

American Mariners Recognized for Response to 2018 Ro/Ro Fire



Green Lake, foreground, responds to the Sincerity Ace disaster (U.S. Coast Guard)

BY [THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE](#) 2019-10-24 14:01:33

Next Friday, the U.S. Maritime Administration will present the crew of the U.S.-flagged ro/ro *Green Lake* with a rare honor - the Gallant Ship Citation Award - for their role in rescuing seven crewmembers from the ro/ro *Sincerity Ace* late last year.

On December 31, 2018, the Japanese-owned ro/ro *Sincerity Ace* was under way on a voyage from Japan to Hawaii in the mid-Pacific, about 1,800 nm northwest of Oahu. At 0100 hours, the U.S. Coast Guard Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) in Honolulu received notification from JRCC Japan about an emergency situation aboard the *Ace*. The vessel's master reported a significant vessel fire, ongoing firefighting efforts and an intent to abandon ship. The weather on scene was reported as 17-foot seas with winds of about 22 knots.

The *Green Lake* was the first good samaritan vessel to respond to the *Sincerity Ace*. As she approached the scene, *Sincerity Ace's* seafarers were trapped due to heavy smoke from the fire, and they were unable to access the vessel's lifeboats. They were ultimately forced to scramble more than 100 feet down the ship's side using lines, abandoning ship directly into turbulent seas.

From 0200 hours to 2000 hours, the crew of the *Green Lake* fought through high waves and rough winds to rescue as many members of the *Sincerity Ace's* crew as possible, often traveling hours between each survivor. At the end of this arduous rescue effort, the *Green Lake* was able to bring seven members of the *Sincerity Ace's* crew aboard to safety.

"The crew showed incredible perseverance, teamwork and determination, constantly improvising with each survivor's recovery in very difficult and dangerous conditions," said *Green Lake's* master, Captain William Boyce, in an interview for the MM&P newsletter. "Winds were blowing a steady 25 knots, gusting to 30 knots, with a heavy 20-25 ft northwesterly swell. Due to the sea state and our high freeboard, it was very difficult to maneuver, bring the ship alongside each survivor, and get them on board with limited retrieval resources."

The merchant ships *SM Eagle*, *New Century 1*, *Venus Spirit* and *Genco Augustus* also aided the response, and together they brought an additional nine survivors to safety. Four other *Sincerity Ace* crewmembers were found unresponsive in the water and were not recovered; one remained missing at the end of SAR operations.

"The actions of [*Green Lake's* crew] truly epitomized the spirit of America's merchant mariners and mariners across the globe; which is to act without hesitation to save one of their own," MARAD said in a statement.

On November 1, the Maritime Administrator will present the captain and crew of the M/V *Green Lake* with the Gallant Ship Citation Award. This award, which recognizes outstanding actions in a marine disaster, was last presented 25 years ago, and only 42 ships have been presented with the award since 1944. The citation comes with a plaque for the ship and a ribbon bar for each officer and member of the crew.