

CLIA Statement on Nightline Story

“While serious crime on cruise ships is very rare, one instance is one too many which is why our industry adopted a zero tolerance policy years ago. The policy was followed and the individual who committed this crime is now in jail. The safety and security of our guests is our top priority.”

1) What kind of security measures cruise lines can employ to prevent such incidents from happening?

The safety and security of our guests and crew is CLIA’s Number One priority. CLIA members maintain a rigorous set of policies and procedures designed both to prevent onboard incidents and to ensure an immediate and effective response when such incidents occur. In addition, the cruise lines’ security operations maintain strong working relations and collaboration with law enforcement authorities at the state and national level, as well as internationally.

It is our understanding that the individual involved in this incident was brought to justice as a result of effective cooperation between Carnival Cruise Line’s security team and a local office for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Cruise ships operate in a controlled environment where access can be strictly enforced. Security officers are highly trained and many have a background in law enforcement. All passengers, crew, carry-on baggage and luggage are inspected prior to boarding. CLIA member lines maintain an official manifest for each ship, which includes everyone on board a cruise ship, all officers, staff and crew, as well as all guests. Both passengers and crew may embark or disembark only after passing through a security checkpoint. Most lines also utilize closed-circuit cameras to monitor ship activity.

Cruise lines have fraternization policies in place that can result in immediate dismissal from employment should a crew member be found in violation.

While these policies and procedures are well-established, we continuously review and update them allowing us to learn from past experiences so that cruising remains one of the safest forms of travel.

2) How often do they happen?

As CLIA does not maintain alleged crime report data, you would need to contact the FBI or U.S. Coast Guard for this information. We can tell you that serious crime on cruise ships is very rare as more than 14 million guests safely take a cruise vacation each year.

3) And how cruise lines should respond when they do.

Upon being notified of an alleged assault during a cruise, our very first concern is the health of the victim. We ensure the individual gets appropriate care so that their physical and mental health needs are met. Codified under the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act, cruise lines provide information in every ship cabin instructing passengers on steps to take in case of an incident, including phone numbers of emergency personnel and first responders on board the ship.

The industry has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to crime. CLIA member lines report all allegations of serious crimes involving U.S. citizens occurring on any ship worldwide. These reports are made to appropriate law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI. The new law does not change the way we report allegations to federal authorities.

When an alleged crime is reported, CLIA member lines' trained security personnel handle such situations with professionalism and follow established procedures that include detaining suspects and, if appropriate, securing a crime scene. Our security personnel have all received training on crime scene preservation from FBI Agents and a FBI-training module developed specifically for the cruise industry. If an alleged crime is sexual in nature, medical professionals on board have sexual assault evidence collection kits and are trained in their proper use.

4) CLIA's view on the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2010 and how that will effect passenger safety and security.

CLIA supports the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act and worked with Congressional staff as the legislation made its way through the Congress during the last session. This law brings greater consistency and clarity to many industry practices and existing regulations. In addition, the industry has long followed a policy to report to the FBI allegations of serious crimes involving a U.S. national anywhere in the world and this law further codifies this regimen. The legislation also establishes additional safety provisions.

For example, while most ships in the CLIA fleet may already feature 42-inch railings, peepholes in all cabins, onboard video surveillance systems, and employ medical personnel who meet guidelines established by the American College of Emergency Physicians, the law will make these and other new provisions consistent across the fleet.