

RECOMMENDATIONS

23 Nov., 1943

HENRY KNOX 6-19-43

CHAS. D. FELL, 3rd Asst. Engr.
E. N. OLSEN, Master

Reels: I suggest or recommend that the locking pins be done away with or eliminated.

Mechanical Lowering: Lowering mechanism like that as you know it is always defective. Only experienced men know how to lower those boats. Recommend a mechanical device like they have on the C-1's with wire falls and one man only to lower the boat. I recommend wire falls and mechanical devices leading to a mechanical device or winch.

Rudders: The rudders were too weak because they were made of soft pine. They should be made of metal or hardwood. Made of heavier material.

Sails: I would also recommend that the sails be made of fireproof material.

Blankets: The six blankets were not enough. There should be at least twelve. Twelve instead of six.

Emergency Escapes: The light traps at the entrance to the passageways were made of wood and caught afire and the men couldn't get out of there from their quarters.

Steam Smothering System: Yes. With the steam smothering equipment-- the line should be controlled from the bridge instead of down by the mast where they are located now. Nobody could get to the valve go smother the fire.

HENRY KNOX 6-19-43

AUSTIN WILLIAMSON, 3rd Mate

Reels: The rope reels, or the lifeboat falls fouled. The particular boat that I was trying to launch was hung up by the faulty rope reel.

Provisions: The provisions were wet. The crackers were wat.

Sails: Fireproof the sails, or have a fireproof covering for the sails. They were all burned by the fire. The sails were all burned.

HENRY KNOX 6-19-43

CHAS. D. FELL, 3rd Asst. Engr.

Blackout Baffles: I had to go up to the bridge and all the doors were on fire. We had wooden baffles around each door to blackout the light, and everyone of them was on fire, and just more or less a trap, and so I went up on the top deck, the captain's deck, and out to the starboard side of the bridge and down on the boat deck.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAS. D. FELL, 3rd Asst. Eng.

HENRY KNOX (cont.)

L. P. Lights: We picked up a Merchant Marine fellow, because we saw him floating, and he had a light showing, and in my estimation, it was a very good thing.

Tool Kit: I suggest that there be a tool kit in each one of these motorboats.

Sails: The sails were burnt completely. We used the yellow signal flag for a sail and also a blanket.

Reels: The forward fall seemed to be fouled in some way on one of these rope reels. Now, whether these pieces of wood fell down on the boat deck and bent the reel, I don't know. When I got down in the boat, the bow of the boat was up in the air, and the other boat was directly overhead, and the stern was directly above, and with the ship moving along, the stern of the boat was going over the top of our heads, and that was another reason we had to cut loose.

Axe: I took the axe up forward and tried to cut the rope with that, and it was like hitting a piece of rubber with it, and one of the boys handed me a knife and I cut it.

Ship's Position: I think every day the approximate position of the ship should be posted, preferably in the officer's messhall or in some place like that. It should show the nearest direction to steer for land, in case it just happens that the boats go over the side and there are no officers. If it hadn't been for the captain, I wouldn't have known which way to go for land.

Tool Kit: I mentioned about the lifeboats with tools, a tool kit for the motor lifeboats.

Abandon Ship Kit: I would also recommend that the big first aid kit be kept in the lifeboat at all times.

Reels: I would recommend that these falls be changed. These rope reels. I prefer the old type with a tub, with a coil of rope in there. With these reels, they are easily bent, and when they are bent they won't clear. Also if the sails could be fireproof, or paint them or treat them somehow or another with a fire preventive.

Instructions-Motorboat: Another thing would be a good set of written instructions with the motorboat. It should show how the motor is operated, and how to start it and keep it in operation. Just by luck I had been around small boats when I was younger, and I knew how to start it if it would start, but it wasn't very clear on the instructions as to how to go about it.

HENRY KNOX (continued)

RECOMMENDATIONS CHAS. D. FELL, 3rd Asst. Eng.

Remote Control: He took and shut the main engine down and went up on top and tried the emergency throttle to make sure, but the type of engine in these Liberty Ships, when we shut the main engine down, they still have a vacuum on the low pressure cylinder, and they will continue turning over for approximately five minutes before they come to a complete stop. That is, unless you reverse it.

HENRY KNOX 7-13-43

WILLARD J. BARBER, Purser

Paint In Boats: One thing I would like to say, they should try to paint these lifeboats with a fireproof paint. I understand there is such a paint out.

Reels: Another thing, they should rig up another way of releasing these boats. This idea of a pin in a reel, and the men in their haste forget to pull the pin out, and they release it, and it sticks. That's because when the checks are kicked out, you have too much pressure on the pin, and it wouldn't unwind. When it is that way you can't even pull the pin out.

Motorboat: The motor was useless to us. That was due to the boat hitting the water some way or other. I don't know, but the bottom was bent in, and the boat--we couldn't get the motor to turn over at all.

HENRY KNOX

JOHN M. BORDIHN, A.B.

Reels: The fall rope was jammed. The pin was still in it. We left number one boat hanging. The reel, as I say, the pin was still in there, and with the weight of the boat pulling the rope on the reel, it wouldn't unreel. I suggest that they go back to the tub type, as I understand they had at one time.

HENRY KNOX

LLOYD L. CARSON, A.B.

Ship's Position: We will say for instance that a ship is torpedoed or sunk or something, and some of the officers were killed, and then the men don't know the nearest way to make land or don't know the way the currents are going. Only the officers do the navigating, they are the only ones to know where to go. Supposing there is a boat with no officer in it. They should have one certain man every day put the position to go for in case we are hit at night or any other time.

HENRY KNOX

EDW. LeROY de FOREST, A.B.

L.P. Lights: I had a light on my life preserver, and I was one of the few men that had a light that worked.

HENRY KNOX (continued)

RECOMMENDATIONS EDW. LeROYdeFOREST, A.B.

Reels: If there was some way they could change the reel system for the lines, that is the lines on the lifeboats. I believe it would be to an advantage if they would.

Sails: The sails definitely should be in a fireproof bag, and if possible, made of fire proof material.

TIMOTHY PICKERING 7-13-43

CHAS. DEERING, 2nd Asst. Eng.

L.P. Stowage: There should be life jackets placed at convenient stations, both forward and aft of the deck because in cases of this type people don't have time to get their life jackets. The men go off with or without.

Port Holes: The portholes should be enlarged to the point where they accommodate a man of any size. I suggest 18 inches at least. I saw men stuck in the portholes at the hips and burned to death as a result.

Emergency Escapes: Yes, off the saloon or off the alleyway, port and starboard both. In a case of this kind when the flame has its source back aft and is coming back through the alleyways, which is a case very likely to happen in case the ship is hit, you have a deep tank of oil right aft the deck house, the alleyways are blocked up, and there is no access to the deck at all.

Machine Space Ladders: The escape ladders in the engine and fire room be secured to the floor plates and adequate means taken to prevent breakage due to a jar by the instruction of a tension device, spring tension device.

BUSHROD WASHINGTON 9-14-43

11-27-43

E.V. SCHAEFER, Chf. Mate.

Emergency Escapes: The fire in #4 hold caused so much smoke and heat there in the after end of the midships house that the men didn't think they could get out that way. Of course the smoke was pouring into the midships house and the midships house had been filled with steam and there were approximately 10 men that for a short time believed themselves trapped in their rooms and the fire in #4 was temporarily controlled and the men were able to get out through the after doorway. The bomb explosion caused the midships house main deck to buckle in, closing off both side exits and the men aft of the athwartship alleyways on the main deck in the midships house were temporarily trapped in their quarters.