

USCG Cruise Ship NCOE Field Notice



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Field Notice: 21-01
Date: May 6, 2021
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Evaluation of Passenger Muster Protocols

This field notice clarifies examination techniques for attendance and observation of updated passenger muster protocols in accordance with the Marine Safety Manual Volume II, Section D, Chapter 7. Administrations have recently approved new passenger muster protocols for various cruise ships that incorporate updated technology and procedures to fulfill the requirements of SOLAS without assembling all passengers at designated muster stations at a prescribed time.

In accordance with SOLAS III/19.2.2, on all ships engaged on a voyage where passengers are scheduled to be on board for more than 24 hours, musters of the newly embarked passengers shall take place prior to or immediately upon departure. Traditionally, cruise ships have carried out this required muster with all passengers physically assembled at their assigned muster station where Port State Control Officers (PSCOs) observe the passenger muster for compliance. These recently updated muster protocols require passengers to review safety and evacuation plans, and to attend their assigned muster station based upon the ship's approved procedures as part of the embarkation process. Since the muster can be completed at any point during the embarkation process, PSCOs should observe various aspects outlined in the ship's procedures during the course of the COC examination.

The lead PSCO must communicate expectations for observing the passenger muster process to the ship's master in the pre-arrival email and again during the opening meeting. PSCOs should review the ship's passenger muster procedures, and verify the Safety Management System, muster list, and training manual are updated. PSCOs must then observe each part of the passenger muster during the examination as the passengers embark the ship.

PSCOs shall ensure the SOLAS requirements of the passenger muster are met, including instruction in the use of lifejackets and the actions to take in an emergency. The ship must also demonstrate how it maintains a record to ensure all passengers participate in the muster prior to departure. Crew providing the instructions are required to be trained in accordance with STCW A-V/2. PSCOs should spot check that the crew assigned to the muster areas have training in accordance with STCW and are familiar with the ship's procedures.

In accordance with the Marine Safety Manual, in situations where an exam is scheduled and passengers have not embarked, witnessing a passenger muster is not required. No deficiency shall be issued, nor should a follow up examination be conducted.

Questions regarding the new requirements should be forwarded to the National Technical Advisor for the Cruise Ship National Center of Expertise at (954) 767-2140 or by email at CSNCOE@uscg.mil.