



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
Safety Recommendation

*Jog M-32814*

**Date:** June 18, 1987

**In reply refer to:** M-87-19 and -20

Mr. Walter Reinhart  
Director of Administrative Services  
Admiral Cruises, Inc.  
1220 Biscayne Boulevard  
Miami, Florida 33101

About 0910 on July 30, 1986, the EMERALD SEAS, a Panamanian registered, 622-foot, 24,458-gross ton, passenger ship with 1,296 people aboard, was anchoring less than a mile offshore of Little Stirrup Cay, Bahamas, when a crewmember saw thick, black smoke coming out of an engine department storeroom. The storeroom contained acetylene, oxygen, argon cylinders, and plumbing parts. When the storeroom door was opened, more smoke poured out, so crewmembers retreated behind a watertight door. Shortly thereafter, there were two explosions and a fire. While passengers were assembled at their assigned lifeboats, the crew fought the fire. By 1005, the fire had been extinguished. U.S. Coast Guard helicopters evacuated 15 passengers and 2 crewmembers, who were taken to hospitals in Miami and treated for smoke inhalation and injuries. The ship arrived in Miami with the remaining passengers and crewmembers on July 31. Damage repair costs were estimated to be about \$300,000. The ship was returned to service on August 1, 1986. 1/

During the fire, crewmembers searched the ship for passengers remaining in rooms or passageways. One passenger, who was trapped for a time in a passageway and was later rescued by a crewmember, provided the necessary information so that crewmembers could rescue two other passengers who were found unconscious in their room. Since the Safety Board was unable to determine the time when the two passengers were rescued, it was unable to ascertain whether or not the two passengers could have been rescued sooner if a muster had been taken at the lifeboats and they had been identified as missing. In some circumstances, if a list of passengers assigned to each lifeboat is provided to the crewmember in charge of each lifeboat, a search can be localized and missing passengers or crewmembers may be found more quickly. Such a list facilitates a search by focusing search effort on locations where missing passengers might be, such as in their cabins. There is, however, no requirement to provide the person in charge of each lifeboat with a list of passengers assigned to that lifeboat. A list of passengers assigned to each lifeboat could be easily provided aboard the EMERALD SEAS by using the computer-generated passenger manifest in use on the ship, which includes the room numbers of each passenger.

During the passenger evacuation, one crewmember was injured when he was turning by hand the lifeboat winch for lifeboat No. 7 and another crewmember energized the winch's electric motor. When the electric winch motor was energized, the hand crank turned, hitting the crewmember in the chest. A power interrupting control circuit for the

1/ For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report—"Fire and Explosions Onboard the Panamanian Passenger Ship EMERALD SEAS in the Atlantic Ocean Near Little Stirrup Cay, Bahamas, July 30, 1986" (NTSB/MAR-87/04).

hand crank could have prevented this injury. Since Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) 74 requires only those ships whose keels are laid after July 1, 1986, to have a power interrupting control circuit that will prevent the winch hand crank from turning when the lifeboat is being lowered or when power is applied, there is a need to adapt the lifeboat winches on ships built before this date to prevent future accidents of this nature.

Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended that Admiral Cruises, Inc.:

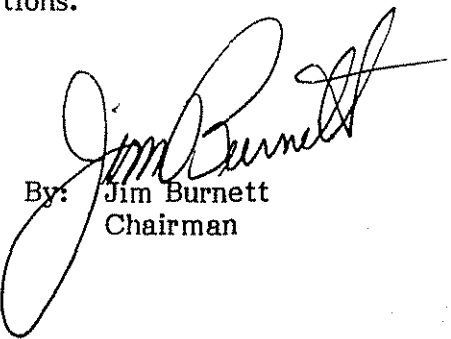
Install a power control circuit onboard the EMERALD SEAS to prevent the hand crank from turning when the lifeboat winch motor is energized or when the lifeboat is being lowered. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-87-19)

Before a ship leaves port, provide the crewmember in charge of each lifeboat with a list of passengers assigned to his/her lifeboat. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-87-20)

Also as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-87-17 and -18 to the U.S. Coast Guard.

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 actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations M-87-19 and -20.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER and NALL, Members, concurred in these recommendations.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman