

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Oct. 23, 2003

SECRETARY RIDGE ANNOUNCES SIGNIFICANT STEPS IN ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY

WILMINGTON, Delaware – Within one year of President Bush’s signing of the Maritime Transportation Security Act on November 25, 2002 U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge today announced approval and publication of the final maritime industry security rules which are designed to significantly improve protection of America’s ports, waterways, and ships from a terrorist attack.

“With 95 percent of our nation’s overseas cargo carried by ship, maritime security is critical to ensuring our Nation’s homeland and economic security,” Secretary Ridge said. “These final rules, which were developed with the cooperation and input of the maritime industry, strengthen and bring consistency to both our nationwide maritime security program and our ability to deter homeland security threats.”

The Department of Homeland Security developed the final rules with a team from the Coast Guard, Transportation Security Administration, Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration. These DHS and DOT teams held public meetings around the nation over the past year in New Orleans, Cleveland, Seattle, San Pedro, Calif., Jacksonville, Fla., New York City, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C., to ensure broad input from the maritime industry on port issues. During these sessions DHS solicited and considered acceptable alternatives from the private sector to meet specific security measures, which included the receipt and evaluation of over 2,000 comments and recommendations.

“These final rules put in practice innovative protective measures on a nationwide basis,” Ridge said. “We are using technology, such as the new Automatic Identification System, teamwork in designing and implementing security measures with the private sector, and a flexible response system that government, responders, and industry will all use to immediately increase security to meet emerging threats.”

The maritime security requirements published by the Coast Guard in a final rule on Oct. 22, 2003 replace temporary rules originally issued in July 2003. The final rules effect significant changes in security practices within all segments of the maritime industry, including cruise ships, container ships, and offshore oil platforms. The following chart summarizes significant measures and security enhancements that will now be required of the maritime industry resulting from the new final rules:

Security Measure**Security Enhancement**

Conduct security assessments

Identifies potential vulnerabilities and helps determine what security measures need to be implemented

Develop security plans

Allows flexibility to deal with unique security aspects as identified in the assessment.

Submit plan to Coast Guard for approval

Ensures consistency in U.S. maritime industry

Identify security officers

Creates a network of security personnel in maritime industry focusing on security issues. Also provides an additional set of informed “eyes and ears”

Increase security as threat rises

Allows more moderate measures under normal circumstances, while ensuring maritime industry is prepared to tighten security when necessary

Install Automatic Identification Systems aboard large ships

Increases our ability to separate law-abiding from suspect vessels by allowing for comprehensive, virtually instantaneous vessel tracking and monitoring

The full text of the final rules can be found at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov>. An information line has been established to answer queries about the new final rules. The number is 1-800-842-8740, ext. 69270. A fact sheet follows with details about the act, key measures, timeline, and expanded discussion of the new security enhancements.

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