



The Delaware River and Bay Authority

PRESS RELEASE

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CMLF Vessels Equipped with New Marine Evacuation System *First Ferry Service in U.S. to Implement this Evacuation System*

CAPE MAY, NJ – Today, Cape May – Lewes Ferry (CMLF) officials announced they have completed the installation of a new marine evacuation system (MES) aboard all three vessels in the fleet – MV Delaware, MV New Jersey and MV Cape Henlopen. Purchased at a cost of \$800,000, the new evacuation system is designed to make the evacuation process faster and more efficient. The Cape May – Lewes Ferry service is the first in the United States to have this type of evacuation equipment aboard its vessels.

The new MES is designed to move 750 passengers off the boats within 30 minutes or less. “We’re pleased to have vastly upgraded our ability to safely and quickly evacuate passengers and crew from our ferry vessels,” said Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations. “Safety is paramount. While we have never had to evacuate a ferry in a real emergency in our history – and we hope that we never have to in the future - it’s important to have this enhanced level of safety should the need arise.”

With traditional evacuation systems, passengers are loaded onto the lifeboats on deck, and the boat is then lowered from the side of the ship into the water. The previous evacuation system required passengers to jump from the deck into the water, and then swim to life rafts.

The MES is different. Consisting of an inflatable slide, passengers aboard the vessel slide down from the deck into a large life raft already waiting on the water’s surface. Gehrke noted that the majority of the Ferry’s vessel departures in any given year could theoretically be evacuated within 15 minutes should an incident occur.

All Cape May – Lewes Ferry marine personnel are trained in abandon ship procedures and emergency evacuation drills are held annually. “It’s an important part of our ongoing in-house training initiatives,” added Port Captain Derek Robinson.

The MES is manufactured by Survitec, a worldwide leader in marine safety based in Chevanceaux, France. While this system is not required by the United States Coast Guard, it is widely used on European ferries and ships. The MES has a 15-20 year lifespan and is re-certified annually.

About the Cape May-Lewes Ferry

The Cape May – Lewes Ferry is owned and operated by the Delaware River and Bay Authority, a bi-state governmental agency created by Compact in 1962. The Ferry is open year-round and has carried more than 45 million passengers since its inception on July 1, 1964. In 2018, the ferry service, which connects Victorian Cape May, New Jersey, and historic Lewes, Delaware, transported approximately 275,000 vehicles and nearly 1 million passengers. For schedule, rates and other program information, please visit the ferry’s website at www.CMLF.com, or call toll free, 800-643-3779. Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter @CMLFerry.