

MARINE SAFETY MANUAL

CHAPTER 3. BRIDGE ADMINISTRATION (BA) PROGRAM

A. Introduction.

1. Authority. Several bridge statutes, as amended, give the Department of Transportation (DOT) authority for administration of laws governing bridges and causeways crossing the navigable waters of the United States. The Secretary of the DOT (SEC DOT) delegated this authority to the Commandant of the Coast Guard under 49 CYR 1.46(c); the Commandant has further delegated certain permitting authority to the Chief, Office of Navigation (G-N) under 33 CFR 1.01-60(a) and to the district commanders under 33 CFR 1.01-60(b). The statutes governing bridges and causeways pertain to:

- a. Approval of bridge location and plans for navigational clearances (33 U.S.C. 401, 491, 525, 535);
- b. Regulation of the operation of drawbridges (33 U.S.C. 494, 499);
- c. Alteration of bridges obstructing navigation (33 U.S.C. 494, 495, 502, 511 et seq.); and
- d. Approval of bridge lighting configurations (14 U.S.C. 84, 85, 92, 633; 33 U.S.C. 494).

2. Regulations. To implement these statutes, the Coast Guard has published the following regulations in 33 CFR Chapter I, Subchapter J (Bridges):

- a. Part 114 - General;
- b. Part 115 - Bridge Locations and Clearances; Administrative Procedures;
- c. Part 116 - Alteration of Obstructive Bridges;
- d. Part 117 - Drawbridge Operation Regulations; and
- e. Part 118 - Lighting of Bridges.

B. Management Activities. Commandant (G-NBR) administers the BA Program and publishes the Bridge Administration Manual, Commandant Instruction (COMDTINST) M16590.5. A bridge administrator in the district (oan) branch (or, in some cases, in a section of the district (oan) branch) manages the program at the district level; Inquiries about the BA Program should be forwarded to the appropriate district bridge administrator. [NOTE: While this program is administered separately from the Port and Environmental Safety (PES) and Waterways Management (WWM) Programs, the concerns of these programs are linked. Liaison should be maintained between the captain of the port (COTP) and the district bridge administrator to ensure that port and navigation safety objectives are mutually achieved.]

C. Statutory Changes. The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1982 amended the authority granted under the bridge statutes to:

1. Exempt bridges across certain waters from the requirement to be permitted by the Coast Guard (see the Bridge Administration Manual for a discussion of which waters);
 2. Add civil penalty provisions to the existing authority to pursue criminal penalties for violations;
 3. Prohibit a vessel from unnecessarily requiring a drawbridge to be opened;
 4. Prohibit any person from delaying opening of a drawbridge after proper signal has been given; and
 5. Prohibit an owner or operator from failing to maintain a bridge adequately.
- D. Reports Of Violations. Reports of alleged violations of the bridge administration statutes or regulations may be submitted by Coast Guard personnel, local law enforcement and other federal agencies, towing companies and other industry concerns, and private citizens. Such reports, made by telephone or in writing, may allege illegal construction activities, deviations from approved plans, failure to open a drawbridge, etc. These reports shall be forwarded promptly to the district bridge administrator.
- E. Program Coordination. Occasionally the district bridge administrator may require assistance from other Coast Guard resources for a specific investigative or enforcement action. In such cases, the administrator will specify requirements and instructions in the request for assistance.