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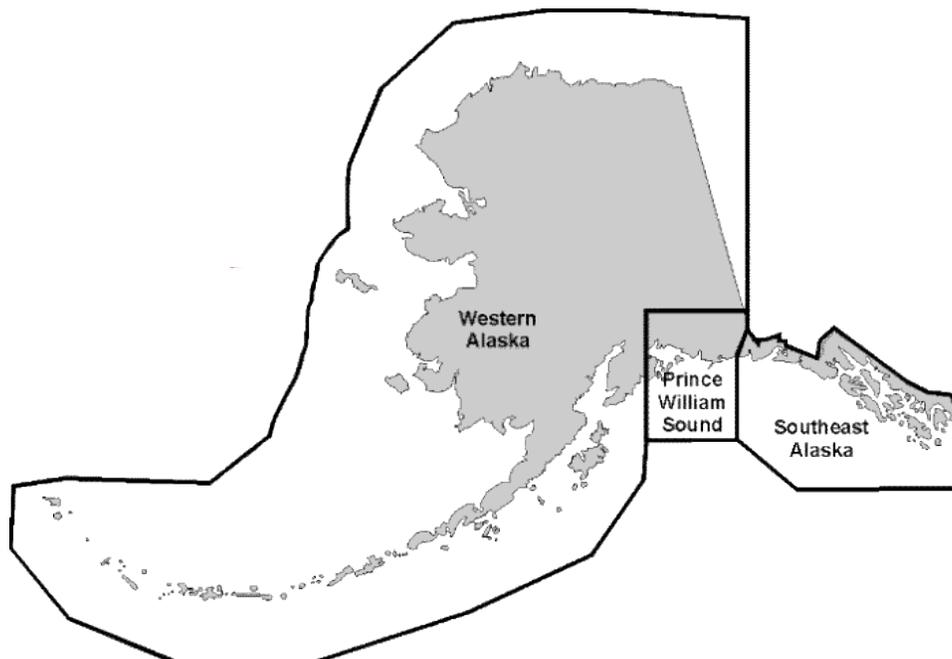
MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN 01-15

Non-tank Vessel Response Plan Enforcement Change for Ships Transiting Western Alaska

Ref: (a) 33 Code of Federal Regulations 155
(b) 33 Code of Federal Regulations 3.85-15

OVERVIEW: On January 1, 2015, Coast Guard Sector Anchorage began issuing civil penalties to operators of non-tank vessels over 400 gross tons (ITC) whose ships transit the Western Alaska Captain of the Port (COTP) Zone without valid Vessel Response Plans (VRPs) or with VRPs that do not contain Geographic Specific Appendices (GSA) for Western Alaska. This represents a change from Sector Anchorage's previous practice of issuing warnings for these infractions.

REQUIREMENTS: Since October 30, 2013, Reference (a) has required all non-tank vessels of 400 gross tons (ITC) or more to maintain valid VRPs. The rule applies to US-flagged vessels, and to foreign ships that pass through US waters when transiting to or from a US port. Within each VRP is a list of GSAs covering different Captain of the Port Zones within the US. The presence of the GSA for a given area in a vessel's VRP indicates that contracts are in place for that vessel to receive response services within that area—critical for timely local spill response.



WESTERN ALASKA: The Western Alaska COTP Zone is pictured above. The boundaries of the Zone are defined in Reference (b) and encompass the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends up to 200 miles beyond the territorial sea baseline. Sector Anchorage began

issuing warnings for non-tank vessel VRP violations on January 31, 2014. Since then, Sector has issued over 400 warnings. The majority of those were to foreign ships transiting through Western Alaska on journeys between Asia and ports in Washington, Oregon, and California. Though these ships did not make port calls in Western Alaska, they were still subject to the requirement to have a valid GSA for Western Alaskan waters.

HOW TO OBTAIN A VESSEL RESPONSE PLAN: Vessels that do not have a VRP should contact the Coast Guard VRP Help Desk at (202) 372-1005 or visit the VRP website at <https://homeport.uscg.mil/vrp>. The website has multiple resources to assist industry in developing and submitting VRPs for Coast Guard approval.

HOW TO OBTAIN A WESTERN ALASKA GEOGRAPHIC SPECIFIC APPENDIX: Due to the area's vast size and limited infrastructure, VRP compliance within the Western Alaska COTP zone is conducted through Alternate Planning Criterias (APCs). Individual vessel operators or industry groups may submit their own APC proposals for Coast Guard approval. Alternatively, vessel operators may contract with a third party organization with an existing approved APC. For a list of available approved APCs, please visit <http://www.uscg.mil/d17/sectoranchorage/waterways.asp> or call (907) 428-4189.

PENALTIES: Multiple fines may be issued to a vessel as a result of a single voyage made without full VRP compliance. Fines for each violation may be as much as \$11,000.

CONTACT: Direct compliance questions to the Sector Anchorage Port State Control Branch at SectorAnchorageArrivals@uscg.mil or (907) 223-9434.

Sincerely,



PAUL MEHLER III
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection
Western Alaska