

COMMANDANT'S EXPECTATIONS FOR INTERACTION WITH MARITIME INDUSTRY

In February 2008, the following message was distributed throughout the Coast Guard.

ALCOAST 108/08

SUBJ: COMMANDANT'S EXPECTATIONS FOR INTERACTION WITH MARITIME INDUSTRY

1. USCG activities involving U.S. and foreign professional mariners and maritime organizations will be conducted with utmost professionalism and respect. Licensed and documented mariners are professionals who share our interests in a safe, secure, and environmentally compliant industry. Alexander Hamilton's charge—to keep in mind that our countrymen are free men, and, as such, are impatient of everything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit—applies as much today as it did in 1790, and equally to international mariners and our trading partners.
2. Unfortunately I have received reports from highly respected professionals, recounting Coast Guard boardings, inspections, and investigations not displaying professionalism. Additionally, some have said they lost the complete trust they once had in the Coast Guard and are fearful of retribution if they challenge the Coast Guard's conduct.
3. We must change this perception. America's position in the global economy, public and environmental safety, and post-9/11 security are at stake. The need for maritime industry/government cooperation and partnership has never been more important. The Coast Guard's obligation to the safety and security of America is shared by the maritime industry and enhanced by working cooperatively with industry at all levels. Openness and transparency will be the hallmarks of our maritime interaction.
4. Boarding team members, marine inspectors, port state control examiners, facility examiners, and their supervisors shall encourage open communication with mariners and other members of industry.
5. Disruption in the normal flow of commerce impacts many parties in the supply chain. We have clearly established appeal procedures when we make a decision that could have negative impacts on a licensed mariner or on the maritime industry. The exercise of appeal is a right we strongly support. Questions, differences of professional opinion, and appeals are normal and improve the conduct of business. We must be as accepting of these as of praise. Attempt to resolve the problems at the lowest level possible, and be resourceful in doing so.
6. In instances when decisions are appealed, unit commanders and supervisors must act with a neutral, common-sense attitude; timely resolution is of utmost importance to facilitating legitimate commerce.
7. As Commandant, I actively engage the captains of the maritime industry in round table discussions to uncover what is good and bad with our current practices, so improvements can be made. I expect similar maritime industry engagement at every level of the Coast Guard, followed by aggressive action to address problem areas. Follow ethics rules and standards of conduct in your interactions.
8. As soon as possible, USCG sector commanders shall solicit candid feedback from the individual mariners, industry association representatives, and facility operators who have a significant stake in marine safety, security, and stewardship. This feedback shall identify pending issues needing action, best practices, and recommendations that can be acted upon. Districts shall hold a sector conference to include COTP/OCMI, Prevention and Response representatives to discuss the feedback, determine a course of action for those that merit action, and then close the loop with industry on actions taken. National-level recommendations shall be vetted through area commanders and forwarded to the Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship (CG-5) by 1 June 2008 for consideration in the Coast Guard's marine safety improvement efforts. My goal is to purge the past and reset for the future. Open communication, critical self-examination, and a willing transparency are hallmarks of great organizations, including the Coast Guard.
9. I also expect USCG sector commanders and cutter commanding officers to ensure boarding teams, inspectors, and examiners provide the unit's senior leader contact information if asked, to vessel masters, port engineers, and facility operators.
10. Effective immediately, Coast Guard requirements that limit vessel movement (such as no-sail orders, major CG-835s, actions that would delay arrivals and departures) are to be affirmed by the sector CID and reported to the Prevention chief, as many already do. At a minimum, a Coast Guard supervisor shall engage, by phone, radio, or in person with the master, port engineer, or facility manager to discuss the requirements and expectations for resolution. As soon as practicable, USCG sector commanders, MSU commanding officers, and cutter commanding officers shall be informed of all such discussions.

ADMIRAL THAD ALLEN, *Commandant*