

Coast Guard publishes notice of proposed rulemaking for inspection of towing vessels

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Coast Guard announced Thursday publication in the *Federal Register* of a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) designed to improve safety on towing vessels.

The NPRM provides a layered approach to towing vessel safety that includes the option of an audited safety management system or an annual Coast Guard inspection regime. The NPRM also includes procedures for obtaining Certificates of Inspection issued by the Coast Guard, and for Coast Guard oversight of any audit and survey processes involving third party organizations.

Additionally, it would establish safety regulations governing the inspection, standards, and safety management systems for towing vessels. These include requirements for lifesaving and fire protection, electrical and mechanical items, and operational requirements such as crewmember training and drills, navigation and towing safety, and recordkeeping provisions.

The Coast Guard has worked closely with the Towing Safety Advisory Committee in developing this proposed rulemaking and now encourages public comment on the proposal. Interested parties can review the proposal and submit comments and related materials at www.regulations.gov, docket number USCG-2006-24412. All comments are posted without change. The comment period ends on [DATE].

“This NPRM, which proposes an inspection regime for a previously uninspected class of vessels, is the result of the Coast Guard working closely with industry to improve vessel safety to prevent accidents and protect vessels, crews, cargoes, our shared waterways, and our environment while being mindful of the burden created by regulations,” said Coast Guard Deputy Commandant for Operations Vice Adm. Brian M. Salerno.

While at this time, there is no specific proposal regarding requirements for hours of service and crew endurance management for mariners aboard towing vessels, comments on this important topic are encouraged and will be considered when the Coast Guard decides whether to propose such requirements in the future.

The Coast Guard’s current Towing Vessel Bridging Program efforts, which address verifying compliance with existing regulations, will not be impacted by these proposed regulations.

###