

PRESS RELEASE

New York: April 14, 2021

Worldwide Ferry Safety Association (WFSA) to host “New and Innovative Life Saving Devices” webinar, April 20, 2021 beginning at 2200 UTC.

This is the third webinar in a series presented by the WFSA, and builds upon two very timely virtual events- both well attended. The first dealt with “Ferry Design and Operation in a Time of Covid” and the second covered “Smarter Maritime Knowledge” –with a focus on digitalization in the ferry sector (including technology for training, for assessing team performance, and for remote vessel surveys). The webinar is accessible upon registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/new-and-innovative-life-saving-devices-tickets-144904167265?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch> ; contact ferrysafety@gmail.com

Dr. Roberta Weisbrod, WFSA’s Executive Director, said, “This webinar was formulated in response to real world problems. For example, there have been accidents and even deaths during training and deployment of life boats. Rescuing a man overboard in rough waters from a moving vessel is difficult and uncertain and can be unsafe. Personal floatation devices are important but there are questions about how to make them accessible when a vessel is in distress – and passengers have no time to access them.” Dr. Weisbrod added: “Another issue is how to keep passengers together in the water even when wearing personal floatation devices. Finally, in parts of the developing world where WFSA works, floatation devices are relatively expensive and subject to pilferage; there is a perennial question of how to provide low-cost sustainable alternatives.

The webinar’s agenda includes the following topics:

- Maritime evacuation slides. Lifeboats, and concerns about accidents and even deaths during training and deployment, are an important agenda item: Heath Gehrke the operator of the Cape May –Lewes Ferry (which crosses the Delaware River between New Jersey and Delaware in the US) will speak about an alternative to conventional lifeboats- maritime evacuation slides. The ferry company is the first in the United States, to employ maritime evacuation slides- which funnel people into waiting floatable vessels.
- Remotely operated rescue devices. Rescuing a man overboard in rough waters from a moving vessel will also be discussed. John Dalziel, who is very active with the International Maritime Rescue Federation and its Future Technology Panel will present a review of remotely operated rescue devices – and other emerging technologies.
- Personal floatation devices, and supplements. They can’t always be available for passengers when they need them. Sally Dale will discuss Life Cell- a supplemental

device. It allows people with or without life jackets to hold onto a buoyant device – and also allow passengers to keep together for moral support and ease of rescue.

In parts of the developing world where Worldwide Ferry Safety Association works, floatation devices are relatively expensive and subject to pilferage – what to do. John Powell is the International Lifesaving Manager (Innovation) of the UK Royal National Life Boat Institution, has been engaged in finding sustainable – and ingenious --alternatives to commercial devices.

Two experienced operators will lead the panel discussion, Malcolm Ormiston, the owner and operator of Waterbus Online, a successful ferry operation on Lake Victoria in Kenya, and Captain James DeSimone, who until recently led the Staten Island Ferry in New York City.

About WFSA: The Worldwide Ferry Safety Association is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to prevent ferry fatalities and to expand the use of safe ferries globally. In addition to organizing conferences and webinars, WFSA engages in action projects, and sponsors an annual Ferry Design Competition for naval architecture students. This year, in the 8th competition, students are being asked to design a RoPax ferry for the Amazon River from Manaus to Tefe. With COVID 19 transmission being a serious problem in Brazil, the ability to limit the risk of virus transmission among passengers will be an important criterion for the judges in evaluating designs.

Further information: Please contact Dr. Roberta Weisbrod at ferrysafety@gmail.com



Maritime evacuation slide- from Cape May – Lewes Ferry