



Standby Vessels

What is a standby vessel?

The operator of each manned OCS facility must develop an Emergency Evacuation Plan (EEP) approved by the cognizant Officer in Charge of Marine Inspections (OCMI) and includes many elements for the safe evacuation of a manned OCS facility. One of the elements of the EEP may consist of the use of a standby vessel.

A standby vessel is a vessel meeting the requirements of 33 CFR Part 143, Subpart E, specifically designated in an EEP under 33 CFR 146.140 to provide rapid evacuation assistance in the event of an emergency.



Standby Vessel Service

Federal Register (FR) Volume 54, Number 95 contains a comment citing 46 USC 2304 stating the obligation of vessels to render emergency assistance which potentially limits the capability of the standby vessel with either not enough deck space or reserve stability to aid the OCS facility. However, there is an important distinction to make: a vessel designated as a standby vessel must meet the applicable 33 CFR 143.400-407 criteria as this is a requirement in the facility's EEP where the standby vessel's primary duty is the rescue and evacuation of OCS personnel.

A vessel acting as a standby vessel is not necessarily acting in the same capacity as a Good Samaritan vessel that is rendering emergency assistance where normal passenger and carrying capacities rules don't apply during the emergency. For the same reason, a Small Passenger Vessel acting in the service of a standby vessel may not exceed the maximum personnel allowed

in the stability letter; this is a planned service for a potential emergency scenario, and a standby vessel must be capable of carrying and providing shelter for 100% of the most populated facility without exceeding the stability criteria.

Can an OSV act as a standby vessel?

33 CFR 143.401, Vessel Certification and Operation, lists vessels inspected under Subchapters H, I, and T as vessel types that can act as Standby vessels. The seeming omission of Subchapter L vessels, Offshore Supply Vessels, is attributed to the development of the standby vessel regulations, May 1989, which pre-date the promulgation of Subchapter L, March 1996.

FR 54-95 includes several discussion points of offshore supply vessel (at the time a vessel service without a dedicated inspection subchapter) participation during the emergency evacuation of an OCS facility. Due to the nature of the FR dialogue, OSVs inspected under Subchapter L or multi-certificated under Subchapter L, may act as a standby vessel.

Vessel Capability

Vessels acting in standby vessel service must be capable of carrying and providing shelter for 100% of the number of persons on the most populated facility that the standby vessel is designated to assist. Additionally, Vessels must provide bunks or aircraft type reclining seats for 10% of the number of persons on the most populated facility that the standby vessel is designated to assist. Crew spaces may be used to meet the requirements of this section.

It is important for the owner/operator to contact their local OCMI to determine what spaces of the vessel are considered shelter, as factors such as vessel operations, weather, and sea state can affect the determination.

The vessel must not carry or store goods, supplies, and equipment on the deck of the standby vessel or in other locations that may hinder the vessel's ability to render assistance to the facility that the vessel is designated to assist. Moreover, the vessel may not carry or store *any* hazardous material.

Required Equipment

- Multiple propellers or propulsion devices;
- Two searchlights;
- For vessels certificated under Subchapter H of 46 CFR Chapter I, a line throwing appliance that meets the requirements in 46 CFR 75.45;
- For vessels certificated under subchapters I or T of 46 CFR Chapter I, a line throwing appliance that meets the requirements of 46 CFR 94.45;
- A Stokes or comparable litter;
- One blanket for each person on the most populated facility that the standby vessel is designated to assist;
- Means for safely retrieving persons, including injured or helpless persons, from the water. The means of retrieval must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection;
- A scramble net that can be rigged on either side of the standby vessel;
- A minimum of four Coast Guard approved ring life buoys, each equipped with 15 fathoms of line;
- An immersion suit approved by the Coast Guard under 46 CFR 160.171, or a buoyant suit meeting Supplement A of ANSI/UL-1123-1987 and approved under 46 CFR 160.053, for each member of the standby vessel's crew when the standby vessel operates north of 32 degrees north latitude in the Atlantic Ocean or north of 35 degrees north latitude in all other waters;
- Two boat hooks;
- A fire monitor with a minimum flow rate of at least 500 gallons per minute;
- One two-way radio capable of voice communications with the OCS facility, helicopters or other rescue aircraft, rescue boats, and shore side support personnel;
- Floodlights to illuminate the personnel and boat retrieval area, the scramble net when deployed, and the water around the personnel retrieval and scramble net deployment areas;

- A copy of "The Ship's Medicine Chest and Medical Aid at Sea";
- An industrial first aid kit sized for 50 percent of the number of persons on the most populated facility that the standby vessel is designated to assist; and
- Coast Guard approved life preservers for 50 percent of the number of persons on the most populated facility that the standby vessel is designated to assist.

All equipment must be inspected to the satisfaction of the OCMI.

Manning

Standby vessels must be crewed in accordance with their certificate of inspection for 24-hour operation. The OCMI may require the crew to be augmented, as necessary, to provide for maneuvering the standby vessel, for lookouts, for rigging and operating retrieval equipment, and for caring for survivors.

Additional Considerations

Operators seeking standby vessel endorsements should contact their local OCMI to schedule an inspection and discuss any particulars for standby vessel endorsements in the OCMI zone. Additionally, operators should be prepared to have all required equipment ready for inspection during the initial endorsement. The OCMI will establish subsequent standby vessel equipment and readiness inspection intervals.

Vessels enrolled in the Alternate Compliance Program are eligible for a standby vessel endorsement; however, endorsements and determinations are not a delegated function of a Classification Society or Recognized Organization and must be obtained through the OCMI.

Once the vessel has met the minimum requirements, the certificate of inspection (COI) will carry a standby vessel endorsement in the Routes and Conditions section of the COI.