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THE DAILY TIMES

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2026 | DELMARVANOW.COM

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The vessel that would become the American Heritage cruise ship, built by Chesapeake Shipbuilding in Salibury, is shown in this file photo on the Wicomico River. PROVIDED BY JIM ADKINS

Cruise ship in New Orleans crash built in Salisbury

Olivia Minzola
Salisbury Daily Times
USA TODAY NETWORK – DELMARVA

A shipbuilding company from Salisbury has ties to this month's Mississippi River cruise ship crash in New Orleans.

Chesapeake Shipbuilding, the company responsible for building the American Cruise Lines riverboat American Heritage, is based in the City of Salisbury. The shipbuilding and naval architecture company, founded in 1980, operates a 13-acre waterfront site at 710 Fitzwater St. along the Wicomico River.

American Heritage was one of the two vessels involved in the waterway collision, which occured at 12:28 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 13. A tanker crashed into American Heritage while it was docked.

Before it was named American Heritage, the riverboat was christened as the American Eagle and later renamed Queen of the Mississippi.

Keep reading to find out the timeline of the river cruise ship crash.

Timeline of the Mississippi River cruise ship crash

The crash involved the docked American Heritage and a tanker called Atlantic Asphalt.

According to USA Today, the tanker experienced a "steering casualty" at about 12:26 p.m. The malfunction left the tanker's rudder fixed to starboard while the vessel neared the Crescent City Connection Bridge. The tanker then reportedly veered toward the Mississippi River's east bank.

A total of 190 people — 140 passengers and 50 crew members — were onboard American Heritage during the collision. The Atlantic Asphalt carried a crew of 19, as well as a local river pilot.

After being struck, the passenger vessel capsized in about 22 minutes. No one was killed or went missing in the collision, but 32 people were reportedly taken to the hospital. A few remain hospitalized as of Nov. 16.

Chesapeake Shipbuilding completed building American Heritage, then named American Eagle, on Jan. 1, 2015.

See CRUISE SHIP, Page 2A

Accidental fuel repair sparked Salisbury shop fire

Keith Demko
Salisbury Daily Times
USA TODAY NETWORK – DELMARVA

The fire that broke out at Salisbury's Patriot Auto Recycling (formerly S&W Auto Body) at 11:49 Nov. 16 has been ruled accidental by the Office of the Maryland State Fire Marshal.

The fire led to widespread outages on the city's north side on the afternoon of Nov. 16, and led to the Centre at Salisbury mall being closed for the rest of that day, reopening the morning of Nov. 17. Power was restored later on the afternoon of Nov. 16.

The fire at the auto body shop, located 714 Brown St., started in the car bay and the preliminary cause was accidental as a result of an employee working on a vehicle's fuel system.

No one was injured in the fire, which caused about $500,000 in damage to the structure and $250,000 to contents.

The Salisbury Fire Department was the primary responder, joined by firefighters from all three Lower Shore counties and Sussex County in lower Delaware. It took firefighters two hours to bring the blaze under control.

One firefighter was transported to a local hospital with non life-threatening injuries, and was later released.

UMES backers sue state

Lawsuit claims school has faced 136 years of underfunding from state

Wiliam J. Ford
Maryland Matters

Since it opened as a land-grant university in 1890, the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore has been underfunded and systemically shortchanged by the state and the university system, say supporters of the historically Black university, who are suing to do something about it.

The group called ForUMES, comprised of students, faculty, alumni and prospective applicants, is seeking billions of dollars in relief for the Princess Anne school in the complaint it filed Oct. 26 in U.S. District Court in Maryland. The suit claims the state has "deliberately underfunded" UMES since it became a land-grant institution in 1890.

The suit names Gov. Wes Moore (D) and several higher education officials with the University System of Maryland and Maryland Higher Education Commission as defendants.

A news conference has been scheduled in Baltimore on Tuesday, Nov. 17, to discuss the lawsuit, and an alumnus of the school declined to comment on the suit Friday, Nov. 13.

UMES officials, on the other hand, were happy to talk about their relationship with the state. UMES spokesperson Rudy Williams said Friday the school has "great relations with the state."

"We are happy with the support that we've gotten from the state," he said. "We're looking forward to continued support and good relations with the [Moore] administration and with the state."

There's a reason why.

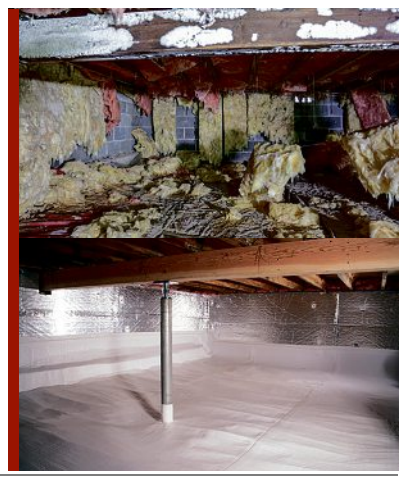
State funding for a full-time equivalent student increased from $19,640 in fiscal 2022 to more than $26,000 in each of the next three fiscal years.

In April, the University System Board of Regents approved nearly $15 million toward renovations and new construction of the Eastern Shore campus' new School of Veterinary Medicine. The school, which began accepting applications last week for a June 2027 opening, will be the state's first veterinary school and the first one at a public historically Black college and university in the nation.

But the lawsuit filed by ForUMES looks to the history of the school. Founded in 1886 as the Delaware Con-

See UMES, Page 2A

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