



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections & Compliance Directorate

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Safety Alert 04-26

CONTAINER OPERATIONS WITH VESSELS ALONGSIDE

During September and October of 2025, multiple incidents occurred at various terminals throughout the Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach that involved shipping containers unexpectedly falling overboard from container vessels. In one instance, several fallen containers struck an emission control barge moored alongside the container vessel. A crew member onboard the barge suffered minor injuries, while the barge itself sustained significant damage. In a separate incident, four containers nearly landed on a separate emission control barge after ineffective container securing methods were used.



Fallen containers on an emissions control barge that was moored alongside a container vessel during cargo operations.

The Coast Guard's investigations into these incidents are ongoing. However, preliminary findings indicate that there were no established policies or planning tools in place to account for vessels alongside during cargo operations. Furthermore, the reliance on ad-hoc communication

protocols has been identified as a contributing factor in both cases. The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that managers and operators of cargo vessels and shoreside facilities:

- Develop and implement written procedures for both shoreside and shipboard management of vessels positioned alongside freight vessels during active cargo operations. These procedures should ensure that vessels alongside are optimally positioned to carry out their primary functions while maintaining awareness of ongoing cargo activities. Vessel placement should minimize the risk of falling containers striking the vessels alongside. In situations where repositioning is not possible, operational priorities should focus on safeguarding the vessels and crew positioned alongside the vessel being actively loaded or offloaded.
- Establish a pre-cargo operations meeting that includes representatives from the freight vessel, vessels positioned alongside, and shoreside personnel responsible for cargo operations. During this meeting, participants should ensure the cargo discharge plan accounts for the presence of vessels alongside and establishes clear communication and notification protocols for addressing any issues related to cargo handling or stability and trim concerns aboard the freight vessel.

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