



Going Green Reaps Rewards

The Coast Guard recognizes industry's marine environmental protection efforts.

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The William M. Benkert Award was created nearly 14 years ago, when our nation was still recovering from the environmental impact caused by the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill off the Alaskan coast. Following that devastating marine casualty, Congress enacted the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which amended old and implemented many new requirements for the tanker community.

In addition to adhering to these obligatory regulations, the maritime industry independently made dramatic pollution prevention policy improvements in operations, maintenance, cargo handling, waste management, and training. As the primary regulating entity for the maritime community, the Coast Guard felt that it was necessary to recognize these outstanding efforts in marine environmental protection.

William M. Benkert

RADM William "Mike" Benkert was considered by many to be the father of the U.S. Coast Guard's marine safety program. While serving as the office chief of marine environmental systems, RADM Benkert initiated many of the programs we have in the prevention department today. He field-tested the then-new small passenger vessel regulations in 1960, which had a significant impact on small passenger community implementation and enforcement. In the late 1960s, when new legislation for fire safety standards went into effect, RADM Benkert



expertly balanced the needs of public safety with industry push-back and ultimately satisfied both parties with patience and educational awareness.

Next, he moved on to work with the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, where he guided its major reorganization and expansion in 1972. As an avid U.S. Coast Guard voice on the international floor, he ensured that the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea convention was aligned with the needs of the U.S. Coast Guard. In a 1994 *Proceedings* article, the author wrote, "His ideals foreshadowed the environmental protection philosophy embodied in OPA 90."¹

2008 Award Recipients
 The 2008 Benkert Award presentations were held during the American Petroleum Institute (API) Tanker Conference.
 This year's awards were presented by USCG Commandant Thad Allen.

Osprey
 Dow Chemical, Freeport, Texas

Gold
 Alaska Chadux, Anchorage, Ark.
 Foss Maritime Company, Seattle, Wash.

Silver
 U.S. Shipping Partners, Edison, N.J.
 American Commercial Lines, Jeffersonville, Ind.
 Marathon Petroleum Company LLC, Nashville, Tenn.

Bronze
 APL Maritime, Ltd., Bethesda, Md. (Large Facility)
 APL Maritime, Ltd., Oakland, Calif. (Large Vessel)
 Marathon Petroleum, Ashland, Ky.

Honorable Mention
 Todd Shipyard, Seattle, Wash.
 SeaRiver Maritime Inc., Houston, Texas



RADM William M. Benkert Award

The Benkert Award is possibly the most sought-after environmental award in the maritime industry. This prestigious award recognizes outstanding achievements that extend far beyond mere compliance with industrial and regulatory standards. More than just a symbol of excellence, the award provides an avenue for creative exchanges of ideas and innovations that benefit both the industry and the public. This award also provides a system for measuring and assessing an organization's management strengths and weaknesses in environmental protection.

Ideally, participants will seek to institute additional procedures that will far exceed the minimum compliance standards of environmental laws. A platform is provided for applicants to discuss current policy where shared initiatives are to be expected. Above all, the U.S. Coast Guard hopes to increase industry and public awareness of the importance of protecting our marine environment and its delicate ecosystem.

Eligibility Details

Any marine transportation-related commercial organization owning, operating, or otherwise managing vessels, facilities, or fleeting areas; oil spill removal organizations; or other entities engaged in maritime operations are eligible to apply. There are six categories in which a company may submit an application. These categories are used to compare each company within its operation type during the initial application review. All applications will compete against each other during the second phase of the application review to select an overall winner. The categories are:

- **small business - vessel operations**
less than 50 employees
headquarters in the United States
- **small business - facility operations**
less than 50 employees
located in the United States
regulated under 33 CFR 126.05 or 33 CFR 154.105
- **special small business**
less than 25 employees
located in the United States
maritime transportation-related entity
- **large business - vessel operations**
50 employees or greater
headquarters in the United States
- **large business - facility operations**
50 employees or greater
located in the United States
regulated under 33 CFR 126.05 or 33 CFR 154.105

- **foreign vessels**
250 full-time employees or greater
must have at least one foreign-flagged vessel over 1,600 gross tons and have conducted commerce at a U.S. port during the given award period

An application package should contain information on environmental achievements and activities that demonstrate the applicant's

commitment and accomplishments for the two previous calendar years (or one award cycle). Organizations will be evaluated on:

- environmental policies, objectives, and targets;
- pollution prevention, preparedness, response, and safety management;
- environmental outreach;
- partnerships;
- performance measures and results.

The award program has three levels of recognition—gold, silver, and bronze. If an organization exceeds all review criteria expectations, then an “Osprey” is awarded as the top prize. The program is capable of recognizing multiple recipients at any or all of these levels.

The application submission deadline is February 1 every “even” year. The selection process concludes April 1, and the informal notification is expected in May of the award year. Award presentations are held in June. For more information, go to <http://homeport.uscg.mil/benkert>.

About the author:

LT Jarrod DeWitz is a marine inspector with five years of experience. He served one tour at Sector Miami, and he is currently on his second tour at Coast Guard headquarters in the Office of Domestic Vessel Compliance. Currently, he works in the Vessel Response Plan Program as the nontank vessel response plan specialist. He's also the program representative for the high-visibility nontank vessel response plan regulation implementation efforts.

Endnote:

¹ LTJG Pamela Zearfoss, “The legacy lives on ... RADM ‘Mike’ Benkert,” Proceedings of the Marine Safety Council, May-June 1994.

Partnerships

The U.S. Coast Guard is proud to partner with the American Petroleum Institute (API) in this program. API has hosted the Benkert Award presentations during the last several award ceremonies and plans to continue its support of this award. API also provides senior event staff to assist with coordinating the Benkert Award presentations during its bi-annual tanker conference.

Although this event was originally geared toward the tanker community, it has expanded to include many important topics that cross all of the maritime industry.

