

Dated: February 20, 2003.

Michael D. Brown,

Deputy Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

46 CFR Part 4

[USCG-2001-8773]

RIN 2115-AG07

Marine Casualties and Investigations; Chemical Testing Following Serious Marine Incidents

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard proposes changing the alcohol testing requirements for commercial vessels following a serious marine incident. The 1998 Coast Guard Authorization Act requires the Coast Guard to establish procedures ensuring alcohol testing is conducted within two hours of a serious marine casualty. The Coast Guard proposes to establish requirements for testing within the statutory time limits, to expand the existing requirements for commercial vessels to have alcohol-testing devices on board, and to authorize use of a wider variety of testing devices. This rulemaking would also make additional minor procedural changes to Part 4, including a time limit for conducting drug testing following a serious marine incident.

DATES: Comments and related material must reach the Docket Management Facility on or before June 30, 2003. Comments sent to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on collection of information must reach OMB on or before April 29, 2003.

ADDRESSES: To make sure that your comments and related material are not entered more than once in the docket, please submit them by only one of the following means:

(1) By mail to the Docket Management Facility (USCG-2001-8773), U.S. Department of Transportation, room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001.

(2) By delivery to room PL-401 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

(3) By fax to the Docket Management Facility at 202-493-2251.

(4) Electronically through the Web Site for the Docket Management System at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

The Docket Management Facility maintains the public docket for this rulemaking. Comments and material received from the public, as well as documents mentioned in this preamble as being available in the docket, will become part of this docket and will be available for inspection or copying at room PL-401 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also find this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions on this proposed rule, call Mr. Robert C. Schoening, Coast Guard, at 202-267-0684. If you have questions on viewing or submitting material to the docket, call Dorothy Beard, Chief, Dockets, Department of Transportation, telephone 202-366-5149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Request for Comments

We encourage you to participate in this rulemaking by submitting comments and related material. If you do so, please include your name and address, identify the docket number for this rulemaking (USCG-2001-8773), indicate the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and give the reason for each comment. You may submit your comments and material by mail, hand delivery, fax, or electronic means to the Docket Management Facility at the address under **ADDRESSES**; but please submit your comments and material by only one means. If you submit them by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit them by mail and would like to know they reached the Facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. We will consider all comments and material received during the comment period. We may change this proposed rule in view of them.

Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume

65, Number 70; pages 19477-78) or you may visit <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Public Meeting

We do not now plan to hold a public meeting. But you may submit a request for one to the Docket Management Facility at the address under **ADDRESSES** explaining why one would be beneficial. If we determine that a public meeting would be helpful to this rulemaking, we will hold one at a time and place announced by a later notice in the **Federal Register**.

Background and Purpose

The current regulations in 46 CFR part 4 require marine employers to take all practicable steps after a serious marine incident (SMI) to ensure that chemical testing is conducted. The regulations do not specify a time requirement for completing the tests for alcohol or for dangerous drugs following an SMI. Without a specified timeframe to conduct alcohol or drug testing after an SMI, in some instances tests were not conducted, and in other instances tests were not completed soon enough for the results to provide a determination of whether alcohol was present in an individual's system at the time the SMI occurred.

In 1998, Congress passed Public Law 105-383 which revised Title 46, U.S. Code, by adding a new section 2303a—"Post serious marine casualty alcohol testing" (hereafter section 2303a). Section 2303a requires the Coast Guard to establish procedures ensuring that after a serious marine casualty occurs, required alcohol testing is conducted no later than two hours after the casualty occurred. If the alcohol testing cannot be conducted within that timeframe because of safety concerns directly related to the casualty, section 2303a requires the alcohol testing to be conducted as soon thereafter as the safety concerns have been adequately addressed to permit such testing. However, section 2303a prohibits us from requiring alcohol testing to be conducted more than eight hours after the casualty occurs.

The Coast Guard requires that alcohol and drug testing be conducted after a serious marine incident. Section 2303a uses the term "serious marine casualty." For the purpose of this rulemaking serious marine casualty means the same as *serious marine incident* (SMI) as defined in 46 CFR 4.03-2. Section 2303a also uses the phrase "safety concerns directly related to the casualty" as the only reason the marine employer may postpone alcohol testing following an SMI.