

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commanding Officer
Marine Safety Office Pittsburgh

Kossman Bldg., Ste. 1150
100 Forbes Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1371
Phone: (412) 644-5808
Fax: (412) 644-3479

16450
March 30, 2005

MSO PITTSBURGH INFORMATION BULLETIN

Prohibition on Intentional Draining of Oil or Hazardous Material Into Bilges

It has recently come to my attention that the owners and/or operators of uninspected towing vessels on the Western Rivers are routinely engaging in the process of intentionally draining oil into the bilges of their tow vessels as the result of routine maintenance such as changing oil filters, etc. Please note that this practice is in direct violation of Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 155.770, which states, "No person may intentionally drain oil or hazardous material from any source into the bilge of a vessel."

Violation of this law is a serious offense that dramatically increases the risk of a shipboard fire and poses potential hazards to the marine environment. This was dramatically illustrated during a marine casualty involving the towing vessel ELIZABETH BEESECKER while underway with eleven loaded grain barges and one empty molasses barge. While enroute to St. Louis, a fire broke out in the vessel's engine room, which quickly spread to the bilges, forcing the evacuation of all crewmembers onto the barges. The crew was eventually rescued and the vessel was pushed into the bank where it burned for 2 days. Had the vessel been pushing red flag barges, the situation may have been much worse.

All violations of this regulation may subject the owner, operator or person in charge of a vessel, to civil penalties of up to \$32,500 per violation. In addition, owners, operators or persons in charge may be subject to criminal prosecution.

It is my expectation that all vessels subject to the pollution prevention regulations outlined in 33 CFR 155 shall comply with these regulations at all times. CFR cites can be accessed on the web at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/retrieve.html>. If you have any questions regarding this matter or would like to report violations of these or any other regulations, please contact Lieutenant Michael Anderson of my staff at 412-644-5808 x 2104.

Handwritten signature of W. W. Briggs in black ink.
W. W. BRIGGS

Commander, U. S. Coast Guard
Captain of the Port