



The Marine Assistance Industry Journal

A Quarterly Newsletter - Volume 57 - August 2025



Chairman's Address

Welcome to the dog days of summer. So named after the heliacal rise of Sirius, otherwise known as the dog star, or the hound of Orion. All I really know is that the "Real Feel" today, according to my local weather station, is 104-degrees. You know it's hot when you're driving in a topless Jeep with the a/c on.

Dear Florida, please come get your weather. It's drunk and causing fights up here in New England.

Even though we're right in the middle of Summer, I just got off the phone with our esteemed Executive Director, talking about Fall events, upcoming travel, various meetings, and our January conference. In some ways it feels like we just left Vegas, and in others it feels like this season is just crawling by.

Much of that is due to our first staffing shortage in over twenty years. One would think, with all the time people spent at home a few years ago, coupled with the easy access to online Captain's courses, we'd have thousands of newly licensed mariners just dying to test out those new credentials.

Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the case here, or almost anywhere in the country from what I'm being told. It's not just us facing this problem, but companies all over. We used to field dozens of calls and emails every year from credentialed mariners who wanted to get into our business. Now, like many industries, we're challenged with a dearth of licensed, qualified, or even willing applicants. My fear is that, absent a new approach, this could be our next great challenge as an industry. So how do we solve it?

I can tell you that we've started reaching out to our local marine trades association, mariner licensing schools, working with local high schools on establishing marine programs, talking to salty folks on the dock or in the marine stores, and interfacing with local Coast Guard coxswains and the National Coast Guard Petty Officer's Association.

While this isn't a problem confined to us (just look at the "Now Hiring" signs on every street corner), I do think our difficulties are greater due to the very limited pool of individuals we can pull from. This isn't working a register or restocking shelves. We need the right licensure, the right experience, and most importantly, the right personality.

We're continuing to work on this at a local and national level, but if anyone has ideas, we're all ears. And, by the way, if anyone has a spare Captain or two, please feel free to send them my way.

Fair winds and following seas,

P LeBlanc

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in the Business

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**To C-PORT, we thank you for
38 Years of representing
the Marine Assistance Industry.**

**To our new members, we
welcome you to the Industry,
and wish you many years of
safety and success!**



**- Phil, Pete, John,
and the Safe/Sea Crew**

Registration is open for the 39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting! This all important industry event will be held on January 26 - 28, 2026 at the Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Disney Springs Resort, Orlando, FL.

On the agenda:

U.S. Coast Guard leadership.

Salvage safety, equipment, and techniques - In-water demonstration planned!

Legal perspective on what constitutes negligent salvage.

A twist on risk management to include panel discussions and best practices.

C-PORT Reports - what your association is doing for you behind the scenes.

C-PORT Membership Meeting - Be informed. Be heard!

C-PORT Vendor Showcase.

Food. Beverage. Interaction and fun with fellow owners and operators.

Awards and prizes!

And more!



**39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting
January 26 – 28, 2026
Orlando, FL**

[Registration](#) is open! [Hotel](#) room block is available! Go to the [C-PORT Conference](#) page for all of the latest!

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Quid Faciendum? Considerations After Your Company Suffers a Marine Casualty

When a serious marine casualty strikes -- like the loss of a vessel or a crew injury -- it's not just chaos on deck. For the towing and salvage company, the legal and regulatory storm that follows can be tricky to navigate. Whether you're a seasoned salvor or a new operator, understanding what needs to happen immediately after a casualty is key to protecting your people and your company.

First, understand that marine casualties happen in this business. It's a dangerous line of work. Don't beat yourself up -- at least not immediately. Focus, instead, on doing what you need to do to comply with the law and prepare for the potential of any future legal battles.

Second, understand that when the phrase "serious marine incident" is triggered so are a host of obligations. As defined by the Coast Guard (take a look at the USCG Form 2692 for the full definition), a serious marine incident is loss of life, injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, vessel loss, \$200,000+ in damages or significant environmental harm. When a serious marine incident has occurred you're in the realm of required federal reporting and testing. And the clock starts ticking the moment the incident occurs.

Third, pay super attention to your company's drug and alcohol testing requirements following a marine casualty. For a serious marine incident, you need to test the involved crew for drugs and alcohol as soon as possible. Alcohol testing must be completed within 2 hours of the incident, and no later than 8 hours. Drug testing must occur within 32 hours. This isn't optional -- it's federal law under 46 C.F.R. Part 4.

And here's the thing, failing to meet these timelines could be interpreted as noncompliance or concealment, even if unintentional. And make no mistake, the results (or lack of them) will come up later in any Coast Guard investigation or litigation. Our tip? Your company should consider having a written post-casualty response plan that includes pre-identified testing vendors who are available days, nights, weekends and holidays. Alcohol testing kits should be part of your inventory. Train your captains and shoreside staff to know this plan cold.

Fourth, after a serious marine incident you need to obtain, complete and submit Form CG-2692. Pay attention to the supplemental forms (CG-2692A for personnel injuries, etc.). This form, too, has a deadline. While the initial report of the incident must be made immediately after addressing safety concerns, typically via phone or radio to the nearest Coast Guard Sector, the written CG-2692 (and its supplemental forms) must be submitted within 5 days of the incident. Operate within the 5 day deadline, but don't rush the submission (even if the Coast Guard may be pressing to receive the forms) and take time to have your maritime lawyer review your completed forms prior to submission. And here's our thought: less is more when describing what happened, etc. and avoid (for sweet's sake) any speculation!

Finally and aside from these compliance issues with respect to a serious marine casualty, don't forget that any casualty can create a potential downstream legal claim. I don't care how jocular your crewmember or the boat owner may be . . . time passes and people can change their views on what happened and who was at fault. In this way, take the time to preserve all log entries, video, pictures and communications. As you can, take a ton of photos and get a picture of your vessel's GPS/Chartplotter showing the incident location. Remember too, notify your insurance carrier immediately and consider hiring a maritime lawyer to help you oversee preparing a file for future use. Also, you should discuss with your insurer/maritime lawyer filing a limitation of liability action in federal court to try and cap your exposure which filing must be done in a pretty shore time.

After a marine casualty, the goal isn't just damage control, it's regulatory compliance, legal positioning and crew protection. The towing and salvage industry operates in a high-risk, high-responsibility space. Know what to do beforehand. Got questions about how to prepare for or respond to a casualty? That's in our wheelhouse. Call us. Anytime.

This article is provided for your general information, is not legal opinion and should not be relied upon. Always seek legal counsel to understand your rights and remedies.

By John K. Fulweiler
Fulweiler llc
john@saltwaterlaw.com; 1-800-383 MAYDAY (6293)

Coast Guard renames geographic operational districts- published July 3, 2025

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Coast Guard announced Thursday the renaming of its operational districts from numerical to geographic designations, a key initiative under Force Design 2028 (FD2028).

This strategic change, directed by Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem on May 21, 2025, aims to indicate more accurately the regions they serve and represent. Renaming operational districts revises a numbered system established during World War II, when the Coast operated as part of the Navy to ensure alignment between the services. In the 80 years since the Coast Guard separated from the Navy, the Service has maintained the numbered districts. However, the Navy stopped using numbered districts over 25 years ago.

Updating operational districts to regional names will more clearly align districts with their areas of responsibility, facilitate collaboration with interagency partners, and ensure the American public and maritime stakeholders can easily find and understand the districts in which they live, recreate and operate. This change is a direct action within FD2028's organization campaign, which is focused on adapting the Coast Guard's structure to remain effective and responsive.

The new geographic names, approved by the Department of Homeland Security, are as follows:

District 1: USCG Northeast District
District 5: USCG East District
District 7: USCG Southeast District
District 8: USCG Heartland District
District 9: USCG Great Lakes District
District 11: USCG Southwest District
District 13: USCG Northwest District
District 14: USCG Oceania District
District 17: USCG Arctic District



"This renaming is more than just a change in labels; it's a critical step in our journey to become a more agile, capable, and responsive fighting force," said Acting Commandant Kevin E. Lunday. "Under Force Design 2028, we are driving fundamental changes to speed decision-making, improve strategic alignment, and ultimately best serve the American people for decades to come. This initiative underscores our commitment to ensuring that change is lasting and has an enduring impact on the Service and the Nation."

This change will not impact operations or change existing geographical district boundaries. To memorialize the updated names for operational districts, the Coast Guard is undertaking the process of formally changing district names in the Code of Federal Regulations. Through this process, the Coast Guard will continue to communicate with stakeholders and provide updated resources and information as appropriate.

For more information, please contact Coast Guard Media Relations at MediaRelations@uscg.mil.
Read more about the Coast Guard's transformation through FD2028 here: [USCG Force Design 2028](#).

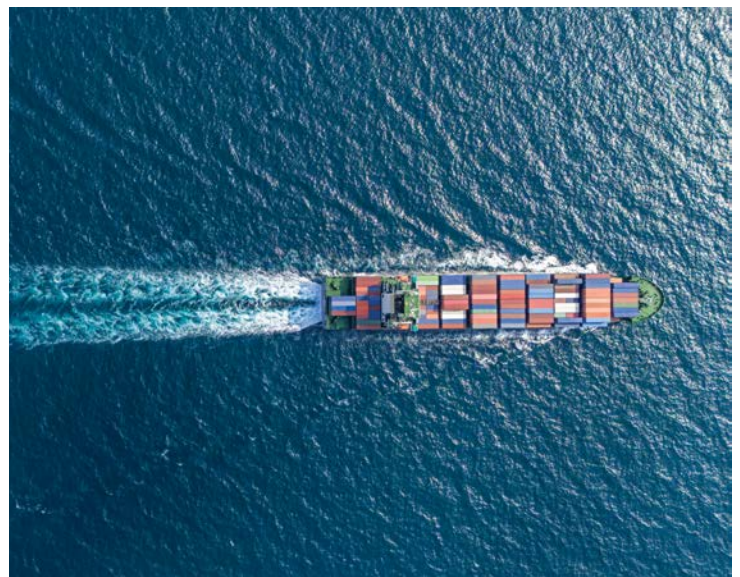
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Questions?

Contact Nadja Knoulton
Membership Committee Chair
nadja@laredogroup.org

Visit our website at www.americansalvage.org/join.html

New Business Inquiry:

Nate Oberg: noberg@starshep.com

Existing Clients:

Sara Mariani: smariani@starshep.com

New Application Status and Credential Verification Web-based Tools Now Available

The National Maritime Center (NMC) is pleased to announce the launch of two new self-service tools, available via the [NMC website](#), are designed to assist mariners and industry stakeholders with obtaining Mariner Credential Application Status and Mariner Credential Verification.

- **Mariner Credential Application Status:** This tool allows users to receive application status updates via e-mail. To use this service, users must provide Mariner's Last Name, Mariner's Reference Number, and a valid e-mail address where results will be sent.

Note: Application status data is updated Monday through Friday by 8:00 a.m. EST.

- **Mariner Credential Verification:** This tool provides credential verification results, via e-mail, for merchant mariner credentials and medical certificates. To use this service, users must provide Mariner's Last Name, Mariner's Reference Number, and a valid e-mail address where results will be sent. Once a submission is complete, users may click the Submit another response link to perform additional verifications.

Note: Credential verification data is updated Monday through Friday by 8:00 a.m. EST.

For more information or to access the tools, please visit the [NMC website](#). If you have questions or require assistance, contact the NMC Customer Service Center, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EST, by using Live Chat, by e-mailing iasknmc@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

We are committed to providing you with exceptional service and hope these new tools offer added convenience and efficiency to our mariner community.

Sincerely,
/P. A. Drayer/
Patrick A. Drayer
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection



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Insurance Corner- Vessel Pollution Liability



Hello C-PORT Members,

The towing and salvage business is a tough business, but you all work hard and get it done. You all take great care of your vessels and do your own repairs when necessary. Insurance for many of you is in place for the liabilities resulting from an accident or occurrence, damages or losses to your own vessels, and to protect the assets of your business. There is another coverage that is often overlooked and should be considered. That being Vessel Pollution Liability coverage.

There is potential for significant need for this coverage, based on the scope of work being conducted along with today's legal and regulatory climate. With Federal acts like OPA 90 and CERCLA, and you are found to be the party responsible for the discharge of any hazardous substances resulting in potential liability, you could be subject to substantial judgements awarded against your business. Your current insurance policies will most likely not respond.

A Vessel Pollution Liability policy would provide coverage including, but not limited to, the following if found liable under the law:

- OPA 90: Removal costs and cleanup expenses required to be paid by you, for which you are designated as the responsible party and liable for damages. These include, but are not limited to, discharge of oil, and actions to avoid the substantial threat of discharge of oil, into or upon the navigable waters or adjoining shorelines of the United States. This coverage also includes removal costs and expenses paid by you and for which you are liable under the law or state or territory of the United States but only to the extent that such costs and expenses can be recovered.
- CERCLA: Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability – Costs and expenses you paid for which you were liable specifically for removal, response, or remedial action.
- Stand By: Will pay for standby firefighting or salvage efforts for a covered vessel, but only to the extent necessary to stop the discharge or release, or to prevent the substantial threat of a discharge or release which would be covered.
- Defense Costs
- Fines and Penalties
- Third-Party Property Damage
- Third-Party Loss of Revenue

This coverage should seriously be considered due to the reason stated above, and surprisingly the premium is normally very reasonable for the \$1,000,000 in coverage. Please let me know if you would like to have a discussion regarding Vessel Pollution Liability.

Please always remember that as a benefit of your C-PORT Membership, Starkweather & Shepley will provide a free consultation and review of your current insurance program to ensure completeness of coverage. Please feel free to reach out to Nate directly.

Contact Info below:

Email: noberg@starshep.com
Mobile: 401.408.6877

Nominations are coming in for the prestigious AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award! Honor your captains for their heroism on the water by submitting their rescues. Since 2010, seventeen deserving individuals have been honored by AFRAS, receiving recognition in front of their peers and nationally during the AFRAS Awards Ceremony held in Washington DC.

(Pictured: 2024 AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award Winner, Captain Kevin Jones. Offshore Marine Towing, with AFRAS Vice President History and Heritage, CDR Gary M. Thomas, USCG (Ret.)



C-PORT Seeks Nominations for AFRAS Lifesaving Award

C-PORT is honored to announce it is seeking nominations for the prestigious AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award. AFRAS and C-PORT are proud to continue this longstanding program recognizing these heroic actions of C-PORT members.

The Association For Rescue At Sea (AFRAS) was formed in 1976 to foster traditional maritime search and rescue values through suitable recognition of deserving personnel, and to facilitate cooperation in search and rescue. In 2010, AFRAS expressed a desire to establish a program, in cooperation with C-PORT, to annually recognize a deserving member of C-PORT that has shown exceptional skill and determination to save lives during a rescue incident in the maritime environment.

The Award is conferred on an individual or group of individuals who perform exceptional acts in attempting to save life in the maritime environment. Instances where the rescuer places their own life at risk will be given highest consideration. The Award may be given posthumously.

Nominations are to include a full description of the circumstances and events giving rise to the nomination and include such factors as:

- Location of the incident
- Prevailing weather conditions
- Skill displayed
- Determination to conduct the rescue operation
- Exceptional courage demonstrated
- Degree of risk involved

To be considered for the upcoming AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award, the rescue must have taken place between September 16, 2024 and September 15, 2025.

AFRAS Award Nominations may be emailed to tcardone@cport.us or mailed directly to the C-PORT office at 4251 NE 27th Ave, Lighthouse Point, FL 33064. Nominations may be sent at any time so long as they are received no later than October 1, 2025 to allow sufficient time for the vetting of the nominations. AFRAS will present the Award at the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala on Tuesday, January 27, 2026.

Actions above and beyond but not exactly lifesaving? C-PORT presents Distinguished and Meritorious Service Awards to members who demonstrate the professional principles that the association promotes. These marine assistance professionals go above and beyond their dedication to providing exceptional service to the boating public through extraordinary and exemplary actions. Nominations are to include a full description of the circumstances and events giving rise to the nomination and may be emailed to tcardone@cport.us or mailed directly to the C-PORT office at 4251 NE 27th Ave, Lighthouse Point, FL 33064. These award recipients will be honored at the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala on Tuesday, January 27, 2026.

Risk Management Training Courses are available on the C-PORT website, <https://cport.us>. The program centers on these concepts:

- Risk: “possibility of loss or injury”
- Risk Management: “The identification, analysis, assessment, control, and avoidance, minimization, or elimination of unacceptable risks.

C-PORT is committed to encouraging its member’s growth and development through education and is dedicated to providing good business practices throughout its membership. With the increase in accidents and economic pressures facing our industry, many companies have lost sight of the importance of training and proper risk management skills. Our mission is to provide our members with programs that will enable their growth and development into the future, while minimizing the impact of looming USCG regulation in response to Congressional directive and safety records.

Contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012 with any questions regarding this program. Captain and crew special pricing is available.

Marine Assistance Company Operations Guideline, exclusively for C-PORT company members. These guidelines promote safe operations and provide regulatory guidance. C-PORT company members may obtain access to this document at the C-PORT website, <https://cport.us> or contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012.

Insurance Program for Marine Assistance Companies - Administered by Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage, Inc. - Designed and underwritten by Travelers for organizations dedicated to marine assistance and towing. This Program offers an extensive portfolio of quality insurance products and services to address a wide range of marine exposures. -Contact Nate Oberg: 401.408.6877 noberg@starshep.com.

ACAPT- Accredited for Commercial Assistance and Professional Towing- The ACAPT program provides best practices guidance for the marine assistance towing and salvage industry. Participants are highlighted as having taken the initiative to meet or exceed their own company qualifications against industry best practice criteria and government regulations. Visit the C-PORT website at <https://cport.us> or contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012 with any questions regarding this program.

BOSAR for Commercial Assistance- Created through the support of NASBLA’s BOAT program and the USCG Office of Boat Forces, is designed for the marine assistance operator, providing reinforcement of knowledge gained by virtue of their captain's license and experience. It also enhances their ability to work as a true partner with local agencies and the US Coast Guard. This course is open to any marine assistance company who wants to host the training. Instructors and course materials are provided by C-PORT. Contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012 if you have an interest in hosting a class.

Mentor Program, exclusively for C-PORT company members. Virtual roundtable discussions with guest speakers. Second Tuesday of the month. Information is emailed to all company members prior to the sessions. If you are a member and not receiving these emails, contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012

What to be more involved? Let us know! We want to hear from you! Reach out to Tina at tcardone@cport.us or call us at 954-261-2012.



C-PORT was founded in 1985 to act as a liaison between the marine assistance industry and public agencies and organizations involved with boating safety, marine assistance, marine salvage and other marine-related operations. Its mission is to represent, promote, protect, and defend its member companies through communication, relationship development, and education. Our members are dedicated to providing prompt, professional and timely assistance to all boaters and to actively partner and cooperate with local law enforcement and U.S. Coast Guard. They are professionals, dedicated to the growth and development of their respective businesses and committed to furthering the advancement of our waterways and the boating community. For more information, contact C-PORT at (954) 261-2012 or visit <https://cport.us>.

C-PORT (Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing)
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C-PORT is a 501(c)(6) organization.