

LOG 404B



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: NOV 24 1995

In Reply Refer To: M-95-43 and -44

Mr. John R. Groundwater
Executive Director
Passenger Vessel Association
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Arlington, Virginia 22209

About 8:35 p.m. on December 3, 1994, an engine room fire occurred aboard the U.S. small passenger vessel ARGO COMMODORE while on a dinner cruise in San Francisco Bay. All passengers were safely evacuated by a U.S. Coast Guard vessel and a passing yacht; there were no deaths or injuries among the 41 passengers and 4 crew members.¹

The Safety Board concluded that the crew's inadequate knowledge of safety systems aboard the vessel prevented them from assuming a leadership role during the emergency. Fortunately, two passengers possessed special skills in emergency procedures and were able to ameliorate the consequences of the fire; however, the crew should have been trained to be self-reliant in handling emergencies. Because none of the deckhands on the ARGO COMMODORE possessed a background in the marine industry and all were relatively new to the company, having only between 3 and 8 months of part-time employment, they would have benefited especially from a well-structured and continuous safety training program. Without such training, they and future employees of the company are unlikely to be able to ensure the safety of passengers.

The Safety Board believes that the Passenger Vessel Association can make an important contribution to public safety by making its members aware of the need for proper crew training, well-defined emergency procedures, and periodic emergency drills. This would be consistent with one of the PVA's goals of encouraging enhanced training among its membership in order to improve the industry's loss record. By combining the practical experience of its members with the guidelines for training deckhands contained in Coast Guard NVIC 1-91, for example, the PVA could develop a model program, to include periodic drills, for training shipboard personnel in safety and emergency procedures. This program would benefit the entire small passenger vessel industry.

¹ For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report—*Fire Aboard U.S. Small Passenger Vessel ARGO COMMODORE in San Francisco Bay, California, December 3, 1994* (NTSB/MAR-95/03).

A safety orientation given at the beginning of this cruise would have made the passengers aware of the location and proper donning procedures for the life preservers and would have familiarized them with the emergency procedures and safety equipment they might have had to use during the evacuation. Further, it would have made the passengers aware of the roles of individual crewmembers and would have prepared them to react more effectively in the emergency.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Passenger Vessel Association:

Develop and provide to your members crew drills for on-board crew emergency procedures/standards which include pre-incident planning for a variety of shipboard emergencies, including fires, and the deployment of crew resources for proper response to the emergency without compromising passenger safety. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-95-43)

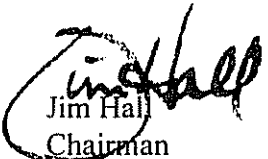
Recommend to your members that they routinely provide pre-departure safety orientations to passengers describing the procedures to follow in an emergency. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-95-44)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-95-36 to the U.S. Department of Transportation; M-95-37 through -42 to the U.S. Coast Guard; and M-95-45 through -53 to Commodore Dining Cruises, Inc.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations M-95-43 and -44 in your reply. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 382-6860.

Chairman HALL, Vice Chairman FRANCIS, Member HAMMERSCHMIDT, and Member GOGLIA concurred in this recommendation.

By:


Jim Hall
Chairman