

Exchange Maritime Operations Committee  
Boarding Work Group  
May 29, 2007  
Meeting Notes

**Issue** – Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay is contemplating instituting a policy change which would restrict vessel boardings to daylight hours.

**CG Report** – CDR Spencer Wood opened the discussion to state that the CG is considering this policy but has not made a decision yet. The CG wants to find the best policy to answer safety, resources and business concerns. He received several comment papers from the industry with concerns for the Delaware River eight-hour transit, competitive edge for the port, scheduling stevedores, labor and the general necessity to move the cargo.

At the national level, CG is re-evaluating its internal security policies. Upcoming guidance may change the way of targeting which ships to board, which currently involves a list of various reasons for which ships are targeted. One change, for example, may involve eliminating the requirement to board every ship simply because it is the first visit to a U.S. port. While such a change may reduce the number of security boardings overall, the new guidance might include a national policy limiting boardings to daylight hours only; in that case, of course, Sector Delaware Bay would be required to comply. There may also be opportunities to reduce the number of boardings at the Bay and conduct more dock-side boardings which should minimize the impact.

Local CG has informally eliminated night time boardings for the last several months; working group participants were aware that this had been going on and raised concerns.

CDR Wood indicated that they are working through headquarters to see if it is feasible to give vessel agents 48-hour advance notice when a security boarding will take place.

A timeline is not set at this point as the CG is currently working the review and analysis in order to come up with a policy. The main concern is tide changes and time loss. The CG is considering Big Stone as a boarding location.

**Industry Concerns** – In addition to the increased incidence of missed tides and missed labor calls resulting from delays associated with unscheduled boardings, working group members also raised the issues of down stream effects. For example, a delay at the Delaware River can cause a shipper to miss a consolidation in Savannah. In addition, many ships travel through the Panama Canal, which must be pre-booked one year in advance. If a ship is delayed because of unscheduled boardings or waiting on daylight hours, and misses the Panama Canal booking, it has to wait three days to get queued into the Canal – at a cost of potentially of \$100,000. Such delays will result in ships going to other ports for discharge.

It was noted that 50% of vessels arriving on the Delaware River arrive at night. CG expressed concern that they cannot do a boarding with fewer than six people and if the vessel is

unexpectedly late, the team may already be en route to Lewes. This is a safety concern for the CG, since the team will then put in a much longer shift and they may not be as alert.

Members also suggested that industry participate in the process by which boarding decisions are made (e.g., could provide a specific list of ships and invite the CG to pick from among them).

Communications need to be better. It was noted that sometimes the CG person on duty, especially weekends, is not always able to help the agent. The Coast Guard will consider using both using the Exchange system and 24-hour vessel dispatching center as well as a centralized email account to help streamline information flow regarding boardings. Agents are reminded to ensure the Exchange is kept apprised of vessel arrival time changes.

CRD Wood reminded everyone that CG may not necessarily need to eliminate night boardings, but certainly wants to minimize them. He asked the community to work with CG to develop specific criteria under which night time boardings would be conducted.

Working group members were requested to forward a list of requirements/needs to Lisa Humber who will then compile and submit to Coast Guard.