

## News

### **Video shows passenger going overboard | Florida Today**

By J.D. Gallop  
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U.S. Coast Guard crews on Wednesday afternoon stopped their search for a 21-year-old man who was videotaped falling overboard Monday from a Port Canaveral-based cruise ship.

"We feel it wasn't a reasonable belief of survival," said Petty Officer Dana Warr, a spokesman for the U.S. Coast Guard in Miami.

The Coast Guard made the decision after searchers combed 900 square miles of warm tropical waters west of the Bahamas, which include small islands, caves and reefs, Warr said.

Dolphin, a Miami-based Coast Guard cutter, a Falcon jet plane and a C-130 trekked along the ship's path from Port Canaveral to the western Bahamas.

Warr said that as days passed, the likelihood of survival dwindled for Daniel DiPiero of Canfield, Ohio.

Though each person's survivability in the ocean varies, chances for a successful recovery decrease past 36 to 40 hours, Coast Guard officials said.

On Tuesday, a C-130 Hercules plane joined the Coast Guard Cutter Dolphin just after dawn for a second day of searching.

Storms that rolled in during some searches stymied efforts, Warr said.

DiPiero was traveling with six friends and was last seen at 11 p.m. Sunday as the Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Seas - which can hold up to 3,000 passengers - traveled west of Grand Bahama Island for one of several stops on its seven-day voyage.

DiPiero was reported missing after a night of drinking, after he did not return to his cabin. His image was captured by an onboard stop-motion camera about 2:15 a.m. Monday as he leaned against a rail on the bow of the ship and, investigators said, fell overboard.

Family members were expected to meet with cruise ship officials and the FBI to discuss the disappearance. The FBI was made aware of DiPiero's disappearance

Tuesday, according to an agency spokeswoman in Tampa.

"The family's whereabouts is a private matter, but we have been in contact with them and have been assisting them from the beginning," said Mike Sheehan, a spokesman for Royal Caribbean.

DiPiero's aunt, Nancy Dixon, said she was exhausted by the agonizing wait for word of his whereabouts.

"I'm just waiting to hear from my brother. I don't know anything other than what I'm seeing on the news," Dixon said.

DiPiero's disappearance is drawing national attention from passenger advocates concerned about security and safety aboard cruise ships.

At least 52 people have been reported overboard from international cruise ships in the past 10 years, according to a FLORIDA TODAY analysis.

"The important thing is, when any passenger is believed missing, that the cruise line conducts an immediate and thorough search and rescue effort," said Tonya Meister, a maritime attorney with **Lipcon, Margulies & Alsina, P.A.** of Miami.

"A problem arises when the cruise lines' priorities are to meet the other schedules or looking to minimize their responsibility in the occurrence," Meister said.

Warr said cruise ship personnel carried out their own search before notifying the Coast Guard at 7 p.m. Monday.

"The ship was already at Coco Cay. They didn't know if he had gotten off the ship. They had to question passengers, make announcements and search one of the largest cruise ships in the world," Warr said of the ship's passenger accountability protocol.

The passenger ship is scheduled to return to Port Canaveral on Sunday at 6:30 a.m.

Staff writers Juan Ortega, Donna Balancia and Rick Neale contributed to this report.