

Whenever you board a cruise ship, just as you're getting settled in your cabin on the first day, all kinds of bells and whistles go off. If it doesn't scare the hell out of you, you'll quickly realize that disaster drills are required at the start of all cruise sailings.



What you need to do immediately is strap on your big red Mae West life jacket and follow specific instructions to your designated muster station on deck near the ship's boats. There you'll get more instructions, and within a half-hour or so, you'll be permitted to go back to your cabin and resume your preparations to enjoy the rest of the cruise.

Thankfully, the efficient crew took care of the Princess emergency, but there have been occasions when the situation could become a horrifying disaster. There have been other fires aboard cruise ships recently, but except for minor inconveniences, passengers were all OK.

Other than the infamous Titanic tragedy, the worst passenger ship disaster was the sinking of the SS Andrea Doria in 1956, when the Italian luxury liner collided with the MS Stockholm. Because of developments in radar and other electronic sensing equipment, fortunately, the Andrea Doria was the last such cruise ship disaster. So far.

When you start out on your next cruise and you need to participate in the emergency drill, just consider it a slight inconvenience that could become a major life-saver.