

NTSB MOST WANTED LIST

CRITICAL CHANGES NEEDED TO REDUCE TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS AND SAVE LIVES

2014

ADVANCE PASSENGER VESSEL SAFETY

What is the Problem?

On a scheduled trip from Point Judith to Block Island, Rhode Island, on a foggy afternoon in July 2008, the *Block Island*, a 187-foot-long US passenger and car ferry vessel carrying 294 passengers and 11 crewmembers, collided with the 140-foot-long US Coast Guard cutter *Morro Bay*, carrying 21 personnel, on Block Island Sound, Rhode Island. The NTSB's investigation of this collision revealed a number of safety issues, including failure to follow navigational "rules of the road" in reduced visibility, ineffective use of the radars on board both vessels, and lack of safety management systems and voyage data recorders on US passenger ferries. Additionally, the available out-of-water survival craft on board the *Block Island* vessel could not have accommodated the ferry's total passenger capacity. Unfortunately, the NTSB has encountered similar gaps in passenger vessel safety in a number of its investigations.

Small passenger vessels, such as the *Block Island* and the *Seastreak Wall Street*, which struck a New York City pier on January 9, 2013, transport millions of commuters each day. Larger cruise ships carry 20 million passengers worldwide, 17.2 million traveling from the United States. Although accidents on these various passenger vessels are relatively rare, a catastrophic event, whether it involves a small domestic excursion vessel or a major cruise ship, would place lives at risk. Therefore, it is critical to increase public and media attention on passenger ship safety.



Photo of the Staten Island Ferry *Andrew J. Barberi* after the May 8, 2010 collision with the St. George Terminal.

What can be done?

For over three decades, NTSB accident investigations revealed in numerous cases that the cause of an accident was not the failure of the vessel but the lack of good safety practices that led to the loss of life and injuries. Safety and risk management is a key factor in passenger vessel operations. Being aware of your potential risks and knowing how to effectively control them is important for the safety of a vessel's passengers and crew.

One need only compare two separate hard landings of the Staten Island ferry *Andrew J. Barberi* to see the critical difference safety management systems play in advancing passenger vessel safety. In 2003, the *Andrew J. Barberi*, struck a maintenance pier while attempting to dock at the Staten Island Ferry terminal causing 10 fatalities and numerous serious injuries and was partially attributable to the New York City Department of Transportation's (DOT) weak safety management. The New York DOT responded by reorganizing the agency and implementing a strong safety culture by training personnel on procedures implemented in its safety management system. In 2010, when the ferry experienced another collision with a structure at the St. George terminal, personnel were able to carry out their designated emergency response procedures in a timely and effective manner leaving only a few with serious injuries and no fatalities.

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What can be done? *con't...*

Improvements to the safety management and safety culture of the industry are not the only changes needed. Steps that can advance passenger vessel safety, particularly for small passenger vessels and ferries, include requiring fire detection and suppression systems, voyage data recorders that meet International Maritime Organization (IMO) standards, and out-of-water survival craft for all passengers and crew.

Congress recently mandated the implementation of safety management systems for the domestic marine industry and the phase out of primary lifesaving devices on passenger vessels that do not provide out-of-water flotation. Unfortunately, the marine passenger vessel industry has been reluctant to embrace these safety improvements or to install voyage data recorders on ferry vessels.

What is the NTSB doing?

The NTSB's history of addressing passenger vessel safety dates back to the 1970s. In 1989, the NTSB conducted a significant and far-reaching safety study that positively influenced the IMO's convention on Safety of Life at Sea as well as US domestic passenger vessel regulations. Since that time, the NTSB has investigated a host of passenger vessel accidents, most involving domestic operations. Many of these accidents involved fatalities, significant property damage, or both. These investigations led to recommendations issued to the US Coast Guard, vessel owners and operators, classification societies, and industry groups concerning various aspects of passenger ship safety.

The NTSB also has partnered with the US Coast Guard to assist in the development of improvements to worldwide passenger vessel safety by the IMO as well as working on domestic passenger vessel safety through participation in various US Coast Guard Safety Advisory Committees and taking advantage of passenger vessel industry outreach opportunities.

In 2014, the NTSB will convene a 2-day forum, *Cruise Ships: Examining Safety, Operations and Oversight*, to review the regulatory framework, ship design and fire protection, operations and corporate oversight of cruise ships. It will also explore some recent high-profile incidents. The goal of this forum is to encourage dialogue among industry stakeholders, regulators, and the general public to better understand cruise ship safety and oversight.

Critical changes needed to reduce transportation accidents and save lives



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The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation - railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the Federal Government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

