

Panelist Biographies
Advancing Shipboard Fire Safety: National Strategies, Local Action



Bill Burket: Senior Director, Maritime Incident Response Team and Business Continuity, Port of Virginia; Member, Virginia Harbor Safety Committee

Bill Burket is the Senior Director, Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT) and Business Continuity. Bill joined the Virginia Port Authority in 2010 and is responsible for the management of resources, training, and personnel from local fire and law enforcement agencies who participate on the MIRT team. He ensures partnerships within the port emergency response community are maintained to provide for an effective and safe response to all hazards incidents within the Port of Virginia.



Curtis Cannizzaro: Executive Director, Maritime Fire and Safety Association; Executive Director, Merchants Exchange of Portland; and Member, Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee

Curtis Cannizzaro is the Executive Director of the Maritime Fire & Safety Association (MFSA) and the Merchants Exchange of Portland, both organizations that serve the Columbia and Willamette River maritime community. MFSA is a non-profit organization focused on fire and oil spill response planning, training, and coordination across public ports, private facilities, and multiple fire agencies in Oregon and Southwest Washington. In his leadership role, Curtis provides strategic guidance, operational oversight, and partnership development for both associations.

Curtis has been an integral part of advancing shipboard fire safety preparedness in the Lower Columbia region for over a decade. In 2017, he led the update of a Regional Fire Safety Plan that has become a cornerstone for planning and coordination between maritime stakeholders and land-based fire departments responding to vessel fires. Building on that work, he created the “Shipboard Fire Operations Guide”— a tactical document actively used by fire departments for training and response operations based on the regional plan’s content, with regular updates to stay current with best practices and evolving response needs.

Previous roles Curtis has served in include General Manager of OSRO - Clean Rivers Cooperative, Assistant Manager of MFSA, and Program Manager for the Fire Protection Agencies Advisory Council (FPAAC). He holds a B.A. in Business Administration from Bethany College and has completed extensive training in FEMA’s Incident Command System (ICS) and in federal grants management.

A long-time participant in maritime safety committees and associations, Curtis serves as a member of the Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee (LCRHSC) and as Board Treasurer for

the Maritime Information Services of North America (MISNA). Through his work at the Merchants Exchange, he continues to support key operational targets aimed at improving regional maritime preparedness, response coordination, and safety outcomes.

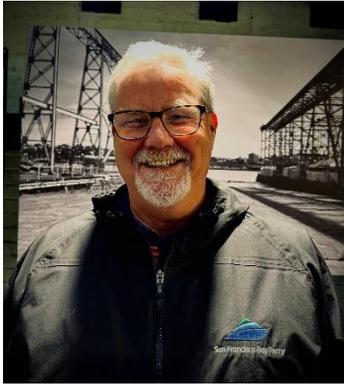


Jim Elliott: Chief Operating Officer, T&T Group of Companies; Past President, American Salvage Association; Vice Chair, Lone Star Harbor Safety Committee

Jim Elliott is Chief Operating Officer of the T&T Group of Companies. He is responsible for managing worldwide marine salvage, firefighting, heavy lift, commercial diving, and emergency response operations while simultaneously managing multiple companies. With four decades of leadership experience in maritime operations, he has served as a senior Coast Guard Officer, Incident Commander, Salvage Master, Commercial Diver and Project Manager on salvage and oil spill response operations from the Equator to the Arctic.

In addition to attaining the United States' highest (Type 1) Incident Commander certification, Mr. Elliott also qualified as a Coast Guard Federal On-Scene Coordinator, Commanding Officer, Captain of the Port, and National Strike Force Response Officer. His professional certifications include Certified Emergency Manager (CEM), Texas Emergency Manager (TEM), Certified Environmental Professional (CEP), Certified Safety Professional (CSP), Certified Instructional Trainer (CIT), Certified Hazardous Material Manager (CHMM), and Registered Environmental Professional (REM). An American Salvage Association instructor for over 20-years, he is also certified to teach Incident Command System, Hazardous Materials Response, Weapons of Mass Destruction Operations, and International Maritime Organization Oil Spill Response courses. As a Type-1 Incident Commander on Coast Guard Incident Management Teams and the National Strike Force, he responded to many of the US's largest response operations, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks; Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ivan, and Ike; and the Deepwater Horizon response, plus hundreds of major oil spills and marine casualty incidents. As a salvage industry executive, he has worked on every continent and has been sought out to present and consult on marine casualty response best practices worldwide.

Mr. Elliott holds a Bachelor of Science in Environment Management with distinction, a Master of Environmental Policy with honors, Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies with highest distinction from the U.S. Naval War College and a Master of Business Administration. Additionally, he has earned over 75 Coast Guard, State and industry awards and medals, including selection into the Coast Guard's Leadership Hall of Fame and the ADCI Commercial Diving Hall of Fame. Jim is also a past President of the American Salvage Association.



Capt. Tony Heeter: Operations Manager, North Bay Operations - Maintenance Facilities, Blue & Gold Fleet; Chair, Ferry Operations Subcommittee, Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region

Tony is the Operations Manager for the San Francisco Bay Ferry in North SF Bay (Vallejo Ferry). Tony joined Blue and Gold Fleet in January of 2017. He is the Chairman of the Ferry Subcommittee for the SF Harbor Safety Committee. He has spent over 20 years in the Wheelhouse on the Pacific Coast. He has experience in SAR, Marine Salvage and High Speed Ferries.



Aaron Patterson: Lieutenant, Seattle Fire Department; Participant, Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee

Aaron Patterson has served for 25 years with the Seattle Fire Department and currently works on the department's fireboat. He has specialized in marine firefighting as part of the department's shoreside marine emergency response team and has played a key role in developing the Seattle Fire Department's Ship Fire Standard Operating Guideline. He has also helped to develop and instruct marine firefighting classes and full-scale exercises throughout the Puget Sound.

After the tragic Grand Costa D'Avorio ship fire, Lieutenant Patterson was a member of the International Association of Firefighters panel that was a party to the NTSB investigation. Following the investigation, this same group developed a ship fire awareness training program to deliver to firefighters nationwide.

He is also active in groups like the Puget Sound Marine Firefighting Commission and regularly collaborates with the Puget Sound Marine Exchange and the Washington State Maritime Cooperative. He is also a new member of the Propeller Club of Seattle, promoting collaboration between maritime industry stakeholders, including emergency responders.



Dan Smiley, Executive Director, Washington State Maritime Cooperative; Participant, Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee

With an expansive maritime career spanning over four decades, Dan has filled a diverse and impressive range of roles within the marine and oil industries. Currently serving as the Executive Director at Washington State Maritime Cooperative (WSMC), Dan manages a skilled group of Incident Commanders while maintaining the organization's response preparedness.

Dan's maritime journey started with the U.S. Coast Guard. He then transitioned to Alaska's coastal freight trade, distinguishing himself as Master and Mate. He joined the Clean Sound Cooperative as Captain of the Oil Spill Recovery Vessel WESTERN GULL. This role underscored Dan's commitment to marine safety and environmental conservation. As a response manager for MSRC, he was at the forefront of managing some of the most notable maritime incidents, including the New Carissa, Cosco Busan, and the Deepwater Horizon.

Dan has carved a niche for himself in oil spill exercise design and facilitation. As the lead designer, he has orchestrated worst-case tabletop exercises not just in the United States but also in Canada, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Dan Smiley is the captivating voice behind "The Tactics Meeting Podcast," an essential resource for those keen on understanding the ever-evolving world of emergency response.