

travel

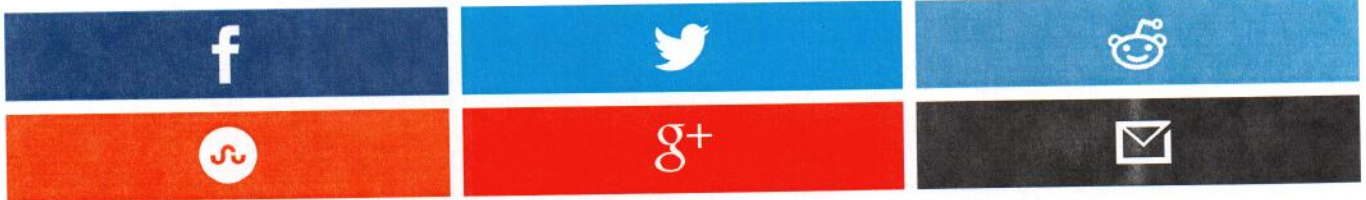
Menu



Cruises

Does the cruise industry need regulation?

In light of recent cruise ship accidents, a New York senator is pushing for a passenger bill of rights to protect US cruise customers in the case of emergency.



By Husna Haq
3 April 2013

Do cruise customers need a passenger bill of rights?

New York Senator Chuck Schumer thinks so. In light of a recent spate of cruise accidents – including the **partial sinking** of the Costa Concordia in January 2012, the Carnival Triumph **engine fire** in February 2013 and the Carnival Dream **generator failure** in March 2013 – the senator is **pushing for a “bill of rights”**, including

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mandates for sanitary conditions, backup power and medical staff, that would protect cruise passengers in the case of emergencies or unexpected events, similar to what is afforded to **airline travellers**.

"Cruise ships, in large part operating outside the bounds of United States enforcement, have become the wild west of the travel industry, and it's time to rein them in before anyone else gets hurt," **Schumer said** in a statement. "This bill of rights, based on work we've done with the airline industry, will ensure that passengers aren't forced to live in third world conditions or put their lives at risk when they go on vacation."

Modelled after the US airline passenger rights, the senator's proposed cruise ship passenger bill of rights includes the following:

- The right to disembark a docked ship if basic provisions are not provided
- The right to a full refund for a trip that is cancelled due to mechanical failure
- The presence of full-time, on-board medical professionals
- The right to real-time updates on itinerary changes
- The presence of a ship crew trained in emergency and evacuation procedures
- The right to backup power in case of generator failure

Schumer is pushing for voluntary adoption of his passenger bill of rights among cruise liners. He is also asking the US State Department and the International Maritime Organization, the United Nations agency responsible for overseeing maritime safety, to pressure foreign countries that host ships serving Americans to adopt the proposed bill.

However, as well as being difficult to enforce, the proposal faces resistance from the industry.

According to **an article** by travel news site Skift, "there is a ton of opposition to Schumer's proposal". The industry trade group the Cruise Lines International Association favours "industry-initiated policies" over pressure from the government and other outsiders and is unlikely to support the senator's proposals.

Also, there is no US government agency that regulates cruise ships, like the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Transportation which regulate air and land travel. What's more, as many cruise ships are flagged in foreign countries and travel in international waters, US law is not enforceable on most liners.

Without support from the cruise industry or a regulatory body that can enforce US law, it is unlikely Schumer's proposal will be successful.

Still, in the wake of recent disasters, there is agreement that more needs to be done to protect passengers. Mark Mogel who helped bring about airline passenger bill of rights as part of the nonprofit airline consumer organisation FlyersRights, suggested a 21st-century approach: social media.

"Social media is far more effective in influencing corporate best practices and/or driving out bad actors in the cruise industry. Political grandstanding and government regulation is the last thing consumers need."

What do you think? Does the cruise industry need more regulation and if so, what's the best way to do it? Let us know on **Facebook**.

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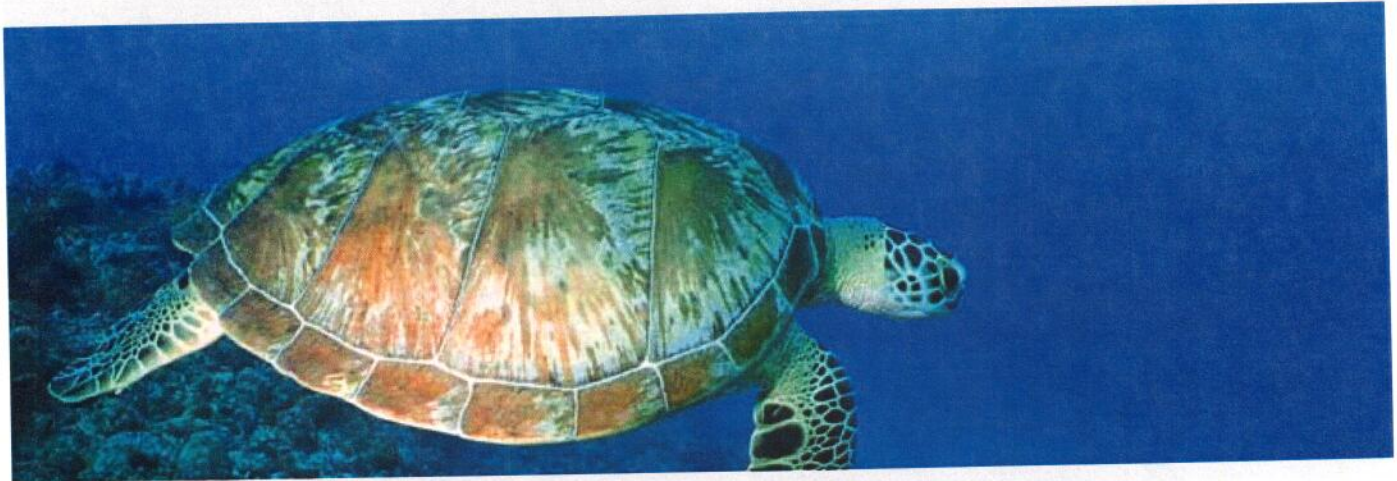
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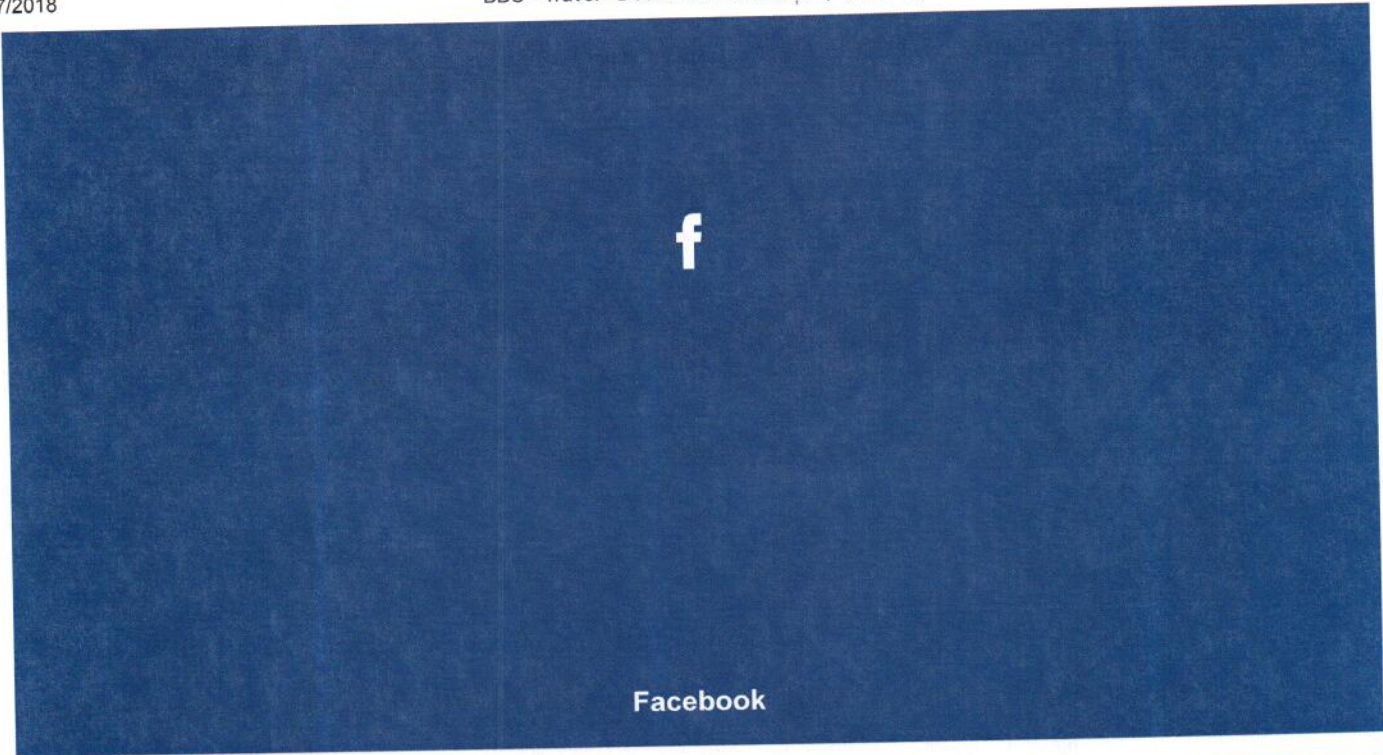


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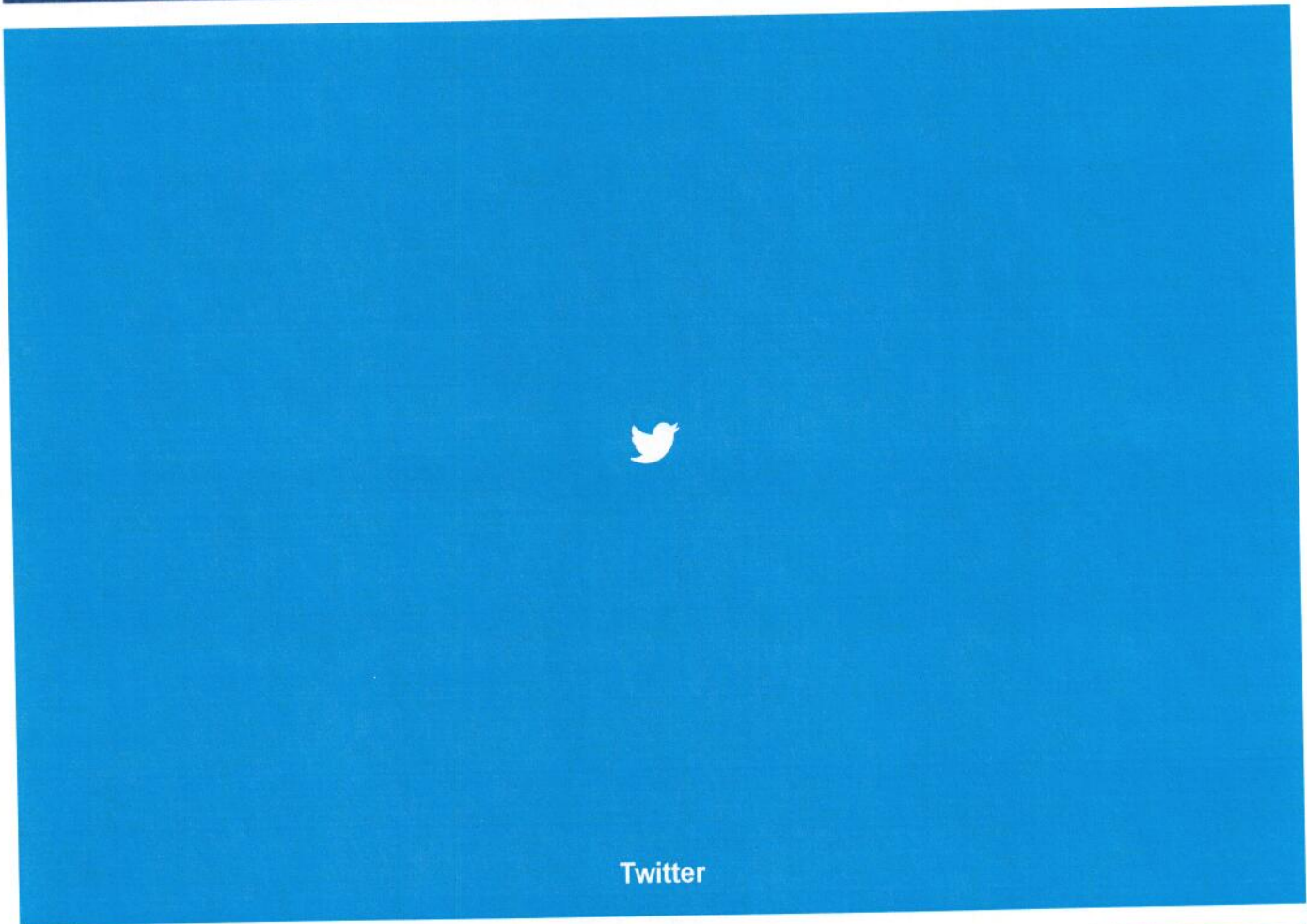
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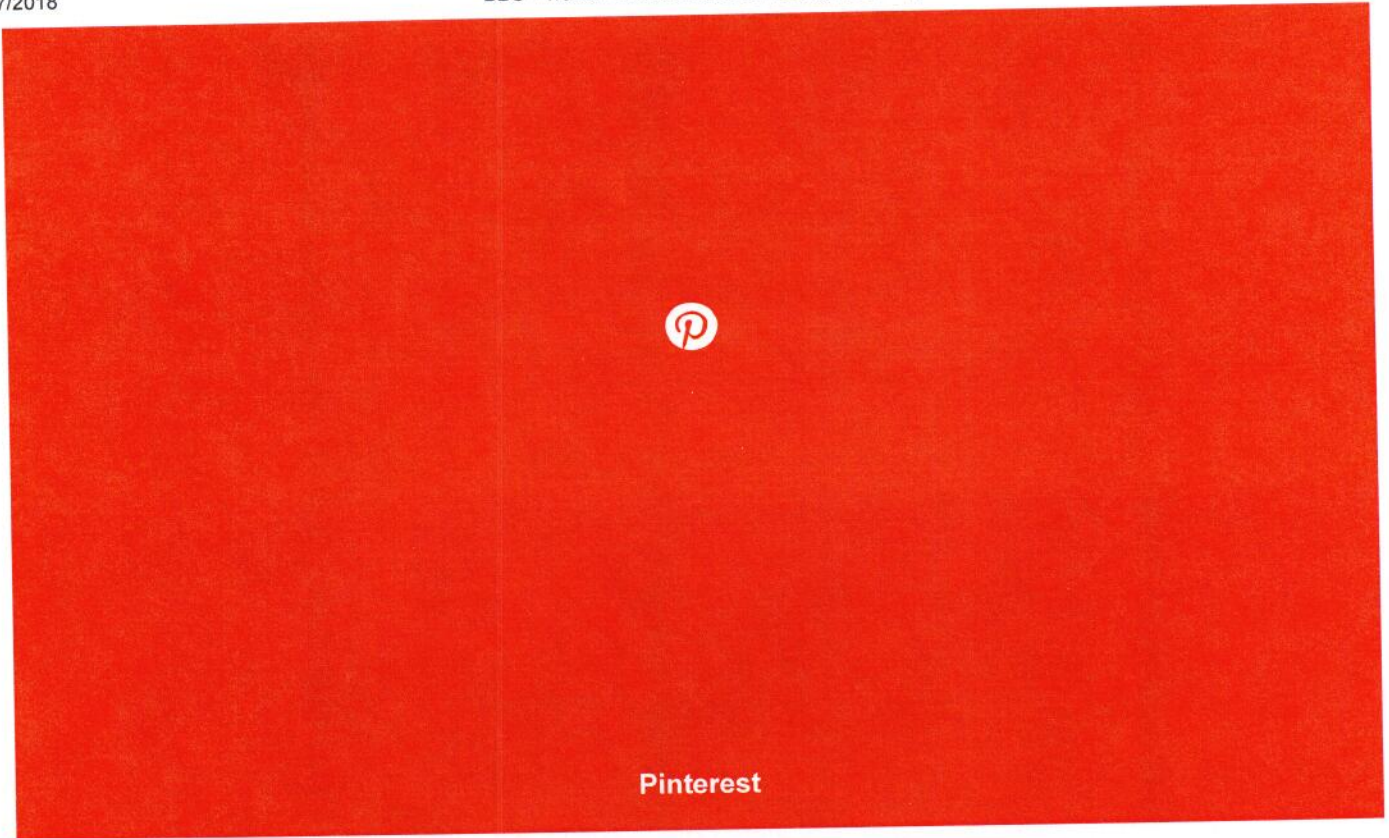


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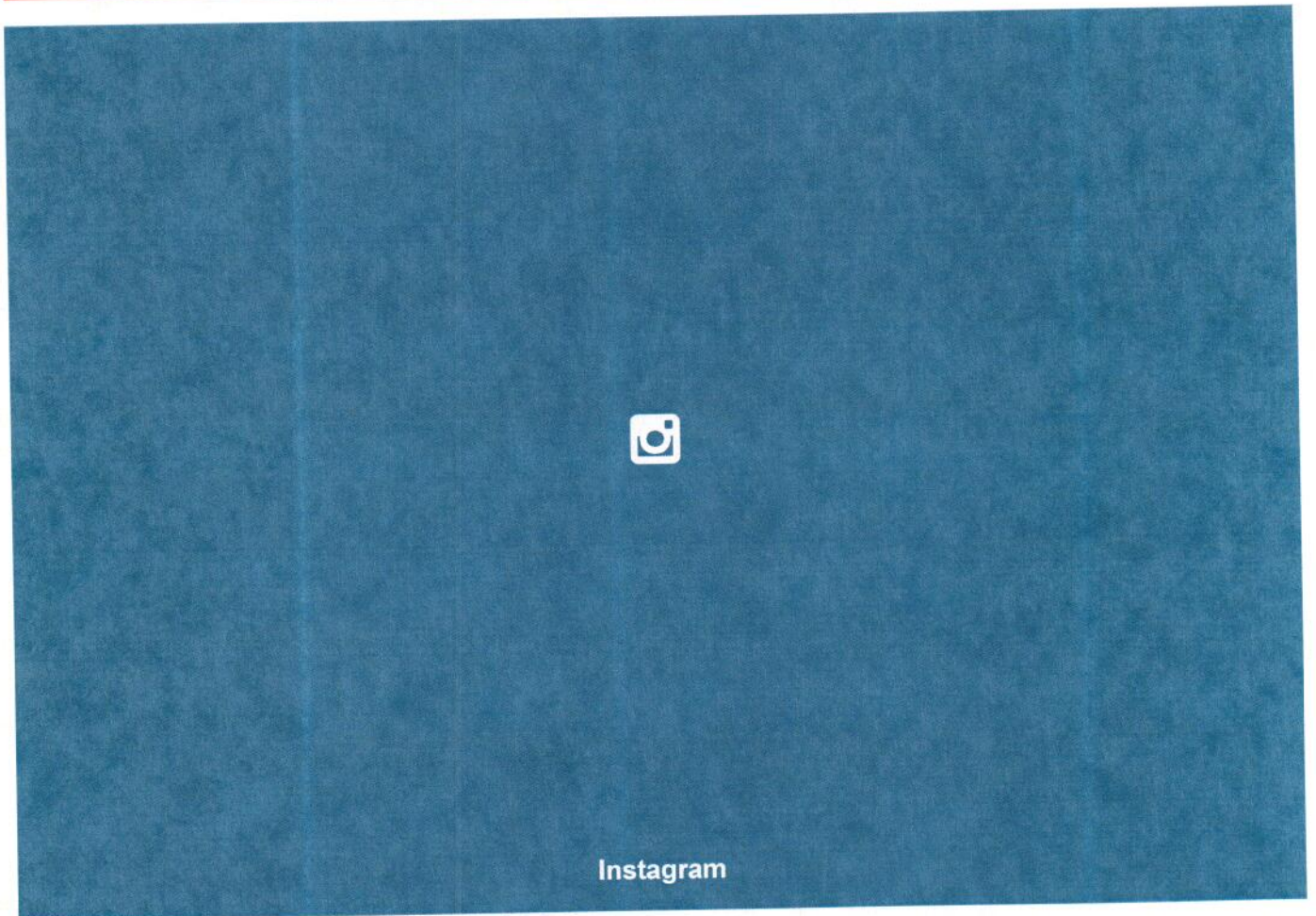


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