

Marine Safety Office Houston-Galveston
Marine Safety Unit Galveston
Vessel Traffic Service Houston

Port Security Information Bulletin
PSIB 08-04

Houston-Galveston Area Maritime Security Committee
SECURE LIBERTY Tabletop Exercise
May 18, 2004

The Houston-Galveston Federal Maritime Security Coordinator (FMSC) announces the Area Maritime Security Committee's SECURE LIBERTY Tabletop Exercise (TTX) on Wednesday, June 16th starting at 8 AM. The exercise is designed to test the activation of the Port Coordination Team and the flow of communications from MTSA regulated facilities to the Federal Maritime Security Coordinator. Maritime Security (MARSEC) Level 3 compliance information must be communicated from industry to the Port Command Centers (PCC) in Houston, Galveston, Texas City, Freeport, and Offshore so that it can be evaluated by the FMSC within the Unified Command prior to lifting port restrictions. All communications will begin with "This is a drill" and all subsequent reports from industry must begin with "This is a drill" to ensure that it is understood by all participants that this is a simulated incident.

The exercise will begin with notification, via the AMSC Communications System, of an increase from MARSEC Level 1 to MARSEC Level 3. To ensure the success of this exercise, it is mandatory that all MTSA-regulated facilities in the Houston-Galveston Captain of the Port Zone participate by notifying the U.S. Coast Guard of MARSEC Level 3 attainment via the Port Command Centers either through simulating the steps taken to attain MARSEC Level 3 or actually holding facility security drills or exercises. Using either option, the FMSC directs all Facility Security Officers (FSO) to, at a minimum, participate in the communications portion of our TTX and report attainment. Per 33 CFR 105.230(b)(2) and (3), when notified of a change in MARSEC Level, the facility owner or operator must ensure the facility complies with the required additional security measures within 12 hours and report compliance or noncompliance to the PCC. For the purposes of this TTX, it is encouraged that all participants simulate and report attainment as soon as possible.

Minimal participation (communication with the PCC and simulating MARSEC Level 3 attainment) will count as drill credit for the participating facility. In order to receive credit for conducting an exercise, facilities must exercise applicable portions of their Facility Security Plans through full scale or tabletop simulation, ensuring each exercise tests communication and notification procedures, as well as elements of coordination, resource availability, and response. Vessels may participate in the exercise but are not required to do so. However, if CSOs/VSOs choose to participate, they will be eligible to receive credit for the drill/exercise.

The scenario for TTX SECURE LIBERTY involves facility explosions caused simultaneously by terrorists in the ports of Los Angeles, CA and Philadelphia, PA. As a result of these incidents and credible intelligence that future explosions will occur during the Fourth of July holiday weekend in the ports of Miami, New Orleans, Houston, New York, and Seattle, the Secretary of Homeland Security has directed the nation to raise the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level from Elevated

(Yellow) to Severe (Red). The HSAS level Severe (Red) is equivalent to the U.S. Coast Guard's Maritime Security (MARSEC) Level 3. Announcements pertaining to the MARSEC Level shift will be relayed to port stakeholders once the FMSC receives specific direction from the Coast Guard Commandant, via the Atlantic Area and District Eight Commanders, as simulated in the exercise.

The Area Maritime Security Plan for the Ports of Houston, Galveston, Texas City, and Freeport highlights procedures that port maritime stakeholders will follow in contacting the local Captain of the Port. Instead of stakeholders directly calling, faxing, or forwarding e-mails to the local COTP office, the AMSP states that all MTSA regulated facilities will communicate directly with the designated Port Command Center (PCC) in their local area to report MARSEC attainment and other facility and vessel status reports. Port Command Centers, which report directly to the Port Coordination Team (PCT), will be activated in the ports of Houston, Galveston, Texas City, Freeport, and Offshore during an increase in MARSEC Levels. The PCT is comprised of a representative from each port in the COTP zone that's well versed in the communication capabilities of their respective port. They serve as an external evaluative body that quickly assess and fuse raw data from organic sources (e.g. Incident Command, Port Command Centers, port police, facility representatives) to enhance the Unified Command's situational awareness and further the objectives of the COTP in managing an incident at MARSEC Level 2 or MARSEC Level 3.

The Houston-Galveston Area Maritime Security Committee (AMSC) brings appropriately experienced representatives from a variety of sources in the area together to continually assess security risks to the port, determine appropriate risk mitigation strategies, and develop, revise, and implement the committee's Area Maritime Security Plan (AMSP). The primary purpose of the AMSP is to provide a framework for communication and coordination among port stakeholders and law enforcement officials, as well as identify and reduce vulnerabilities of security threats in and near the area's Maritime Transportation System.

To assist Facility Security Officers with this effort, a subsequent PSIB will be posted with a list containing the Port Command Centers point of contact numbers and an evaluation form for those facilities and vessels conducting an exercise/drill. If you have any questions regarding the TTX SECURE LIBERTY, please do not hesitate to contact Lieutenant Leon McClain, Jr. at (713) 671-5120 or Marine Science Technician Third Class Shawna Poor at (713) 671-5133. They may also be reached via e-mail at LMcClain@msohouston.uscg.mil or SPoor@msohouston.uscg.mil. To learn more about the local Area Maritime Security Committee and other area maritime security initiatives, you may obtain a copy of the AMSP by contacting Mrs. Tobi Moore at (713) 671-5118 or via e-mail at TMoore@msohouston.uscg.mil.



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