



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

First Coast Guard District

December 8, 2025
Boston, MA

Findings of Concern 017-25

MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS FOR “PUSHER VEHICLES” AND EQUIPMENT

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. In July 2023, a JEEP Wrangler, used by longshoremen as a “pusher vehicle” to load non-running cargo vehicles onto a foreign flagged Ro-Ro/Container vessel moored at Port Newark, New Jersey, caught fire while inside one of the vessel’s vehicle decks. Firefighting efforts by the vessel’s crew and land-based firefighters were ineffective at suppressing the fire. Tragically, during the response, two land-based firefighters lost their lives, and several others were injured.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The JEEP and other “pusher vehicles” were owned by the stevedoring company and operated/maintained by the contracted longshoring company. The investigation showed that both companies lacked a formalized routine preventative maintenance program for their “pusher vehicles” and equipment resulting in their reliance on reactive maintenance practices when issues arose. Aside from basic checks before vessel arrivals like topping off fluids and tire repairs/changes, no regular preventative maintenance was performed to ensure “pusher vehicles” could withstand the heightened demands of pushing non-running cargo vehicles up steep ramps for 12 or more hours per cargo-operation day. Additionally, neither company had a formal program in place to take malfunctioning vehicles and equipment out of service and prevent further use before repairs were affected.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators identified the following measures to mitigate the risks associated with the contributing factors identified above:

- Use all stevedoring “pusher vehicles” and equipment only in accordance with manufacturer’s designed specifications.
- Ensure all “pusher vehicles” manuals and addendums are available for reference and considered when addressing issues.
- Develop routine maintenance programs for all stevedoring “pusher vehicles” and equipment considering the operational characteristics and in consultation with the manufacturer or another engineering professional.



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- Ensure routine periodic recall inquiries are conducted as part of routine maintenance programs for all in service stevedoring “pusher vehicles.”
- Implement and consistently enforce formal “out of service” or “Lock-out/Tag-out” policy and procedures that provide sufficient notice of a disrepair status for “pusher vehicles” and equipment to prevent use before corrective action has been taken.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact the First Coast Guard District, Inspections and Investigations Branch, by email at D01-DG-D1-CCPrevention@uscg.mil.