

CRUISES · Published 3 hours ago

How cruise ships are cleaned, according to CEO of company that sterilized Diamond Princess after outbreak



By Alexandra Deabler | Fox News



Even after the [coronavirus pandemic](#) subsides, Americans might still be hesitant to board [cruise](#) ships, especially following recent outbreaks across several liners that prompted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to extend a "[no sail order](#)" to ships under U.S. jurisdiction.

But fear of contamination while traveling should not completely dictate your vacation plans — and the CEO of the world's largest disaster restoration company explains why.

Sheldon Yellen is the CEO of Belfor Property Restoration, the company responsible for cleaning the Diamond Princess, [where 697 passengers tested positive and seven died](#), and getting it [certified to sail again](#). Yellen recently spoke to Fox News about how cruises are cleaned after a coronavirus outbreak, and whether or not he himself would get on a cruise ship once shelter-in-place laws are lifted.



"For [the Diamond Princess ship], we followed protocols set by industrial hygienists, Japanese authorities, and WHO."

Fox News: How is a cruise ship cleaned after such a widespread outbreak?

Yellen: For [the Diamond Princess ship], we followed protocols set by industrial hygienists, Japanese authorities and WHO. But this is not something new to us. This is what we do all day, every day — hazmat and hazmat work.

For this, it was a Level 3, [meaning] confirmed exposure. So my team followed all of our safety protocols and approached different areas of the ship based on those. In the rooms and cabins, we had to remove mattresses, bedding, towels, and dispose of all cloth goods. We had to remove all of the kitchen utensils that may have been in there.

Once everything was removed, we begin our cleaning process of the rooms. We had to barricade off things as soon as they were completed. We had to almost engineer our approach in advance, so we would end up where we needed to be without re-contaminating any room. Imagine the hallways — we had to make sure we cleaned them and had an access route to move through without going back through the hallway.

Then it was cleared by officials and WHO to set sail.

What is different about coronavirus compared to other outbreaks or hazmat situations you've dealt with?

Yellen: The unsophisticated answer is that this virus, number 1, is crossing all geographies that we are located in. If you go back in time and think about when this first became known, people here were looking at it as if 'that's over there.' It didn't take long for us to realize, as a world community, to say, 'Excuse me, this is affecting us.' That magnitude is so incredibly different. The management of our workforces around the world is so intense now, making certain safety is our priority and, logistically, we have enough PPE.

We were never imaginings this type of worldwide event, but we were lucky and fortunate that we were so stocked with masks, gloves, sheets ... that we were able to operate everywhere without being shut down.

Another differentiator is that the media coverage is all over. And people are so aware of the risk. And it's a good thing that they are. These stay-at-home orders are for the good of the world. I think that the people...are recognizing the magnitude of this. People are respecting how critical it is to be careful.

But beyond that, I feel around this world an abundance of compassion. Compassion from the laypeople. Compassion from the authorities who show up on sites and are offering to help. And we just ask everyone to keep out and not reenter.

**"What I can tell you is this: the world has faced challenges and we have risen to those occasions. We will go on planes and cruise ships and be in office buildings again."
— Sheldon Yellen, CEO**

How has Belfor been handling the coronavirus situation as it has grown?

Yellen: I've been doing this for 36 years. As I said earlier, we as individuals, we have a choice every day. We look and approach the world as we 'get to' or we 'got to.' Some people say, 'I got to go to work.' Some people say, 'I get to.'... These Belfor people around the world surely

approach their commitments [as] 'we get to serve' — we don't 'got to.' It's an honor to be able to do that.

And I know there are so many heroic people, the healthcare workers on the front line, the police and firemen and EMTs on the front line. We also have to include grocery store workers, delivery drivers and workers that deliver food. Preventing people from having to go to the hospital is also recognized as an essential service in a heroic way. Our people who are trained in hazmat cleaning, these men and women are, in my opinion, no less heroic.

Our people are trained in this process of cleaning, whether it's a ship or hospital or police or fire department that we're doing, an ambulance goes out on a run and has a patient, and then that vehicle has to be sanitized for the next patient. That level of cleaning is what we're doing.

Should people be afraid of staying in hotels or traveling on cruise ships?

Yellen: I'm not a professor, not a doctor, not a scientist. What I can tell you is this: The world has faced challenges and we have risen to those occasions. We will go on planes and cruise ships and be in office buildings again.

[More than fear], people in this time, people need someone to cheerlead, to be enthusiastic... through everything that is happening.

As I've said to our people on numerous conference calls, I'm the CEO: the Cheerleader, Enthusiast and Optimist-in-chief. We will come out of this. I don't want to get ahead of ourselves. I'm not trying to set policy. But we will get through this and go back to everyday life.

Would you get on a cruise ship?

Yellen: If it was important for that message to be sent to people, then yes, I would.