



## **Costa Concordia – Lessons Learned and Path Forward**

By Andrew J. Quackenbos on February 7th, 2012

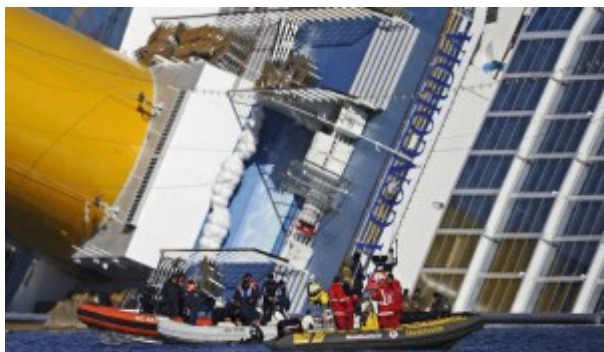


Photo via ABC News

When the *Costa Concordia* ran aground on a reef off Giglio Island near the Tuscan coast of Italy last month, owners and insurers of vessels certainly paid attention. How could they not? The incident was the most noteworthy shipping casualty since the Exxon Valdez disaster, and it is now being called the biggest ever shipping loss for insurers.

While the investigation into the causes of the incident is ongoing, early indications are that it could have been avoided. And even if it was unavoidable, the management of the ensuing emergency by the captain and the crew of the *Costa Concordia* apparently left a lot to be desired. The fallout has been immense, and a magnifying glass has been placed over many issues relating to proper navigational practices and emergency management. Environmental concerns have arisen amid reports of spilling oil and fuel from the *Costa Concordia*'s hull. And, now, the ship's owner is faced with determining whether it should salvage, cut or sink it, a decision that should have major financial, logistical, and environmental risks and ramifications.

In short, the current and potential issues associated with the incident are limitless. Thus, marine companies should view the matter as motivation to shore up their own policies and procedures. As suggested by Kevin Gilheany of Maritime Compliance International, marine companies should take this opportunity to review their own navigation standards, as navigational error by the captain of the *Costa Concordia* is widely regarded as the main cause of the entire incident. It also would be beneficial to use this incident to refresh both captain and crew with those navigation standards and to drive home the need to be vigilant at all times. Marine companies also should ensure that their crew knows their emergency and evacuation protocol. Moreover, if passenger vessels are in their fleet, they should ensure captain and crew understand that, in emergency evacuation scenarios, there is a responsibility on their part to evacuate the passengers first. By taking such steps, vessel operators will improve their chances of avoiding a casualty of their own and certainly be in a better position to handle such a casualty in the event that one occurs.

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