



# **UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

**REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION  
INTO THE  
CAPSIZING OF THE BARGE AMBITION (CG 1647791)  
IN THE GULF OF MEXICO ON  
JUNE 15, 2022**



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

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16732/IIA #7478752  
05 June 2025

**CAPSIZING OF THE UNINSPECTED CRANE BARGE AMBITION (CG# CG1647791)  
AND SUBSEQUENT DISCHARGE OF OIL WHILE BEING TOWED BY THE  
INSPECTED TOWING VESSEL KAREN KOBY (O.N. 1230122) IN THE GULF OF  
AMERICA 15 NAUTICAL MILES SOUTH OF FRESHWATER BAYOU, LOUISIANA  
ON JUNE 15, 2022**

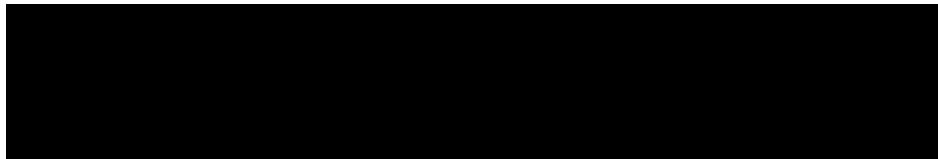
**ACTION BY THE COMMANDANT**

The record and the incident investigation report completed for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendation are approved subject to the following comments. This marine casualty investigation is closed.

**ACTION ON RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that the Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Houma Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections initiate an investigation into the alleged offenses listed in 6.4.1, 6.4.2, and 6.4.3 and take any necessary and appropriate enforcement actions.

**Action:** I concur with this recommendation and note that MSU Houma's Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections initiated an investigation into the alleged offenses listed in paragraphs 6.4.1, 6.4.2, and 6.4.3 of the Report of Investigation. At the conclusion of that investigation, MSU Houma elected not to pursue enforcement actions against the identified responsible parties.



J. D. Neubauer  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Acting Chief, Office of Investigations  
& Casualty Analysis (CG-INV)



16732

APR 15 2025

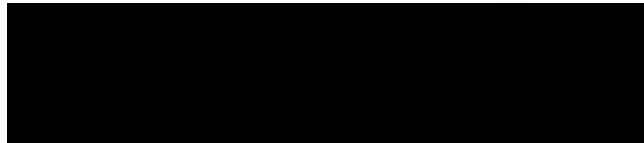
**CAPSIZING OF THE BARGE AMBITION (CG1647791) IN THE GULF OF MEXICO  
ON JUNE 15, 2022**

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE COMMANDER,  
EIGHTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT**

The record and the report of the investigation convened for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are approved. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.

**COMMENTS ON THE REPORT**

The investigation and report contain valuable information which can be used to address the factors that contributed to this marine casualty and prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.



J. E. FOTHERGILL

Commander, U.S. Coast Guard  
Chief of Prevention, Acting  
Eighth Coast Guard District  
By Direction



16732  
October 24, 2023

**CAPSIZING OF THE BARGE AMBITION (CG1647791) IN THE GULF OF MEXICO  
ON JUNE 15, 2022**

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE OFFICER IN CHARGE, MARINE INSPECTION**

The record and the report of the investigation convened for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are approved subject to the following comments. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.

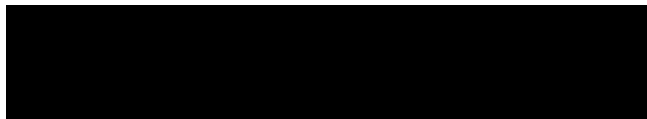
**ENDORSEMENT/ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Administrative Recommendation 1.** It is recommended that the Marine Safety Unit Houma Captain of the Port initiate an investigation into the alleged offenses listed in 6.4.1, 6.4.2, and 6.4.3 and take any necessary and appropriate enforcement actions.

**Action:** Concur - Marine Safety Unit Houma has initiated a Civil Penalty for the alleged pollution per 6.4.1 and will continue to pursue maritime enforcement options into 6.4.2 & 6.4.3.

**Administrative Recommendation 2.** Recommend this investigation be closed.

**Endorsement:** Concur – recommend this investigation be closed.



L. T. O'BRIEN  
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard  
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection  
Houma, Louisiana

Enclosures: (1) Executive Summary  
(2) Investigating Officer's Report

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Title
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
E-Crane	Equilibrium Crane
ITV	Inspected Towing Vessel
LIO	Lead Investigative Officer
GOM	Gulf of Mexico
USC	United States Code



16732  
April 26, 2023

## **CAPSIZING OF THE BARGE AMBITION (CG1647791) IN THE GULF OF MEXICO ON JUNE 15, 2022**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At approximately 0400 local time on June 15, 2022, the uninspected equilibrium crane (E-Crane) barge AMBITION (CG1647791), being towed by the inspected towing vessel (ITV) KAREN KOBY (ON: 1230122), capsized in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) with zero persons on board in a water depth of 32 feet. The KAREN KOBY was transporting the AMBITION from Cameron, LA to Myrtle Grove, LA. At the time of the capsizing, KAREN KOBY and AMBITION were located in the GOM approximately 15 nautical miles south of Freshwater Bayou, LA.

The AMBITION was underway in the GOM without previous inspections or verifications of structural or watertight integrity. As the vessel cleared the jetties to enter the GOM, the towline was let out to 900 to 1,000 feet. For collision avoidance reasons, the relief captain altered the autopilot to starboard. As the vessel turned to the starboard, the starboard bridle went slack and pulled the port bridle to make the turn. The vessel reduced speed due to the pull of the barge as the barge flooded and then capsized.

There were no injuries during this incident, but there was a visible sheen indicating a pollution spill. The AMBITION was reported to have a 2,000-gallon metal tank on the deck with approximately 1,180 gallons of diesel fuel inside. The crane also had lube and hydraulic oils in the enclosed systems for normal operations of the crane. Total damage to the AMBITION was estimated at \$6.3 million.

As a result of this investigation, the Coast Guard determined that the initiating event for this casualty was the continual water intrusion into the barge AMBITION. This was followed by the eventual capsizing of the AMBITION and pollution spill. The casual factors that contributed to this casualty include: (1) failure to have a load line certificate or single voyage load line exemption, (2) possible unknown structural or watertight integrity issues, (3) lack of proper manhole covers, (4) relief captain's inexperience handling an E-crane barge, (5) the autopilot changes for collision avoidance, and (6) the lack of a viable alternate route.



16732  
April 26, 2023

**CAPSIZING OF THE BARGE AMBITION (CG1647791) IN THE GULF OF MEXICO ON  
JUNE 15, 2022**

**INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT**

**1. Preliminary Statement**

1.1. This marine casualty investigation was conducted, and this report was submitted in accordance with Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart 4.07, and under the authority of Title 46, United States Code (USC) Chapter 63.

1.2. In accordance with 46 CFR Subsection 4.03-10, the following parties in interest (PII) were designated: the owner of the AMBITION, Rigid Constructors LLC; the operator of the KAREN KOBY, LA Carriers LLC; and the Master of the KAREN KOBY.

1.3. The Coast Guard was the lead agency for all evidence collection activities involving this investigation. Coordination and cooperation with the National Transportation Safety Board was provided during the course of this investigation.

1.4. All times listed in this Report of Investigation are in Central Standard Time (CST) using a 24-hour format. All times are approximate.



## 2. Vessels Involved in the Incident

Official Name:	AMBITION
Identification Number:	CG1647791
Flag:	United States
Vessel Class/Type/Sub-Type	Equilibrium Crane Barge
Naval Architect Survey:	2020
Gross Tonnage:	Not Available
Length:	195 Feet
Beam/Width:	70 Feet
Main/Primary Propulsion:	None
Owner:	Rigid Constructors LLC Breux Bridge, LA
Operator:	Rigid Constructors LLC Breux Bridge, LA



Figure 1. Photograph of AMBITION provided by [REDACTED], Rigid Construction. Date taken: unknown.

Official Name:	KAREN KOBY
Identification Number:	1230122
Flag:	United States
Vessel Class/Type/Sub-Type	Towing Vessel
Year Built:	2010
Gross Tonnage:	278 GT ITC
Length:	94.4 Feet
Main/Primary Propulsion:	Diesel Reduction 2700hp
Owner:	LA Carriers LLC Larose, LA
Operator:	LA Carriers LLC Larose, LA



Figure 2. Photograph of KAREN KOBY provided by Shipspotting.com. Date taken: unknown.

### 3. Deceased, Missing, and/or Injured Persons

3.1 None.

#### **4. Findings of Fact**

##### **4.1. The Incident:**

4.1.1. On June 14, 2022, at approximately 0940, the Inspected Towing Vessel (ITV) KAREN KOBY arrived at Devall fleet to pick up the uninspected equilibrium crane (E-Crane) barge AMBITION. The KAREN KOBY was contracted to move the AMBITION from Cameron, LA to Myrtle Grove, LA via the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). There were no written contracts in place for this transit.

4.1.2. The AMBITION was spudded up when KAREN KOBY arrived but was lowered off spuds for transport by the crew onboard preparing the barge for sea. When lowered, the barge's bow was 3' lower than the stern. Items on the barge AMBITION consisted of an E-crane, cement blocks (Unknown amount and weight), fuel tanks, a conex box, dewatering pumps, and other miscellaneous equipment.

4.1.3. At approximately 1020, the captain maneuvered the KAREN KOBY to depart Devall fleet area with AMBITION. During the transit, KAREN KOBY had to be repositioned (regrouped) from the side of the barge to pushing on the bow to get to Stone Fuel in Cameron, LA.

4.1.4. At approximately 1200, the relief captain assumed command of the KAREN KOBY and AMBITION. This was the first time the relief captain had maneuvered an E-crane barge.

4.1.5. At approximately 1210, the relief captain rubbed the AMBITION against "strikes", a river marker. The exact location of the hit on the AMBITION could not be agreed upon during interviews. The relief captain did not document this strike in the master's log as he determined that it was insignificant as a small rub. The AMBITION was not inspected for damages after the striking of the river marker; therefore it could not be determined if the strike caused damages to the AMBITION.

4.1.6. At approximately 1610, the relief captain attempted to approach Stone Fuel dock but had difficulty. The captain of the KAREN KOBY assumed the wheel and secured to the point.

4.1.7. At approximately 1615, the AMBITION crew put water into the stern for ballast and added fuel to the fuel tank. After ballasting of the stern, the freeboard of the AMBITION was around 4' at the bow and about 5' at the stern.

4.1.8. At approximately 1700, the AMBITION crew covered 2 manhole covers that were not secured. The crew used a metal plate and a pump to cover the manholes due to lack of proper covers. The AMBITION crew then departed the barge to shore. The KAREN KOBY crew could not confirm that all manhole covers were secured or in place covering all manholes.

4.1.9. At approximately 1730, the captain maneuvered the KAREN KOBY to depart Stone Fuel Dock. The AMBITION was being pulled behind the KAREN KOBY with approximately 100' of tow wire.

4.1.10. At approximately 1735, the captain maneuvered the KAREN KOBY past the jetties into the GOM and ordered the AMBITION towline to be let out to 900'-1,000'.

4.1.11. On June 15, 2022, at approximately 0001, the relief captain assumed command and control of the KAREN KOBY while pulling the AMBITION in the GOM.

4.1.12. At approximately 0115, the relief captain noticed 2 fishing vessels and 1 towing vessel sighted in the area. Both towing vessels agreed to pass port to port. The relief captain altered the autopilot course to starboard. As the KAREN KOBY was making the starboard turn, the starboard towing bridle went slack and pulled the port bridle to alter the course of the AMBITION. The other vessel passed about 1.5 miles away.

4.1.13. At approximately 0225, the relief captain altered the course to port to return to the original course. As no crewmember watched the barge during this time, it is unknown if the port bridle went slack during this turn.

4.1.14. At approximately 0325, the crew on the vessel observed that the AMBITION began to list to the port side. In addition, the KAREN KOBY had a reduction of speed from between 5.2 and 4.8 knots down to 4.5 knots gradually. Speed reduction was not felt but speed indicators on the bridge confirmed it. (The relief captain stated 5.2 knots, but logs show 4.8 knots at midnight.)

4.1.15. At approximately 0400, the barge AMBITION capsized to the port side in 32 feet of water in the GOM approximately 18 miles from Freshwater Bayou.

4.1.16. At approximately 0400, 1980 gallons of hydraulic oil and diesel were discharged by the barge AMBITION which created a sheen measuring 200 feet in length by 10 feet in width. KAREN KOBY notified the National Response Center.

#### 4.2. Additional/Supporting Information:

4.2.1. The barge AMBITION was constructed of two separate deck barges, the GD 962 and the GD 983. The starboard side of the GD 962 was welded to the port side of the GD 983. The E-crane was then welded to the top of both barges causing a high center of gravity and a slight port list. Rigid Constructors LLC maintained valid Certificates of Documentation for the GD 962 and the GD 983. There was no Certificate of Documentation for the AMBITION.

4.2.2. The AMBITION was an uninspected barge and therefore not inspected for seaworthiness by the Coast Guard. Rigid Constructors LLC admitted that there was no schedule for inspections of the AMBITION for structural or watertight integrity. It is unknown when the last inspection, by any party, of the AMBITION was completed.

4.2.3. The barge AMBITION did not have a load line certificate. It was also not designated for "special service". 46 CFR Part 42 states "All U.S. flag vessels which engage in domestic voyages by sea (Coastwise and Intercoastal voyages) shall be subject to the applicable provisions of this part." The barge was over 150 gross tons and therefore was not exempted from these regulations when operating beyond the boundary

line. For the GOM, the boundary line is 12 nautical miles offshore. A load line certificate requires an annual inspection of the vessel/barge for structural and watertight integrity.

4.2.4. The barge AMBITION did not have a single voyage load line exemption for a transit beyond the boundary line. To obtain a single voyage load line exemption, the AMBITION needed a structural and watertight integrity inspection by the Coast Guard.

4.2.5. The weather on location of the capsizing was about 2-3' seas. Visibility was clear. With the height of the bow and stern, the normal sea conditions at the time of the transit would prevent water from reaching to the top of the AMBITION.

4.2.6. There are two routes that are possible to move a barge from Cameron, LA to Myrtle Grove, LA. One route is through the Intracoastal Waterway running from Florida to Texas. This route has multiple locks and bridges. There are bridges on this route with a maximum air draft of 70 feet. The other route is through the GOM.

4.2.7. Initially L.A. Carriers determined there to be no crew to be directly involved with the casualty, so alcohol testing was not completed in the required 8 hours IAW 46 CFR Part 4.06-3. After discussing with the Coast Guard investigating officer, drug testing was arranged for the crew and, at that time, alcohol testing was conducted. The specimens tested negative for alcohol.

4.2.8. Crewmembers deemed directly involved submitted to a Post Casualty Drug Test in accordance with 46 CFR Part 4.06-3. The specimens were subsequently tested negative for drugs. Due to the location of the incident and the fact that the vessel could not leave the scene, drug testing was completed as soon as arrangements could be made. L.A. Carriers coordinated with the Coast Guard to get the tests completed while ensuring the safety of the crew.

4.2.9. Due to the time submerged in the GOM, the exact thickness and condition of the hull could not be determined. There were also temporary repairs on the hull that were not logged in Rigid Construction reports.

## **5. Analysis**

5.1. *No Load line Certificate or Single Voyage Load Line Exemption for AMBITION.* The AMBITION does not have a load line certificate, nor did it have a single voyage load line exemption. If the vessel had had a load line or a single voyage load line exemption, the AMBITION would have been inspected for structural and watertight integrity prior to the incident. Had there been an inspection, it is likely that the vessel would not have been approved due to the lack of manhole covers, a watertight integrity concern. It is also possible that there would have been structural or other watertight integrity issues found and the voyage would not have been authorized, preventing the capsizing.

5.2. *Lack of regular structural or watertight integrity inspections and unknown damages to the hull.* The company verified that the AMBITION was not regularly inspected for structural or watertight integrity, nor was it inspected for damages in the recent time frame prior to the transit into the GOM. Since there were no inspections prior to getting underway,

there was no determination if the barge had structural or watertight integrity issues. Had the vessel been inspected, it may have been discovered that there were structural or watertight integrity issues preventing it from getting underway. Since the determination could not be made on how the barge took on water, prior structural or watertight integrity issues cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor of the flooding of the barge.

*5.3. Unknown damages to the barge hull following the hit against the river marker.* The barge AMBITION was not inspected for damages after the barge rubbed against the river marker. Since there was no inspection at the time of the incident, there was no determination if the striking of the river marker caused damages that may have caused water intrusion. Had the vessel been inspected after the striking of the river marker, it may have been discovered if the hull was damaged due to the strike on the river marker. Since the determination could not be made as to how the barge took on water, unknown damage to the hull after striking the river marker cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor of the flooding of the barge.

*5.4. Lack of appropriate manhole covers.* The AMBITION crew used a metal plate and a pump to cover 2 manholes that had no covers. It is possible that the manhole covers leaked and allowed water into the AMBITION during the transit in the GOM. Had the manholes been properly covered and secured, it is likely that the manholes would not be the source of the water intrusion of the AMBITION. Since the determination could not be made how the barge took on water, lack of appropriate manhole covers cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor of the flooding of the barge.

*5.5. Inadequate experience of vessel relief captain.* The relief captain verified that this was his first time handling an E-crane barge. There were two incidents during this transit where the vessel relief captain had control of the vessel and the barge and was unable to maintain course before entering the GOM. Had the relief captain had more knowledge of E-crane barge handling, the change in the autopilot course may have been reconsidered. It cannot be determined if the course changes or his other actions were a contributing factor of the flooding, but they cannot be ruled out as contributing factors.

*5.6. Lack of viable alternative routes to complete transit.* There are alternative waterways to allow a barge to transit from Cameron, LA to Myrtle Grove, LA. However, there are bridges on those routes which do not have an air draft high enough for a crane barge of the size of the AMBITION, forcing the barge to travel via the GOM. Had there been a viable alternate route for the vessel to transit with the barge, the KAREN KOBAYASHI may have taken that route and the incident may not have occurred.

*5.7. High center of gravity and slight list.* The barge had a list to the port side with the crane installed, it also had a high center of gravity. During the autopilot course change to starboard, there was strain on the port bridle and the port side of the AMBITION. The port side list coupled with the high center of gravity created a latent unsafe condition that may have made it easier for the AMBITION to take on water on the port side, either over the top of the AMBITION or through possible preexisting damage located above the water line in level conditions.

## **6. Conclusions**

### **6.1. Determination of Cause:**

6.1.1. The initiating event for this casualty occurred when the barge AMBITION started taking on water. The water may have entered the barge through unknown wastage or damage to the hull or the improperly covered manhole covers on the deck of the AMBITION. The actions and conditions contributing to the flooding were:

6.1.1.1. The failure of the AMBITION to have a load line certificate or single voyage load line exemption.

6.1.1.2. The structural and watertight integrity of the barge was not known by the barge or vessel crew before hooking up for the tow.

6.1.1.3. The lack of proper manhole covers.

6.1.1.4. The relief captain's inexperience handling an E-crane barge.

6.1.1.5. The autopilot change to starboard for collision avoidance.

6.1.1.6. A lack of a viable alternative route.

6.1.2. The flooding of the port side hold resulted in the capsizing of the barge AMBITION. Causal factors contributing to the event include:

6.1.2.1. Flooding within the barge AMBITION.

6.1.2.2. High center of gravity of the barge AMBITION.

6.1.3. The capsizing of the barge AMBITION led to a spill of 1180 gallons of diesel fuel and 800 gallons of hydraulic oil. Causal factors contributing to this event include:

6.1.3.1. The capsizing.

6.2. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by Any Coast Guard Credentialed Mariner Subject to Action Under 46 USC Chapter 77: There is no evidence of actionable misconduct, inattention to duty, or negligent or willful violation of law or regulation on the part of Coast Guard licensed or certificated personnel.

6.3. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by U.S. Coast Guard Personnel, or any other person: There is no evidence of actionable misconduct, inattention to duty, or negligent or willful violation of law or regulation on the part of Coast Guard Personnel, or any other person.



6.4. Evidence of Act(s) Subject to Civil Penalty:

- 6.4.1. The actions described in 4.1.16 show alleged pollution by Rigid Constructors, LLC, owner of the barge AMBITION, into navigable waters of the United States.
- 6.4.2. The actions described in 4.2.1 show alleged violation of 46 CFR Part 67 by Rigid Constructors, LLC, owner of the barge AMBITION.
- 6.4.3. The actions described in 4.2.3 show alleged violation of 46 CFR Part 42 by Rigid Constructors, LLC, owner of the barge AMBITION.

6.5. Evidence of Criminal Act(s): No evidence of any criminal acts was identified.

6.6. Need for New or Amended U.S. Law or Regulation: There is no need for any new or amended U.S. laws or regulations.

6.7. Unsafe Actions or Conditions that were not Causal Factors: There were no actions or conditions that were not causal factors.

**7. Actions Taken Since the Incident**

7.1. The salvage of the AMBITION and its assorted deck cargo and cleanup of the pollution discharge have been completed.

7.2. On May 5, 2023, the Coast Guard issued Safety Alert 06-2023. Dangers of Avoiding Loadline Requirements, highlighting the importance of load line exemptions when travelling beyond the boundary line.

**8. Recommendations**

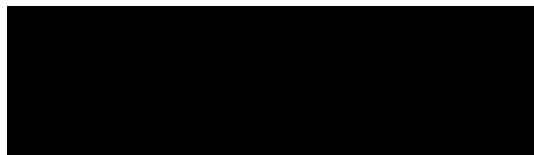
8.1. Safety Recommendations:

8.1.1. There are no additional recommendations beyond the Safety Alert mentioned in 7.2 above.

8.2. Administrative Recommendations:

8.2.1. It is recommended that the Marine Safety Unit Houma Officer in charge, Marine Inspections initiate an investigation into the alleged offenses listed in 6.4.1, 6.4.2, and 6.4.3 and take any necessary and appropriate enforcement actions.

8.2.2. Recommend this investigation be closed.



U.S. Coast Guard  
Lead Investigating Officer