

United States
Coast Guard

National Pollution Funds Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CG 94-16
Contact: Robert Horowitz
Tel.: (703) 235-4792

"COAST GUARD CLARIFIES COFR FILING TIMEFRAME"

The Coast Guard's National Pollution Funds Center (NPFC) has received inquiries from several sources indicating that many charterers and vessel owners and operators are unclear about how the NPFC will process Certificate of Financial Responsibility (COFR) applications up until the December 28, 1994 tank vessel implementation date. Fear has been expressed that, if a vessel operator has demonstrated new evidence of financial responsibility but the vessel does not physically have on board a new OPA/CERCLA COFR by December 28, 1994, the vessel will be denied entry to United States waters. This fear is unfounded.

The Interim Rule published July 1, 1994 only requires vessel operators to demonstrate financial responsibility under the new rules before December 28, 1994 in order to operate in United States waters on that date. The rule allows vessels for which this evidence has been supplied to operate with their "old" COFRs (the "old" COFR is deemed extended until December 27, 1995 in this case). For example, if Stockton Reinsurance Limited, or Shoreline Mutual, or any other approved guarantor, submits to the NPFC confirmation that it is providing evidence on behalf of a particular vessel operator for named vessels, the NPFC will immediately process that information and enter it into the Marine Safety Information System (MSIS). This information will be readily available to Coast Guard field enforcement personnel. The Coast Guard has committed to process any filing of acceptable evidence of financial responsibility in an expeditious fashion and no operator that has supplied acceptable evidence will be denied the ability to trade in United States waters solely because it does not physically have a new OPA/CERCLA COFR on board the vessel. The NPFC is not imposing any cutoff date prior to the December 28, 1994 deadline for receipt of the evidence of financial responsibility, although operators are encouraged to make their arrangements and file the evidence as soon as possible.

Any person having questions about this information is encouraged to call the NPFC's Vessel Certification functional area at (703) 235-4813 or the contact person listed above.