

Did Unmapped Rocks Cause the Sea Diamond Disaster?



In April 2020, it will be 13 years since the state-of-the-art cruise ship *Sea Diamond* sank after hitting a volcanic rock off the Greek island of Santorini, resulting in the death of two French passengers. The current Greek government is now trying to decide whether to raise the wreck from the deep. The vessel, owned by Louis Hellenic Cruises, ran aground along the coast of Santorini with nearly 1,200 passengers and 400 crew. Following an evacuation of everyone on board, the ship was towed offshore and sank. After a lawsuit had been filed against them, investigations were carried out by the defence team of the Master of the Vessel and Louis Cruise Lines, which included a new hydrographic survey of the accident area in Santorini.

This survey was carried out by [Akti Engineering](#) who discovered discrepancies between the actual mapping of the sea area and the official charts used by the *Sea Diamond* (and all other vessels) at the time of the accident. The detailed survey claimed that the reef struck by the *Sea Diamond* was actually located 131 metres (430 ft) from the shore and not at a distance of 57 metres (187 ft), as was incorrectly marked on the nautical chart. The official chart also showed that the depth of the water at the area of impact varied from 18–22 metres (59–72 ft), whilst the recent survey shows that it is only 5 metres (16 ft).

New Mapping Rejected

The findings obtained by Akti Engineering have since been passed on to the Hydrographic Office of the Hellenic Navy and other responsible authorities, with the aim of bringing about the necessary changes to maritime charts and preventing similar accidents. According to a branch reviewing source, the [Hellenic Hydrographic Office](#) initially rejected the new mapping, but a later study confirmed Akti's findings.

The vessel is lying 90 metres (295 feet) below the surface where the two French tourists, a 45-year-old man and his teenage daughter, disappeared and were presumed drowned, although their bodies were never recovered. In 2011, the Greek government then in power said it could not afford the salvage operation and Louis Hellenic would have to cover the costs. However, the company said government maps were inaccurate, causing the ship to strike an underwater rock and sink within hours, [Seatrade Cruise News](#) said. The ship's fuel was removed in 2009.

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