

Log 404



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: NOV 24 1995

In Reply Refer To: M-95-36

Honorable Federico Peña
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20590

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 accident involved ongoing Safety Board concerns related to small passenger vessels, including the issues of crew emergency training and passenger briefings, both of which are on the Safety Board's list of "Most Wanted Transportation Safety Improvements."

Small passenger vessel operators belonging to the Passenger Vessel Association alone transport approximately 85 million passengers annually within the United States. The U.S. small passenger vessel industry is growing rapidly with the introduction of newer and larger-capacity vessels such as gambling vessels and fast ferries, meaning that small passenger vessels will carry an even greater share of the traveling public in the future. Regulations under revision by the Coast Guard, including those that would require passenger briefings and crew training for emergency response, are crucial to passenger safety. The rulemaking process for revising these regulations was initiated in 1982 with the intent of modernizing the regulations to keep pace with developments in the small passenger vessel industry. Unfortunately, these updated regulations remain unfinalized. In a June 8, 1994, letter commenting on the proposed rules, the Safety Board again urged the Coast Guard to complete its revision to the regulations for small passenger vessels, but with no results. In the interest of improving the safety of this large sector of the public transportation system in the United States, the Safety Board believes that the U.S. Department of Transportation should direct

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).

the U.S. Coast Guard to issue the proposed regulations for small passenger vessels without further delay.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U. S. Department of Transportation:

Expedite the adoption of the proposed U.S. Coast Guard regulations for small passenger vessels. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-95-36)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-95-37 through -42 to the U. S. Coast Guard; M-95-43 and -44 to the Passenger Vessel Association; and M-95-45 through -53 to Commodore Dining Cruises, Inc. 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