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MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) — By now, we've heard several reports of complete confusion during the evacuation of the Costa Concordia. So, with more than 19 million passengers from around the world going on cruises every year, cruise safety is becoming front and center in an international discussion.

Several Twin Cities travel agents told us cruises are often Minnesotans' preferred choice for vacation. So, what's keeping us safe at sea?

WCCO-TV found out that around the world, cruise ships are supposed to follow a set of minimum safety codes established by an arm of the United Nations, called the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

It's the enforcement, however, that varies a great degree, depending on where the ship is registered.

The words "capsized ship" takes most of us back to dramatic motion pictures, like "Titanic." Front and center were images of women and children getting on life boats first.

"Realizing from a disaster like this, 100 years after the Titanic disaster, that ships are vulnerable, they're not invincible," said Miami Maritime Lawyer Brett Rivkind.

Rivkind specialized in cruise ship safety for 30 years. He says while there are no specific regulations when it comes to who gets on the life boat, the IMO does mandate other minimum codes.

"It's going to be equipment, minimum safety equipment, minimum type of safety drills that have to be performed, and minimum training standards," Rivkind said.

One rule: In an evacuation, a ship must be emptied within 30 minutes.

"That doesn't seem likely that that can occur with these cruise ships with so many people on board," Rivkind said.

While the lawyer sees inherent concern in relying on the cruise industry to police itself, there are some who say the numbers speak to the safety of the sea.

"When you do consider the number of ships that are sailing every day, and the number of passengers that are on board," Minnetonka Travel Agency's Lori Bednark said.

Bednark has book passengers on thousands of cruises, and she's been on upwards of 20 ships herself. She says while different cruise lines have different types of life boat drills, most passengers walk away with the same lessons learned.

"With a majority of the ships, I think it's knowing where your life jacket is located, knowing where the evacuation areas are on board the ship," Bednark said.

Although Bednark can't give her customers a sure-fire safety guarantee, she says so far, she's seen no

cancellations as a result of the Costa Concordia disaster.

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

While U.S. safety regulations for cruise ships are higher than the international standards, of the 256 cruise ships registered around the world, only one of them is registered in the U.S.