

Home > News > Video supports SSA transfer bridge explanation

# Video supports SSA transfer bridge explanation

By **Rich Saltzberg** - November 23, 2022

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A set of transfer bridge counterweights that a crane fished from Vineyard Haven Harbor in August. — Rich Saltzberg



Security camera footage lends support to the explanation given by Steamship Authority general manager Robert Davis as to why a cable supporting a multi-ton set of counterweights broke in August. The counterweights fell from the Slip 1 transfer bridge at the ferry line's

Vineyard Haven terminal on August 30. Nobody was injured. It took a crane, a commercial diver, and a maintenance crew from the SSA to rehang the counterweights. At a Port Council meeting in September, Davis said something protruding from a trash truck snagged the cable attached to the counterweights, and that caused the cable to fail. The driver of the truck previously disputed that account.

At the same Port Council meeting, SSA director of marine operations Mark Amundsen said the truck lifted up the counterweights and dropped them as it passed, and that caused them to break free. The trash truck in question wasn't the typical type that collects and compacts roadside trash, but a tractor-trailer of the kind that routinely takes rubbish off-Island. Footage taken from the ferry Governor as the truck crossed the transfer bridge clearly shows a strip of what appears to be metal protruding from the driver's side of the truck, the same side the counterweights fell from. An actual snag is difficult to see; however, moments after the truck passes the suspended counterweights, they topple. Footage taken from farther away in the terminal shows the large splash the counterweights made plunging into Vineyard Haven Harbor.

The counterweights are used to counterbalance a vehicle ramp that spans the gap between ferries and the terminal. One set hangs on each side of a gallows frame that straddles the ramp. The SSA previously told The Times these counterweights weigh 20,000 pounds.

Amundsen previously said the cablework supporting the weights isn't behind any kind of guard, to prevent snags. When asked Thursday if the event qualified as a "near miss," a type of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) incident, SSA spokesman Sean Driscoll said he was unsure.

"OSHA strongly encourages employers to investigate all incidents in which a worker was hurt, as well as close calls (sometimes called 'near misses'), in which a worker might have been hurt if the circumstances had been slightly different," the administration's website states.

As The Times previously reported, when a set of counterweights fell in May 2020, Driscoll described the incident as a "near miss."

Citing federal regulations governing sensitive security information (SSI), the SSA originally refused to provide camera footage that would show the August counterweights incident. The Times appealed to the state's supervisor of records. That office ordered an in-camera review of the footage. In lieu of providing the footage to the supervisor, the SSA consulted with the U.S. Coast Guard and TSA. TSA wound up being the ultimate arbiter in the matter, and found the footage didn't contain SSI. The SSA subsequently mailed a DVD containing the footage, and also provided a tutorial PDF on SSI. The Times request helped establish a mechanism going forward for the evaluation of SSA security video for public release.

"The authority will process any future requests for information that may be deemed SSI in the same manner as it managed this request," SSA general counsel Terence Kenneally wrote.

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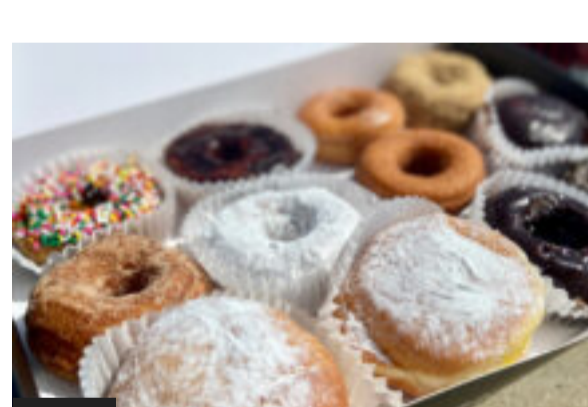
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**Jackson Jervis** November 25, 2022 At 3:21 pm  
 One question to ask is who makes the call as to may be deemed SSI? Bob Davis? An internal review? The board of governors? The process now amounts to someone/something at the Steamship considering something SSI, refusing to share it, an outside entity filing a request, and the TSA determining that it's ok to share or it isn't — I guess it means that the SSA doesn't know what's SSI and is guessing. In this case, they got it wrong. That's the TSA speaking.

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