

Text 1 – Corrosion and faulty repairs led to fatal explosion, NTSB says David Wagman | The October 2017 explosion aboard the Articulated Tug and Barge (ATB) Buster Bouchard/B No. 255 was caused by the ignition of flammable vapor that formed in a void space. An ATB consists of an independent tugboat, acting as a detachable power module, that is connected by a rack and pinion into the stern notch of a cargo-carrying barge designed to fit the tugboat. NTSB investigators documented cracks in the area of the original bulkhead that were not repaired prior to the explosion. The vapor was from crude oil that leaked into the space from a cargo tank through a corroded bulkhead. No. 255 anchored in the western part of the Aransas Pass Fairway Anchorage about 3.25 miles offshore from Port Aransas, Texas. In order to raise the anchor, the barge crew had to start one of the barge's diesel generators and switch the source of electrical power from the tugboat to the barge. The ATB in this accident included the tugboat Buster Bouchard and the tank barge B. No. 255. At around 4:30 a.m., the mate on watch in the Buster Bouchard wheelhouse and the two barge crewmembers prepared to raise the anchor on the bow. A 2017 explosion and fire aboard a barge off the Texas Gulf Coast was the result of a lack of effective maintenance and safety management, the National Transportation Safety Board said. About 2,000 barrels of crude oil were discharged into the water or were consumed in the fire. These cracks compromised the integrity of the cargo containment of the number one port tank. The barge was carrying 135,000 barrels (1.39 million gallons) of crude oil. The cargo was distributed in the barge's 16 tanks, with the no. 1 port cargo tank about 90% filled. When connected, the tugboat and barge operate and navigate as a single unit. On Oct. 19, 2017, the Buster Bouchard/B. Once electrical power was switched, the barge's crew moved to the bow. Two barge crew members who were on the bow were killed in the explosion. Accident timeline 4. May 10, 2019 1.2.3.5.6