

# Two More Bodies Found, Fuel Removal to Begin on Ship

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ROME (AP) — Nudged gently by the tides off Tuscany, the capsized Costa Concordia has been deemed stable enough on its rocky perch for salvagers to begin pumping fuel oil from its giant tanks as early as Tuesday.

The cruise liner, its hull gashed by a reef and pocked by holes blasted by divers searching for the missing, yielded two more bodies Monday, 10 days after the accident. The corpses of two women were found in the luxury liner's Internet cafe, now 55 feet (17 meters) underwater.

Tables, desks, elegant upholstered armchairs and cabinets bobbed in the sea as divers guided the furniture out of the holes to clear space for their exploration inside.

So far, the bodies of 15 people have been found, most of them in the submerged portion of the vessel, while 17 others remain unaccounted for. Authorities said earlier reports that an unregistered Hungarian woman had called friends from the ship before it flipped over turned out to be groundless.

The Concordia rammed a reef and capsized Jan. 13 off the tiny Tuscan island of Giglio as it was carrying 4,200 passengers and crew on a Mediterranean cruise.

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Salvage experts received the green light Monday to start pumping fuel soon from the double-lined tanks of the Concordia. The weekslong fuel-removal operation aims to avert a possible environmental catastrophe in the waters off Giglio, part of a protected seven-island marine park.

Officials said the pumping would be carried out as divers continue the search for the missing since instrument readings have determined the Concordia was not at risk of sliding into deeper waters and being swallowed by the sea.

"The ship is stable," said Franco Gabrielli, head of the national civil protection agency. "There is no problem or danger that it is about to drop onto much lower seabed."

Meanwhile, an oily film was spotted about 300 yards (meters) from the capsized vessel by officials flying in a helicopter and by residents of Giglio, Gabrielli's office said. Samples were being analyzed, but preliminary observations indicated the slick is a light oil and not from heavy fuel inside the Concordia's tanks.

Absorbent panels put around the area seem to have at least partially absorbed the oil, authorities said.

The ship's Italian captain, Francesco Schettino, is under house arrest near Naples, facing possible charges of manslaughter, causing a shipwreck and abandoning his vessel while some people were still aboard. He has insisted that he was coordinating rescue operations from a lifeboat and then from shore.

The ship's operator, Costa Crociere SpA, has distanced itself from the captain, contending he made an unauthorized detour from the ship's authorized route. Schettino, however, has reportedly told investigators that Costa officials requested that he sail close to Giglio in a publicity move.

In a statement issued late Monday, Costa said it would refund passengers the full cost of the cruise and reimburse all travel and any medical expenses incurred as a result of the accident.

Schettino's lawyer, Bruno Leporatti, told reporters Monday that tests on urine and hair samples showed his client was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs before the crash. Prosecutors are not allowed to discuss the investigation while it is under way and it was impossible to confirm the report.

Despite earlier fears, officials said the crippled cruise ship, with a 230-foot (70-meter) gash in its hull, is not expected to roll off its rocky seabed perch and be swallowed by the sea.

An Italian geologist on Giglio monitoring the ship's movements said the Concordia was not so much moving as "responding to the tides."

"It is moving at the rate of about one or two millimeters an hour," Nicola Casagli told Sky TV TG24.

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The sea has been calm for several days but was expected to become choppy in the next few days.

Islanders have been pressing for removal of the heavy, tar-like fuel from the ship's 17 tanks to avert a possible catastrophic leak.

"They should start the oil drainage operations on the ship. At this point those who died will not come back to life. Even if they pull them out later, unfortunately it won't make a difference," Giglio resident Andrea Ginanneschi told The Associated Press.

Five miles (eight kilometers) of oil barriers have been laid to protect marine life and the pristine waters, which are prime fishing grounds and a protected area for dolphins and whales.

Recovery experts from the Dutch salvage company Smit have said they will create holes in the top and the bottom of each tank, heating the fuel so it flows more easily and pumping from the top while forcing air in from the bottom. For the underwater tanks, sea water will be used to displace the fuel, which becomes thick and gooey when cooled.

Besides some 2,200 metric tons of heavy fuel oil, there are 185 metric tons of diesel and lubricants on board, as well as chemicals including cleaning products and chlorine. Some diesel and lubricants have leaked into the water near the ship, probably from machinery on board, officials have said.

"Smit has been ready for a week to begin pumping fuel from the tanks, awaiting only the go-ahead," said a company statement. "For this purpose, Smit has mobilized an oil tanker with emergency response equipment, including sweeping arms, booms and a skimmer."

Seven bodies still await identification. Gabrielli said officials have DNA from the relatives of all of the missing passengers and are working to confirm their names.

On Monday, the body of a woman found in the ship a few days earlier was identified as that of a 30-year-old Italian woman, a new bride who was on the Mediterranean cruise with several family members.

*Barry reported from Milan. Andrea Foa reported from Giglio.*

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