

Feb 28, 2012

Statement By: Divya and Sameer Sharma

We boarded the Costa Concordia on Friday, January 13th, 2012 from Civitavecchia, Italy between 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM. The boarding process was fairly easy. After surrendering our passports to the crew members we went to our room on the 9th deck. At this point we have had no communication regarding the emergency safety drill or any instructions from anyone from the crew telling us where to go in case of any emergency.

We were in full sprit of our vacation and were very happy to be on board. Soon after getting situated we started to unpack our luggage and started to get ready for our dinner reservation at 9:00pm on the 3rd Deck. At about 9:15 pm we were at our dinner table on Deck 3 and were in process of ordering our food. As we had just ordered our appetizers. There was violent shaking of the ship followed by loud crash noises as the plates and glasses broke due to the listing of the ship towards the starboard side. Lights went out immediately but there was no announcement as to what had happened. It was pitch dark and with no visibility. Everyone nearby started to scream and few minutes into the ordeal the emergency lights came on and we observed that the ship is now listing on the port side. This is when the first announcement came on telling us that it was nothing but an electrical failure and that everything is under control. Crew members urged the passengers to remain calm and seated. The staff started to bring out people's food as if nothing bad had happened. While the ship is still tilted we saw a few crewmembers in our dining room break down, crying and panicked. When we glanced outside we saw around 5-7 crewmembers wearing lifejackets but still the announcements continued telling us to remain calm and seated and the electrical issue is being worked on and everything is under control. Around 10:00 pm about 30 minutes in to the situation Sameer decided it's time for us to go and at least get our life jackets from our rooms. We had no knowledge that from where we can get the life jackets other than which Divya had spotted in the closets of our room. As we went out of the dining room we were highly imbalanced due to the tilt and there were, water, wine and broken glass on the dining room floor. Once outside we were immediately unable to locate the stairs as we had taken the elevators to get to the deck 3. There were dim emergency lights indicating the stairs and we climbed 6 floors to our deck to get to our room without anyone guiding us in the dark. Somehow, we managed to get to our room holding the guardrails, very much exhausted and panicked. As were reaching our room there were constant announcements of the same message "Ladies and gentlemen everything is under control at this point and it seems to be a generator failure. Please stay calm and wait for further instructions and be cooperative" What caught our attention was that all the announcements were made on "Behalf" of the Captain and never once did we ever hear the Captain speak. However, there was a sense of panic in the announcer voice that kept making the announcement.

Finally we managed to get our door unlocked using our card key after several tries. The room had no light and it was dark. Divya stumbled upon a few things that ad fallen on the floor. Sameer stayed in middle of the door to keep it open and pushing the furniture back to make some room to get

our life jackets. The ship felt a little more tilted and the room's furniture had shifted significantly. Divya knew where the life jackets were because she had just unpacked the luggage to arrange in the closets and had seen life jackets. Once we got the life jackets we immediately got out of the room and spotted our State Room attendant nearby. Divya asked the room attendant "where we are supposed to go?" she replied in a very irritated tone "Madam at this point there is no emergency, you don't need to go anywhere, please stay here and wait for further instructions and for emergency alarm to sound" As we are walking away we ask her again, "In emergency where we suppose to meet"? She replied, "The Muster stations are on Deck 4."

At this point we were still unaware what was the root cause of this ordeal, there were no emergency alarms going off, the same announcements keep on repeating telling the passengers to remain calm and electrical issue is under control. While we are going to the deck 4, we saw the crew members amongst us running around panicked, frustrated and clueless.

No one seemed to have any clear idea as to what they had to do in this situation or where they were supposed to send us. People seemed to direct themselves onto Deck 4 and stood near any available lifeboat. As we were making our way to Deck 4 where the Muster Stations were located we saw a lot of people just sitting outside of their rooms, waiting. People were also sitting on stairs closer to Deck 4 but we went ahead and stood closer to a lifeboat. At this point there were 3-4 crewmembers per lifeboat and they were trying to keep the crowd away from the boats. The time by now was 10:30 PM and one of the crew members came and practically gave us the same instructions this time urging all of us to go back to our rooms and wait for further instructions and "everything is under control"?

A few people did what was being asked for; we decided to stand near by the exit door near the life boat. By now it was really difficult to stand straight as the ship was listing towards the port violently. At this point we decided amongst ourselves and located a rock where we would swim to in case they kept us waiting longer to get into the lifeboats. We tried asking a couple of crew members to tell us what had happened and they simply shrugged their shoulders and went on. The lifeboat crew was equally clueless and kept waiting for further instructions from the Captain that never came.

People started to panic and frustrated as the ship is tilting more by the minutes. We were getting frustrated, aggravated and the crowd was pushing and shoving against each other. Still no sign of any Emergency alarms or any evacuation instructions from the Captain. Finally the life boat crew let us in as they saw the crowd getting enraged and out of control. There was no order of boarding the lifeboats and everyone was shoving, pushing and kicking to get onto the lifeboat.

Once on the lifeboat people sat/stood wherever they found a place and the boat was full within a minute. There were more people on the boat then supposed as a lot of people were standing or sitting on the floor. Now the lifeboat would not disengage from the ship and crew member is asking the passenger to get off the boat to go to the next boat as our boat was over capacity.

The motor was not working and after trying to disengage the boat for around 5 minutes the crewmembers started using hammers to cut off the ropes. There was constant loud banging as ship is still tilting. About after 5 minutes the boat listed towards the back, then towards the front and then

finally with a loud scratching noise, which sounded like a ripping noise the boat fell onto the water upright.

Once on the water we saw that the ship was leaning on top of the boat and it would not move. We happened to observe that the decks 1 were completely submerged into the water and Deck 2 and 3 partially in the water. We saw blue smoke coming out of the engine of our life boat and the crew members were yelling and shouting back and forth in between themselves. At this point while the boat is not mobile the panic was growing by the seconds, all you could see is this huge ship tilting towards the boat. At this point Sameer decided to jump out of the boat with Divya by lifting the tarp that was covering the lifeboat. Sameer alone could not lift the tarp high enough to get enough access. About the same time the lifeboat started to move inch by inch away from the ship and finally we reached the shore after about half hour of struggle. Once ashore the confusion and chaos continued and still we were not sure what had just happened. How an “under control” electrical issue can cause the ship to sink?