

Cruise ship safety training, enforcement varies

By Mark Strassmann CBS News January 17, 2012, 4:45 PM

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With all the reports of confusion during the evacuation of the ill-fated Costa Concordia cruise ship in Italy, CBS News correspondent Mark Strassman decided to look into the training the crews receive.

One simulator outside Ft. Lauderdale trains 2,000 junior and senior officers a year from cruise ships and cargo ships. The mock disaster CBS News witnessed simulated running aground, followed by the order to abandon ship.

Gerry Pannell, a sea captain for thirteen years, directs the training.

"Everyone is going to be looking to the captain to make decisions that have to be made in a timely manner," Pannell said. "He has an onboard team (to get the message out, including) not only his bridge crew, but every other officer on board to deal with that emergency."

Cruise ships around the world are supposed to follow minimum safety codes established by the International Maritime Organization, an arm of the U.N.

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The codes include numbers of life boats, life jackets and a requirement to stage a life boat drill within at least 24 hours of departure.

But enforcement varies, depending on the ship's home port and the country in which it's registered.

The Concordia was owned by Carnival, an American company, but under Italian jurisdiction.

While officers can have several weeks of training, many of the hundreds of waiters, maids and support staff get only two weeks of basic safety training.

Another challenge is communication. Cruise ship staff comes from many countries.

"Most vessels operate internationally on an English basis. So in some cases it may be a second language to these people," Pannell said.

International rules require that a ship be emptied within 30 minutes of an order to abandon ship. But Maritime lawyer Brett Rivkind says that's unrealistic for giant cruise ships that have become an industry standard.

"We've seen these megaships being built with over 4- or 5-thousand passengers, like a floating city, and we haven't had time to see all the dangers that can come with that."

U.S. safety regulations for cruise ships are higher than the international standard.

Right now there are 256 cruise ships registered around the world, but only one of them is registered in the

U.S.



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Luxury cruise ship runs aground

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Mark Strassmann was named CBS News Transportation correspondent in August 2011. He has been a CBS News correspondent since January 2001, and is based in the Atlanta bureau.

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