

Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress



Doris O. Matsui

The Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act

The Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act was signed into law by President Obama on July 27, 2010. This law, sponsored by Congresswoman Doris Matsui, improves the safety and reporting standards by which cruise ships must adhere. Specifically, the law does the following:

Improves Ship Safety. This law mandates that: guard rails reach 54 inches in height; entry doors of each passenger stateroom and crew cabin have peep holes, security latches, and time sensitive key technology. It requires ship owner to implement fire safety codes as well as technology to detect when a passenger falls overboard. It establishes procedures to determine when and which crew members have access to staterooms. It requires ship owners to equip their vessels with a sound warning system capable of communicating with other nearby vessels when in high risk areas.

Provides Transparency in Reporting. The law establishes a reporting structure based on the current voluntary agreement in place between the cruise industry, the FBI, and the Coast Guard. Additionally, each ship is required to maintain a log book, which records all deaths, missing individuals, alleged crimes, and passenger/crewmember complaints regarding theft, sexual harassment, and assault. The log books are available to the FBI and Coast Guard electronically, as well as to any law enforcement officer upon request. Finally the law mandates that statistical information be posted on a public website maintained by the Coast Guard.

Improves Crime Scene Response. The law requires each ship to maintain anti-retroviral medications and medications used to prevent sexually transmitted diseases after assault, as well as equipment and materials for performing a medical examination to determine if a victim has been raped. The law requires a United States licensed medical practitioners to be on every ship to perform the necessary examinations and to administer treatment. Private medical information is protected, and requires written authorization for release. Additionally, all passengers are given free, immediate, and confidential access to a National Sexual Assault Hotline and the FBI.

Improves Training Procedures. The law establishes a program designed by the Coast Guard and the FBI, and certified by the Administrator of the Maritime Administration, to train appropriate crewmembers in crime scene preservation. Each ship is required to maintain one crewmember trained and certified under such a program.