



NTSB

SAFETY ALERT

National Transportation Safety Board

Passenger Vessels: Stairway Hazards during Docking and Undocking

Falls in stairways caused serious injury in recent passenger vessel allision while docking

The problem

The NTSB recently investigated a vessel accident in which people were seriously injured when the vessel allided with the dock.

Five stairways provided passenger access between three deck levels. As the vessel approached the pier, some passengers stood in stairways as they anticipated arrival. When the vessel unexpectedly struck the dock, passengers lost their balance and fell, causing head injuries, fractured ribs, and cuts and bruises. The most severely injured passenger fell down a stairway and suffered a broken neck, brain hemorrhage, lung collapse, facial fractures and lacerations, and nerve injuries. He spent more than 5 weeks in a hospital.

The NTSB encourages vessel operators to control passenger access to stairways while docking and undocking.

What can be done?

- Vessel passengers: Even if you see unrestricted stairways on board your vessel, please avoid them during docking and undocking. A momentary loss of balance can cause you to fall and be seriously injured.

Reduce the risk of injuries by remaining seated or holding on to a handrail or seat back during docking. Always be prepared for unexpected vessel movement.

- Vessel operators: To reduce the risk of serious injuries, develop procedures to control passenger access to stairways during docking and undocking.

For more information about this accident, see *Allision of Passenger Vessel Seastreak Wall Street with Pier 11, Lower Manhattan, New York, New York, January 9, 2013*. The report is available at http://www.nts.gov/investigations/reports_marine.html under report number [MAR-14-01](#).
