



The Marine Assistance Industry Journal

A Quarterly Newsletter - Volume 60 - May 2026

SAVE THE DATE!

C-PORT will hold its 40th Conference and Membership Meeting on February 1-3, 2027 at Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, Nashville TN.

Chairman's Address



As we all gear up for what I hope is a busy and profitable season, I wanted to give a bit of an update on some of the things we have been doing. March 24-26 we had 9 members participate in the DC Capitol Hill Visits and 19 meetings were held. We received support and direction on how to standardize maritime response for 911 centers. Thank you Terry Hill for spear-heading this effort with NENA.

The USCG National Maritime Center has gotten alternate funding for now and the processing of licenses has resumed, so if you are looking to renew or upgrade, I suggest you do it sooner rather than later.*

We are in the planning stages of our BIG 40th anniversary conference in Nashville! Also with this being our Nations 250th anniversary I know in New York there is lots of celebrations planned. I would hope that nationwide the 4th of July will be a bigger event for all areas and we can all look forward to being busy.

Reach out to Tina, me, or any board member. We are here to help.
Smitty

**Editor's note: Since the time of this writing, DHS has been fully funded.*



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

C-PORT held its DC Capitol Hill Fly-In on March 24 - 26, 2026. C-PORT members gathered in Washington DC to meet with legislators to discuss the challenges faced by the marine assistance industry and promote the work and service provided by the industry throughout the nation.



Much work was done prior to the visit. Meetings were scheduled, not only with individual representatives, but with the legislative committees tasked with developing legislation that directly affects the industry.

Tina Cardone, C-PORT executive director lead the group, providing guidance and insight for successful meetings. Participating were C-PORT members Tim Peters and Noah Santos MA; Jeff Dziedzic CT; Sarah Lawrence MD; Phil

LeBlanc RI; Lucas Cavaluzzi NY; Terry Hill VA; and Richard Paul FL. Their support enabled C-PORT to reach more legislators than ever before.

Cardone stated that C-PORT is excited to report that through the 19 meetings held, the industry's concerns were heard. Action is being taken on creating legislation that will encourage all public response agencies to adopt the U.S. Coast Guard MSAP standard for response. This builds on the Congressional directive found in the 2018 Coast Guard Authorization Act (a charge lead by C-PORT) that called to "further minimize the possibility of maritime 911 calls being improperly routed; ...the Commandant shall—formulate a national maritime public safety answering points policy..."

A committee lead by NENA, National Emergency Number Association, and including Terry Hill, representing C-PORT, and U.S. Coast Guard SAR representatives was created to develop a standard of maritime response for local and state responders that follows the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime SAR policy. The NENA policy took years to complete now reaching its final stage, being posted for public comment by NENA. This standard follows MSAP, and provides clear guidance to all response agencies on how to effectively and efficiently manage any maritime call they may receive.

LeBlanc and Cardone met with Representative Mike Ezell (R-MS), chairman of the U.S. House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee. Being a former law enforcement officer having served as Sheriff, he understood the dynamics of marine assistance companies and their interactions with local agencies and U.S. Coast Guard. They also met with the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. That committee is researching the issue with the goal of finding a path forward.

Continued next page.



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who tirelessly plotted course
and held the watch.**



- Phil and Pete

DC Hill Visits, cont.

Many meetings had Coast Guard Fellows attending. These Fellows provided much appreciated context to the challenges facing the industry and boaters needing assistance.

Along with meeting the goal of encouraging the adoption of a national standard of response that follows U.S. Coast Guard policy, participants had the opportunity to speak with their Congressional representatives. Many of the representatives were not aware of the key role played by the marine assistance industry in their districts and the value brought to their boating constituents by our services.

It was not only 3 days of meetings, but a few dinners and sightseeing in-between. The Japanese Cherry Blossoms were reaching peak, and the President's Motorcade was viewed leaving the White House. Dinners and productive conversations were enjoyed by all.

Any C-PORT member wanting to get involved with the next DC Fly-In is encouraged to reach out to Tina Cardone. Depending on the Congressional calendar, the next Hill Visit will be in March 2027.



The U.S. Coast Guard has announced the Resumption of Services at the National Maritime Center and Regional Examination Centers.

The following is an excerpt from the announcement. C-PORT members with additional questions are encouraged to contact Tina at 954-261-2012 or tcardone@cport.us.

Funding for the Department of Homeland Security and US Coast Guard has been restored, and the National Maritime Center (NMC) and Regional Examination Centers (RECs) are resuming normal operations in a phased approach to prioritize the most critical functions and address the backlog of applications and examinations resulting from the lapse in appropriations.

Application Procedures and Processing Timelines:

- The Application Submission Portal (ASAP) for submission of applications and supporting documentation remains active.
- Applications for merchant mariner credentials (MMCs), medical certificates, and course approvals and related requests will be processed on a first-in/first-out basis.
- Only applications that demonstrate a clear and documented nexus to national defense will be considered for expedited processing. Marine employers with national defense-related requests are advised to contact the NMC Customer Service Center (CSC).
- All extension policies and mitigation measures outlined in [Update #3: Mitigation Efforts – Extensions, dated April 22, 2026](#), remain in effect through their stated expiration dates. Mariners should refer to that bulletin for full details.

During the prolonged lapse, the NMC has accumulated a significant backlog of applications, currently more than 19,000 submissions and growing. **Processing timelines are expected to extend 8-12 months from the date a completed application is received. To avoid potential delays and disruptions to employment and operations, mariners are strongly encouraged to apply at least 8-12 months in advance of expiration. After submission, mariners should also allow additional time for applications to be entered into the system before checking the status online or contacting the CSC.**

RECs:

RECs will resume operations; however, counter (walk-in) services will remain suspended until further notice to allow staff to focus on backlog reduction and examination scheduling.

Examination Scheduling Priorities:

Examination scheduling will be conducted in the following order of priority:

1. Mariners with previously scheduled examinations on or after May 1, 2026: Appointments will be honored as scheduled.
2. Mariners whose examinations were scheduled and cancelled between February 17, 2026, and May 1, 2026: Mariners will be contacted by REC staff to reschedule at the earliest available opportunity.
3. All other applicants: Scheduling will open once priority groups have been accommodated.

During the initial resumption period, the CSC will not schedule examinations. After the period for mariners whose examinations were canceled during the furlough to re-schedule is completed, the opportunity to schedule an exam for all mariners will be available through the CSC. Anticipate opening exam schedule for all other mariners shortly.

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).

News from C-PORT:

On May 1, 2026, **C-PORT and ASA**, American Salvage Association, renewed their strategic partnership agreement. This agreement establishes a framework for a professional alliance and facilitates a mutual exchange of ideas and opportunities for the parties. C-PORT has maintained its affiliation with ASA over the past decade, and looks forward to continuing and strengthening the relationship.

California C-PORT members attended the **California Boating Congress** in Sacramento CA on April 28-29, 2026. With the support of our members, C-PORT was able to achieve sponsor status affording the association more visibility with the speakers, legislators, and event producers. David LaMontagne, C-PORT board member, along with members Rob Fassett, Sacramento, and Jamie Cheshire, Lake Tahoe, attended the event. Contributing towards the host sponsor status were members Rob Butler, San Diego, and Carson Shevitz, Ventura.

Participation in state-centric events provides a unique opportunity for business owners to meet with State leaderships and learn about State focused actions that may affect them. C-PORT members interested in becoming more involved with their State or Local governance are encouraged to reach out to C-PORT for guidance by calling 954-261-2012 or email tcardone@cport.us.

Trusted Boaters of America is producing an App to enhance safety and security on the waterways. VADM Dean Lee, USCG (ret.), brought this project to C-PORT's attention late in 2025. Many of you heard Phil LeBlanc introduce it during the C-PORT Membership Meeting in Orlando. There have been some upgrades and changes to the App and testers are needed. C-PORT members will receive more details on how to participate in the coming days.

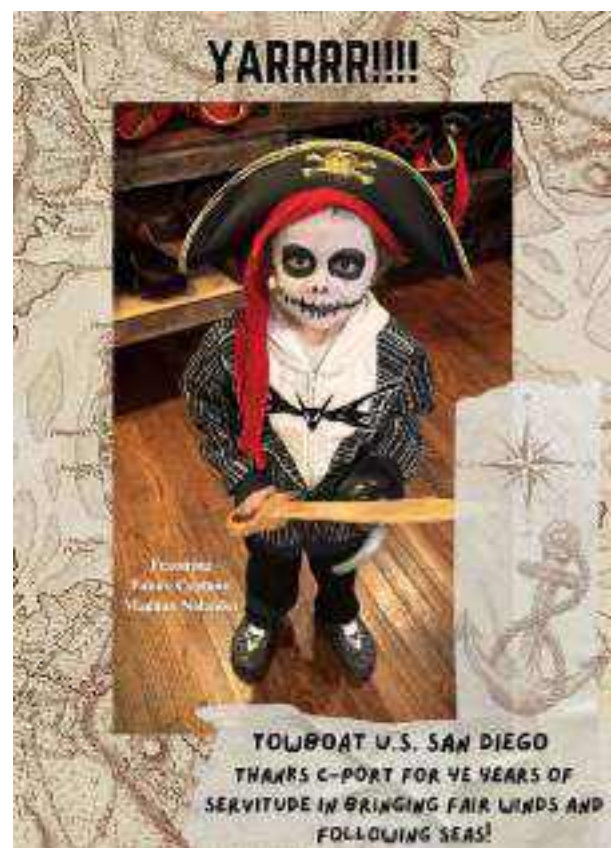
C-PORT will be celebrating 40 Years in 2027! Plans are underway to make this conference one for the record-books with special sessions, guest speakers, industry focused discussions and panels, salvage day lessons, enhanced celebrations, and more! Work on the agenda has begun!

The location is the newly renovated Loews Hotel Vanderbilt, Nashville TN. Special room rates are available and attendees are encourage to [book now](#)! The rates are gone once the block sells out.

C-PORT is looking for sponsors and exhibitors for this special event. [Sponsor opportunities](#) are found on the website. Contact Tina if you want to sponsor, but none of the packages meet your needs. Exhibitor [Opportunities](#) are also posted on the C-PORT website. Watch your email for more information.

Registration is open! Go to the [C-PORT](#) website for the latest information!

TowBoatU.S. affiliates: The TowBoatU.S. Conference immediately follows C-PORT. Come to C-PORT and stay for TowBoatU.S. Same hotel!





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Legal Perspective: Salvage: Won or Lost in the First 24 Hours



There's a tendency in salvage disputes to focus on the back end. Arbitration. SALCON (Blackwall) factors. Percentages. That all matters, for sure, but if you represent salvors long enough, you learn something simple: most salvage claims are won or lost in the first 24 hours after the job.

The problem is the salvor is busy doing what it's supposed to be doing. Pulling the vessel away from the brink of loss whether that's an ungrounding, a seawater flooding response or what have you. With all that and dealing with a nervous owner, an omnipresent insurer and sometimes a hovering Coast Guard presence, pushes paperwork and evidence collection into an afterthought if not an annoyance. Fair enough. But hear this: it's that early window where the claim takes shape and the value is developed whether anyone realizes it or not.

Start with peril. Every salvage claim lives or dies on peril because it's not only necessary to establishing a right to salvage, but an accelerant to value. Give me great peril and I'll deliver a great salvage award percentage. And no matter how good we are word-smithing, peril is not built with adjectives. Peril is built with facts captured in real time. Wind. Sea state. Incoming weather trends. Proximity to rocks or risk of imminent loss. Remoteness, unavailability of other resources to assist and pollution considerations. These details need to be pinned down early. NOAA buoy data is helpful, but it's better when paired with a simple contemporaneous log entry from the salvor like this: "Wind building from the southeast, vessel setting toward rocks, repeated pounding." That sort of language carries weight (read: it's trustworthy) because it was written before anyone climbed into the octagon.

Then there's imagery. Salvors consistently undershoot here. They send us ten close up photos of damage and not one orientation shot. That's a mistake. An arbitrator or a judge needs to see where the vessel is in relation to danger. Show the shoreline. Show the rocks or reef. Show the channel. Show the flooding seawater. Then move closer. Without that imagery, you're asking someone to imagine peril instead of giving them reliable evidence of peril.

The same goes for progression. One photo is a snapshot while a series of photos tells a story. For instance, consider the story-telling power of this visual sequence: vessel aground -- vessel flooding -- pumps staged and deployed -- stabilized. That sequence does more work than any paragraph we might pen later.

Communications are another missed opportunity. VHF traffic, text messages and even a quick call log can become powerful evidence. Not because of what is said in a polished way, but because of what is said in the moment. "We need help now." "She's not coming off." Those are the kinds of statements that cut through later attempts to minimize the situation.

And then there's the contract. Everyone knows to get one signed, but few salvors pause to consider how it will look under a microscope. Who signed the contract, when and under what conditions was it signed. Did the vessel owner/captain have time to call someone or were the circumstances too exigent? Did the owner/captain initial in the proper spaces? Did we contract properly, i.e. salvage versus wreck removal? Those facts matter and ignoring the them will cost the salvor money.

Continued next page.

Another point that gets overlooked is value preservation. Salvors tend to focus on what they did, not what they prevented. That's backwards. The law rewards the avoidance of loss. If the vessel was one swell set away from worse grounding or if passing vessel traffic was throwing dangerous wakes or fuel was venting due to the heel or the tidal window mattered, capture those moments whether in your log aboard or via a log kept at your home base. Those facts tie directly into the percentage discussion later.

Owners and insurers will almost always try to shrink the event no matter how chummy everyone 'appears' on-scene. They'll pivot, trust us, and start talking about routine towage and time and material rates and how the seas were laying down. Those arguments are easier to make when the record is thin. Those arguments, however, are much harder to make when the record shows a deteriorating situation with a clear risk of escalation.

None of this requires turning salvors into lawyers. It just requires a bit of discipline. The irony is that the same instincts that make a good salvor, awareness, anticipation, attention to conditions, are the same instincts that make for a strong salvage claim. They just need to be captured.

At the end of the day, arbitration or litigation is still a story. Two sides telling the same set of facts in different ways. If you have the better facts, you usually have the better story. And if you built those facts in the first 24 hours, you are already most of the way there. The rest is just finishing the job.

Underway and making way.

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Insurance Corner: Contractual requests for Workers Comp for Vessel Crew



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Recently when reviewing the insurance requirements in contracts for Assureds involving third parties, there has often only been a specific request for Workers Compensation required by the Assured for vessel crew. The particular Third Party may be unaware of your obligation to your vessel crew as Jones Act Seaman.

You, as the vessels owner and employer, have the obligation and need to be protected against any action brought against you if the employees are determined Jones Act Seaman. The determination being: they are employed by the vessel, their duties onboard contribute to the vessel's operation, and the vessel is in navigation. While there is still a need for Workers Compensation/US Longshore & Harbor Workers and possibly Maritime Employers Liability for the remainder of your Company's employees, and may not be referenced in the contract, you will need to understand the obligation for all classes of employees and covered for all.

There can often be an area of uncertainty regarding the status of employees, Jones act or

Workers Compensation, and employees can attempt to bring actions against both exposures. Therefore, it's best to have coverage for both so as to not be left without any defense or subsequent coverage. Despite any minimum contractual insurance requirements, it is always best to make sure you, as the business owner, have the correct coverages regarding your employees.

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

Mobile: 401-524-7692

C-PORT Experiences Membership Growth with new members joining, and established companies with new owners maintaining their C-PORT association.

2025 saw a growth in C-PORT membership.

Coming aboard in January 2025 was Preston Rose, Boat Towing and Salvage, operating TowBoatU.S. out of Coeur d'Alene ID.

February 2025 brought Flagship Towing LLC, owner Chris Riley, to the association. Flagship Towing, with offices in Austin TX, has operations in Texas and Florida.

In March 2025, Anthony Cappriccio, took the reins from Monte Ash at the TowBoatU.S. Santa Cruz location. Anthony owns and operates PAC Marine Towing and Salvage LLC.

Two members joined in May 2025. Rob Fassett, NorCal Marine Towing and Salvage, opened a TowBoatU.S. area in Sacramento CA. Rob Butler, looking for a new challenge, opened BMC Marine LLC, taking over the TowBoatU.S. location at Old Hickory Lake. Travis Basom, long-time captain under Rob's guidance, is manager.

July 2025 brought Kevin Black, C & K Knotty Marine Services Inc. to C-PORT. Kevin purchased the TowBoatU.S. Cape May location from Benny Campanile, a long-time C-PORT member. Also in July, Deb Fritz, Towline Marine Assist, TowBoatU.S. Friday Harbor, returned to C-PORT.

September 2025 added two more members. Jimmy Mason, Pickwick Lake Marine Towing, purchased the TowBoatU.S. operation at Pickwick Lake TN. Reed Dills and Corey Williams, owners of West Point Marine Recovery, opened a TowBoatU.S. location on West Point Lake GA.

Two members joined in October 2025. Brady Bramley, owner of Bramley Marine Towing and Services, opened a TowBoatU.S. port on Lake Gaston NC. Phillip Johnson, Johnson Marine LLC, took control of TowBoatU.S. Grand Strand, formerly owned by long-time C-PORT member George Bruton.

November 2025 brought new member North Idaho Marine Rescue. The company is owned and operated by father-son team of Anthony "Tony" Munda and Austin Munda. They operate out of Coeur d'Alene ID.

After many years of collaboration with many C-PORT members, Kevin and Kelly Rowlette, Husky Marine Towing and Salvage, officially became a C-PORT member. Kevin and Kelly have provided towing and salvage services for the Caribbean, based in Tortola, British VI.

Membership growth continued in 2026.

Larry Phillips, Electric Harbor Marina, operating TowBoatU.S. Fox Lake IL, was welcomed back to C-PORT in January 2026 after taking a brief time away.

Timothy Bland, Downeast Yacht Services LLC, joined C-PORT in January 2026. Timothy is located in Penobscot ME.

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>.
