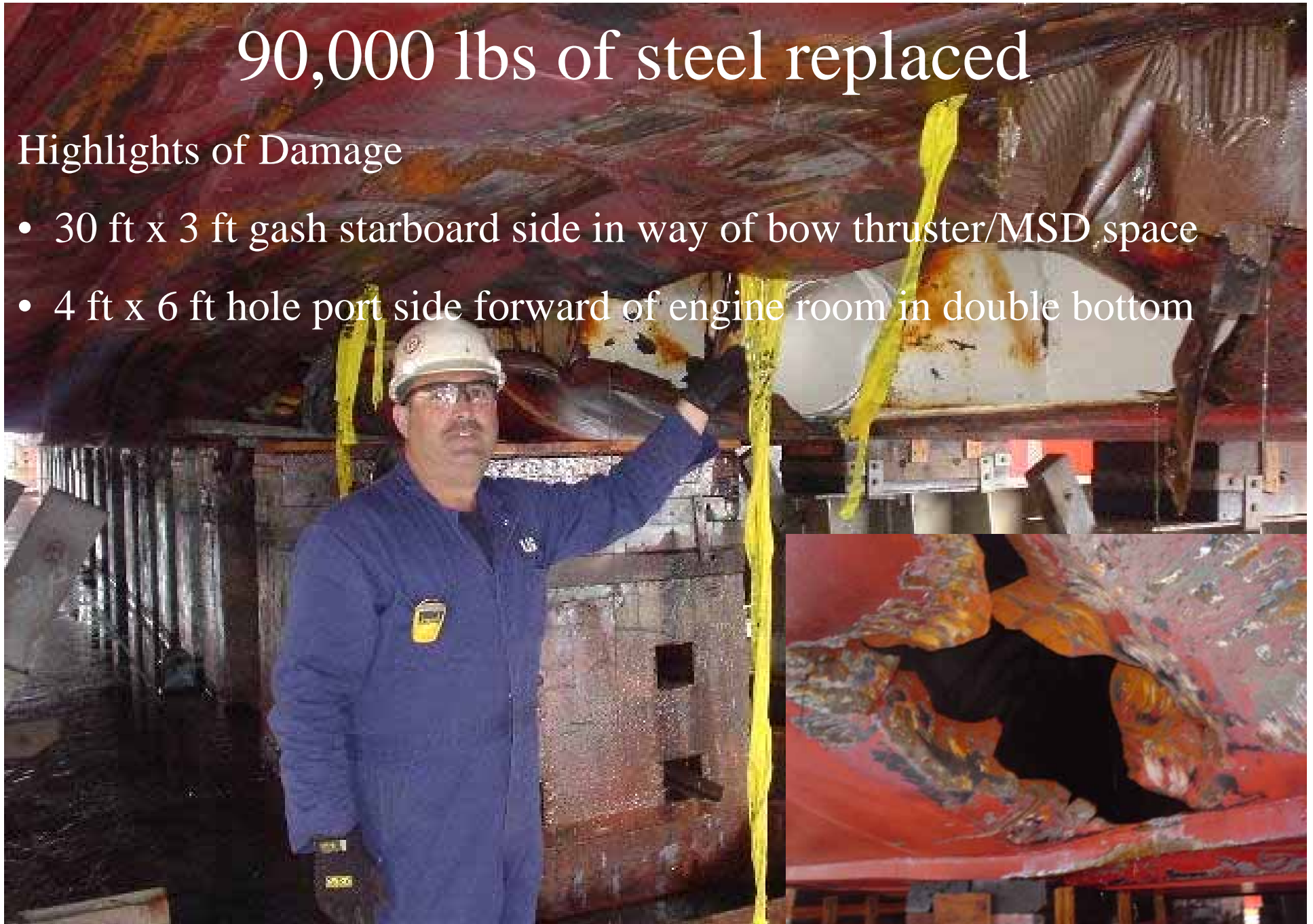
SALVAGE OPERATIONS

- Weather was excellent for 2 week period of operations
- Tow Plan Developed
- Determined Places of Safe Refuge along tow route
- Trustees provided historical properties and critical habitats information for tow route
- Crowley Salvors completed temporary repairs and utilized “air bubble” in holed tanks to keep LECONTE afloat after removal from the reef.

90,000 lbs of steel replaced

Highlights of Damage

- 30 ft x 3 ft gash starboard side in way of bow thruster/MSD space
- 4 ft x 6 ft hole port side forward of engine room in double bottom



Summary of Significant Recommendations

- ❑ Expansion of CG VHF coverage in Southeast Alaska to eliminate “black holes”, especially along major shipping lanes for passenger vessels.
- ❑ Develop planning guidelines for the locations and operations of a joint command post. Guidelines should include when to establish a joint command post, potential locations, minimum requirements, and exceptions.
- ❑ Review standard operating procedures developed for large cruise ship responses and amend as required for AMHS operations. These procedures include a joint quick start guide, standard evacuee accountability process, standard objectives and missions, command organization, and communications best practices.
- ❑ USCG, State and AMHS safety officers should communicate with salvage safety officer to fully understand safety expectations and requirements, especially in salvage operations.
- ❑ Provide improved direction to the OSC for passenger accountability. Ensure OSC directs all on scene response vessels to remain on scene until adequate tracking of evacuees is in place, and until released by the OSC.
- ❑ Cellular phones coverage was nonexistent. Both IRRIDIUM and GOLBAL STAR satellite phones were used, with varying level of success.
- ❑ Portable communications suite of equipment dispatched to the scene and a base radio installed at Incident Command Post that utilized the US Forest Service network. Improved communications on-scene

Special Thanks to all Participants

ADEC

ASR

CROWLEY

NOAA

Allen Marine

CG STRIKE TEAM

DOI

Good Sams

CGD17 (M)

SEAPRO

CG Air Station

USDAFS

CROWLEY

USFW

Unified Command
After Action Report

M/V LECONTE Response

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A. Background:

This report is intended to summarize the comments and observations presented at the May 21, 2004 debrief for the joint response to the MV LECONTE grounding. This report focuses on the unified command response, and provides recommendations for improvement during future joint operations. This report will not discuss the cause of the incident.

Summary:

On May 10, 2004, the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) vessel MV LECONTE grounded on Cozian Reef. Vessel reported flooding in five areas – two outer voids, bow thruster room, MSD space, and ballast tank. The master of the vessel successfully evacuated 86 passengers and non-essential crew. Two minor injuries were reported during the evacuation.

A command post was established at MSO Juneau. AMHS, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), and MSO Juneau established a unified command and jointly staffed the command post. AMHS activated their contract with Alaska Steamship Response (ASR) to assist with response management, and with SEAPRO to support both command post requirements and to provide on scene pollution response capability.

B. Summary of Significant Recommendations: The following list summarizes the most significant recommendations resulting from this response. Additional recommendations are found in each section.

- USCG should expand VHF coverage in Southeast Alaska to eliminate ‘black holes’, especially along major shipping lanes for passenger vessels.
- Establish an ‘‘umbrella’’ safety plan as soon as possible that appoints an overall on-scene safety officer, and incorporates and strengthens the individual safety programs of the various response organizations.
- Activate communication technicians as soon as possible and task them with developing the capability to provide adequate communications to the scene.
- Develop planning guidelines for the location and operation of a joint command post. Guidelines should include when to establish a joint command post, potential locations, minimum requirements, and expectations.
- Conduct Joint Incident Command System (ICS) training and annual refresher exercises for unified command personnel.
- Review the standard operating procedures developed for large cruise ship responses and amend as required for AMHS operations. These procedures include a joint quick start guide, standard evacuee accountability process, standard objectives and missions, command organization, and communications best practices.
- Provide better direction to the On Scene Commander (OSC) in regards to evacuee tracking and control.
- Conduct joint information center training with the goal to improve operations and service to media.

C. Safety Observations and Recommendations:

Safety was stressed from the earliest stages of the response. The unified command addressed safety at every meeting. On scene safety procedures were continually evaluated and improved, especially in regards to accountability of responders on scene. Two minor injuries occurred during the evacuation process, and one during the response phase when a salvage worker tripped over a hose on deck and hyper-extended his elbow. No other injuries resulted.

Safety Recommendations:

- Continue the use of the safety summary sheet as part of the site safety plan. This summary provided a quick reference and refresher for response personnel.
- Stress to all responders, and especially to safety officers, that anyone is empowered to stop an operation for safety reasons.
- USCG, State, and AMHS safety officers should communicate with salvage safety officer to fully understand safety expectations and requirements, especially in salvage operations.
- Continue to use the expertise and experience of the USCG Pacific Strike Team for on scene safety, especially in lightering and salvage operations.

D. Search And Rescue Response :

- **Initial Notifications:** No significant notification issues were reported. ADEC requested to be notified as early as possible, even in cases involving only potential oil spills.
- **Evacuation and Evacuee Tracking:** The evacuation of the 86 passengers and non-essential crew went well. Only 2 minor injuries resulted. Once the decision to evacuate was made, the process went smoothly, indicating good crew training and professionalism. The NOAA vessel MV FRED COBB was appointed On Scene Commander by the USCG Command Center, and coordinated on scene operations until relieved by the USCGC MAPLE. Passengers were evacuated onto Allen Marine passenger vessels and two fishing vessels. Evacuees were landed in Sitka from the Allen Marine vessel and in Angoon from the fishing vessels. The fishing vessels departed the scene before full accountability of passengers was completed which caused some confusion. Improved direction, communication, and check in –out procedures with the fishing vessels may have eliminated the confusion.

Recommendations for Evacuee Tracking:

- Provide improved direction to the OSC for passenger accountability. Ensure OSC directs all on scene response vessels to remain on scene until adequate tracking of evacuees is in place, and until released by the OSC.

- Review the standard procedures develop by the large cruise ship work group for evacuee accountability, joint quick start guides, unified objectives, and communications. Amend for use in AMHS response as appropriate.
- Ensure the OSC fully understands responsibility to direct on scene rescue resources and to track evacuees. To the extent conditions permit, OSC shall direct all response vessels to remain on scene until accountability information is provided, and vessel is released by the OSC. Vessel should not be released if it contains insufficient capacity or life saving equipment for the additional personnel.
- The unified command should determine evacuee landing sites quickly. To the extent that conditions permit, direct all evacuee offloading to the same location. This may require off loading evacuees from smaller fishing vessels onto larger platforms.
- **Away Team:** A USCG Away team was dispatched to the scene by MSO Juneau to provide a communications point of contact and assist as required. IAW with CGD17INST , the Away team should have communicated through the OSC, which permits all on scene resources to be in the information loop. The use of satellite telephones by the Away Team often kept the OSC unaware of rapidly changing information.

Recommendations for Away Team improvement:

- To the maximum extent possible, the Away team should communicate through the OSC. This enables the OSC to be fully aware of conditions and requests.
- In situations where it is preferable or necessary for the Away Team to communicate directly with cell or satellite telephones, the Away team must update the OSC regularly.
- **Communications:** Communications coverage in Southeast Alaska is not complete. There are dead spots or black ‘ holes’ with no USCG VHF coverage. This incident occurred in one of those dead spot with poor VHS coverage and spotty satellite telephone reception. Both IRRIDIUM and GLOBAL STAR satellite phones were used, with varying level of success. USCGD17 command center was initially the primary center for communications and relayed information to the unified command. The relay of information improved when an (M) duty officer augmented the watch and provided regular updates to the unified command. MSO Juneau has no pre-installed communications capability. In the initial stages of the incident, the flow of information between the AMHS office, MSO Juneau and D17 command center was difficult, and each party reported being information starved. The capability to quickly share information was identified. Once requested, the USCGD17 communications specialists dispatched a portable communications suite of equipment to the scene, including fax capability, and installed a base radio at MSO Juneau that utilized the US Forest Service network. This team of specialist in conjunction with AT&T activated an old VHF site in Angoon, which permitted improved coverage to the region. This combination of equipment permitted direct communications to the scene and reduced reliance on satellite telephones. One drawback was insufficient USFS handheld radios on scene. Personnel for radio watches would have been a

limiting factor for an extended response. SEAPRO and ADEC portable communications options were not employed.

Recommendations for communication improvements:

- USCG should continue to plan for complete VHF coverage throughout Se Alaska, especially along the main cruise ship, state ferry and commercial shipping lanes.
- Unified Command should alert / activate communications specialist as early in the response as possible, and provide to them their performance requirements and needs. Timely activation permits communications to be operational as early as possible and help reduce the confusion resulting from lack of information.
- USCGD17(m) should continue to augment the USCGD17 command center watch with a dedicated person to serve as a sole point of contact to relay information to the unified command.
- MSO Juneau should be equipped to rapidly utilize the extensive US Forest Service communications network.
- If resources are available, utilize more than one type of satellite telephone during a response. More than one option expands the potential for coverage.
- USCG should develop an MOU with the USFS for use of the VHF sites and hand held radios during an emergency.
- The USCGD17 fly away communications package should be equipped with email capability if the technology exists.
- Unified command should investigate and test programs to enable rapid exchange of information between agencies over the internet.
- Logistics Section should initiate process to identify radio watch standers to meet demands of the operation.

E. Post SAR Response

- **Transition to Post SAR Phase:** Once all passengers and crew were safely evacuated, the USCGD17 Command Center transferred responsibility for the response to MSO Juneau. This transition was orderly and smooth, and clearly communicated. USCGD17 CC continued to pass information to MSO Juneau. MSO Juneau then had the responsibility to keep the command center updated on current status and significant events in order to keep District Commander informed.
- **Command Post Issues:** Immediately following the grounding, AMHS Emergency Response Team assembled at the AMHS office and MSO Juneau and ADEC assembled at the MSO Juneau command post. It quickly became clear that a joint AMHS, MSO and ADEC command would be required for this response to be successful. At the request of MSO Juneau, AMHS initially reported to MSO Juneau with 4 key personnel, agreed to stay, and expanded their presence. This created some problems for the AMHS personnel, who now had to work in unfamiliar locations, operate under the unfamiliar ICS organizations with State and federal personnel, and leave other fleet issues unresolved back at the office. This separate location did however separate responders from their day job and permitted their full attention to the problem at hand.

The command post at MSO Juneau is confined to a single multipurpose room. It offers good access, security, parking and proximity to airport. For this incident, it's size was adequate, but barley. If there has been a significant oil spill as part of the incident, space would have been inadequate. A separate conference room was borrowed from the fire training service for private meetings and confidential telephone calls. The MSO command post does offers internet connectivity, 6 telephone lines, and email for the incident can be established. There is no dedicated fax, or networked printer capability.

Recommendations to Improve the Operations of the Joint Command Post:

- The unified command (AMHS, MSO Juneau, ADEC) should develop planning guidelines for the location and operation of a joint command post. Guidelines should include when to establish a joint command post, potential locations, minimum requirements, and expectations.
 - Internet connectivity is a vital component of any command post. The command post at MSO Juneau should investigate the feasibility of increasing this capability.
 - MSO Juneau should investigate the feasibility of establishment of a central printer hub, installation of a dedicated fax machine, and establishment of a pool of USB pens for data transfer.
 - The D17 DRAT fly away kits should be upgraded to include section signs, USB pens, and name tags on lanyards.
 - The unified command should pre-design status boards required for a response. This will enable even inexperienced personnel to quickly identify what information is required to be displayed, and the standard display format.
- **Salvage Issues:** Salvage planning was initiated by AMHS early, and this was critical in the timelessness of the response. Some salvage issues were started prior to actual the contract, and the salvage master and support team arrived on scene well in advance of salvage tug. Simultaneous with salvage arrangements were efforts to stabilize the vessel, remove oil, offload the 15 vehicles and baggage for passengers and crew. These initial actions all proceeded smoothly due largely to good cooperation between all parties, and the effort made by all to address any concerns raised. Bottom line: The salvage team displayed good teamwork.

Salvage Recommendations:

- Alert and activate salvage actions as early as practical into an incident. This enables salvage companies to “gear up” and arrive at earliest time. It also permits salvage masters to become involved early in the decision process and identify potential problems.
 - Update the local contingency plan with current information for local salvage assets and resources.
- **ICS Process:** For many in the command post, this was their first exposure to the ICS process. For the most part, the process was a success. The ICS planning cycle was implemented early, and carried through to the end. Action plans were developed with full input from field

personnel, and were complete without being too extensive. Early on, and in large part due to the lack of adequate communications, the unified commanders were too involved in the minor decisions and support operations. Once communications improved, the UC did a good job of extracting themselves from the routine, and handed it over to the Operations and Planning Sections Chiefs. Briefs at times were too long, and discussions permitted to drag on. As more discipline was applied, the briefs become tighter, and issues requiring further discussion handled after the brief. Planning Section worked well together, especially in regards to Placers of Refuge approval, historic properties, and resource agency notification. Resource agencies provided excellent support. There was some confusion of the mechanics of hiring a historic properties specialist, and on a wildlife hazing permit that was issued to USDA agent with no HAZWOPER training. Both of these issues need to be addressed. The situation unit and resource unit both provided good information display, due largely to the efforts of the unified command to keep units current. Situation unit leader attended conference calls and meetings whenever possible to keep abreast of current information. ADEC's new oil specific T cards were a big improvement over the generic cards of old. The logistics specialist from ASR was critical. His local knowledge and contacts enable logistics to quickly meet all demands. The one improvement in logistics for future responses is to dispatch a dedicated on scene logistics manager. This on scene logistics manager permits supplies, personnel, and requests to be tracked and delivered on scene and o the correct locations. The documentation unit was weak, and needs improvement. There was no central location or process for capturing or tracking the daily flow of documents.

Recommendations to improve the ICS process:

- Provide ICS training to AMHS personnel, and conduct joint ICS based exercises annually.
 - Practice good discipline at all briefs – keep concise, on track and on subject.
 - Provide training and review to MSO Juneau on the procedures to hire historic properties specialist.
 - Improve the process of issuing Wildlife Hazing Permits so they are not issued to personnel without all the required training, including HAZWOPER.
 - Design standard display boards or information requirements for the Situation Unit.
 - Improve and continue to use ADEC's oil specific T Cards.
 - Provide training for the Documentation Unit, and focus on this process during the next drill.
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- **Media:** Public affairs was activate early in the response. The USCG and AMHS both provided dedicated media specialist, and ADEC established a website on day 4 which provided a good source of information. This was the 1st time AMHS and USCG operated a joint information center (JIC) and the results were good. There was discussion on the appropriate agency to serve as the “chief” of the JIC. The media team relied heavily on the information displayed by the Situation Unit. Due to command post limits, only one dedicated press line was available. At times, the JIC was undermanned, and non-media personnel answered their telephones. This may have resulted in personnel other than the UC or medial specialist answering some press questions.

Recommendations to improve Joint Media Operations:

- Conduct Joint Information Center Training with USCG, AMHS, and ADEC.
- Develop procedure to quickly establish a 1-800 media number, and a process to permit its daily manning and operation.
- Improve the process of providing images and video access to media.
- Provide a recorder on dedicated press telephone line to answer calls if line unattended.
- Ensure JIC is properly staffed to meet demands of the incident.
- Update guidance in contingency plans on the appointment considerations for Chief of the JIC.