



# Securing Our Ports

*TWIC outreach, operations, and oversight.*

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In the wake of the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the United States Coast Guard found itself at the forefront of homeland security in the maritime sector. The Maritime Transportation Security Act and subsequent SAFE Port Act specified criteria for a transportation security card, which was implemented through the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Coast Guard.

## TWIC

The Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) was rolled out as a means to heighten maritime

transportation infrastructure security. Its goal is to identify those who have access to our maritime transportation system, determine who poses a security threat, and deny unescorted access to individuals who do not meet certain requirements.

Issued to merchant mariners, longshoremen, and maritime

workers, TWICs contain biometric information, and all who obtain one are vetted through national security databases to ensure the safety of our ports. Through a long and arduous process, TWIC implementation has led to accountability for more than one million workers who have unescorted access into secure areas of U.S. ports.

The Transportation Security Administration developed the programmatic elements for the implementation of the TWIC program, and the U.S. Coast Guard is charged with reaching out to the maritime sector as the arm of enforcement. The Coast Guard outlined security requirements for maritime facilities and workers and reached out to industry to ensure maximum transparency of information flow.

The maritime industry is as diverse as the United States, so TWIC's impact is felt through a wide range of marine operations—small passenger vessel communities, cruise liners, the containerized shipping industry, oil and chemical refineries, etc. Vetting the entire nation's body of maritime workers is a task of monumental logistical effort. With unique circumstances in each port, the effort required untold man-hours of outreach, education, and problem-solving. The Coast Guard, already stretched to carry out its new security missions, found ways and people to help meet this additional requirement.



**The TWIC reader at the Port of Brownsville. U.S. Coast Guard photo by LT Stephen Bor, Sector Corpus Christi.**

## Got TWIC?

Credentialing working group members conducted surveys, promoted outreach, and shared their best practices. The most recognized example of this is an exercise entitled "Operation Got TWIC."

The exercise was planned to survey all personnel accessing facilities in the port and to fulfill MTSA yearly exercise credit requirements. Planners issued a port security information bulletin to the port community announcing the exercise. It contained a spreadsheet to record information.

During the exercise, facility personnel asked every person who came to their security gates if they had a TWIC or had applied for one. Personnel conducted this exercise three times over the course of six months to gauge the health of TWIC implementation.

This information helped the working group judge whether the outreach was effective and provided an indication if there was enough equipment in the area to get everyone enrolled.

There's a daily hustle and bustle throughout the port complex. Oil tankers carry crude oil into refineries, towboats move barges, and vessels that support the daily needs of the industry move around the port. While many ports have similar numbers of vessels, the chemical tanker trade adds a level of complexity few ports in the U.S. experience. For example, it is not unusual for a chemical tanker to call on seven or more berths during its normal rotation through the area.

### Credentialing Working Group

It became obvious that the Coast Guard was going to need some help to

Though the national implementation date for the transportation worker identification credential was April 15, 2009, the Coast Guard had worked for years to ensure that proper outreach enabled maritime partners to meet the new requirements. For example, Coast Guard sectors in the state of Texas (a major center for the energy industry) worked tirelessly in coordination with the maritime industry, agency partners, and local law enforcement to identify and resolve issues with TWIC implementation. These targeted efforts are captured in the credentialing working group from Sector Houston/Galveston as well as in the unique TWIC issues surrounding the Port of Brownsville, Texas, addressed by Sector Corpus Christi.

### Captain of the Port Zone Houston/Galveston

This area encompasses the inland waterways and ports spanning the Ports of Houston, Galveston, Texas City, and Freeport. Some of the largest petroleum and petrochemical facilities in the world operate inside these expansive complexes.

In fact, Houston is home to the largest petro-chemical refinery complex in the U.S., second in the world to Rotterdam, The Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> A single facility can potentially lose millions of dollars a day if it is shut down, directly impacting the national economy. Houston also houses the largest TWIC enrollment population in the United States, originally estimated to be 260,000 transportation workers. The Coast Guard, in coordination with industry partners, ensures that these facilities operate safely, securely, and according to the new regulations.



**Petty Officer 3rd Class Robin Lindsey (left) and Petty Officer 2nd Class Baron Barrera from Sector Houston/Galveston's Waterfront and Facilities Security Branch perform a random TWIC card check at the Houston refinery. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Renee C. Aiello.**

implement this new security requirement, especially in this already-hectic environment. Industry in Sector Houston/Galveston ranges from small business operators to some of the largest petroleum manufacturers in the world. Ensuring that everyone has a voice and representation of all needs is a key to building stakeholder commitment.

With regard to TWIC implementation, the area maritime security committee created a credentialing working group shortly after the initial TWIC regulations were published. The group was led by Mr. James Prazak of Dow Chemical, and initially was made up of industry stakeholders and the Coast Guard. Over time, the group grew to include the Transportation Security Adminis-





**U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, 18th District Texas, activates her transportation worker identification credential at the TWIC center in Houston, Texas. LT Sarah Hayes of Sector Houston/Galveston and LTJG Quinton DuBose of Marine Safety Unit Galveston observe. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Renee C. Aiello.**

tration (TSA), Lockheed Martin, the Seafarer Center, utility companies, and various other stakeholders.

The focus of the working group was laid out very early, and goals were stressed at almost every meeting: communicate, learn, conduct outreach, identify and solve issues, and leverage resources to avoid duplicate efforts.

### **Building Successful Partnerships**

Each individual and organization came to the forum with preconceived notions, and in many cases, that bias could hinder further progress. The working group's success in resolving these issues speaks to the ability of these individuals and organizations to work together to achieve the overarching goal of security and safety.

When unique issues arose, the group held special meetings. For example, they had to discuss compliance from railroads. The working group coordinated meetings with Marine Safety Unit Galveston, industry stakeholders, and representatives of the local and national

railroads. The goal was to air any facility- or railroad-specific issues, then work to resolve these and come up with best practices.

The working group was critical in determining how to achieve overall security needs while minimizing the impact on commerce. Trends were identified, best practices shared, and efforts were coordinated with the enrollment centers.

### **Value of Partnerships**

The partnerships fostered in the Houston/Galveston area enable the apparently seamless operations against a backdrop of complex port operations. These partnerships were not created recently or in response to recent events. They were developed over years and years of cooperation and relationship-building. This leads to trust, cooperation, and a willingness to work for the greater good.

Much of the resiliency found in this port is due to these relationships, whether it is the port coordination team helping to reconstitute the port after Hurricane Ike, or dealing with the more common issue of fog closure and backlog of vessels in the queue. The relationships in the maritime industry in this area are a key to success, and reflect the same approach taken by Sector Corpus Christi with the implementation of TWIC in the pilot Port of Brownsville.

### **Outreach in the Port of Brownsville**

As the southernmost Coast Guard unit directly in touch with international borders, Marine Safety Detachment Brownsville, a satellite office of Sector Corpus Christi, was in a key position to assist TWIC implementation. The Port of Brownsville was selected to be a pilot port for TWIC, and tested card readers with biometric capabilities.

Unique to other pilot ports where the impact of the new technology was being tested, the Port of Brownsville is on the Mexico-U.S. border, and many of its economic provisions fall under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In addition to vetting U.S. citizens who require access to secure port areas, the Port of Brownsville is required to screen and determine the eligibility of Mexican truckers who are allowed into the port to pick up and receive cargo under NAFTA.

Now that the card readers for the TWIC cards have been installed, Port of Brownsville personnel are responsible for submitting information on the operability of the readers back to TSA headquarters. Coast Guard

# Pilot Program

The Port of Brownsville is the largest provider of petroleum and energy products to Mexico, so it is critical to ensure the smooth flow of commerce while maintaining proper security measures. LT William Magness, chief of the facilities section for Sector Corpus Christi, orchestrated a colloquium on the TWIC regulations, inviting industry leaders and maritime workers to air their concerns and ask questions.

Additionally, more than 5,000 truckers work approximately 3,000 trucks that serve the Port of Brownsville from Mexico. Armed with literature and information, Port of Brownsville Chief of Police George Gavito coordinated meetings with trucking companies in Matamoros, Mexico, educating truckers about the new requirements.

“At this point,” Chief Gavito said, “the pilot program in Brownsville will identify and work to find solutions so that other ports do not go through the same issues.”

Since coming online, the readers successfully operated with the newly issued cards. As a card is scanned, the information is channeled directly to the control room at the port, where security personnel can verify eligibility for each individual entering that terminal.

**Port of Brownsville Chief of Police George Gavito uses the portable card reader to check his TWIC. U.S. Coast Guard photo by LT Stephen Bor, Sector Corpus Christi.**



personnel are continually on hand to evaluate and oversee the process. Under the new regulations, all those who have a valid reason to enter the secure areas of the port must have a TWIC.

Once a maritime worker receives a TWIC, port personnel program the card to specific sections of the port where that individual is allowed access. Coast Guard

members at Marine Safety Detachment Brownsville have been key to this oversight, and in communicating questions from port personnel up the chain to TSA.

Since this initiative involves brand-new technology and policy with far-ranging impacts on the movement of commerce, it is expected that challenges will arise. With that in mind, the Coast Guard, with the significant help of the credentialing working group in Sector Houston/Galveston and the Port of Brownsville, make every effort to ensure that the spirit of the program remains intact, and that the ultimate goals of national security and the free flow of commerce are achieved.

As CAPT Robert Paulison, commander of Sector Corpus Christi puts it, “Communicate, communicate, communicate. When you think you can’t communicate any more—communicate.”

#### **About the authors:**

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#### **Endnote:**

<sup>1</sup> Port of Houston Authority website, <http://www.portofhouston.com>.

