



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

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May 1, 2020

Admiral Karl L. Schultz
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2100 Second Street SW
Washington, DC 20593

Admiral Schultz:

Long before the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic began to race around the world, affecting local communities, churches, cities, homes, hospitals and cruise ships sailing at sea, the cruise industry had a problem managing, containing and responding to public health outbreaks. A variety of recent media reports have also called the response of the Carnival Corporation,¹ and its nine affiliated cruise lines with 109 passenger vessels, to the coronavirus pandemic into question.² The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) plays a vital role helping to ensure the health and safety of passengers and crew on cruise ships and other maritime vessels.

As you know, under current federal regulations, illness of a person onboard a vessel that may adversely affect the safety of a vessel or port is a hazardous condition and the owner, agent, master, operator, or person in charge must immediately notify the nearest Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP).³ Failure to do so may result in Coast Guard enforcement actions, which include civil penalties, vessel detentions, and criminal liability.

Moreover, the Committee was alerted in early March to the high-risk level associated with cruise vessels that set sail on voyages in late February 2020. In fact, on March 10, 2020, Vice Admiral Daniel B. Abel, United States Coast Guard Deputy Commandant for Operations, specifically informed the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation that the Coast Guard was actively tracking 76 cruise vessels carrying over 270,000 passengers and crew that were

¹ See, for instance: Austin Carr and Chris Palmeri, "Carnival Executives Knew They Had a Virus Problem, But Kept the Party Going," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, April 16, 2020, accessed here: <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-carnival-cruise-coronavirus/>.

² "Our Brands," Carnival Corporation & PLC, accessed here: <https://www.carnivalcorp.com/corporate-information/our-brands>.

³ 33 CFR 160.216 "Notice of hazardous conditions," accessed here: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2015-title33-vol2/CFR-2015-title33-vol2-sec160-216>.

due to arrive in the United States in the ensuing two weeks partly due to concerns over the threat of coronavirus.⁴

On March 23, 2020 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that the *Diamond Princess*, with 328 Americans onboard, and the *Grand Princess*, which docked in the United States, had more than 800 total COVID-19 cases, including 10 deaths.⁵ Both are operated by Princess Cruises, a subsidiary cruise line of the Carnival Corporation. The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases on those two ships is more than all of the confirmed cases in the states of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Alaska or Hawaii as of April 22, 2020.⁶ According to the CDC, “During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Diamond Princess* was the setting of the largest outbreak outside mainland China.” *Bloomberg* has reported that at least nine of Carnival’s ships have been infected with COVID-19 resulting in more than 1,500 confirmed infections and at least 39 deaths.⁷

Recent media allegations, including the story in *Bloomberg*, regarding Carnival Corporation and some of its affiliated cruise lines’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic are quite disturbing.⁸ They suggest that officials at Carnival were aware of the coronavirus threats to some of its ships and did not take appropriate actions, which may have led to greater infections and the spread of the disease. Even a senior CDC official, who leads the CDC’s cruise ship task force was quoted as saying she had a hard time believing that Carnival was simply “a victim of happenstance.”⁹

As the world continues to confront the coronavirus pandemic we expect that travel restrictions will eventually ease, and cruise ships will begin to sail again. We also believe that when that happens more robust health precautions and new social distancing protocols will be paramount to preventing the re-emergence and spread of new COVID-19 infections. The CDC, for instance, has linked the spread of COVID-19 from passengers on cruise ships to 15 states.¹⁰

However, as of April 23, 2020, none of the front facing web-pages from any of Carnival Corporation’s nine affiliated cruise lines composed of Carnival Cruise Line,¹¹ Princess Cruises,¹²

⁴ “The International Role of the United States Coast Guard,” Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, March 10, 2020, accessed here:

<https://transportation.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/the-international-role-of-the-united-state-coast-guard>.

⁵ “Public Health Responses to COVID-19 Outbreaks on Cruise Ships — Worldwide, February–March 2020,” Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), March 27, 2020 / 69(12); 347-352, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm>.

⁶ “Number of COVID-19 Cases in the U.S., by State or Territory,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor_1586784349.

⁷ Austin Carr and Chris Palmeri, “Carnival Executives Knew They Had a Virus Problem, But Kept the Party Going,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, April 16, 2020, accessed here: <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-carnival-cruise-coronavirus/>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ “Public Health Responses to COVID-19 Outbreaks on Cruise Ships — Worldwide, February–March 2020,” Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), March 27, 2020 / 69(12); 347-352, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm>.

¹¹ Carnival Cruise Line, accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_ccl.html.

¹² Princess Cruises, accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_PCL.html.

Holland America Line,¹³ Seabourn,¹⁴ P&O Cruises (Australia),¹⁵ Costa Cruises,¹⁶ AIDA Cruises,¹⁷ P&O Cruises (UK)¹⁸ and Cunard,¹⁹ mentioned a single word about COVID-19, coronavirus or the precautions these cruise lines intend to take once the CDC lifts its “No Sail Order” for cruise lines.²⁰ Instead, they were advertising various images of couples dining and dancing, musicians entertaining and lines of children holding hands and playing.

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the U.S. House of Representatives has broad jurisdiction over maritime transportation issues, including those issues related to passenger vessels and various international treaties, including the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). All cruise ships – regardless of what flag they are registered under or where they sail – must operate in full compliance with SOLAS convention standards which regulate maritime safety related issues.

In order to better understand what information Carnival Corporation and its affiliated cruise lines had, and when they had it, regarding the potential infection of COVID-19 to its passengers and crew, the public health implications of possible exposure, and what decisions Carnival Corporation and its various affiliated lines made regarding the health and safety of their passengers and crew, we are requesting that you provide the Committee with the records listed below. The search for all of the records below may be limited to January 1, 2020 to the present.

1. A copy of all communications, including, but not limited to, e-mails, instant messages, and text messages, from any USCG employee with any Carnival Corporation employee or officer or any Carnival Corporation affiliated ship’s crew, officer, or medical or health care related staff, discussing, referring to or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus. This should include, but not be limited to, individuals on any of the nine reported Carnival ships that reported positive cases of COVID-19.²¹
2. A copy of all records discussing, referring to or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus provided to or received from any Carnival Corporation employee, including, but not limited to, any Carnival Corporation affiliated ship’s crew, officer, or medical or health care related staff. This should include, but not be limited to, individuals both at Carnival Corporation headquarters and Carnival affiliated employees on any of the nine reported Carnival ships that reported positive cases of COVID-19. It should also include, but not be limited to, plans or procedures to respond to, prevent or contain coronavirus infections on board

¹³ Holland America Line, accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/BrandPage.html.

¹⁴ Seabourn, accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_SBN.html.

¹⁵ P&O Cruises (Australia), accessed here:

https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/BrandPage_POAustralia.html.

¹⁶ Costa Cruises, accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/BrandPage_Costa.html.

¹⁷ AIDA Cruises, https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_AIDA.html.

¹⁸ P&O Cruises (UK), accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_POCruises.html.

¹⁹ Cunard, accessed here: https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_CUN.html.

²⁰ “Quarantine and Isolation: Cruise Ship Guidance,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here, <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/cruise/index.html>.

²¹ *Bloomberg* reported that COVID-19 infections had occurred on board the following Carnival owned ships: Diamond Princess, Costa Magica, Costa Favolosa, Grand Princess, Ruby Princess, Costa Luminosa, Costa Victoria, Zaandam and the Coral Princess.

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passenger vessels, as well as health alerts, data on infection rates, medical memorandum or similar records regarding actual or potential coronavirus infections.

3. A copy of all records discussing, referring to or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus regarding either Carnival Corporation or any affiliated Carnival Corporation ships, including, but not limited to, the nine reported Carnival ships that reported positive cases of COVID-19, and any employee of the USCG, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the California Department of Public Health, Florida Department of Health or any individuals on the White House's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force also known as the "Great American Economic Revival Industry Group" on Hospitality. This should include, but not be limited to all communications, including e-mails, instant messages, and text messages.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. Please see the attachment for instructions regarding the preparation of these records. Please deliver one set of these records electronically to the Majority Staff and one set of records electronically to the Minority Staff.

We request that delivery of these records begin on May 15, 2020. We will consider a rolling production of these records if you are unable to fully complete this response by this date. However, for any delay beyond the May 15, 2020, deadline, your staff must coordinate a timeline for delivery of these records with the Committee's staff.

To make arrangements for electronic delivery of these records, or if you have any questions regarding this request, please have your staff contact [REDACTED] of the Majority Staff at [REDACTED] or via e-mail at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



PETER A. DeFAZIO
Chair



SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Chair
Subcommittee on Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation

Enclosure: Attachment A – Responding to House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Records requests in the 116th Congress

cc: The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member

The Honorable Bob Gibbs, Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation