

# Officer Says He Steered Ship Wrong

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — A cruise ship's second officer told investigators he steered it in the wrong direction before it tilted and injured hundreds aboard last year, according to documents released Friday.

Second Officer Adam Stratford told National Transportation Safety Board investigators that he took the Crown Princess off auto pilot after becoming concerned about the speed of a turn.

"I turned the wheel to port, which was my mistake," Stratford said in interview transcripts. "I meant to go to starboard with the ship sheering off to port. I need to go to starboard, but I went to port."

"The ship was doing, you know, started leaning over, and I was starting to ... get a bit nervous ... I was just trying to do whatever I could whatever I could to stop what was happening," Stratford said.

Capt. Andrew Proctor was not on the bridge at the time of the July 18, 2006, accident. He told investigators, "The Second Officer told me ... I'm sorry, that, you know."

The information from the NTSB was included in about 1,700 pages on the accident off the coast of Port Canaveral. The information is factual and does not provide an analysis of what caused the accident.

The final report, along with conclusions and a probable cause, will be released later.

At the time of the accident, Princess Cruises officials said "the incident was due to human error and the appropriate personnel changes have been made." It did not blame Proctor and did not mention Stratford.

Calls to Princess Cruises seeking comment from Stratford was not immediately returned.

Gretchen Nelson, an attorney whose firm represents 21 injured passengers, said the report will shed more light on that day. "I anticipate there will be more information on the cause of the accident," she said.

The Crown Princess unexpectedly heeled to its side shortly after departing the port, where it stopped for a few hours before a scheduled return to New York to finish off a nine-day Caribbean cruise.

The ship tilted an estimated 16 to 18 degrees, seriously injuring at least 14 people after passengers and objects tumbled. A total of 227 passengers and 57 crew members were injured.

After the accident, the ship returned to Port Canaveral. At the time of the incident, seas were calm and there was no indication a rogue wave or foul play.

Princess is operated by Miami-based Carnival Corp., the world's largest cruise operator.

A similar tilt occurred in February 2006 on a ship also operated by Princess.

The 2,600-passenger Grand Princess left the Port of Galveston but soon made an emergency turnaround because a passenger suffered a heart attack. It tipped sharply, injuring 10 crew members and 27 passengers.

The cause of that list was determined to be human error.