

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



COAST GUARD NEWS

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NATION'S FIRST SAFETY ASSESSMENT ALTERNATIVE APPROVED FOR THE CASINO VESSEL "MISS BELTERRA"

Veevay, Indiana, May 2, 2001. U. S. Coast Guard officials from Marine Safety Detachment Cincinnati, OH and its parent command, Marine Safety Office Louisville, KY conducted a rigorous abandon ship drill on the MISS BELTERRA as the final step towards approving the vessel's full operation. Previously limited to operating within the confines of its small, protected harbor, the vessel is now authorized by the Coast Guard to operate on the Ohio River. Stringent Coast Guard regulations call for a host of safety requirements for large passenger vessels. One such requirement is for a ship to have enough inflatable life rafts to accommodate its passengers. For the MISS BELTERRA, that equates to over 2,500 people. The unique problem in this case is that the vessel's sailing route on the Ohio River is just upriver of the Markland Dam. In emergency situations, it would be extremely dangerous to put large numbers of people into life rafts just one half mile upriver from a large overflow dam. The good news is that the Coast Guard allows for alternative safety measures. The owners of the MISS BELTERRA developed a comprehensive Emergency Disaster Response Plan and put it to the test. This was the first such alternative safety assessment to be conducted in the nation. During the safety assessment, Captain Sonya Skinner skillfully maneuvered the MISS BELTERRA into the riverbank and held station while the crew evacuated over four hundred people. Said Coast Guard Lieutenant Jim Nussbaumer, the Chief of the Prevention Department, "The Officers and crew of the MISS BELTERRA showed impressive professionalism in a very well executed drill. They are to be commended."

Chief Warrant Officer Dave Druso, Marine Safety Detachment Cincinnati's lead marine inspector, commented that, "The teamwork on the MISS BELTERRA is what got them through this rigorous process...from Captain Joe Jamison, the Senior Captain, to Ed Utterback, the Director of Marine Operations, everyone worked together flawlessly."

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On an average day, the Eighth Coast Guard District saves 14 lives, \$7 million in property, and interdicts over 400 pounds of illegal drugs. The U.S. Coast Guard has served America's national security interests since 1790.