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Policy Letter 01-17 CH.2
March 11, 2025

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SECTOR St. Petersburg (s)

To: Distribution

Subj: APPROVED LOCATION IN TAMPA BAY TO MEET OPPOSING VESSELS
TRANSITING WITH MOVING SECURITY ZONES

Ref: (a) Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 165.703

1. PURPOSE. This policy outlines Captain of the Port (COTP) expectations for commercial traffic management when meeting opposing cruise ships or vessels carrying especially hazardous cargos. Any vessel desiring to enter or transit through a moving security zone at any other location shall first obtain permission from the COTP in accordance with reference (a).
2. ACTION. Mariners operating in Tampa Bay shall comply with reference (a) unless otherwise specified by any waiver outlined in this policy.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. This policy letter (Change 2) supersedes Sector St. Petersburg COTP Policy Letter 01-17 CH 1.
4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. The general policies contained within this policy letter have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office in conjunction with the Office of Environmental Management, and are categorically excluded (CE) under current Department of Homeland Security (DHS) CE LS from further environmental analysis, in accordance with Appendix A, Table 1 of the DHS Instruction Manual # 023-01-001-01, Revision 01 , Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Since this policy implements, without substantive change, the applicable Commandant Instruction or other federal agency regulations, procedures, manuals, and other guidance documents, DHS CE LS is appropriate. This directive will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions, or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from this policy must be individually evaluated for compliance with the NEPA, DHS, and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.
5. BACKGROUND.

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- a. The Coast Guard published a Notice to Proposed Rulemaking on September 15, 2014, (79 FR 54937). After receiving no comments on the proposed rule and no requests for public meetings, the final rule was published and went into effect December 17, 2014.
- b. Sector St. Petersburg oversees one of the busiest ports in the state of Florida. Cargo shipping includes general cargo ships, tankers, gas carriers, as well as cruise ships. In accordance with reference (a), vessel specific security zones and procedures are established for all waters, from surface to bottom, within a 500-yard radius of all cruise ships and vessels carrying especially hazardous cargos (EHC). Since the majority of the shipping channels throughout Tampa Bay are less than 500 yards in width, strict enforcement of the moving security zone potentially creates significant delays in two-way shipping traffic. Therefore, the COTP has identified areas in Tampa Bay to allow meeting situations to occur to facilitate the normal flow of traffic when transits are scheduled to meet opposing vessels with a moving security zone, i.e. cruise ships or vessels carrying especially hazardous cargos.

NOTE: Especially hazardous cargo means anhydrous ammonia, ammonium nitrate, chlorine, liquefied natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, and any other substance, material, or group or class in a particular amount and form that the Secretary of Homeland Security determines by regulation poses a significant risk of creating a transportation security incident while being transported in maritime commerce.

- c. Enclosure (1) contains guidance, developed in collaboration with the Vessel Movement Committee, outlining the protocol for Vessels of Concern (VOC). Specifically, it addresses the arrival and departure of a single VOC as well as multiple VOCs on the same calendar day based on local time. This protocol does not supersede or negate security zone regulations established by reference (a).
- d. Be mindful that vessel movements can potentially be delayed if Coast Guard or law enforcement resources are not immediately available to complete necessary escorts or boardings.

6. POLICY.

- a. Except as follows, when transits are scheduled for cruise ships or vessels carrying especially hazardous cargo, all other transits in Tampa Bay will be one way, with no meeting or passing between Mullet Key Channel lighted buoys 23/24 and Port Tampa Bay Berth 272. Any vessel desiring to meet any cruise ship or vessel carrying especially hazardous cargos may meet the opposing vessel(s) in Gadsen Point Cut Channel or anywhere west of lighted buoys 23/24 in Mullet Key Channel.
- b. Vessel operators desiring to enter or transit through a moving security zone at any other location in Tampa Bay shall obtain permission from the COTP prior to commencing their transit. To request permission, contact Cooperative Vessel Traffic Service Tampa Bay via VHF channel 12 or (813) 224-1900. If permission is granted, all persons and vessels must comply with any given instructions.

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NOTE: Resident harbor tugs that have been granted a waiver by the COTP may operate within established security zones throughout Tampa Bay. If approaching an escorted vessel, the master of the vessel having a waiver must still notify the COTP's designated representative, i.e. Coast Guard patrol commander or coxswain operating a Coast Guard vessel, to communicate their intent.

7. QUESTIONS. Please direct all questions or comments to the Sector St. Petersburg Waterways Management Division Duty Officer, at (813) 918-7270 or D07-SMB-Tampa-WWM@uscg.mil.

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Enclosure: Safe Navigation Guidelines for Tampa Bay, Vessels of Concern

Safe Navigation Guidelines for Tampa Bay, Vessels of Concern

Vessel of Concern (VOC) is defined as a vessel carrying Especially Hazardous Cargos or of a class type, with a certain size or maneuvering characteristics, that requires special handling while transiting within Tampa Bay.

This protocol addresses the arrival and departure of a single VOC as well as the arrival and departure of multiple VOC(s) on the same calendar day based on local time, therefore it is essential that all affected vessel traffic adhere to the following vessel traffic protocol. This protocol does not supersede or negate security zone regulations established by reference (a) of COTP Policy Letter 01-17 Change 2.

Requirements Common to All VOC Movements:

Except as follows, all transits will be one way, with no meeting or passing between Mullet Key Channel Buoys 23/24 and Port Tampa Bay Berth 272.

Gadsden Point Cut Channel and Mullet Key Channel west of LB 23/24 may be used for passing arrangements as follows:

- a. A single VOC may only meet a maximum of two opposing vessels (no hawser tows unless tug master and pilot make prior passing arrangements) when forecasted, sustained winds are predicted to be 15 knots or less and reasonable visibility (no fog or heavy rain) is predicted. Only one opposing vessel shall plan on meeting two VOCs in convoy.
- b. A single VOC may meet a maximum of one opposing vessel (no hawser tows unless tug master and pilot make prior passing arrangements) when forecasted, sustained winds are predicted to be between 16 and 20 knots and reasonable visibility (no fog or heavy rain) is predicted. Only one opposing vessel should plan on meeting two VOCs in convoy.

All vessels should give the Cooperative Vessel Traffic Service (CVTS), 24- and 4- hour notices prior to arrival at the sea buoy and 4- and 2- hour notices prior to departure from berth. Vessel operators who foresee a conflict with scheduled movements must contact the CVTS.

Especially Hazardous Cargos:

The Owner, master, agent, or person in charge of a vessel or barge, loaded with EHCs, shall report the following information to CVTS Tampa Bay at least twenty-four hours before entering Tampa Bay or its approaches, shifting, or departing Tampa Bay:

- a. Name and country of registry of the vessel or barge;
- b. The name of the port or place of departure;
- c. The name of the port or place of destination;

- d. The estimated time that the vessel is expected at Egmont Channel Lighted Buoys “9” and “10” to begin its transit of Tampa Bay (moving security zones and procedures are established for all waters, from surface to bottom, within a 500-yard radius);
- e. The cargo carried and amount.

Cruise Ships:

The following applies to cruise ships measuring 855’ LOA, 106’ Beam, and 70,000 GRT or greater:

a. Single Cruise Ship:

1. Cruise ships that meet the aforementioned criteria shall arrive at the “T” Buoy at 0230 for a 0230-0500 start-up window depending on traffic, with an expected docking time between 0600 and 0830. Start-up for the cruise ship shall be adjusted, within the window, to allow for movement of other commercial vessels that are restricted in sailing by tide or current, as long as such movement does not cause the cruise ship to deviate the window. If the arrival time is changed due to exceptional circumstances, the cruise ship will be allowed to reestablish its arrival time. The cruise ship must notify CVTS no later than 1200 the day prior to the scheduled arrival date with its reestablished arrival time. Any deviation greater than 30 minutes from the reestablished arrival time will move the cruise ship in line with other traffic that has reported to the CVTS.
2. The departure window will be no earlier than 1530 and no later than 1730 under favorable weather conditions. The cruise ship must notify the CVTS no later than 1200 with a departure time for that day. Any deviation greater than 30 minutes from that day’s established departure time will move the cruise ship departure time in line with other traffic that has reported to the CVTS. If the departure time is delayed due to exceptional circumstances, the cruise ship will be allowed to reestablish its departure time. Any deviation greater than 30 minutes from the reestablished departure time will move the cruise ship in line with other traffic that has reported to the CVTS.

b. Multiple Cruise Ships:

1. The cruise ships arrive at the “T” Buoy at 0230 for a 0230-0500 start-up window depending on traffic, with an expected docking time of 0600-0830. The cruise ships will be expected to coordinate arrival so that they can convoy together, within the window, at a distance established by the pilots on each vessel. Start-up for the cruise ships shall be adjusted, within the window, to allow for movement of other commercial vessels that are restricted in sailing by tide or current, as long as such

movement does not cause the cruise ships to deviate the window. If one or more of the cruise ships' arrival times are changed due to exceptional circumstances, the cruise ships will be given the opportunity to reestablish an arrival time. The cruise ships must notify CVTS no later than 1200 the day prior to the scheduled arrival date with their reestablished arrival times. Any deviation greater than 30 minutes from the reestablished arrival time will move the cruise ships in line with other traffic that has reported to the CVTS.

2. Upon departure, the cruise ships will convoy together during a departure window no earlier than 1530 and no later than 1730 under favorable weather conditions. The cruise ships must notify the CVTS no later than 1200 with a departure time for that day. Any deviation greater than 30 minutes by any cruise ship from its established departure time will move the cruise ship in line with other traffic that has reported to the CVTS. If the cruise ship's departure time is delayed due to exceptional circumstances, the cruise ship will be allowed to reestablish its departure time within the 30-minute convoy requirement. Any deviation greater than 30 minutes from the reestablished departure time will move the delayed cruise ship in line with other traffic that has reported to the CVTS.
3. Vessels at berths in Ybor Channel shall enter and depart in a sequence coordinated by the pilots onboard.

c. Additional Requirements for Cruise Ships Measuring 900' LOA, 106' Beam, and 85,000 GRT or Greater:

The requirements in this section are in addition to the requirements listed above for all cruise ships.

1. During sustained winds of 20 knots or less, as measured at Terminal 2, Seabulk Towing, or Peter O. knight Airport, the vessel may transit Sparkman Channel.
2. During Sustained winds of 21 to 25 knots, as measured at Terminal 2, Seabulk Towing, or Peter O. knight Airport, the vessel may transit Sparkman Channel with the mutual agreement of the master and pilot taking into consideration variables, such as wind direction, tug availability, vessels at berth along Sparkman Channel, etc.
3. During Sustained winds of 26 to 30 knots, as measured at Terminal 2, Seabulk Towing, or Peter O. knight Airport, the vessel may transit from the "T" Buoy to East Bay only.

An alternative berth will be identified and communicated to the pilot and master of the vessel prior to the inbound transit.