

**NATIONAL TOWING SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NTSAC)**  
**TASK STATEMENT**

**Task # 21-01**

I. **TASK TITLE**

“Recommendations for the Criteria Used to Apply the Term “Occasional Towing”

Abbreviated: *Occasional Towing*

II. **BACKGROUND**

46 CFR §136.105(a)(5) states that Subchapter M is applicable to all U.S. flagged towing vessels except when the vessel is inspected under other subchapters and performs *occasional towing*.

During the spring 2019 meeting of the legacy Towing Safety Advisory Committee, the public provided comments expressing concerns regarding the lack of a clear and explicit definition for the term *occasional towing*. It is the marine industry’s contention that the ambiguity of the term *occasional towing* has resulted in the inconsistent implementation of Subchapter M across Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI) Zones and has created confusion amongst vessel operators who are eager to learn what methodology the U.S. Coast Guard uses when applying such a term.

III. **DISCUSSION**

The U.S. Coast Guard has provided the following clarification on the meaning of *occasional towing* within the Frequently Asked Questions repository:

***Request that the Coast Guard provide a definition of “occasional towing” as it is used in 46 CFR §136.105(a)(5), which exempts “a vessel inspected under other subchapters of this chapter that may perform “occasional towing” from Subchapter M.***

*“Occasional towing” is described as engaged in the “infrequent” and “irregular” act of commercial towing (assistance towing exempt). “Infrequent” describes engaged in towing a minority amount of time. “Irregular” describes towing not on an established and routinely scheduled route or operation.*

IV. **TASK**

The U.S. Coast Guard requests that NTSAC identify the parameters OCMI’s should use to determine whether a vessel inspected under subchapters other than Subchapter M performs *occasional towing*. Take into consideration the type of service that a vessel is constructed and certified to perform when drafting your report. If a vessel is purpose built as a towing

vessel, then *occasional towing* should not apply. In completing this task, please provide written examples of vessel operations that the U.S. Coast Guard should consider *occasional towing*. Such examples should account for and describe the infrequent and irregular nature of the operation.

V. ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE TASK

NTSAC will provide a Final Report to the Coast Guard during its spring 2022 meeting.

VI. COAST GUARD TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVES

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VII. NTSAC CONTACT

TBD

VIII. ENCLOSURES

(1) USCG Response Letter to OMSA dated 14 May 2018