



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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DISTRACTED OPERATIONS **Don't let it be you!**

Throughout the United States, and across all transportation modes, safety initiatives are being established to address issues related to Distracted Operations. The Coast Guard recognizes the importance of this issue, understands the potential consequences caused by increased operational risk in marine operations, and is supportive of the goals and objectives of the U.S. Department of Transportation and other distracted driving safety initiatives.

With respect to vessel operations, the bridge team management approach to safe navigation is an essential element of risk management and safe vessel operations. The team approach to safe navigation requires the clear, frequent and accurate exchange of information between all crewmembers relative to the safe operation of the vessel. In other evolutions, such as discharging cargo, loading fuels, etc., full attention is required by all involved in order to prevent casualties or pollution incidents. Additionally, when mariners are navigating or working alone, the use of cellular or other devices unrelated to the operation at hand could impede the exchange of vital operational information, delay reaction time, or cause attention lapses of those involved which could result in unwanted circumstances having very serious consequences causing injuries and fatalities, material damage, and environmental impact.

NTSB findings in investigations involving other transportation modes have found that the use of cellular telephones and other wireless devices can degrade performance, slow response times, and increase attention lapses of those in safety-sensitive positions. A recent executive order signed by President Obama prohibits text messaging by federal employees, including contractors, when driving government vehicles or their privately owned vehicles on government business. Most states and the District of Columbia (DOC) have recognized the risk and banned texting while driving. Nine states and the DOC have banned the use of handheld cellular telephones while driving. Lastly, the United States Department of Transportation has established a national initiative focusing on Driving Distracted. (More information is available at <http://distraction.gov>.)

The potential risk associated with improper use of cellular telephones and other devices in the marine environment while navigating or performing other vessel functions should be apparent to vessel owners and operators.

Consequently, the Coast Guard **strongly recommends** vessel owners and operators to develop and implement effective operational policies outlining when the use of cellular telephones and other devices is appropriate or prohibited.

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