

Q: What does this rule do, and what vessels does it affect?

A: This rule complies with the direction of The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-281) (“The Act”) to issue a rule ensuring the safe carriage of oil, hazardous substances, and individuals in addition to crew on Offshore Supply Vessels (OSVs) of at least 6,000 gross tonnage as measured under the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships (6,000 GT ITC). The rule will also affect any vessel of at least 500 gross tons as measured under the regulatory tonnage measurement system (GRT), if that vessel does not have a GT ITC measurement, and will be certificated as an OSV. These vessels will be considered “Large” OSVs. The rule does not impact any existing OSV under 6,000 GT ITC (500 GRT) or existing “Large” OSVs certificated in the interim process as outlined in The Act.

Q: How does removal of this upper limit affect operations on the OCS?

A: In addition to providing rules for a class of vessels previously not addressed by regulations, the rule provides for growth of and options for the U.S. OSV fleet. For example, the rule allows for the carriage of more than 36 offshore workers, establishes regulations for carriage of noxious liquid cargoes in bulk, provides acceptable industry standards as alternatives for electrical installations in hazardous locations, and aligns certifications requirements with international standards.

Q: What differences do we see in the “Large” OSVs versus the existing OSV fleet that necessitate these new rules?

A: As the U.S. offshore industry has grown and developed technologically, so too have the demands on OSVs operating in support of the offshore missions. These “Large” OSVs, servicing facilities further offshore, require more varied, complex and increased volumes of NLS-based product mixtures for deeper, higher pressure well requirements. Also, previous law exempted all OSVs from double hulls. The new, larger OSVs can carry increased volumes of oil based products, whereby the extent of environmental safety concerns dictate the use of double hulls. Additionally, the scale and missions of these “Large” OSVs require greater numbers of persons in addition to crew on board, and an increased risk needing further mitigation. It should also be noted that International carriage requirements have become more stringent and have surpassed current CFR standards. As these larger OSVs would likely desire to be competitive in an international market due to their scale, this rule establishes a path to meet and exceed international standards.

Q: Why can’t OSV’s \geq 6000 GT continue to use the interim process? How is this rule an improvement?

A: The Act directs the Coast Guard to issue an interim rule as soon as practicable, and only created an interim process for the limited time until the Coast Guard issues the rule. This interim process required case-by-case analysis in order to approve the construction of each Large OSV being built. This rule provides the regulatory standards needed to address the uncertainty and gaps, and do away with any inefficiencies and delays caused by a lack of explicit and transparent set of regulations.

If you have specific questions regarding the content of the interim rule, please contact LT Anne Besser, at the Office of Design & Engineering Standards, CG-ENG-1 at 202-372-1362 or anne.e.besser@uscg.mil.

If you have commentary on the interim rule for consideration prior to finalization, please see the [Federal Register Notice](#).