



News Release

For Immediate Release
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Puget Sound Pilots Launch Safety Task Force

SEATTLE – Puget Sound Pilots (PSP), an organization of marine pilots in Washington State, is conducting a comprehensive review of its procedures and policies in the wake of the deaths of two pilots in other states.

On January 9, Columbia River bar pilot Capt. Kevin Murray died when he fell overboard in heavy seas near Astoria, Oregon. Murray was climbing down a rope pilot's ladder strung over the side of a merchant vessel to a waiting pilot boat when he fell into the water. Search efforts were hampered by darkness and severe weather. Murray's body was recovered three days later 100 miles up the coast.

In Hawaii, Capt. David Lyman died January 29 while disembarking from a cruise ship. Lyman fell from the rope pilot ladder, struck the pilot boat below, and fell into the water where he was struck by the boat's propellers.

"Both pilots used standard equipment and procedures," noted PSP President Capt. Richard McCurdy. "But transferring from one moving ship to another in open seas is inherently dangerous. We want to determine if there is any way to make this very dangerous maneuver safer."

McCurdy is leading a task force of Puget Sound Pilots who will work with pilots in British Columbia and other West Coast ports to review current procedures and equipment. They expect to complete their work by this summer.

Eight thousand times a year, members of Puget Sound Pilots navigate oil tankers, cargo vessels and cruise ships in Puget Sound and adjacent waterways. Their expertise and commitment to excellence has produced an unparalleled safety record of more than 165,000 sailings over the last twenty years without a major incident.
