



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Tom Cocola/212-442-7033

D.O.T. ANNOUNCES FERRY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

New York City Department of Transportation Commissioner Iris Weinshall outlined several interim initiatives designed to enhance safety at the Staten Island Ferry.

“At the Department of Transportation, we extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who perished during last week’s Staten Island Ferry tragedy,” the Commissioner said. “We are continuing to cooperate with the National Transportation Safety Board’s investigation. While many questions remain unanswered, we must act now to improve safety. The riders of the Staten Island Ferry deserve no less.”

Commissioner Weinshall outlined initiatives that were developed in consultation with the United States Coast Guard.

- **Ensure a permanent presence in pilot house.** Effective immediately, a deckhand assigned to the operational (inshore) pilot house will be positioned in that pilot house at all times. Should the captain or assistant captain be required to leave the pilot house for any reason, the deckhand will be able to contact that officer via radio immediately, if necessary. “Let us be clear – during docking, both the captain and the assistant captain should be in the pilot house at all times,” the Commissioner said.
- **Provide all crew members with radios.** Currently the majority of the crew is equipped with radios. In addition, each deck has one radio. However, some crew members – such as engine room personnel and deckhands – do not have individual radios. Going forward, all boat personnel will be assigned radios, further ensuring communication between all decks and the pilot house. Distribution of all new radios will be completed by the Monday morning rush hour.
- **Implement a check-in system.** Currently crew members go to docking assignments based on the engine sound as the vessel slows and prepares for docking. As of Monday, at the captain’s direction, the pilot house deckhand will announce: “All crew prepare for docking” over the public address system. The staff will immediately report to assigned stations, and, via radio, will call in to direct supervisors up the chain of command (i.e., deckhands



**New York City
Department of Transportation**

Public Information Division
40 Worth Street, Room 1010
New York, New York 10013
Tel:212/442-7033 Fax:212/442-7044

Iris Weinshall, Commissioner

will call mates, mates will call the pilot house). Upon confirmation that all crew are at assigned stations, the captain will contact the on-shore dock office.

- **Require passengers to stand back during landings.** As of tomorrow, using a rope barrier, appropriate deckhands will require passengers to stand further back from the bow of the boat to minimize risk during hard landings. Additional signs will be posted as necessary.
- **Expand the Global Positioning System (GPS) to all boats.** Currently four boats have been outfitted with GPS technology to augment radar. These boats are: the Alice Austen, the John A. Noble, the Samuel I. Newhouse and the American Legion. Within two weeks, we will expand GPS to the remaining boats.

“In addition to these improvements, the DOT will continue to assess Ferry operations and will pursue additional changes,” Commissioner Weinshall said. “We expect to continue to learn more from our assessment and from any preliminary NTSB information that is shared with us. The DOT and I will continue to be vigilant in ensuring the safety of our passengers.”

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