



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF CRUISE LINES

April 13, 2006

## **SAFETY NOTICE**

The purpose of this safety notice is to inform ICCL members and, to the extent feasible, other passenger vessel operators, of some of the preliminary indications from the recent balcony fire on the cruise ship STAR PRINCESS. Additionally, this safety notice also urges immediate action.

The investigation, being conducted by the UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) (at the request of the government of Bermuda, the flag state of STAR PRINCESS) also includes representatives of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the United States National Transportation Safety Board (US NTSB). The purpose of the investigation is to determine the cause of the fire. A full report from the MAIB will be available at a later date.

Early indications are that the fire originated on an exterior balcony and quickly spread to other balconies in three main vertical fire zones. The cause of the fire spread is unknown at this time, but the presence of combustible material in the balcony areas is considered to have been a major factor.

This notice is to alert ship owners and ship managers of the potential fire risk on external areas, particularly balcony areas, arising from the use of combustible materials. Such areas typically lack smoke/heat detectors, and difficulty of access potentially makes fire fighting in these areas problematic. These issues combine to raise the risk of high intensity fire spreading rapidly.

In the interim, having met with the investigative authorities concerned, ICCL offers the following safety guidance to the cruise line industry:

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## **Immediate Action**

1. Immediately implement measures to counter the risk of this type of marine casualty such as:
  - a. Increase vigilance on all vessels with balconies where there may be a presence of combustible materials and the lack of detectors or sprinkler systems. In this respect, the provision of dedicated lookouts and additional fire patrols should be considered.
  - b. Review the crew's onboard training and response procedures to ensure that the ship's firefighting teams are prepared to respond to a fire occurring in the balcony area.
  - c. Advise passengers and crew not to leave towels and personal belongings on balconies when they are not in their rooms.
  - d. Instruct housekeeping staff to place personal articles left on balconies by room occupants back in the room during their last visit of the day to the guest room, and to observe balconies during other visits to the room.
  - e. Re-emphasize fire safety in communications to passengers, including the distribution of appropriate informational pamphlets.
  - f. Re-emphasize to passengers the need not to throw any items over a ship's side from balconies or other external areas...
  - g. Re-emphasize to passengers the hazards of not properly extinguishing smoking materials where smoking is authorized, and never to leave smoking materials unattended.
  - h. Re-emphasize to crew and passengers the hazards of using unauthorized heating elements such as electrical heating coils used in cups or mugs and open flames such as candles.

## **Additional Actions**

2. Within three months, determine the areas at risk by carrying out a fire risk assessment of external areas, particularly balcony areas. During this assessment the following shall be taken into account:
  - Accessibility for fire fighting
  - Availability of fixed detection and fire fighting systems
  - Structural materials (particularly balcony partitions)
  - Chairs, tables and other furniture including any cushions or coverings
  - Paints
  - Deck or floor mats
  - Deck coverings
  - Handrails
  - Other combustible materials typically present, if any.
3. In accordance with the results of the fire risk assessment, and in consultation with regulatory authorities replace all inappropriate materials on balcony areas with materials that are determined to be acceptable. Replace all

combustible balcony dividers on a priority basis and as soon as possible with dividers that are of non-combustible material.

4. A plan to make any replacements of materials should be developed as a final step of the fire risk assessment, with the aim of completing this action within six months from the issue of this safety notice.

ICCL will follow-up with member lines regarding their progress.

ICCL and member lines will continue to work closely with the investigating authorities to review lessons learned from this incident and to take additional actions as appropriate.