

CRUISE BUSINESS SETS NEW RECORDS

In December 2004, for the first time in the Port of Galveston's history, three homeport cruise ships were in port simultaneously to disembark and embark cruise passengers. In February 2005 the impressive sight was repeated once again. Then in early March, the Port of Galveston set a new record for passenger-embarkation totals on a single voyage and promptly broke that record the next week when Princess Cruises *Grand Princess* embarked 2,945 cruisers.

On the three-ship days, the cruise vessels arrived at The Texas Cruise Ship Terminals on Galveston Island® in the early morning. Celebrity Cruises' *Galaxy* arrived first and docked at terminal two. Carnival Cruise Lines' *Ecstasy* appeared at the cruise terminal complex next and docked between terminal one and terminal two, making it the centerpiece of the three cruise ship operation. Princess Cruises' *Grand Princess* was the last to arrive at the complex, where it docked at terminal one.

Both *Grand Princess* and *Ecstasy* were serviced alongside Cruise Terminal One using the terminal's FMT Passenger Loading Bridge and a gangway to the pier respectively. *Galaxy* was serviced from Cruise Terminal Two, with passengers using a temporary loading platform. A new FMT Passenger Loading Bridge is being installed and will be available for use in mid-April.

The number of people disembarking from and embarking on the three ships during the eight-hour turnaround totaled 13,906 passengers. End-to-end, the three ships occupied more than half a mile of contiguous cruise ship berth space. It was indeed an impressive sight!

The next day, two more of the Port of Galveston's homeport cruise ships arrived for turnaround. Carnival Cruise Line's *Elation* and Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's *Rhapsody of the Seas* both docked at Cruise Terminals One and Two respectively.

Over the two days of that one weekend, 12,273 visitors arrived by vehicle and airline flights, and boarded ships at the Port of Galveston to begin their cruising vacations and 10,780 returned from their time abroad, totaling 23,053 passengers.

After evaluating the three-ship configuration at the current Texas Cruise Ship Terminals on Galveston Island®, the Port of Galveston has determined that there is room for expansion at Cruise Terminal One, with space available for build-out on the west side of the upper level of the terminal building for passenger screening, ticketing and waiting areas. Studies are underway to determine the most effective way to expand cruise operations. It is anticipated that as this expansion progresses, an additional passenger walkway/loading bridge will be installed at the west side of the terminal to service the middle berth, which is able to handle up to 900+ feet of cruise ship. With the permanent addition of the middle berth, the east berth will be extended to allow for simultaneous accommodation of the largest ships, such as *Grand Princess* or Carnival Conquest size, with the middle berth occupied.

Additionally, the west berth at Cruise Terminal Two will also be expanded to allow for a simultaneous three-ship configuration, with an extension to the existing passenger loading bridge to allow for embarkation/disembarkation of the ship in that berth. In the two-ship mode, the west berth will then accommodate up to Eagle/Voyager Class size. As part of the planned cruise terminal complex enhancement, there will also be some additional construction work required on the wharf. This will allow for better fendering and working of baggage and stores on the apron alongside the ships, and will allow use of all of the varying door configurations.

The Port is examining the roadway system in front of the cruise terminals for future enhancements to more efficiently handle the growing number of vehicles carrying cruise passengers.

The demonstrated capability to efficiently handle three ships on one day, and the above planned berth layout, means that the Port of Galveston now has an additional ship berth available on Saturdays and Sundays, and the ability to provide first-class facilities for three cruise ships on any given day.