**INFORMATIVE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JOSEPH LUKEDA**

Hello everyone. I want to say hello to all of you and to thank you for joining on this video conference call. That this is the way that we are meeting now speaks a lot to the times we are experiencing. The world.... and we are included in that... along with millions of others.... is living through truly **uncharted** waters... and I imagine some of you know what that feels like, only this time, so much more is at stake.... our livelihoods, our “normal” way of life, our mental and emotional well being.... the welfare of our families, friends, and colleagues, and most importantly, our health. I want to speak to you, not only as a manager, but as a person who lives through this pandemic with you and shares concerns for those people in his life that may be angry, frustrated, doubting, and even disbelieving of the situations we currently are facing due to the global pandemic caused by Covid-19.

The loss of one of our own, Captain \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, has brought this virus way too close for comfort. Each one of us needs to take a long, hard, honest look at what we are facing, what the overall impact can be, how this virus travels on a determined path and doesn’t discriminate against some or favor others. This is an ugly, untamed disease and while we think we know what we need to know, let’s be clear.... we **DON’T**. Every day, scientists are learning more and more about how this virus travels and the damage it can... and **HAS** caused to too many people, regardless of age, overall health, belief systems, economic status.... anyone one of us that knew \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ can attest to that. We’re now seeing pictures of how the Coronavirus ravages the body.... forming blood clots where they shouldn’t be....leading to strokes, destroyed organs, amputations and worse... if that’s possible. It can cause permanent damage on the lungs... it can leave brain damage... we’ve learned about patients that had to be placed on ventilators, painfully inserted through their throats, lying prone on beds in semi vegetative states, with the intention that they will beat this enemy. So far, in the United States, to date, almost 138,000 people have lost the bet. That’s comparable to totally wiping out cities with similar populations.... cities like Syracuse.... Dayton, Ohio.... Waco, Texas..... **ENTIRE CITIES**. What’s even more treacherous is that many people carrying the disease are asymptomatic.... Talk about, “We don’t know what we don’t know...” What we **DO** know and what we are observing, even though we don’t yet have a sure fire cure or vaccine, is that we can all take precautions to protect ourselves, our colleagues, our friends, and those, back home, that we love.

We’ve seen flare ups and rising numbers in areas that may be disregarding how this disease spreads. On Sunday, Florida reported over **15,000** new cases... in just **ONE** **DAY**. True, more people are being tested.... the other truth is that for every positive case, ten more people most probably are infected.

I’m not here to be the “grim reaper.” I’m here to speak to each one of you openly and frankly about what needs to be done to insure your safety and that of your crews, as much as we possibly can, as we all adapt to this strange, “new normal.” Pardon the pun, but we really are “all in this boat together” and I don’t want to have to extend condolences to one more family member or friend of anyone I... or **YOU** know.

Yes, we’re in this boat together.... in the tug boat business.. our vessels might be relatively small compared to the ships we guide, but we serve an essential purpose.... we’re here as legacies, sailors, people committed to making the world and our communities stronger through the power of what’s possible in the maritime trades. We can’t do our jobs if we’re sick.... or worse. So what do we do?? How do we at least stare down the enemy or make an admirable attempt to beat it at its own game? How do we show this virus that it won’t take us down? We do it by making informed choices based on verified information for the greater good of all involved. There are certain non-negotiable factors involved:

* Tugboat crews have schedules in which travel is required for two weeks at a time.
* Tugboats are relatively small and sleeping quarters are smaller with limited space and privacy and contact is unavoidable in communal spaces.
* Each crew has seven men.... each is on board because they are needed and do essential functions. This is what the team and the mandate requires.

For two weeks at a time, you, the leaders, and your crews leave the safety of your homes and families to do your jobs. As your manager, and as the chain of command leads to you toninclude and manage your crews, I would be remiss if I did not have an open, honest communication with you on how critically important it is for all of you to take precautions while in the line of duty. This is done, not only for your safety, but for the safety and well being of all of the people with whom you come into contact.

There are certain facts that we know to be true. Every day, more information is discovered. As of right now, we know the following:

* The virus is spread in droplets or aerosols. The spread of infection is airborne. It can be transmitted through sneezing, coughing... even just talking. The aerosols can live in the air for several hours. Keep this in mind: when you walk into a room, you don’t necessarily know who was there, what they did or touched, or how the air might have been affected by aerosols or droplets that were possibly infected.
* If we know this, then we can assess our situations in the environments we will find ourselves. If quarters are close and symptoms don’t necessarily show themselves, we have to be smart enough to protect ourselves as much as possible. This includes disinfecting surfaces as frequently as possible, being mindful of what we touch, and frequently washing and sanitizing our hands, being conscious to avoid touching our faces, being outdoors as much as possible.... but even THAT is not fool proof... although it’s less risky... and above all, wearing face coverings, gloves when needed, and any PPE - Personal Protective Equipment that might be needed to insure a greater degree of safety and protection for both you and your crews.

(**Do you want to say**) This is **NOT** a political statement. This **DOES NOT** rob you of your freedoms. This is common sense to save lives and to limit the spread of this heinous disease. Gladiators and knights wore armor. Soldiers wear protective gear. I cannot stress enough how important it is for each one of you to set an example in order to preserve your health and protect the lives of those around you.

I want you to know, in no uncertain terms, that we all need to understand that we must learn to live with these new conditions. There’s an expression I’ve heard. It says, “Adapt or die.” I don’t think that’s ever been truer than right now. With the threat of Covid-19 for the time being and into the foreseeable future, the only way forward is using best practices of wearing a mask and other PPE when you cannot socially distance from one another. I want you to know this has nothing to do with violating your personal freedoms to not wear a mask vs. the actual, practical, proven safety of wearing one. You are strong. You’re tough, but you’re **NOT** indestructible. I want you to know, and I truly, sincerely hope that you understand that although you may not feel the necessity to wear a mask at home, as soon as you leave your houses and families, you’re exposed and the clock starts ticking. I want you to also realize that the members of your crew come from all over the country. You have no idea who or what these crew members may have come in contact with- without their knowledge and caution, so please, **PLEASE** understand how important it is to protect yourselves and your crew and know the urgency that you should set an example and wear PPE. While all employees are subject to temperature checks before you can board the tug, and while each one of you is, in addition required to submit a pre-assessment form, we need to go further to protect all of us. Daily temperature checks are good but not enough. Symptoms may not show. By wearing PPE and by carefully sanitizing and paying attention to actions and movements, there’s somewhat less risk when an occasion arises when social distancing is not possible or practical. With the death of one of our captains and with others getting very sick, we’ve all received a very clear message. This is **NOT** a disease that “someone else gets.” This is **NOT** a myth that we only hear about on TV or the newspapers. This is very, **VERY** real. **NO ONE** has yet “out toughened” Covid-19. Sheer will does not make the virus turn and run. Being cautious, careful, and respectful of others buys each one of us some time until we can all be protected by a vaccine.... that time is not here yet. I wish it was. In the meantime, for you, for your team, for your families, kids, parents, and friends, please protect yourselves to protect others. You are leaders and managers and your team looks to you for guidance. I am relying on you to show the way, set an example, and encourage all to stay safe. Thank you.