

innovations

Focusing on innovation in the global cruise industry

Socially distanced safety drills wins award



Special Report
International Cruise Ship Industry

**INTERNATIONAL
CRUISE SHIP
INDUSTRY**

Focusing on innovation in the global cruise industry
www.cruise-ship-industry.com

Even at 50% capacity, 'Symphony of the Seas' would be hard pressed to introduce social distancing

Receiving news that The Points Guy UK (TPG) had given Royal Caribbean a gong for a solution to encourage social distancing while undergoing a safety drill on board, ICSI took a look at this innovative initiative.

During the middle of this year, Royal Caribbean Group announced that it had managed to replace one of the least-loved but most important parts of a cruise – the physical safety drill.

A safety drill for all passengers is mandatory today to be undertaken before the ship sails under IMO regulations.

In the past, this drill could be very much a hit and miss affair, depending on the efforts of the Master and crew on board.

It was originally conceived to show passengers the whereabouts of their allocated muster stations, learn the donning of a lifejacket, to find their allocated lifeboats on board and to enable the crew to take a roll call of all the passengers on board at their relevant muster locations.

With the introduction of e-services on board, much of this can now be handled remotely. For example, the Group introduced the patented Muster 2.0 app, which the company claimed was an entirely new approach to delivering safety

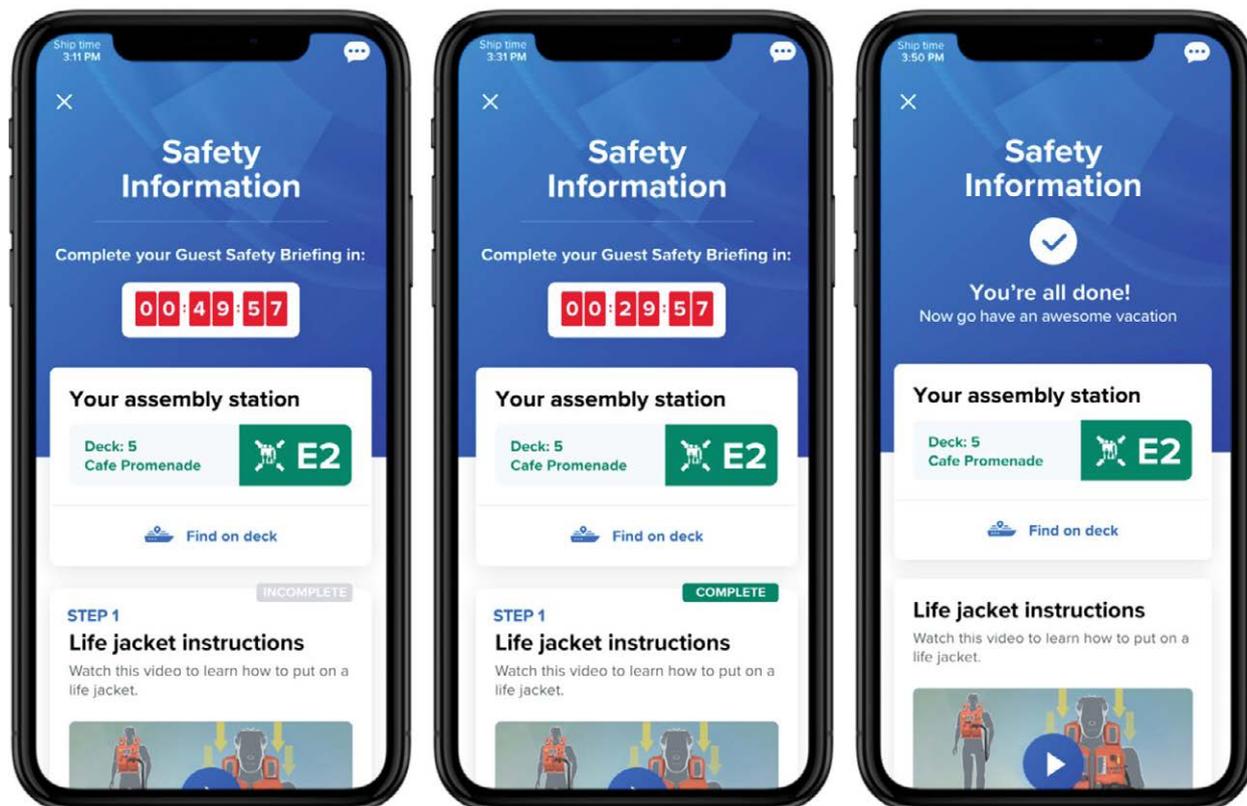
information to guests.

The program, the first of its kind and soon to be followed by a similar new app completely changed the process originally designed for large groups of people into a faster, more personal approach that encourages higher levels of safety, the company claimed.

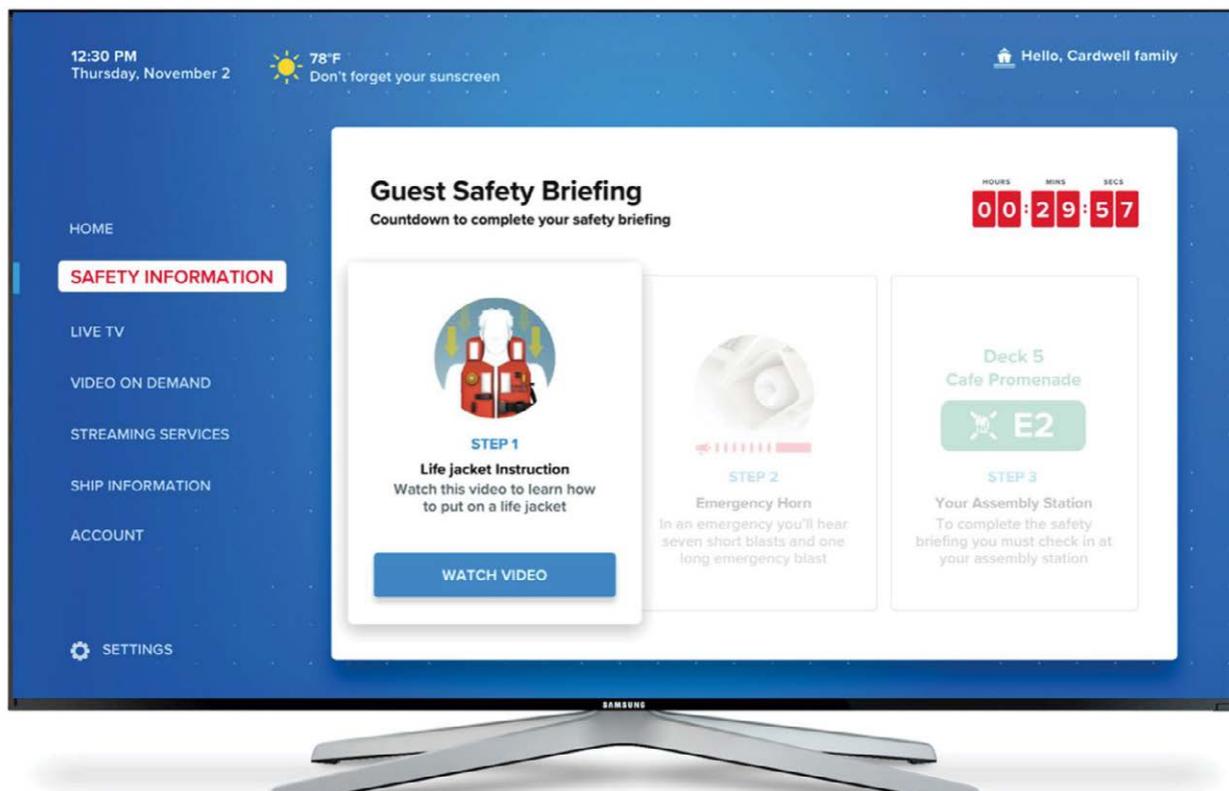
With Muster 2.0, the key elements of the safety drill – including reviewing what to expect and where to go in case of an emergency, and instructions on how to properly use a lifejacket – will be accessible to guests on an individual basis instead of a group approach that was followed historically.

This new technology, the patented eMuster, will be used to help provide the information to guests via their mobile devices and interactive stateroom TVs.

Travellers will be able to review the information at their own time prior to setting sail, eliminating the need for the traditional large group assemblies. This new approach also enables



The safety drill is now available on a mobile device



It can even be viewed from the comfort of your stateroom

everyone on board to maintain better spacing as guests move about the ship, and it also allows them to enjoy more of their vacation without the need for interruption.

After reviewing safety information individually, guests will complete the drill by visiting their assigned assembly station, where a crew member will verify that all steps have been completed and answer any questions. Each of the steps will need to be completed prior to the ship's departure, as required by international maritime law (IMO).

"The health and safety of our guests and crew are our number one priority, and the development of this new muster process is an elegant solution to an outdated, unpopular process," said Richard Fain, chairman and CEO, Royal Caribbean Group at the time of its launch. "The fact that this will also save guests time and allow the ship to operate without pause means that we can increase health, safety and guest satisfaction simultaneously."

"Muster 2.0 represents a natural extension of our mission to improve our guests' vacation experiences by removing points of friction," added Jay Schneider, Royal Caribbean Group's Senior Vice President of digital. "In this instance, what's most convenient for our guests is also the safest option in light of needing to re-imagine

social spaces in the wake of COVID-19."

This marks the first major change to the safety drill process in a decade, since Royal Caribbean's 'Oasis of the Seas' moved the lifejackets from guest staterooms to the muster stations, which improved the evacuation process and has been widely followed throughout the industry.

Taking more than a year to plan, Muster 2.0 now forms part of a comprehensive set of protocols and procedures Royal Caribbean Group is developing along with the 'Healthy Sail Panel' that was put together in collaboration with Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd (NCLH).

"This new process represents the kind of innovation that the 'Healthy Sail Panel' is focusing on as part of its mission to enhance the health and safety of cruising," said former Utah Governor, Mike Leavitt, co-chair of the 'Healthy Sail Panel'. "It shows that we can accomplish a lot if we try to think outside the box on safety."

"I'd like to extend my congratulations to Royal Caribbean Group on this innovative milestone. It's exactly what our industry needs during these unprecedented times and we appreciate the generous offer to participate in this innovation," said Frank Del Rio, NCLH President and CEO. "In this industry, we all work co-operatively

to enhance health and safety, and this is an example of that.”

The Muster 2.0 for ocean-going vessels concept is patented in the US and was also patent-pending in major markets worldwide, including the various cruise ship flag states, a few months ago.

Safety requirements

Royal Caribbean said that it had also worked with international regulators, the US Coast Guard (USCG) and other maritime and government authorities to ensure it meets all safety requirements.

In addition to introducing the new process on the ships within its own cruise brands – Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara – the Group has started to offer a license for the technology to interested cruise operators and will waive patent license fees during the global pandemic.

Patent licenses have already been granted to the company’s joint venture, TUI Cruises, as well as NCLH, the parent company of Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Strong preference

Muster 2.0 was first tested on Royal Caribbean’s ‘Symphony of the Seas’ in January, 2020. Guests who took part in the trial process indicated a strong preference for the new approach and also

reported better comprehension and retention of the safety information.

As mentioned, this innovation recently caught the eye of The Points Guy (TPG), a company that started out advising on the miles and points available in several service sectors, including the travel industry.

At the recent cruise week, Royal Caribbean was rewarded with the ‘TPG Editors’ Choice Award for innovation by a cruise company in its annual TPG awards.

TPG said that eMuster is not as eye catching as robot bar tenders in cruise ship bars or skydiving attractions on top of cruise ships – both pioneered by Royal Caribbean Group - but it’s perhaps more significant to the overall experience of passengers at sea.

The company said that Royal Caribbean Group had begun working on the new technology long before the coronavirus outbreak began. But its development is a good solution to one of the biggest hurdles to bringing cruising back in this new era of coronavirus-related safety measures - how to keep passengers socially distanced during safety drills.

TPG said: “If you dread the typical safety drill prior to a cruise’s departure, you may find that your next sailing gets off to a much better start – and it’s for this reason that we’re honouring Royal Caribbean Group’s eMuster technology with this year’s Innovation in Cruising Award.”

