



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

**REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION
INTO THE
CUMBERLAND II (O.N. 1244371) AND MOTOR
VEHICLE (PLATE #1PD5341) ROLL OFF WITH
LOSS OF LIFE NEAR CUMBERLAND RIVER
MILE 104
ON APRIL 25, 2025**



MISLE ACTIVITY NUMBER: 8126294

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

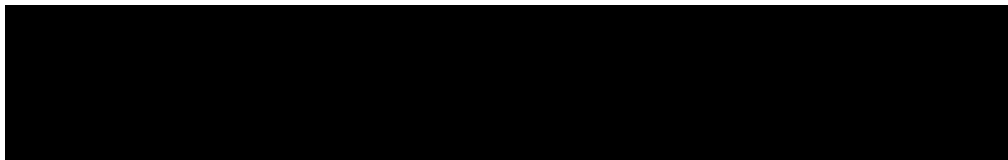
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Washington, DC 20593-7501
Staff Symbol: CG-INV
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16732/IIA # 8126294
23 June 2026

**MOTOR VEHICLE ROLL OFF FROM THE BARGE FERRY CUMBERLAND II
(O.N. 1244371) WHILE CONDUCTING BOARDING OPERATIONS RESULTING
IN THE LOSS OF ONE LIFE ON THE CUMBERLAND RIVER NEAR
CUMBERLAND CITY, TENNESSEE ON APRIL 25, 2025**

ACTION BY THE COMMANDANT

The record and the report of investigation completed for this marine casualty have been reviewed by the Office of Investigations & Casualty Analysis. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analyses, and conclusions are approved. This marine casualty investigation is closed.



Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Office of Investigations & Casualty Analysis (CG-INV)



16732

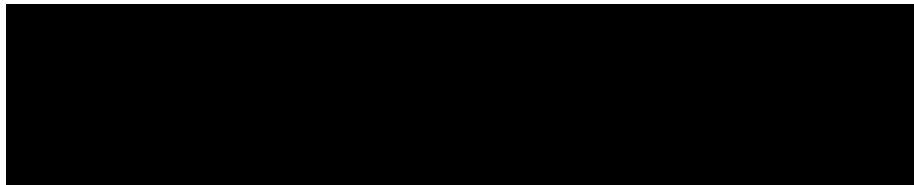
**CUMBERLAND II (O.N. 1244371) AND MOTOR VEHICLE (PLATE #1PD5341) ROLL
OFF WITH LOSS OF LIFE NEAR CUMBERLAND RIVER MILE 104
ON APRIL 25, 2025**

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE COMMANDER,
COAST GUARD HEARTLAND 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

1. I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of the passenger who lost his life in this tragic accident.
2. 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.



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



16732/8126294

April 29, 2026

**CUMBERLAND II (O.N. 1244371) AND MOTOR VEHICLE (PLATE #1PD5341) ROLL
OFF WITH LOSS OF LIFE NEAR CUMBERLAND RIVER MILE 104
ON APRIL 25, 2025**

ENDORSEMENT BY THE OFFICER IN CHARGE, MARINE INSPECTION

The Report of Investigation for the subject casualty has been reviewed. The report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations are approved. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.

COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

1. The investigation revealed this preventable fatality was a direct result of the automobile operator's loss of situational awareness and current barrier requirements aboard ferries do not require the ability of such barriers to stop a moving vehicle.
2. The Master and crew of *CUMBERLAND II* were found compliant with applicable regulations, and all post casualty drug and alcohol tests were negative.
3. The rescue attempts by nearby vessel crews were admirable and keeping with maritime assistance at sea, Good Samaritan traditions.

ENDORSEMENT ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Safety Recommendation: The investigation found no cause to recommend amendments to existing U.S. law, regulations, standards or U.S. Coast Guard policy.

Endorsement: Concur.



Randy L. Preston
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection, Ohio Valley



16732/8126294
March 19, 2026

**CUMBERLAND II (O.N. 1244371) AND MOTOR VEHICLE (PLATE #1PD5341) ROLL
OFF WITH LOSS OF LIFE NEAR CUMBERLAND RIVER MILE 104
ON APRIL 25, 2025**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 25, 2025, at approximately 1151 (CDT) the towing vessel *PATIENCE* (O.N. 1244273) and *CUMBERLAND II* (O.N. 1244371) ferry barge, operated by River Marine Service Inc. for the Tennessee Department of Transportation, was pushed up to the roadway ramp at the Cumberland City Ferry Terminal to engage in routine ferry operations. At approximately 1152, the crew of the *CUMBERLAND II* opened the retention gates permitting cars to drive onto the ferry. A single gray car, 2020 Ford Edge (PLATE #1PD5341), drove onto the ferry. The Ford Edge failed to stop and drove through the river-side retention gate into the Cumberland River.

At approximately 1153, the deckhand onboard the *CUMBERLAND II* collected a life ring and proceeded to the end of barge where the vehicle went overboard but did not throw the life ring as the vehicle began to drift further away. The deckhand then yelled from the deck of the barge to the Master to call the nearby and passing towing vessels on the radio to see if they could get a skiff (small boat) in the water to reach the vehicle. At approximately 1155, the *PATIENCE* towing the *CUMBERLAND II* ferry barge got underway to get closer to the vehicle and passenger inside. At approximately 1200, several crew members of the *CLARENCE G FRAME* (O.N. 574683) got underway from their nearby position and launched a skiff near the vehicle taking on water. By the time they arrived at the vehicle, all that could be seen was the rear hatch and back tires. The 2020 Ford Edge eventually sank and was later located by Stewart County Fire Rescue divers who confirmed an occupant in the vehicle. The decision was made to pull the vehicle from the river bottom via tow truck. At approximately 1751, once the vehicle was brought ashore, the Stewart County Medical Examiner pronounced the occupant as deceased.

As a result of its investigation, the Coast Guard has determined that the initiating event for this casualty was the 2020 Ford Edge (PLATE #1PD5341) breaking through the set of closed retention gates on the water side of the ferry barge and entering the water with one occupant. This was followed by initial flooding, then progressive flooding, and eventually sinking of the vehicle where it came to rest on the bottom of the Cumberland River near Mile Marker 104 resulting in the loss of life of the occupant. The causal factors that contributed to this casualty include: (1) Loss of situational awareness; (2) Inadequate gate strength to support run-away vehicle; (3) Occupant did not attempt to escape the vehicle once it entered the water; and (4) Good Samaritan rescuers could not extricate the occupant from the flooded or sunken automobile.



16732/8126294
March 19, 2026

**CUMBERLAND II (O.N. 1244371) AND MOTOR VEHICLE (PLATE #1PD5341) ROLL
OFF WITH LOSS OF LIFE NEAR CUMBERLAND RIVER MILE 104
ON APRIL 25, 2025**

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. Under 46 USC § 6308, no part of a report of a marine casualty investigation, including its findings of fact, opinions, recommendations, deliberations, or conclusions shall be admissible as evidence or subject to discovery in any civil or administrative proceedings, other than an administrative proceeding initiated by the United States.

1.2. No individuals, organizations, or parties were designated as a party-in-interest in accordance with 46 C.F.R. § 4.03-10.

1.3. This investigation was conducted by the United States Coast Guard, with assistance from the Tennessee Highway Patrol who conducted a preliminary investigation. Also, the owner and occupant of the vehicle was identified by the Stewart County Fire Rescue (SCFR) dive team following the vehicle's sinking and shortly thereafter the Stewart County Medical Examiner pronounced the occupant deceased.

1.4. All times listed in this report are in Central Daylight Time using a 24-hour format and are approximate.

2. Vessels and Motor Vehicle Involved in the Incident

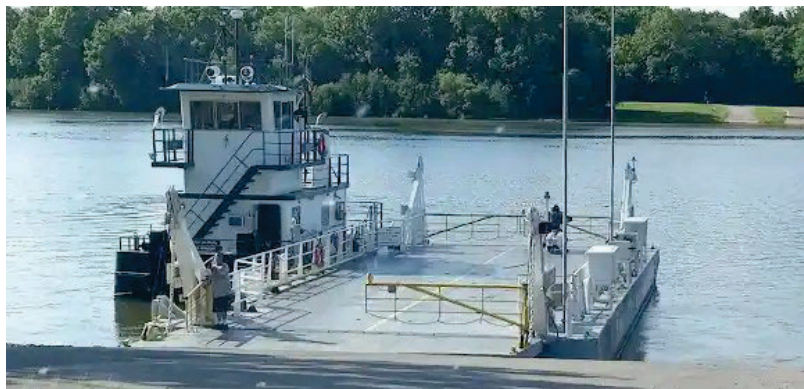


Figure 1. ITV PATIENCE and CUMBERLAND II (Google) (March 18,2026/USCG)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Official Name: | <i>CUMBERLAND II</i> |
| Identification Number: | O.N. 1244371 |
| Flag: | United States |
| Vessel Class/Type/Sub-Type | Subchapter T – Passenger Ferry Barge |
| Build Year: | 2013 |
| Gross Tonnage: | 80 GT |
| Length: | 76.8 feet |
| Beam/Width: | 32 feet |
| Draft/Depth: | 5 feet |
| Main/Primary Propulsion: | Not self-propelled. Relies on ITV PATIENCE |
| Owner: | TENNESSEE, STATE OF DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 400 JAMES K POLK BUILDING NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0333 |
| Operator: | RIVER MARINE SERVICE INC 100 CUMBERLAND CITY RD PO BOX 115 CUMBERLAND CITY, TN 37050 |

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Official Name: | <i>ITV PATIENCE</i> |
| Identification Number: | O.N. 1244273 |
| Flag: | United States |
| Vessel Class/Type/Sub-Type | Subchapter M – Towing Vessels |
| Build Year: | 2013 |
| Gross Tonnage: | 43 GT |
| Length: | 48 feet |
| Beam/Width: | 18 feet |
| Draft/Depth: | 6 feet |
| Main/Primary Propulsion: | Medium Speed, Diesel Reduction (600 HP) |
| Owner: | TENNESSEE, STATE OF DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 400 JAMES K POLK BUILDING NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0333 |
| Operator: | RIVER MARINE SERVICE INC 100 CUMBERLAND CITY RD PO BOX 115 CUMBERLAND CITY, TN 37050 |

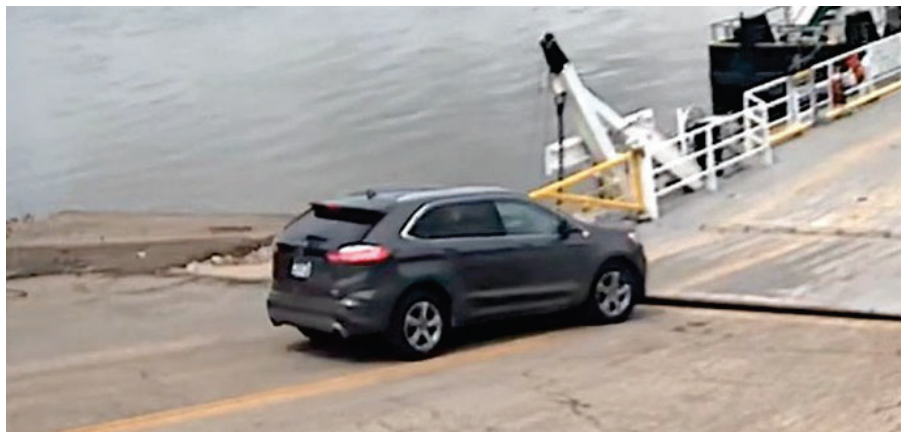


Figure 2. 2020 Gray Ford Edge (PLATE #1PD5341) (River Marine Services, Inc.) (April 25, 2025)

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Make: | Ford |
| Model: | Edge |
| Year: | 2020 |
| Color: | Gray |
| License Plate: | 1PD5341 |
| State and County of Registration: | Tennessee, Stewart County |
| Owner/Operator: | WESLEY ROBSON 364 WILDCAT CREEK ROAD INDIAN MOUND, TN 37079 |

3. Deceased, Missing, and/or Injured Persons

| Relationship to Motor Vehicle | Sex | Age | Status |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------|
| Owner/Operator | Male | 79 | Deceased |

4. Findings of Fact

4.1. The Incident:

4.1.1. At 1151 CDT on April 25, 2025, the towing vessel *PATIENCE* (O.N. 1244273) and *CUMBERLAND II* (O.N. 1244371) ferry barge, operated by River Marine Service Inc. for the Tennessee Department of Transportation, was pushed up to the roadway ramp at the Cumberland City Ferry Terminal to engage in routine ferry operations. The *PATIENCE/CUMBERLAND II* had a crew of 3 onboard.

4.1.2. At 1152, the deckhand onboard the *CUMBERLAND II* ferry barge unlatched and swung open both yellow safety gates to allow for vehicles to begin boarding. A single vehicle, a gray 2020 Ford Edge with License Plate #1PD5341, drove onto the *CUMBERLAND II* ferry barge by its owner.

4.1.3. A few seconds after 1152, the owner/operator of the 2020 Ford Edge briefly tapped their brakes before approaching the set of closed gates on the opposite end of the barge and then broke through the set of closed gates on the water side of the barge and entered the water with one person in the vehicle.

4.1.4. At 1153, the deckhand onboard the *CUMBERLAND II* collected a life ring and proceeded to the end of barge where the vehicle went overboard but did not throw the life ring as the vehicle began to drift further away.

4.1.5. At 1154, the deckhand yelled from the deck of the barge to the Master to call the nearby and passing towing vessels on the radio to see if they could get a skiff in the water to reach the vehicle.

4.1.6. At 1155, after calling 911 and announcing a man overboard, the Master of the *PATIENCE* got the *PATIENCE* and *CUMBERLAND II* underway. Both the Master and deckhand onboard the *PATIENCE/CUMBERLAND II* noted that the 2020 Ford Edge had the windows down when it drove onto the *CUMBERLAND II*; however, after entering the water the windows were noticed to be up.

4.1.7. At 1156, the 2020 Ford Edge is seen taking on water as less of the vehicle can be seen above water and as the vehicle drifted away from the Cumberland City Ferry Terminal.

4.1.8. At 1200, several crew members of the *CLARENCE G FRAME* (O.N. 574683) got underway from their nearby position and launched a skiff (small boat) near the vehicle taking on water. By the time they arrived at the vehicle, all that could be seen was the rear hatch and back tires.

4.1.9. At 1203, the crew members of the *CLARENCE G FRAME* attempted to open the trunk of the 2020 Ford Edge but the door was locked and would not open.

4.1.10. At 1207, the 2020 Ford Edge became fully submerged and sank.

4.1.11. At 1208, the crew members of the *CLARENCE G FRAME* waited approximately 10 minutes on the skiff looking for any signs of movement in the water prior to returning to their vessel.

4.1.12. At 1215, the USCG Sector Ohio Valley Command Center received a call regarding this incident.

4.1.13. At 1640, the crew members onboard the *PATIENCE/CUMBERLAND II* underwent post casualty alcohol testing. All results were negative.

4.1.14. At 1730, the crew members onboard the *PATIENCE/CUMBERLAND II* underwent post casualty DOT drug testing. All results were negative.

4.1.15. At 1751, after the Stewart County Fire Rescue (SCFR) dive team identified the vehicle occupant and the vehicle was removed from the water, the Stewart County Medical Examiner pronounced the occupant deceased.

4.1.16. On April 29, 2025, the Operator of the *CUMBERLAND II* ferry barge submitted a CG-2692 and CG-2692B to the U.S. Coast Guard, MSD Nashville.

4.2. Additional/Supporting Information:

Alcohol and Drug Testing

4.2.1. On April 25, 2025, from 1640 to 1714 a post-marine casualty saliva test for alcohol was administered to all crew members onboard the *PATIENCE/CUMBERLAND II*. The saliva test was administered by [REDACTED] of Premier Medical Group. The result was negative for all crew members for the presence of alcohol.

4.2.2. On April 25, 2025, a D.O.T. drug test collector from Premier Medical Group collected a post-marine casualty urine specimen from all crew members onboard the *PATIENCE/CUMBERLAND II*. On April 29, 2025, a Medical Review Officer verified all results were negative for the presence of drugs.

Waterway Information

4.2.3. The Cumberland River forms a 688-mile-long waterway from its headwaters in southeastern Kentucky near Harlan, flowing southwest through middle Tennessee and back north into western Kentucky where it empties into the Ohio River.

4.2.4. The location of the incident was at approximately mile marker 104 of the Cumberland River near Cumberland City, TN within Stewart County. The incident took place in the vicinity of the Cumberland City Ferry Terminal ramp on the South side of the Cumberland River.



Figure 3: Map of Cumberland River (Britannica.com) (March 19, 2026/USCG)

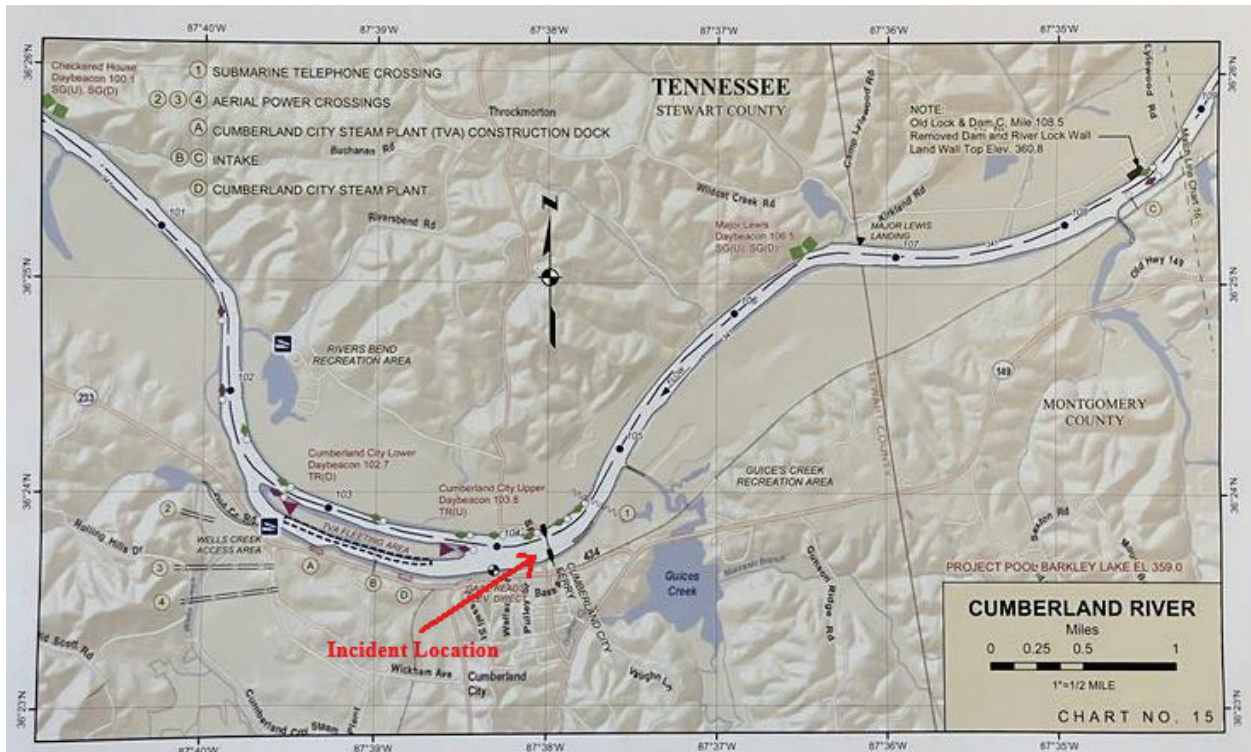


Figure 4: Location of Incident Cumberland River MM 104 (ACOE Cumberland River Chart) (March 19, 2026/USCG)

Motor Vehicle License Plate #1PD5341

4.2.5. The 2020 Gray Ford Edge with license plate #1PD5341 was owned by the operator at the time of the incident.

4.2.6. According to statements from the family, the operator was scared to death of drowning and that he took the Cumberland City Ferry often.

Inspected Towing Vessel PATIENCE

4.2.7. The Master of the *ITV PATIENCE* (O.N. 1244273) at the time of the incident had been employed by River Marine Service Inc. for approximately 2 years. He has held a Coast Guard Merchant Mariners Credential (MMC) endorsement as a Master of Self-Propelled Vessels not Including Sail or Auxiliary Sail of Less Than 200 Gross Register Tons (GRT) Upon Rivers, for 1 year. At the time of the incident, routine maintenance was up to date, and the *ITV PATIENCE* had no known mechanical issues.

Regulatory Framework

4.2.8. The *CUMBERLAND II* (O.N. 1244371) is a Passenger Ferry Barge inspected under Subchapter T and per Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart 177.940, "On a vessel authorized to carry one or more vehicles, suitable chains, cables, or other barriers must be installed at the end of each vehicle runway. In addition, temporary rails or equivalent protection must be installed in way of each vehicle ramp, in compliance with § 177.900, when the vessel is underway.

5. Analysis

5.1. *Loss of Situational Awareness.* After driving onto the *CUMBERLAND II*, the owner/operator of the 2020 Ford Edge briefly tapped the breaks but failed to come to a full stop. The vehicle maintained enough momentum to break through the closed and latched gates and entered the water. Had the operator come to a full stop the vehicle would not have breached the barrier. The medical examiner's report listed the suspected cause of death (COD) as Asphyxia-Drowning. The medical examiner attributed the death to drowning, though the driver's medical history and medication use were noted as potential variables.

5.2. *Insufficient Barrier Strength for Run-A-Way Vehicles.* The *CUMBERLAND II* is a ferry barge inspected under Subchapter T and per 46CFR177.940 is required to have suitable chains, cables, or other barriers installed at the end of each vehicle runway. The gate, rails, and latching mechanism met the intent of the regulation before and after the incident. Following the event, the operator proactively upgraded the latching hardware to increase the physical strength of the barrier system. Specifically, the original hollow steel latch pin was replaced with a solid steel pin of increased length.

5.3. *Failure to Attempt Egress.* Following the vehicle's entry into the water, evidence indicates that the operator actively rolled up the window and made no discernible attempt to exit the sinking vehicle. Had the operator attempted to exit the vehicle before it fully submerged, a viable opportunity for survival may have existed.

5.4. *Inability to Open the Rear Hatch of Sinking Vehicle.* The Master of the *ITV PATIENCE* (O.N. 1244273) requested assistance from the *ITV CLARENCE G FRAME* (O.N. 574683), which was located nearby. The responding crew launched a skiff and navigated to the sinking vehicle. By the time rescuers reached the scene, only the rear hatch and back tires remained above the waterline. The skiff crew made several attempts to open the rear hatch of the vehicle to extricate the operator, but all efforts were unsuccessful. Had they been able to open the rear hatch they may have been able to pull the owner/operator to safety.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Determination of Cause:

6.1.1. The initiating event was the owner/operator of the 2020 Ford Edge breaking through the set of closed gates on the water side of the barge and entering the water. The causal factors contributing to this event were:

6.1.1.1. The owner/operator of the 2020 Ford Edge lost situational awareness and did not come to a complete stop before breaching the closed and latched gates.

6.1.1.2. The ferry barge retention gate and latch mechanism did not support the force of a run-a-way vehicle.

6.1.2. The first subsequent event was flooding of the 2020 Ford Edge with License Plate #1PD5341. The causal factor contributing to this event was:

6.1.2.1. There is no reasonable defense to prevent a car from flooding after entering a body of water.

6.1.3. The second subsequent event was the sinking of the 2020 Ford Edge with License Plate #1PD5341. The causal factors contributing to this event were:

6.1.3.1. There is no reasonable defense to prevent a car from sinking in a body of water after an extended period of time.

6.1.4. The third subsequent event was the drowning death of the owner/operator of the 2020 Ford Edge with License Plate #1PD5341. The causal factors contributing to this event were:

6.1.4.1. The owner/operator was unable to exit the vehicle once it entered the water.

6.1.4.2. The nearby responding crew was unable to open the rear hatch of the vehicle.

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: None.

6.3. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by U.S. Coast Guard Personnel, or any other person: None.

6.4. Evidence of Act(s) Subject to Civil Penalty: None.

6.5. Evidence of Criminal Act(s): None.

6.6. Need for New or Amended U.S. Law or Regulation: None.

6.7. Unsafe Actions or Conditions That Were Not Causal Factors: None.

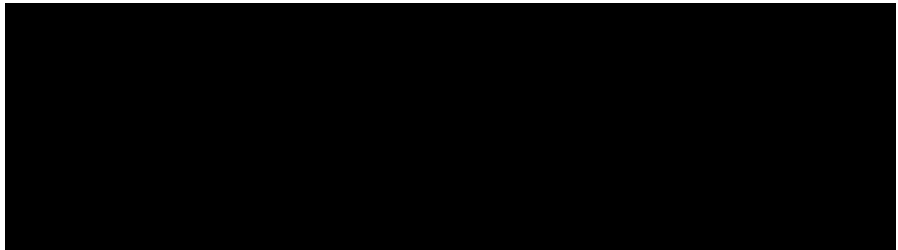
7. Actions Taken Since the Incident

7.1. On April 26, 2025, one-day after the incident, the Vice President of Marine Operations stated that the metal pin, as a part of the latching mechanism on the loading gates, were replaced with a solid steel versus hollow steel pin and lengthened.

8. Recommendations

8.1. Safety Recommendation: There were no proposed actions to add new or amend existing U.S. law or regulations, international requirements, industry standards, or U.S. Coast Guard policies and procedures as part of this investigation.

8.2. Administrative Recommendations: There are no proposed administrative recommendations.



Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Coast Guard
Investigating Officer, MSD Nashville