



The Marine Assistance Industry Journal

A Quarterly Newsletter - Volume 59 - February 2026

C-PORT held its 39th Conference and Membership Meeting on January 26-28, 2026 at the Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Resort, Orlando, FL.

This edition of The Marine Assistance Industry Journal is dedicated to the conference.

Chairman's Address



First and foremost let me say I am honored and humbled to be selected to be the next chairman of C-PORT.

We were poised to have the largest attendance of any conference then we got the weather report. But still, we had a great turn out. A few of the presenters were weather bound but we pivoted and we got through it, and gave a great conference with lots of content. As I socialized and networked, I saw lots of members talking and sharing stories. One of the most encouraging sights was of new towers and younger folks mingling with the veterans.

One of the first things I would like to work on as chairman is to encourage the next generation to be engaged with C-PORT's work. The first step is to get involved in some of the committees. If you have interest in participating, please let a board member or Tina

know your interest, and we will guide you. I am looking forward to a productive year!

I can be reached any time on my cell phone at 732-489-1975. Please also don't forget next year in Nashville will be our huge 40th year!

Hoping to see everyone in Nashville!

Smitty



40th Anniversary!
C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting
February 1 – 2, 2027
Nashville, TN

David LaMontagne Presented the John D. Andrews Founder's Award



In memory and in honor of John D. Andrews, past Chairman and founding member of C-PORT, as well as a longtime leader of the assistance towing industry, C-PORT presented its inaugural John D. Andrews Founder's Award to David LaMontagne, founder of Vessel Assist Association of America and one of the original C-PORT founding board members. The award was given at the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala on January 27, 2026.

Presenting the award was Phil LeBlanc, C-PORT chairman and co-owner of the company John Andrews created, Safe Sea. LeBlanc explained that John's extraordinary involvement in the forming and fostering of the assistance towing industry, decades of board service, and the mentorship of countless operators and businesses brought him many honors, awards, and recognition. "It is most fitting that this award be named after John, a man who gave back so much to the industry he helped to found. "

The Award is to be granted to those that have made an indelible positive impact on the assistance towing industry or C-PORT. It is not an annual or regular award. Instead, it is reserved for those who have demonstrated their passion for and dedication to the industry, through tireless service or exemplary acts of leadership.

"In this room are only a few individuals who were here from the very beginning. One of those led the way for an entire coast, and later, the country. Therefore, it is only fitting that the first ever John D. Andrews Founder's Award be presented to David LaMontagne," announced LeBlanc.

LaMontagne expressed he was overwhelmed and shocked when he heard his name from the podium and regrets not conveying his thoughts at that moment. He provided a statement in the hopes of showing his sincere thanks and gratitude for this high honor.

Statement from David LaMontagne on receiving the C-PORT John D. Andrews Founder's Award:

The awards and recognition of the evening should rightly go to the younger guys and gals in the room that are on the water, truly helping and saving people and building up their areas. So now it's one of the older guys in the room getting an award... it must be my age... haha

Then I started to have some memories of John, when I was the youngest guy the room, and our conversations... About then, as I was walking back to my table, I ran into Pete [Andrews]... and felt the emotion of it all...tearing up a tad. Pete was very genuine and sincere.

John and I would have these conversations over the years where we were learning from each other. I, the CA guy, had the Vessel Assist business plan and was very busy executing it and it was all about obtaining more service providers, selling memberships and expanding territory. The boats had to be a certain look, fast and meet a list of equipment and operational requirements, and operator's ideally the right temperament. He, on the other hand was this lanky older sometimes awkward Nw-England gent with a not so attractive Tug Kropp that could do 5 knots over a waterfall. Talk about approaching the business from different directions. But learn from each other we did.

John was outspoken on the need to be sure the industry did not water down the underpinning salvage law, and he was spot on. I've, of course, learned that initially from John, and others, and have taught the same to many a captain ever since.

(continued next page)

John came to get a fleet of faster boats and grew the primary local membership program SafeSea. Plus, while a successful company from CA could send money to help out the fledging industry, we couldn't always show up at CG Headquarters and Capitol Hill for the necessary meetings to watch over the industry like John and others could do.

Now here I am, back to being the older guy in the room... Richard Schwartz has died and I was honored to become the first recipient of the BoatUS - Schwartz Founders Award. Joe [Frohnhofer] has passed on. And now my friend John, who I respected, is gone and I'm the first recipient of the C-PORT Founders Award - - in John's name. It's truly an honor and a total surprise to me to be honored after all these years when you guys on the water everyday, are the true heroes of our industry.

I've given much of my entire career and adult life to this industry and helped lay the backbone of what and who the industry is now. I'm so proud of you guys when I see the good work or hear stories from all over the US of the jobs well done. There is a humility and yet confidence in our ability to get the job done right and treat the customer right that I see in the culture of who this industry is, that I've felt important for our common success from day one. The industry is maturing before our very eyes but keep the humility and respect for the sea, and don't forget from the outside you're only as good as your last job, so do it well. I am profoundly appreciative to you all for this recognition.

***39 Years of support, advocacy,
and mentorship.***

***Here's to where we came from,
where we are bound.***

***Remembering those we lost,
who tirelessly plotted course
and held the watch.***



- Phil and Pete

39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting Recap

C-PORT hosts a number of important partner meetings leading up to the opening of its Conference. One of those meetings is the **U.S. Coast Guard and C-PORT Partnership Meeting**. Due to the winter storm that grounded thousands of flights throughout the country, only one member of the Coast Guard leadership team was able to attend. Captain Matt Fine, Chief, Office of Shore Forces USCG, arrived later in the day, and was in attendance for the Partnership Dinner. The C-PORT Board of Directors and Captain Fine took that opportunity to discuss industry concerns as Fine provided US Coast Guard updates in preparation for his address to the membership on the following day.

C-PORT Board of Directors met with its insurance program partners on Monday, January 26, 2026. Travelers Ocean Marine underwrites the C-PORT program with Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage acting as the administrators. Attending from Travelers Ocean Marine were Lisbeth Ryan, AVP and Managing Director, and Mike Gozzo, underwriter. Representing Starkweather & Shepley's Marine Practice Group were Jay Frechette, Senior Vice President and Sara Mariani, account manager. They were joined by Charlie Pugliese, former president, Ocean Marine Practice Leader at Travelers Insurance. Charlie is now a marine consultant working with Starkweather & Shepley's marine practice group. Frechette presented the yearly program report to the board. Discussions continued regarding the program's success and financial health and stability of the program under Travelers, and developing the program for future growth.

The conference kicked off on Monday evening with a welcome reception. Attendees enjoyed connecting and reconnecting with their fellow operators, as well as conversing with U.S. Coast Guard partners, and industry sponsor supporters in a relaxed atmosphere. The evening was made complete with an open bar and artisanal cheeses displays.

General sessions started on Tuesday morning, January 27. Welcoming everyone to the conference was Phil LeBlanc, chairman, and Tina Cardone, executive director. A moment of remembrance was held marking the passing of Larry Tieman, American Marine Services, Tampa Bay FL, Richard Spoth, Lake Erie Towing & Salvage, Buffalo NY, and John Andrews, a C-PORT founder and driving force behind the growth and development of the marine assistance towing and salvage industry.



Larry Tieman



Dick Spoth



John Andrews

39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting Recap

Cardone provided C-PORT's U.S. Coast Guard Partnership Committee report, emphasizing the importance of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that exists between U.S. Coast Guard and C-PORT. The agreement opens doors of communication and enhances the partner relationship between the parties. She thanked the Coast Guard, in particular CAPT Matt Fine, who worked with C-PORT to clarify a couple of policy variances that occurred over the past year.

Cardone highlighted three events that C-PORT was honored to be a part of, including the Retirement Ceremony for Jeffrey Wheeler, Deputy Chief, Office of Boat Forces USCG (now retired), the USCG Commandant's Holiday Party, and the USCG Commandant's Assumption of Command Ceremony.



Wheeler's retirement: Tina Cardone, Phil LeBlanc, Terry Hill, and Jeff and Tania Dziedzic joined the celebration honoring Jeff's 42 ½ years with the U.S. Coast Guard. As is Jeff's style, he wanted a celebratory affair and called for a roast rather than speeches about how great he is. LeBlanc and Cardone managed to do both. With Wheeler in the audience, Cardone said "Jeff, as I said at the retirement party, through it all, much work was done. Programs were created. Professionalism within the industry was raised. We thank you for your guidance over the past 15+ years."

A few weeks after Wheeler's retirement, Cardone and LeBlanc were back at Coast Guard Headquarters, attending the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant's Holiday Party. It was a Luau theme, and all were asked to dress in Hawaiian Crisp. Phil commented that he didn't believe her at first, and was very suspect as they entered Coast Guard Headquarters. C-PORT was honored to be included.



On January 15, 2026, Admiral Kevin E. Lunday assumed the duties of the 28th Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. Representing C-PORT at the Assumption of Command were Tina Cardone, executive director and Phil LeBlanc, chairman. Secretary of DHS, Kristi Noem, presided. It was an honor to be included in this prestigious event representing the marine assistance industry.



Prizes and awards were presented at the 39th C-PORT Conference! Congratulations to all!

The **Dave Delano Mentor Prize** is presented to a new C-PORT member. It is sponsored by the Delano family in memory of their father's dedication to C-PORT and the assistance towing industry. The recipient receives a 2-night hotel stay during the C-PORT conference and complimentary registration. This year's winner was Preston Rose, Boat Towing & Salvage, Coeur d'Alene ID. Welcome to C-PORT!

Traveler Prizes were awarded to Shonda Kennedy, Orion Towing Salvage & Marine Services, for traveling the shortest distance to reach the conference, 51 miles from Daytona Beach FL. She received a gift of locally crafted artisan soaps. Roger Slade, Marine Assist Port Hadlock, Port Hadlock WA, traveled the farthest at 2573 miles. He received designer luggage tags.

First to Register went to Brandon Meshey, Upper Bay Towing & Salvage. Last year, Brandon took his time, driving over 4500 miles in his RV while exploring the country, arriving in Las Vegas 28 days after departing North East, MD and received a special turtle to mark the journey. This year, Brandon was presented Lightning McQueen for being the First to Register for the conference!

Conference Enthusiast Award goes to the member who attended the most conferences in the past 10 years. There were 9 finalists, with Rob Butler, Big Bay Marine Services, San Diego CA, receiving a suite room upgrade.

The **Welcome Back Award** is presented to the member who attends two consecutive conferences. Receiving brownies from a local bakery was Carlos Galindo, Poseidon Marine Towing, Islamorada FL.

Thank you to all of the C-PORT members, sponsors, and vendors who made the 39th C-PORT Conference a success!

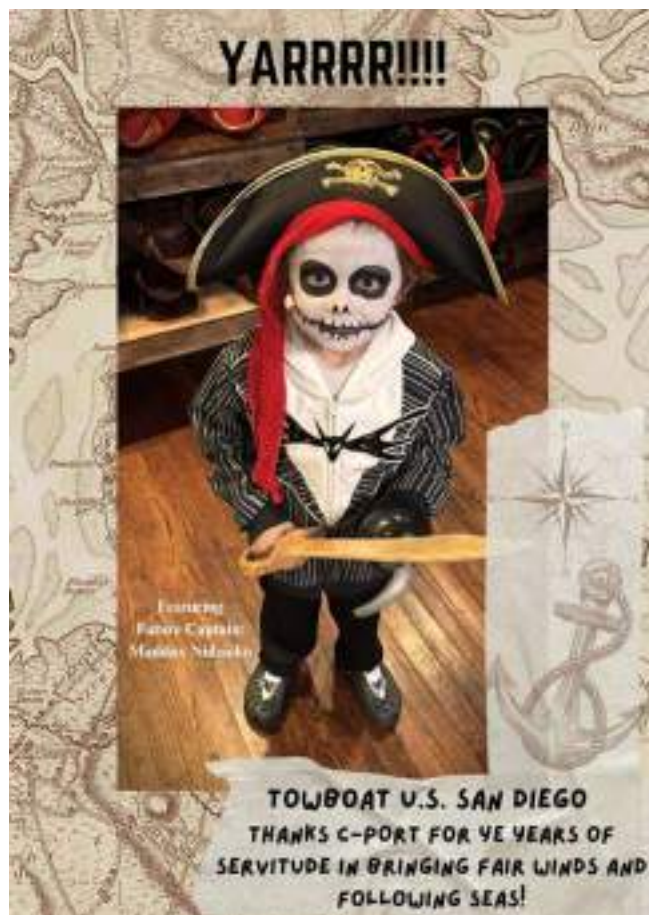


Always imitated but never duplicated,
TowBoatU.S. is the biggest and best
towing service around - **JOIN US TODAY!**



- Partner with the Nation's Largest Boating Association with 800,000+ Members
- Exclusive Service Provider to the BoatU.S. and GEICO Insurance Programs
- Cash Tower Bonus Program
- Direct Billing to BoatU.S. with Guaranteed Payment for Towing Services
- Promote Your Company With Our Free National Advertising Program
- Co-op Advertising Funds to Help Your Local Business Grow

To Join the Red Boat Team: 800-391-4869
or BoatUS.com/business/become-a-tower





PERFORMANCE INFLATABLES™

ENGINEERED INFLATABLES



AEF

A Performance Inflatables Company

LIQUID CONTAINMENT

- LIQUID CONTAINMENT FOR FUEL & WATER
- DEFAMING
- EMERGENCY WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS
- AIR CUSHION VEHICLES

www.aef-inflatables.com





SUBSALVE

A Performance Inflatables Company

BUOYANCY INFLATABLES

- UNDERWATER LIFTING BOATS
- AIRCRAFT INFLATION BOATS
- VERTICALLY LIFTING BOATS
- UNDERWATER EOD SYSTEMS

www.subsalve.com





AERÉ

A Performance Inflatables Company

DOCKING SOLUTIONS

- INFLATABLE DOCKING BOATS
- AIRCRAFT & VEHICLES DOCKING BOATS
- INFLATABLE DOCKING & PLACING BOATS
- DOCKING KITS & LINES

www.aere-docking.com







PROUD SPONSORS OF C-PORT AND ITS MEMBERS

www.NorthRiverBoats.com



ComMar Sales, LLC

Manufacturers' Representatives

800-343-7979

info@commar.com

www.commar.com







SAFE 29 CENTER CONSOLE

TowBoat US Fort Lauderdale

SAFE 27 WALK-AROUND CABIN

TowBoat US Provincetown

SAFE 27 CENTER CONSOLE

TowBoat US Port Aransas

We are proud to support your mission by offering a full line of center console, walk-around cabin, and full cabin models customized for the assistance towing industry.

SAFEBOATS.COM | 360.674.7161 | INFO@SAFEBOATS.COM
8800 SW BARNEY WHITE ROAD | BREMERTON, WASHINGTON 98312



STARKWEATHER & SHEPLEY

MARINE RISK SOLUTIONS

Offering an Exclusive Insurance Program for C-PORT Members.



We continue to grow our Towing and Salvage Program to offer you the best. We will gladly review your policy and answer any questions/concerns. Our Marine Team specializes in the marine industry and will work with you regarding your other marine exposures.

New Business Inquiry:

Nate Oberg: noberg@starshep.com

Existing Clients:

Sara Mariani: smariani@starshep.com



C-PORT held its Board of Directors Election at its 2026 Membership Meeting on January 27, 2026.
Richard Lenardson, owner Great Lakes Marine Services LLC, was elected to a second term by unanimous vote.



Rich started GLMS llc as an addition to Great Lakes Towing's Road Service. In 2008, Rich and his wife Jessica started their first marine port, Saint Joseph MI. The company has expanded to cover waters in 5 states from 16 listed TowBoatU.S. ports. His family has also grown with 6 children. While the marine and land services are now separate entities, he has learned much from his lifelong experience with road towing.

Rich maintains that marine assistance towing is a very small niche industry. He feels this exposes the industry to being very sensitive to any participating company's actions that could be seen as negative. In turn, all companies can be affected by a few that may not operate under certain safety and professional policies. He feels that C-PORT is offering the industry the needed guidance for safety and professional operations in the industry.

In his words, "I have seen many of the ups and downs of the road service industry that relate to marine assistance towing from safety, training, insurance relations, and interactions between companies in the industry. As well, my experience with towing and recovery can offer C-PORT and its members valuable insight into training programs and effective operating procedures for the industry. I am honored to serve as a board member and pass on any knowledge I have to the industry."

During the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala later that evening, Tina Cardone, C-PORT executive director, released the names of the 2026 C-PORT board of directors and executive committee. She announced that Phil LeBlanc, currently serving as Chairman, had reached his term limits of service. According to the C-PORT Bylaws, LeBlanc was required to step down from the board for a period of one year. She, and he, assured the membership his service to the association and to the industry would continue.

The 2026 C-PORT Officers and Directors are:

Harold "Smitty" Smith, Miller's Towing & Salvage, Sandy Hook NJ; Chairman

Terry Hill, Potomac Marine, Woodbridge VA; Vice-chairman

Terry is also President of Chesapeake Marine Towing & Assistance Association, a C-PORT regional chapter.

Richard Paul, Marine Towing & Salvage of SWFL, Cape Coral FL; Treasurer

Michael Tucker, Big Water Cowboys, Lake Texoma TX; Secretary

Jake Dunfee, Rescue Marine, Marblehead OH; Director

David LaMontagne, Pacific Towing LLC, Newport CA; Director

Richard Lenardson, Great Lake Marine Services, St Joseph MI; Director

C-PORT encourages members who are interested in serving on the board of directors in the future to contact Tina Cardone, executive director, at tcardone@cport.us or call 954-261-2012.

New Application Submission Portal and Redesigned Website

The National Maritime Center (NMC) officially launched its new online Application Submission and Additional Information Portal (ASAP) and redesigned website on Monday January 26, 2026. The transition to the new website will begin Friday, January 23, 2026, and users will experience a period of system unavailability during this transition.

Please note this new functionality is not associated with the ongoing development of the U.S. Coast Guard Navita© system. It is a separate effort to improve customer service until the U.S. Coast Guard Navita© is fully operational.

What's Changing on January 26, 2026:

1. ASAP – Fast. Secure. Convenient.
 - Submit merchant mariner credential (MMC) applications.
 - Submit medical certificate (MC) applications.
 - Upload supporting or additional documents for existing MMC or MC applications.

To help mariners prepare for the transition, a step-by-step tutorial demonstrating how to use ASAP is available. Mariners are strongly encouraged to review the tutorial in advance of the January 26 launch.

Prepare Now: [ASAP Tutorial](#)

ASAP will be the primary method for submitting applications and additional documents for new and existing applications to the NMC. Submission options such as e-mail or fax will be significantly limited and eventually discontinued as part of this transition.

2. New and Improved Website – Clear. Simple. Customer-first navigation.
 - Improved navigation and layout.
 - Clearer “How to Apply” guidance.
 - Easier access to credentialing information and customer support tools.

These improvements are designed to simplify the process, reduce waiting times, and give you more control over your documents.

C-PORT reached out to NMC prior to the site going live. CAPT Drayer commented that as use of the system proceeds, NMC is creating a FAQ document that will be available to answer some of the most commonly asked questions. Tina Cardone, executive director, asks members to contact her with any comments or concerns they have as they use the process. She may be reached at tcardone@cport.us or call 954-261-2012.

39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting Recap



CAPT Matt Fine, Chief, Office of Shore Forces USCG, provided Office of Shore Forces, Coast Guard staffing and Command Center updates. He thanked C-PORT and its members for the assistance provided to CG Command Centers and Stations. He noted that cooperation and engagement are the "backbone of our relationship".

He noted that policy and procedures for state and local agencies not tied to CG/MSAP policy may be challenging to the industry. Keeping open lines of communication and working with shore partners is critical with the changing maritime landscape.

CAPT Fine provided notes from CG-SAR. The Coast Guard assumed leadership of the Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking (SARSAT) program for the U.S. Government. This culminated a 5-year effort coordinated with NOAA, NASA, and the Air Force.

He advised the CG SAR Addendum is undergoing a substantial revision in both form and function. Fine stressed that the revision will enhance training and operations for CG SAR and the spirit of the Maritime SAR Assistance Policy (MSAP) will remain unchanged.

Later that day, CAPT Fine graciously accepted to present the AFRAS C-PORT Lifesaving Award to two C-PORT members when flight cancelations prevented RADM Jim Olson, USCG (Ret.) from attending the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala.

An advertisement for Compass Marine Services. The top half features a blue sky and water background with the company name "COMPASS MARINE SERVICES" and tagline "BOATING PEOPLE HELPING BOATING PEOPLE". Below this is a paragraph of text about their services. The bottom half shows a collage of three photos: a woman on a phone, a man at a computer, and a group of people. At the very bottom, there is contact information.

COMPASS MARINE SERVICES
BOATING PEOPLE HELPING BOATING PEOPLE

At Compass Marine Services, our goal is to provide customized, 24/7, professional customer support for businesses in the marine industry. Whether it's marine insurance companies, boat manufacturers, towing fleets, dealerships, or security systems, our support center is all about strengthening the personal bond between marine companies and their customers. Our friendly, knowledgeable staff help act as extensions of your company to provide assistance whenever your customers need it.

COMPASS
MARINE SERVICES, INC.

For more information and to see what Compass Marine Services can do for you, visit compassmarineservices.com or call 866.201.5411.



Maritime risks are vast.
So is our team to see you through them.

Whether you provide marine services or transport goods, people or cargo, you face countless property and liability risks. When you work with Travelers Ocean Marine, you'll be working with a team that has deep knowledge of the maritime industry – backed by the financial strength and power of one of the largest providers of property and casualty insurance products in the United States. We're dedicated to helping you understand how to protect against the unknown. But if the unfortunate should occur, you can rest easy knowing you're not going it alone.

TRAVELERS

travelers.com
The Travelers Indemnity Company and its property casualty affiliates. One Tower Square, Hartford, CT 06183
© 2024 The Travelers Indemnity Company. All rights reserved. Travelers and the Travelers Umbrella logo are registered trademarks of The Travelers Indemnity Company in the U.S. and other countries. BOMAD0011 New 12-24

39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting Recap

The sessions continued with Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage presenting Contractual Risk Transfer. The important topic of Contractual Risk Transfer has come up quite a bit in the past year and C-PORT was pleased that they agreed to talk about this issue at the conference. The panel consisted of Jay Frechette, Senior VP, and Sara Mariani, Account Manager, Marine Practice Group at Starkweather. Leading the discussion was Charlie Pugliese, Marine Consultant for Starkweather, and former President and Practice Leader for Travelers Ocean Marine. If you missed this informative session or have questions, please contact Starkweather & Shepley directly, or reach out to Tina for more information.

Tina Cardone, executive director, and Phil LeBlanc provided the C-PORT Government and Legislative Affairs Committee Report and the Programs and Education Report:

Cardone reported that two Coast Guard advisory committees, NMERPAC and NTSAC did not meet in 2025. She stated that these committees provide CG valuable industry perspective for consideration as they improve processes and policies and create regulations. We remain hopeful the work of the committees will start again in 2026.

She continued by addressing the many partner relationships C-PORT has cultivated over the years to promote the marine assistance industry. Discussed were NASBLA, National Association of Boating Law Administrators, and C-PORT's relationship with the NASBLA BOAT program, with Phil LeBlanc holding the industry seat on the program board. Courtney Livingston, NASBLA BOAT Program Director, said a few words on behalf of NASBLA.

ASA, American Salvage Association, and C-PORT have been working together over the last decade on issues that crossed both groups. In 2025, C-PORT and ASA signed a partnership agreement, formalizing the relationship. Katie Hill, ASA Director of Operations, was in attendance.

AFRAS, Association For Rescue At Sea, held its 50th Anniversary Awards Ceremony in Washington DC, on January 13, 2026. Cardone was honored to receive a shout out from Joe Re, AFRAS President, and to hear him speak about the lifesaving contributions of C-PORT members.



AFRAS celebrated two C-PORT members with its prestigious lifesaving award at the 39th C-PORT Conference held January 26–28, 2026 at the Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Resort, Orlando, FL. The award was announced on Tuesday during the C-PORT Awards Banquet Gala.

Honored were Captain Michael Tucker, Big Water Cowboys/TowBoatU.S. Lake Texoma, and Captain Zach Baxter, Estrada Marine Service/TowBoatU.S. Lake Lanier.

RADM James Olson, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.), AFRAS Board member, was slated to present, but the winter storm made that impossible, grounding flights around the country. CAPT Matt Fine, Chief, Office of Shore Forces, USCG, was at the event and graciously agreed to present these lifesaving awards to the honorees.

RADM Olson sent his congratulations stating, “The Association for Rescue at Sea, AFRAS, promotes the importance of maritime safety with support and award recognition for outstanding rescues and assistance. AFRAS works with many maritime and aviation organizations in the United States and Internationally. AFRAS provides worldwide support and assistance to volunteer air and sea rescue services. As an AFRAS Board member, I am proud to congratulate your two Association for Rescue At Sea award winners this year, Captain Zach Baxter from Estrada Marine Service, and Captain Michael Tucker from Big Water Cowboys, and his deckhand Elie Karam.”

RADM Olson summarized their heroism in a statement supplied to C-PORT:



Captain Baxter saved the lives of 7 people and prevented additional injuries and damage through his courageous actions, skill and singular determination, all the while ignoring the personal dangers that he faced. By acting quickly and decisively, he was able to get 5 children and 2 adults off the burning boat without further injuries or endangering them anymore. He observed the injuries and burns to the victims, and swiftly got them into the hands of shoreside emergency medical teams. Still aware of the burning boat, he returned to the scene and again his expert actions prevented injury to bystanders and damage to nearby boats. Captain Baxter, your quick thinking, exceptional leadership and superb seamanship saved 7 lives and an unknown amount of maritime property. You have my utmost respect. Congratulations on your 2025 C-PORT Award!



Captain Tucker, along with his deckhand Elie Karam, saved 5 lives on Lake Texoma on a day when the weather changed suddenly, and quickly put the lives of those people in extreme danger. Captain Tucker is recognized for his situational awareness, judgement, and seamanship skills under perilous circumstances. His quick decisive actions and calm demeanor under stressful circumstances, saved five lives that day. Additionally Captain Tucker witnessed that post rescue reunion of family and friends. That is indeed a gratifying experience that has few parallels in life. Your persistence, smart marine knowledge and senses, and exceptional boat handling seamanship, saved 5 lives and impacted many more people! You have my sincere admiration. Congratulations on your 2025 C-PORT Award!

Their complete stories may be found at the C-PORT website. <https://cport.us>

Committee Reports, continued

Terry Hill and David LaMontagne, C-PORT board members, discussed special projects and state issues. Hill reported the NENA PSAP- 911 Dispatch Training project is almost done. It has taken years to get to this point, and the final reviews are taking place now. This document will provide a standard and training provided by NENA, National Emergency Number Association, that will be pushed out to participating 911 call centers throughout the country. The purpose of this guidance is to provide for consistent prosecution of all marine cases in the US.

LaMontagne spoke about the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with local and state agencies, as well as participating in state legislative events. The importance of knowing your legislative representatives is beneficial to your business.

Cardone mentioned a few state advocacy projects C-PORT is working on. C-PORT created a short presentation for use as introduction for local and state agencies and urges anyone in the membership needing guidance or help in relationship development to contact us.

She reported that C-PORT provided state legislative committee testimony in Massachusetts. A bill was introduced to create a buffer around LE activities. Considering the challenges many of our members face doing their jobs without harbormaster interference in MA, C-PORT went on record asking for clarity in the definition of the first responders that this bill would cover, and to specifically include marine assistance towing and salvage responders.

Cardone noted that she and Terry Hill provided a salvage presentation and discussion with the MD Marine Contractors Licensing Board regarding the definitions of maritime salvage and the salvage of structures in marine construction.

Cardone concluded the report by mentioning the numerous federal bills being watched, and highlighting the CG Authorization Act passage that included clear definitions of abandoned or derelict vessels to be used for removal. She forwarded that information to NASBLA and the committee she serves on that is developing a model policy for states to use when crafting their state laws. The definition includes a time element that is necessary to distinguish an abandoned vessel from a vessel in need of salvage services.



HONDA
MARINE

350
V8

**THE RIGHT POWER
FOR YOUR FLEET**

- Fleet Discounts / Low APR
- Low Operation Costs
- High ROI / Budget Friendly
- 3-Year Government Warranty
- 2-Year Commercial Warranty

3 **2**
YEAR
WARRANTY
WARRANTY



TowCo 6
Towing operations management

www.towco.net

For towboat captains
By towboat captains

- No startup fees or software to buy
- Works on all web-capable devices
- Approved by Geico for use by TBUS companies
- Streamlined, easy onboarding
- ERPB payment matching

Try it free for 3 months

TowCo Mobile Solutions - Capt. Pete Andrews - 401-413-2148

39th C-PORT Conference and Membership Meeting Recap

Jeff Wheeler, Deputy Chief, Office of Boat Forces (Ret.), provided the Key Note Address. As a new business owner in the private sector, Wheeler spoke to the importance of solid practices backed by company policies and procedures.

Terry Hill and Phil LeBlanc presented the latest C-PORT risk management best practice module. The session provided guidance on how to avoid and manage Electrical Shock Drowning (ESD) situations. ESD is a silent killer caused by faulty boat/dock wiring leaking current into the water. Audience participants will receive a certificate of completion. The course will be available for purchase on C-PORT's website soon.

Salvage Day in-water demonstrations were canceled due to the sudden drop in temperatures. That didn't stop a morning of insightful sessions.

John Fulweiler, maritime attorney, was not able to attend the conference, but provided a video of his presentation on Negligent Salvage.

Rowan Westall, diver and captain for Safe Sea, spoke about communications from the operator's perspective.

Phil LeBlanc hosted a salvage panel discussion using videos rather than in the water support, to demonstrate various salvage techniques.

Lili Colby, Mustang Survival, managed to find a flight and arrived in time to show the Mustang dual buoyancy PFDs. These vests are designed to enhance salvage safety. Special thanks to our volunteers! *Click for the video!*



C-PORT could not provide this valuable content and opportunity to network, relax, and enjoy time spent with fellow operators without our sponsors and exhibitors!

Welcome Reception sponsored by Big Bay Marine Services included an open bar and an artisan cheese display. A great way to kick off the event!

Continental breakfasts each morning in the exhibitor's area provided time for all attendees to meet with vendors in a relaxed setting. Travelers Insurance, Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Brokerage, and Safe/Sea sponsored.

Lunch was sponsored by Compass Marine Services. After a morning of sessions, the attendees took a break and enjoyed a Southern BBQ buffet.

Breaks are as important to a successful conference as content. Donuts, brownies, fresh fruit, snacks, coffee and soft beverages sponsored by Biscayne Towing & Salvage; Marine Towing & Salvage of SWFL; Millers Towing & Salvage; and Reynolds Towing & Marine Service. Did you enjoy the special beverages provided by Rich and Jimmy during one of the breaks?

The Awards Reception and Banquet were sponsored by GEICO/BoatU.S. Complete with an open bar, everyone enjoyed a meal of steak and seafood.

C-PORT recognizes 2026 membership anniversaries! Thank you for your continued support!

5 year members – Joined 2021:

Danny DeCaro – Coastal Towing and Salvage, Georgetown SC
Dominique and Todd Dillman – Marine Towing and Salvage, Naples FL
Chris Justice – Swift Justice, Anacortes WA
Rick Kahn – Lake Murray Marine Towing, Lake Murray SC
Steve Rhoades – Grand Lake Towing, Grand Lake OK
George Strader – STX Marine Tow, Port Isabel TX

10 year members – Joined 2016:

Dennis Bailey – Drummond Island Yacht Haven, Drummond Island MI
Ross Baker – Eufaula Marine Solutions, Lake Eufaula OK
Scott and Ahna McClung – Waterman Response, Dana Point CA
Gareth Stamm – Optimus Marine, Joliet IL

15 year members – Joined 2011:

Jeff Dziedzic – JDZ Marine, Mystic CT
William Leslie – St.Clair Marine Salvage, Lake St. Clair MI
Chad Noetzel – CCN Enterprises, Port Huron MI
Axson Smith – Riverforest Shipyard, Belhaven NC

20 year members – Joined 2006:

Clint Allen – New Bedford Marine Rescue, New Bedford MA

25 year members – Joined 2001:

Jake Dunfee – Rescue Marine, Marblehead OH
Jeffrey Pullen – Pullen Tows and Marine Salvage, Lake Washington WA

30 year members – Joined 1996:

Mark Brown – Towboat Nantucket Sound, Falmouth MA
Jeanne Macko – Lake Erie Towing and Salvage, Buffalo NY

Sincere thanks from C-PORT to our longstanding member company owners who attended the 39th C-PORT Conference:

Jimmy Reynolds – Reynold's Towing & Marine Service, member since 1987
David LaMontagne – Pacific Towing/Vessel Assist Association of America, member since 1987
Pete Andrews - Safe/Sea, member since 1987

Join us for our 40th Anniversary celebration in Nashville 2027!

Risk Management Training Courses are available on the C-PORT website, <https://cport.us>. The program centers on these concepts:

- Risk: “possibility of loss or injury”
- Risk Management: “The identification, analysis, assessment, control, and avoidance, minimization, or elimination of unacceptable risks.

C-PORT is committed to encouraging its member’s growth and development through education and is dedicated to providing good business practices throughout its membership. With the increase in accidents and economic pressures facing our industry, many companies have lost sight of the importance of training and proper risk management skills. Our mission is to provide our members with programs that will enable their growth and development into the future, while minimizing the impact of looming USCG regulation in response to Congressional directive and safety records.

Contact Tina Cardone at tcardone@cport.us or 954-261-2012 with any questions regarding this program. Captain and crew special pricing is 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 at the C-PORT website, <https://cport.us> 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 at <https://cport.us> 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.



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>.
