



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections & Compliance Directorate

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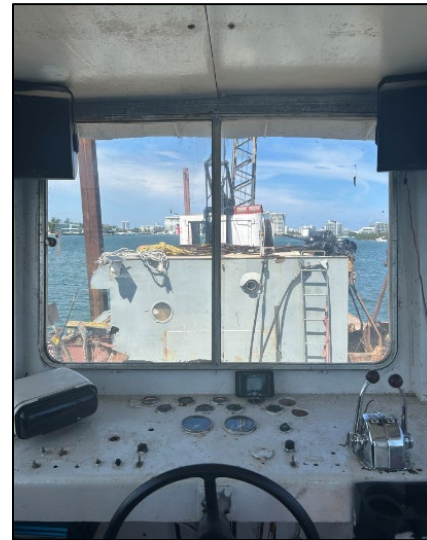
Safety Alert 06-26

IMPORTANCE OF ADEQUATE NAVIGATION BRIDGE VISIBILITY AND VISUAL LOOKOUTS

Major contributing factors to several recent collisions and near-misses included cargo loading conditions that negatively impacted the operator's visibility from the navigation bridge. Failing to address obstructions to visibility from the navigation bridge, by either moving cargo or posting trained lookouts, has repeatedly resulted in catastrophic outcomes including loss of life and property damage. Vessel operators, owners, and crews must understand that compromised visibility poses a serious threat to the maritime domain that must be properly mitigated before getting underway.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** the following actions for vessel owners and operators:

- Prior to getting underway, thoroughly evaluate visibility from the navigation bridge for all potential prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine whether a person at the operating station is able to maintain an adequate lookout to assess risk of collision in accordance with Rule 5 of the Navigation Rules ([33 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 83.05](#)). Those circumstances and conditions should include the current loaded condition, anticipated vessel traffic and other potential hazards.
- For applicable vessels, ensure arrangements of cargo, cargo gear, and trim are such that the field of vision from the navigation bridge is in compliance with [33 CFR 164.15](#).
- If navigation bridge visibility is deemed inadequate, measures to address the inadequacy should be considered, including but not limited to:
 - Post additional lookouts to maintain visual coverage of the segments obscured from the pilothouse. Ensure crew members are properly trained, designated, and empowered to maintain an effective watch. When a crew member is critical to mitigating a known blind spot, they should have no other responsibilities or duties that could compromise their ability to maintain a proper lookout "by sight and hearing." Also, provide lookouts with reliable means of communication to the master or mate on watch.



- Leverage technology to maintain a visual lookout from the operating station of obscured segments. Where practical, install mirrors, cameras, or elevated vantage points to reduce and/or eliminate blind spots and use radars, Automatic Identification Systems, and cameras to support situational awareness.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** the following actions for Coast Guard marine inspectors and investigators:

- Verify that the vessel's cargo procedures and routine operations do not impair visibility from the bridge. Emphasize the critical importance of complying with Navigation Rule 5 and [33 CFR 164.15](#) "at all times" and encourage operators to post additional lookouts and leverage technology when obstructions to visibility are identified and cannot be eliminated.

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