



News Release

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AAA Travel Experts Offer Five Cruise Safety Tips

Cruising remains an attractive vacation option for millions of North Americans

VIRGINIA BEACH Va., (Feb. 2, 2012) - Cruising remains a popular choice for North American vacationers, buoyed by AAA Travel cruise statistics revealing a 5% percent increase in cruise sales in 2011 over 2010. More than 16 million cruise passengers sailed the world's waterways last year, according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), and a passenger total in excess of 17 million is forecast for 2012.

While most AAA Travel cruise passengers remain loyal to cruising, the Costa Concordia tragedy has sparked debate about cruise safety in some industry and public sectors.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), an agency of the United Nations, mandates global regulations for the safety and operation of cruise ships. The most important of these is the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), which includes comprehensive information on safety equipment and procedures. To help ensure the safety and security of cruise line passengers, AAA recommends all cruise lines meet the industry standards included in the SOLAS treaty.

"There is value in having reasoned dialogue to examine whether current maritime laws governing the cruise industry are sufficient or should be modified," said Judy Ocasio, Vice President of AAA Travel Services for AAA Tidewater Virginia. "Meanwhile, cruising remains an attractive vacation option for millions of North Americans each year."

In the United States, the U.S. Coast Guard has the responsibility for ensuring that ships embarking passengers in U.S. ports meet all international conventions and domestic requirements for safety, security and environmental protection. It conducts announced and unannounced safety inspections for every cruise ship that embarks passengers in U.S. ports. More than 10 million people boarded cruise ships in the United States last year.

AAA Travel experts offer cruise passengers five important safety tips:

- All cruise passengers, even seasoned cruisers, should actively participate in and pay full attention during the ship's muster drills as evacuation procedures vary by cruise line. Currently, ships are required to hold safety drills within 24 hours of boarding new passengers. If the ship's emergency muster drill is not scheduled prior to departure from the embarkation port, take personal responsibility for safety by locating life vests and identifying assigned muster stations.

- Register all international travel with the U.S. Department of State's free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. This will enable the State Department to provide better assistance in an emergency.

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- **Travel with a small waterproof pack that can be easily secured around the body in the event of an evacuation.** The pack should include, passports, cash including local currency, credit card, medications, small flashlight, cell phone, nutrition bars, and a bottle of water if possible. Prepare the pack upon boarding the ship so it is immediately accessible in the event of an emergency.

- **Don't let common sense take a vacation.** Avoid participation in risky behaviors like excessive consumption of alcohol and admitting strangers to your cabin, and report any concerns to ship security. Personal safety is a consideration while on a cruise vacation, just like it is while at home or when traveling on land.

- **Book all cruise vacations through a trusted travel counselor.** In the days following an emergency, the travel counselor can be a trusted ally providing critical, timely and valuable assistance. A travel counselor can provide guidance to customers already booked on future cruises that may be affected by the original cruise ship emergency

February through March sees the highest demand among consumers for purchasing cruise vacations to sail to top summer cruise destinations like Alaska, the Caribbean and Europe as well as cruises throughout the world for the remainder of the year. Prospective cruise passengers should book early and take advantage of special buying incentives to secure their first choice of ship, itinerary, cabin location, and sailing date.

AAA is committed to providing members with everything needed to plan the best cruise vacation. AAA Vacations® - a customized collection of cruise and tour packages designed to provide AAA members with unique, exclusive and engaging experiences - is an exclusive product of AAA Travel. For the nearest AAA Travel location or for more information visit AAA.com.

As part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit AAA.com and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).

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