



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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## Towing Vessel International Certificates Requirements and Certificate of Inspection Routes

U.S. flag towing vessel owners and operators are reminded that the vessel must possess the appropriate certificates and endorsements for the intended voyage.

International certificates and certain equipment is required prior to embarking on international voyages<sup>1</sup> including voyages to Canada and Mexico. Failure to present valid international certificates and demonstrate operation of equipment may lead to a Port State Control (PSC) detention, schedule delays, and additional costs to owners and operators. In general, the key international conventions are:

- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended
- International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto and by the Protocol of 1997 (MARPOL)
- International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) as amended, including the 1995 and 2010 Manila Amendments

CG-CVC recommends using [CG-FM-003](#), *Inspected Towing Vessel (ITV) International Addendum*, to assist towing vessel owners and operators in determining which certificates and equipment are required for towing vessels on international voyages. Additionally, owners and operators are highly encouraged to use the Towing Vessel National Center of Expertise (TVNCOE) [TugSafe International Addendum](#) and [Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular \(NVIC\) No. 11-93, Change 3](#), *Applicability Of Tonnage Measurement Systems To U.S. Flag Vessels*, to ensure the correct tonnage scheme is applied when embarking on international voyages.

For domestic voyages, Section 8402 of the 2020 Coast Guard Authorization Act provides an interim exemption for towing vessels that are conducting response operations and are identified as response assets on vessel response plans (VRP). This exemption permits applicable vessels to engage in response activities

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<sup>1</sup> *International voyage* means a voyage between a country to which the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended (SOLAS) applies and a port outside that country. A country, as used in this definition, includes every territory for the international relations of which a contracting government to the Convention is responsible or for which the United Nations is the administering authority. For the United States, the term "territory" includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, all possessions of the United States, and all lands held by the United States under a protectorate or mandate. For the purposes of this subchapter, vessels are not considered as being on an "international voyage" when solely navigating the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River as far east as a straight line drawn from Cap des Rosiers to West Point, Anticosti Island and, on the north side of Anticosti Island, the 63rd meridian.

without additional requirements that would result from solely operating outside the boundary line (e.g. loadline, manning, and certain equipment). The Coast Guard encourages owners and operators of towing vessels not identified on a VRP to request a route on the vessel's Certificate of Inspection (COI) that covers potential response areas.

Questions regarding this message should be directed to the Towing Vessel National Center of Expertise (TVNCOE) at [TVNCOE@uscg.mil](mailto:TVNCOE@uscg.mil) or at (270) 444-7715.

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