

INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 82

US Coast Guard Access to Merchant Shipping

This Administration is in receipt of a communication from the USCG on the subject of access to ships and port facilities in the course of security checks.

This shortened extract of the text is brought to your attention so that your CSO may ensure your staff is appropriately briefed.

The intent of this letter is to clarify procedures that will be followed by Coast Guard personnel as they access foreign flagged vessels.

Recognising that maritime security is a shared responsibility, the following steps will be adhered to by a Coast Guard official when attempting to access a commercial vessel.

- 1. They will verbally provide their name and organizational affiliation.*
- 2. They will present an official government issued ID card at each security checkpoint.*
- 3. Sign the visitor's logbook and provide an office contact number if requested.*
- 4. Accept an escort if requested.*

Coast Guard personnel fully expect to be approached for an ID check before being granted access to the vessel. Vessels which allow access to unidentified law enforcement could be considered to be in violation of the MTSA / ISPS Code.

Please note that properly identified law enforcement officials will not surrender their ID cards or firearms and will not submit to baggage or vehicle searches.

With regard to safety issues regarding the use of non intrinsically safe equipment onboard tankers and chemical vessels. The USCG is following an internationally accepted training programme to ensure only appropriately trained officials board certain ship types.

USCG officials will not attempt to test security arrangement by fabricating or refusing to show their credentials or by simulating the smuggling of prohibited items in baggage or government vehicles.

If any officials refuse to show proper ID or there is any doubt to there veracity of an officials credentials the ship should immediately contact the Coast Guard Captain of the Port.

Law enforcement officers have the have the right to access vessels for inspection without delay or obstruction.

Furthermore they have the right to use reasonable force to compel compliance with lawful orders.

Swift remedial actions will be applied to ships where access has been denied and these may include operational controls, civil penalties, and potential criminal sanctions.

It should be noted that the procedures outlined in this information do not apply to accessing vessels during emergencies.

It is recognised that during this initial phase that matters will arise that have not been fully addressed. The Coast Guard will not take immediate actions in these cases but will require the vessel security plan to be amended so that it complies with the law enforcement procedures.

2004-09-28

