



The Marine Assistance Industry Journal

A Quarterly Newsletter - Volume 61 - August 2026

Chairman's Address



Well, we have made it halfway through the season. I see the fourth of July as the halfway mark here in the Northeast. We have been pretty busy with the Sail 250 Celebration, which brings me to my topic of this statement: diversity, as all of us across the industry see commercial assistance towing is down.

We all need to be diverse in our business plans. And the best way to do that is to network with each other. That is why our 40th Anniversary conference in Nashville is so important to attend. Beside all the content we provide, the networking is invaluable. Registration is open and it is going to be a great event! Check the C-PORT website for the agenda.

We are looking forward to a record attendance! *Smitty,*

NEWS: NENA, National Emergency Number Association, announced the publication of the ANSI-approved NENA Standard for 9-1-1 Notifications and Coordination with the United States Coast Guard.

This standard provides recommendations and standards for coordination and information sharing between the 9-1-1 public safety community and the United States Coast Guard. When followed, boaters everywhere will receive consistent, reliable response.

C-PORT vice chairman, Terry Hill, participated on this committee, providing valuable insight into the on-the-water response provided by the marine assistance towing and salvage companies. Guidance is included in the Standard for proper coordination and prosecution of all maritime cases, following U.S. Coast Guard policy.

Congress set the stage for this standard through the passage of the 2018 Coast Guard Authorization Act. It called for PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Point) to work more closely with U.S. Coast Guard in prosecuting maritime incidents by calling for a national maritime PSAP policy to minimize the possibility of maritime 911 calls being improperly routed. C-PORT discussed next steps with legislators during their DC Hill Visits held earlier in the year.

The NENA standard asserts that "USCG and Maritime first responders should be made aware of this document and material. This material should be incorporated into the training of personnel associated with water rescue that may interact with PSAP and the USCG."

For more information, contact Tina Cardone, C-PORT executive director, at 954-261-2012, tcardone@cport.us.

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- Phil and Pete



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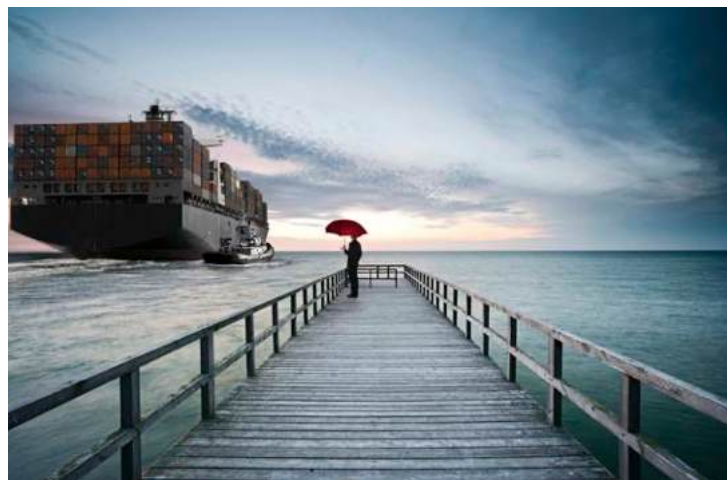


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14-CMA-1520 New 9-14

Important reminder from US Coast Guard NMC. Apply EARLY and use the ASAP portal.

National Maritime Center

Mariner Ready, Mission Steady



NMC Processing Timeline Update 2 – Recovery Efforts Continue to Reduce Processing Times Following 2026 Funding Lapse

The National Maritime Center (NMC) has made substantial progress in reducing the backlog of applications resulting from the 2026 lapse in appropriations. As a result of sustained recovery efforts and increased production capacity, the NMC is updating its published processing timeline outlined in the [NMC Processing Timeline Update announcement](#) dated June 16, 2026.

Effective immediately, complete applications are expected to be processed within **4 months** from the date received, excluding any time waiting for mariner applicants to test or provide additional information. This improvement reflects expanded production efforts, overtime, surge processing, workflow efficiencies, and the reallocation of personnel and resources to reduce the backlog inventory accumulated during the lapse.

While application volumes remain elevated, current trends indicate continued progress toward restoring more normal processing timelines. Mariners and maritime employers should continue to plan accordingly and submit applications early to avoid potential disruptions to employment and vessel operations.

Key Information:

- Applications will continue to be processed on a **first-in, first-out basis**. Only applications demonstrating a clear and documented nexus to national defense will be considered for expedited processing.
- Mariners are **strongly encouraged** to apply early via the [ASAP Tool](#) to account for unforeseen delays. As a reminder, mariner credential renewals may also be post-dated up to 8 months, allowing mariners to renew early. Paper and incomplete submissions may delay issuance.
- Mariners should verify the expiration dates on their medical certificates before submitting a renewal application. Medical certificate expiration dates may differ from MMC expiration dates, and medical certificate renewal may not yet be necessary.

The NMC remains committed to further improving processing times while maintaining the safety, security, and professional standards of the U.S. merchant mariner credentialing system.

Mariners are encouraged to monitor the [NMC website](#) for updates regarding processing times, REC operations, and policy adjustments as operations stabilize. For ongoing updates, sign up for the NMC list server by scanning the QR code below. For questions, contact our Customer Service Center via the [NMC online chat system](#), by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

Sincerely,

/J. B. Suffern/

James B. Suffern
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections

Stay informed.
Scan to sign up for NMC updates:



Legal Perspective: Who Decides When Salvage Is Over?



Most salvage operations have two endings. The first comes on the water when the owner says, “We’re good.” The second comes weeks or months later when the insurer sends a check and says, in substance, “Go ahead and take this. We’re done.”

Neither statement necessarily makes it so and that’s what I’m wanting to talk about.

In both instances, someone other than the salvor is trying to draw the finish line. And sometimes that’s okay, but in other instances what’s happening is an effort to limit expense or gain leverage. Either way, the salvor needs to slow down and understand exactly what’s being ended, by whom and on what terms. The physical operation may be winding down, but responsibility and legal rights have a habit of continuing long after the hawser is stored in the lazarette.

Consider the on-scene situation. A vessel has been refloated, dewatered or pulled away from danger. The engines may even be running. To a nervous owner, that looks like success and success looks like the end of the salvage. But y’all likely know better. A vessel that’s floating isn’t necessarily out of danger because you’ve still got hull integrity concerns, renewed flooding or a thru-hull waiting to fail after being loaded up during the grounding.

How should a salvor handle that moment when the owner wants you to head back to port?

I’d suggest avoiding confrontation. What to do should turn on the record with the salvor considering things like: What’s the vessel’s condition? Is seawater still flooding? Are our dewatering pumps still aboard and operating? Is the vessel making seawater faster than its own pumps can handle? Can it navigate under its own power? Does everyone understand the below-the-waterline picture? What are the expected weather and sea conditions?

A simple warning can carry enormous weight later: “The vessel is presently afloat, but the source of flooding has not been permanently repaired and continued pumping and monitoring are recommended.” Better yet, put it in writing and obtain an acknowledgment. Alternatively, consider presenting your office’s Redelivery Statement for signature by the master or owner (that form is available from us on request). If the owner refuses to sign, note the refusal in the log and send a warning to the owner by text or email. When warranted, consider contacting the Coast Guard or harbormaster and advising that you’re being released despite continuing concerns. The point isn’t to create drama; it’s to put the facts surrounding your departure on the record. The takeaway for the salvor in this situation, your North Star is to make clear the owner elected to assume responsibility despite a known, continuing condition.

Redelivery should be treated as an event. Record the time, location and vessel condition. Identify the person accepting control and his or her authority to do so. List any equipment left aboard and who is responsible for operating, monitoring and returning the equipment. Photograph the vessel’s draft, bilges, pumps, lines and berth. If the Coast Guard, harbormaster, marina or environmental authorities remain involved, document what they required and who agreed to do what.

Why all the fuss? Because if the vessel sinks six hours later, memories will change quickly. The same owner who insisted everything was under control may say the salvor left too soon. The insurer may argue the original salvage was unsuccessful or that the later loss resulted from mishandling. A clean redelivery record doesn’t prevent such arguments, but it makes them a much harder sell.

(continued next page)

Legal Perspective: Who Decides When Salvage Is Over?- continued

Then there's that other ending where the marine insurer dangles some candy in front of your office, hoping you'll settle on the cheap.

The set-up is simple: the salvage is successfully completed, but the insurer disputes the amount. What it'll sometimes do is send a check representing what it calls the "undisputed portion." The amount may be substantial and may sometimes represent a big portion of your office's demand. Boy, it's tempting to deposit that check and order steak on your next outing, but pause before you go to the bank.

The check, endorsement, accompanying letter or email may describe the payment as "full and final settlement," "payment in full" or satisfaction of all claims arising from the service. Even where the insurer uses the softer phrase "undisputed amount," it may later argue that depositing the check compromised the balance, waived some right or changed the amount remaining in controversy. Whether that argument succeeds depends on the language, the surrounding communications and applicable law. By then, however, the salvor may be spending time and money litigating a problem that could've been identified before the check was deposited.

Here, your North Star is simple to follow. Don't let your bookkeeper or a mobile banking app make a legal decision for your office.

Before depositing a partial payment, examine the front and back of the check and every document accompanying the check. Look for settlement language. Determine whether a release is requested or implied. Review earlier communications for conditions attached to payment. If the claim is headed to arbitration, consider whether accepting the payment could affect the amount in controversy, the issues submitted or the relief the arbitrators may award. Then get legal advice before acting. A quick chat with your maritime lawyer will help you understand what's at stake and how best to proceed.

Writing "under protest" or "without prejudice" on the check may feel protective, but that script isn't magic. And cashing the check while sending a separate reservation-of-rights letter may not solve the problem. The important point is that the decision should be deliberate and made with your maritime lawyer's blessing.

The on-scene owner telling you to head home and the insurer's check may look unrelated, but they present the same trap. In each situation, the salvor is offered something it likely wants (permission to demobilize or immediate payment) and in each situation a misstep in handling the moment can cost you real money.

Salvors are trained to control risk while a vessel is in peril. The same discipline should apply when the danger appears to have passed. Confirm the vessel's condition. State what remains to be done. Identify who is assuming responsibility. Read the language accompanying payment. Preserve the balance of the claim expressly and in writing.

A salvage operation should end with a safe and documented redelivery. A salvage claim should end with an intentional resolution. Neither should end merely because an owner says "stop" or an insurer puts a check in the mail.

Me? I don't like people telling me when the show is over. Maybe you don't either. Just make sure nobody else gets to write the ending because you failed to make a record, read the fine print or pick up the telephone.

Underway and making way.

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C-PORT is honored to announce it is seeking nominations for the prestigious AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award.

AFRAS and C-PORT are proud to continue this longstanding program recognizing these heroic actions of C-PORT members. Since its inception, 19 C-PORT members and their captains and crew have been honored with this award. Announcement of the winner is at the C-PORT Awards Banquet held during the C-PORT Conference. The award winner is also highlighted during the AFRAS Awards Ceremony hosted later in the year in Washington DC.

The Association For Rescue At Sea (AFRAS) was formed in 1976 to foster traditional maritime search and rescue values through suitable recognition of deserving personnel, and to facilitate cooperation in search and rescue. In 2010, AFRAS expressed a desire to establish a program, in cooperation with C-PORT, to annually recognize a deserving member of C-PORT that has shown exceptional skill and determination to save lives during a rescue incident in the maritime environment.

The Award is conferred on an individual or group of individuals who perform exceptional acts in attempting to save life in the maritime environment. Instances where the rescuer places their own life at risk will be given highest consideration. The Award may be given posthumously.

Nominations are to include a full description of the circumstances and events giving rise to the nomination and include such factors as:

- Location of the incident
- Prevailing weather conditions
- Skill displayed
- Determination to conduct the rescue operation
- Exceptional courage demonstrated
- Degree of risk involved

To be considered for the upcoming AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award, the rescue must have taken place between September 16, 2025 and September 15, 2026.

AFRAS Award Nominations may be emailed to tcardone@cport.us. Nominations may be sent at any time so long as they are received no later than October 1, 2026 to allow sufficient time for the vetting of the nominations. AFRAS will present the Award at the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala on Tuesday, February 2, 2027 in Nashville TN.

Actions above and beyond but not exactly lifesaving? C-PORT presents Distinguished and Meritorious Service Awards to members who demonstrate the professional principles that the association promotes. These marine assistance professionals go above and beyond their dedication to providing exceptional service to the boating public through extraordinary and exemplary actions.

Nominations are to include a full description of the circumstances and events giving rise to the nomination and may be emailed to tcardone@cport.us for consideration. These award recipients will also be honored at the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala on Tuesday, February 2, 2027.

Insurance Corner: Risk Control: A Key to Long-Term Success

The term risk control is often associated with insurance surveys, recommendations, or compliance requirements. While it can be a reactive response to past incidents, its greatest value lies in being proactive—helping prevent losses before they occur.

Effective risk control is a partnership between the insured, the insurance broker, and the insurance carrier. Each has the same objective: building a safer, more efficient, and more profitable business. When approached strategically, risk control becomes much more than a checklist—it becomes an essential part of day-to-day operations.

Strong risk control practices help identify opportunities to improve safety, reduce claims, and establish consistent operating procedures. Maintaining a favorable loss history not only protects your business but can also positively influence your insurance terms and pricing. It's no surprise that many underwriters ask whether a business has an active risk control program in place.

Most marine insurance carriers have dedicated risk control professionals whose expertise is available to policyholders as part of the insurance relationship. They stay current on emerging risks, evolving regulations, and industry best practices, providing valuable guidance as your business and the marine industry continue to change.

Risk control is not a one-time project—it's an ongoing process of continuous improvement. Whether you're operating one towboat or managing a fleet, investing time in risk control today can help reduce losses and strengthen your business for years to come.

If you have questions about your current risk control program or would like to learn more about available resources, reach out to your insurance broker. They can help connect you with the tools and expertise needed to support your operation.

Please always remember that as a benefit of C-PORT Membership, Starkweather & Shepley will provide a free consultation and review of your current insurance program to ensure completeness of coverage. Please feel free to reach out to Sara Mariani directly.

Email: smariani@starshep.com

Office: 401-709-7568

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A message from Phil LeBlanc, C-PORT Chairman Emeritus.



At the annual conference in January, I briefly spoke about a brand new app, then in development, called Trusted Boaters of America. At the time, the app was still early in the development and test phase, but everything I had heard up until that point was immensely positive. Neither I nor C-PORT have any vested interest in this program. I've offered to help because I believe in the goals of the developers. We've been asked, as an industry and as the people out on the water each and every day, to help in this effort.. The group that assists in the testing and subsequent upgrades will inevitably have the most influence in how the app works. I would much prefer that group be our industry, and not the police, fire, harbor masters, or Auxiliary. If this catches on, I want it to be our experiences and input that shape it.

This has the potential to better direct calls to us, and away from the agencies whose focus doesn't need to be on towing, provides a better tool to keep the boating community safe, and makes our job of locating and assisting boaters easier.

Some background, over the last decade, those of us on the water have seen a dramatic reduction in the use of VHF radios. It makes sense, when you think about it. Everyone has a phone aboard, they're easy to use, always in our pocket, and an integral part of our everyday lives. For those who didn't grow up with VHF radios, it's far less intimidating and seemingly easier to just pick up the phone when they need help.

Unfortunately, as we all know, there are some serious detractors of using a phone for an emergency on the water. The only person who's alerted is the single person they called, determining location can be difficult, signal strength varies, the battery is always "about to die", the list goes on and on. This new app is an effort by retired Coast Guard and first responders to leverage the positive attributes of a phone with the benefits of VHF. It offers locations services, the ability to direct calls to the appropriate place, float plans, multi-party notification, and a host of other benefits.

And, this effort is being shepherded by retired USCG Vice Admiral Dean Lee. Dean has supported our industry since the very first meetings in 1987, and stood by us every step of the way. Not only was he a legend in the Coast Guard, he was one of our fiercest advocates for three decades.

I recently spoke with Admiral Lee again, and they're nearing the finish line. The Coast Guard is now examining the app and its effectiveness, but they need help. In order to properly get a sense of how well it works, they need more users, more underway track lines, and more stress testing.

The app is out of the development phase, and available on both mobile platforms. You can register at <https://www.tboam.com/>, download the app, and simply turn it on while underway. Play with the app, see what works well and what doesn't, and let them know.

I honestly think that, if well built and widely used, this could be a game changer for how responses are coordinated in the future, and it would be a shame if we were invited in on the ground floor and declined the invitation.

**C-PORT Announces its
40th Anniversary Conference and Membership Meeting!
Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, Nashville TN
February 1-3, 2027**

Join fellow owners and operators for this exciting event, starting with a Welcome Reception on Monday, February 1, followed by industry specific and business growing sessions on Tuesday, February 2. Don't miss Salvage Day, February 3!



Plan now to attend this 40 year celebration of the marine assistance towing and salvage industry! Along with informative sessions and dynamic speakers, access to U.S. Coast Guard leadership, association partners and highlighted vendors, spend time with catching up with fellow owners and operators. Industry Awards and fun prizes, receptions, luncheon, and the

Roaring 20s Gatsby themed C-PORT Gala/Banquet will ensure your time will be well spent!

Sponsors help C-PORT achieve its mission to represent, promote, protect, and defend its member companies through advocacy and education. Sponsors help us keep conference costs low for our members, and provides needed funds for speakers and venues. Please consider sponsorship. (C-PORT appreciates all sponsorships. Contact us to explore options.)

Exhibitors are an important segment of the C-PORT Conference. C-PORT provides exceptional visibility for products and services to the decision-makers of the industry. Be an exhibitor at the special 40th Anniversary Celebration!

Registration is Open! For more details and to sign up visit our website at C-PORT Conference.

C-PORT Welcomes New Members.

Capt. Brendan Bingham, owner of BB's Great Lakes Sportfishing, has opened a TowBoatUS port on Lake Charlevoix MI. He joined C-PORT in May after taking over this location from long-time C-PORT member, John Stevens.

Mike Hogg, H20 Boat Tow LLC, joined C-PORT in July. He is operating as TowBoatUS Sam Rayburn, TX.



C-PORT Member Benefits

[Risk Management Training Courses](#) are available on the C-PORT website. At the center of risk management are best practice principles. These core courses were developed by U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boat Forces. Topic specific modules for the marine assistance operator are also available.

[Marine Assistance Company Operations Guideline](#), exclusively for C-PORT company members. These guidelines promote safe operations and provide regulatory guidance. C-PORT company members may obtain access to this document in the Members Only area of the website, or contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012.

[Insurance Program for Marine Assistance Companies](#) - Administered by Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage, Inc. - Designed and underwritten by Travelers for organizations dedicated to marine assistance and towing. This Program offers an extensive portfolio of quality insurance products and services to address a wide range of marine exposures. -Contact Sara Mariani 401-531-0137 smariani@starshep.com.

[ACAPT- Accredited for Commercial Assistance and Professional Towing](#)- The ACAPT program provides best practices guidance for the marine assistance towing and salvage industry. Participants are highlighted as having taken the initiative to meet or exceed their own company qualifications against industry best practice criteria and government regulations. Visit the C-PORT website or contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012 with any questions regarding this program.

[BOSAR for Commercial Assistance](#)- Created through the support of NASBLA's BOAT program and the USCG Office of Boat Forces, is designed for the marine assistance operator, providing reinforcement of knowledge gained by virtue of their captain's license and experience. It also enhances their ability to work as a true partner with local agencies and the US Coast Guard. This course is open to any marine assistance company who wants to host the training. Instructors and course materials are provided by C-PORT. Contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012 if you have an interest in hosting a class.

[Mentor Program](#), exclusively for C-PORT company members. Virtual roundtable discussions with guest speakers. Second Tuesday of the month. Information is emailed to all company members prior to the sessions.

What to be more involved? Have other questions? Let us know! We want to hear from you!



C-PORT was established in 1985 to act as a liaison between the marine assistance industry and public agencies and organizations involved with boating safety, marine assistance, marine salvage and other marine-related operations. Its mission is to represent, promote, protect, and defend its member companies through communication, relationship development, and education. Our members are dedicated to providing prompt, professional and timely assistance to all boaters and to actively partner and cooperate with local law enforcement and U.S. Coast Guard. They are professionals, dedicated to the growth and development of their respective businesses and committed to furthering the advancement of our waterways and the boating community. For more information, contact C-PORT at (954) 261-2012 or visit <https://cport.us>.

C-PORT (Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing)
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C-PORT is a 501(c)(6) organization.