



# UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

September 19, 2008  
Washington, DC

Alert 6-08

### COUNTERFEIT EMERGENCY ESCAPE BREATHING DEVICES (EEBDs)

The U.S. Coast Guard has recently learned that counterfeit Unitor model UNISCAPE 15H EEBD Emergency Escape Breathing Devices (EEBDs) are being sold to ship operators and placed onboard commercial vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard **strongly encourages** that all vessel owners and operators with EEBDs onboard carefully and thoroughly inspect them for authenticity. If any doubt exists as to the authenticity, they should immediately contact their emergency equipment vendors and / or the manufacturer for verification or replacement.

The number of fake units sold and currently onboard vessels is unknown and could be substantial. The fake reproduction will not fit over an individual's head and the automatic air release valve will not open. A crisis situation requiring the use of an EEBD will be severely compounded, potentially leading to death, should a crewmember inadvertently rely on a fake reproduction.

Differentiating factors:

An authentic Unitor UNISCAPE 15H is contained in a shiny PVC bag. When viewed from the front with the instruction icons upside down, the zipper opens from left to right, and at the most left section of the zipper is a two centimeter gap covered by a clear tab that has a button closure.

The **fake reproduction** is contained within a **dull canvas-like** material bag. When viewed from the front with the instruction icons upside down, the **zipper opens from right to left**, and at the most left section of the zipper there is no opening, although a tab made of what appears to be the same material of the bag is present with a button closure. This unit will not automatically activate.



Note: Authentic Unitor UNISCAPE 15H EEBDs are not permitted on U.S. flag vessels because they are not National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health certified.

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### **DANGER ALOFT**

The U.S. Coast Guard **strongly encourages** that operators of vessels establish clear written guidelines and procedures for working aloft, require the use of safety harnesses, discourage and prohibit "rites of passage" such as described below. Going aloft to any height on any type of vessel is very serious and dangerous business, can be deadly and leaves no room for acts of daring or joking around!

We're sadly reminded of that fact by the death of an 18 year old crewmember onboard a New England sailing vessel. This tall ship had embarked a group of students and set out for a beautiful day of sailing. About an hour into the cruise a crewmember slipped from the rigging and plummeted about 30 feet to the deck below sustaining terrible injury that resulted in his death.

Evidence in the casualty investigation indicated that this young man went aloft without permission, was unsupervised and alone and was participating in an informal rite of passage referred to in the tall ship community as "laying across the spring stay." This involves crossing from one mast to another while hanging by your hands and feet on a wire called a "spring stay."

The resultant Coast Guard casualty investigation concluded in part that, "The practice of laying across the spring stay is an extremely dangerous and unnecessary evolution, especially while the vessel is underway, and without a safety harness. Although crewmembers were not directed to use the spring stay, it appears the practice was not discouraged and was considered by some crewmembers as a daring accomplishment or rite of passage."

Further, the investigation concluded that:

- The policies regarding crew training for going aloft in the rigging onboard the vessel appeared to be "unstructured and loosely defined" relying primarily upon on-the-job type training with no written guidelines or procedures.
- The crewmember was not wearing any type of safety harness. This piece of safety equipment was neither required by regulation or by company policy and was not onboard the vessel at the time of the casualty.

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