

Beat: Health

Nearly 200 evacuated from sinking cruise ship in Netherlands

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USPA News - Nearly 200 passengers and crew members were evacuated from a cruise ship on early Sunday morning after it began taking on water on a river in the eastern Netherlands, emergency services said. None of those on board were injured.

The accident happened just after midnight local time when the 110-meter (360-foot) long Britannia began taking on water while on the river IJssel near the city of Zutphen in eastern Gelderland province. The multi-deck river cruise ship was traveling from the Dutch city of Deventer to the German city of Cologne. Officials from Safety Region North- and East Gelderland said Britannia had suffered a serious breach in its aft part, but the vessel was able to get to a wharf before sinking. All 154 passengers - most of them pensioners from Germany and Austria - and 40 crew members were safely evacuated. "We were all in our cabins and wanted to go to sleep when there was a sudden rumbling sound," one of the passengers told Dutch broadcaster NOS. "I stayed calm and opened the door of our cabin, but then I saw there was already 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) of water in the corridor. Within a few minutes it became so much we barely had the chance to get our things." Another passenger described hearing a loud "bang" and felt the ship rumbling as the vessel began taking on water. Emergency services responded in large numbers and quickly began to pump water out of the vessel to prevent it from sinking. "The situation on the ship in Zutphen is not yet stable," Safety Region officials said. "Pumps are continuing to run, after which the salvor can attempt to close the hole." The cause of the breach was not immediately known. Evacuated passengers were taken by bus to a nearby event hall in Zutphen to spend the remainder of the night. Rijkswaterstaat, which is part of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, said the closure of the river IJssel was lifted at around 2 p.m. on Sunday, some 14 hours after the accident.

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