



King County

Department of Transportation

201 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-3856

July 10, 2008

Kjristine Lund
Lund Consulting, Inc.
1941 26th Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98112

Dear Ms. Lund:

I am writing on behalf of Bill Greene, King County Acting Marine Division Director, who asked that I respond to your June 23, 2008, email regarding safety drill and passenger briefings on the Vashon passenger only ferry. Your questions regarding the integrity of the vessel and passenger safety is an interest that we share in coordination with the Washington State Ferry System and the United States Coast Guard.

Bill Greene and I had a recent meeting with Scott Davis, Safety Systems Manager/Designated Person, Washington State Ferries (WSF), to discuss safety standards and protocols. This was a continuation of several meetings that have occurred with WSF during the transition period until the King County Department of Transportation Marine Division assumes full responsibility for the operation of the Vashon passenger only ferry in 2009.

During the WSF discussion, it was evident that the WSF Safety Management System represents the core for ferry operations and passenger safety. The Safety Management System establishes safety standards for fleet operations; passenger safety protocols; crew training and conduct; and many other safety, security and operational practices. The system establishes standards for crew training and certification, safety drills, safety audits and evaluations with follow up sessions to ensure compliance. Leadership and supervisory participation and support are integrated into the safety management system through performance reports for skippers. The inclusion of this requirement with performance evaluations clearly establishes the shared responsibility for safety and the accomplishment of training standards with supervisors. The Safety Management System is a comprehensive system that holistically addresses operational, safety, security, and environmental issues. This system is recognized as a national model of excellence.

WSF has embraced international maritime operating standards, which in some respects exceed national requirements for domestic ferry fleet operation. Additionally, the United States Coast Guard conducts extensive review and inspection processes throughout a vessel's operating life, which include vessel design review; stability analysis; dry-dock examinations; and quarterly and annual inspections covering equipment, operations, and ongoing crew safety training.



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Safety drills and training are often conducted outside of normal service hours so there is minimum disruption to passengers during daily service. The limited service hours of the Seattle to Vashon Passenger-Only route makes it difficult to conduct safety drills without creating a travel hardship for the passengers, especially when other transit connections are considered. Therefore, drills are often conducted before the first run of the day, prior to mid-day tie-up, or on the trip to the Eagle Harbor tie-up facility following the completion of service.

We share the national respect that WSF has garnered for their safety record and safety practices and will seek to emulate their high standards when we begin in-house operations next year.

Currently, WSF makes available a brochure entitled "A Passenger's Guide to System Security at the Washington State Ferries," with a secondary title of "WSF and You: Partners in Safety and Security." As an immediate step, we will encourage WSF to make this brochure more readily available on the passenger-only vessel. Additionally, during this period of transition as King County moves forward to assume full responsibility of the route on July 1, 2009, we will formulate a plan to educate the passengers about emergency situations, including evacuations. We recognize that it is critically important for passengers to understand the emergency plan and their role in executing that plan safely and effectively.

I hope this has been helpful to you regarding safety preparedness for the ferry crew and passengers. If you have further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, at 206-263-4724.

Sincerely,



Walt Hubbard
Emergency Preparedness Manager

cc: Harold S. Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Bill Greene, Acting Division Director, Marine Division, DOT
Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Scott E. Davis, Safety Systems Manager & Designated Person, WSF