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He added that insurance claims are being processed, a comment confirmed by Trip Mate's president, Brad Finkle, who said there is "no question" that the passengers are covered.

Finkle said that "every passenger has received a claim form" and Trip Mate has received some completed claims. He said Louis Cruise has some liability for trip interruption, but the Trip Mate insurance will share that cost and it is clear the baggage is covered.

Louis Cruise could not be reached for comment.

To contact the reporter who wrote this article, send e-mail to Nadine Godwin at ngodwin@travelweekly.com.

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CRUISE

Update: Group sues Sea Diamond owner, Globus over ship's sinking (05/17/2007)

Globus assures passengers that claims are being processed

By Nadine Godwin

A group of travelers who were aboard the ill-fated Sea Diamond the day it struck a reef and sank near Santorini, Greece, have filed suit against the cruise operator, Louis Cruise Lines, and their tour operator, Globus, charging both with negligence and demanding that both pay damages in amounts to be set by a jury.

The suit was filed by some 20 passengers in the same group, mostly from in and around Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., said Jacqueline James, attorney for the travelers; still more may join the action, she said.

The plaintiffs told the U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, that the Sea Diamond ran aground on a well-marked reef because its captain and crew failed to observe the rules of navigation.

The plaintiffs also said the evacuation was a long, chaotic, poorly managed affair, contrary to maritime safety guidelines calling for a ship to be evacuated within one hour. It said the "negligent evacuation ... left many without life jackets, instructions or the proper egress from the ship." The court papers said ship crew apparently lacked evacuation training.


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In addition, the plaintiffs said, some of the Sea Diamond's air-tight doors failed to function correctly, allowing water to flood cabins.

The plaintiffs said Globus knew or should have known that Louis Cruise Lines negligently operated the ship and that it had violated safety standards previously.

They said Globus failed to "organize and supervise an orderly evacuation of its escorted guests ... [and] failed to provide information on evacuation and safety measures prior to and during the evacuation."

The travelers also accused Globus of deceptive practices and breach of contract, saying they bought baggage and trip interruption insurance from Globus, which "has refused to make payment."

The plaintiffs seek damages for various injuries, property loss and mental anguish.

James, the attorney, said she did not sue the insurance provider, Trip Mate, because clients "paid their premiums to Globus."

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