

IAATO Takes Further Action on Antarctic Passenger Vessel Marine Safety

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

October 9, 2009, Providence, RI... The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) made further recommendations today, designed to enhance marine safety on vessels operated by its members. The additional directives were the outcome of a mid-September meeting in London, UK of the IAATO Marine Committee, and follow recommendations approved earlier this year by the association's membership.

The follow-up actions resulted from the continued analysis of the Liberian flag-state "Report of Investigation in the Matter of Sinking of Passenger Vessel *EXPLORER* (O.N. 8495) 23 November, 2007 in the Bransfield Strait near the South Shetland Islands," as well as the "lessons learned" that were shared by G.A.P Adventures with the Marine Committee since the report's issuance.

"This further advice calls for an ongoing investment by IAATO vessel operators to ensure the safety of their vessels, crew and passengers while in Antarctic waters," said Steve Wellmeier, executive director of IAATO. "While they may seem obvious in some respects, the recommendations go beyond the ship's bridge, and make safety a priority throughout the member company, enlisting the active involvement of appropriate office personnel and encouraging the continual review and adoption of new technologies."

The new list of actions for IAATO SOLAS passenger vessels operating in the Southern Ocean include: (1) reviewing information services (weather, ice and routing) to ensure the most appropriate data is provided in a timely manner to vessels; (2) regularly review company procedures – including emergency response – to ensure all persons involved have a clear understanding of current Antarctic requirements; (3) staying abreast of, and consider the use of, continued technological developments, such as forward looking sonar and ECDIS; (4) ensuring that onboard drill schedules include regular damage control scenarios related to ice damage, and that control measures consider implications of cold weather environments; and (5) making sure that passenger and crew attention is drawn to the necessity for suitable clothing in conditions that can be severe and inhospitable.

The initial set of recommendations to enhance marine safety, which included changes in standard operating procedures by IAATO vessel operators and modifications to the

association's bylaws to strengthen the requirements for experience for bridge officers, can be found on the IAATO website at: <http://www.iaato.org/press.html>

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“Work remains to be done,” noted Wellmeier. “We continue to work on the development of a forum for the review, discussion and enhancement of IAATO members’ Crisis Management Plans, and are making progress on the Tiered-Risk Assessment Plan. The bulk of the London meeting was spent in further refining the goals and objectives of this plan.”

The Tiered-Risk Assessment is a multifaceted plan that will allow vessel operators to evaluate risk during voyage planning, preparation and execution phases, with consideration given to seasonal and geographic variations, expected risk, historic and real-time information available (ice, weather, sea conditions), as well as contingency and mitigation measures.

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IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO currently has 109 members worldwide. Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. Numerous operating procedures and guidelines have been adopted over the last 19 years that have proven to be successful methods for avoiding impacts, including site-specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passengers-to-staff ratios, limiting numbers of passengers ashore, boot-washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of alien organisms, wilderness etiquette, garbage policy, ship scheduling and vessel communications procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guides, station visitation policies and more.

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