



Cook Inlet Risk Assessment seeking ideas to cut risks of maritime accidents

Submitted by the Cook Inlet Risk Assessment Management Team:

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Cook Inlet mariners are all too familiar with the whims of Mother Nature, whose gale-force winds, ice-flows, extreme tides and currents can only be navigated with the highest level of specialized skills, training, and experience. With its significant vessel traffic, dynamic waters, and navigational features that challenge even the most experienced mariners, the possibility of a serious accident in Cook Inlet is always present. The U. S. Coast Guard, Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council, and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation created the Cook Inlet Risk Assessment to analyze the risks associated with marine vessel operations in Cook Inlet and recommend measures to reduce the chances of accidents and resulting oil spills.

The project is guided by a Management Team, comprised of the organization and agencies noted above, and an Advisory Panel of 14 stakeholders including mariners, marine pilots, port directors, fishermen, subsistence users, and other experts. They have completed three technical studies analyzing the vessel traffic, accident frequencies, and potential consequences from spills. The Advisory Panel is now considering risk reduction measures and asking the public for ideas on potential risk reduction options as a first step.

A risk reduction measure can be any policy, procedure, rule, equipment, system, or service that would lower the chance of a marine incident or reduce the impact of an incident if it should occur. It can be something fairly obvious or traditional such as a Vessel Traffic System that monitors and controls the movement of vessels transiting Cook Inlet. Or, it may be something less obvious, such as a sub-sea pipeline that would take the place of tankers moving oil across Cook Inlet. The Advisory Panel will consider all suggestions for further study. A list of some risk reduction measures already slated for consideration is posted on the project website at www.cookinletriskassessment.com. If you do not have a new suggestion to offer, you are also invited to weigh in on what you think about the options that have already been suggested.

Cook Inlet Risk Assessment Management Team:

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Ideas for risk reduction measures can be submitted by email to ciracomment@nukaresearch.com, by mail to CIRA Comments, Nuka Research, PO Box 175, Seldovia, AK 99663, or by fax to (240) 394-4855. The deadline for comments is February 4, 2013. The Advisory Panel will meet in late February to consider all suggestions.

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Background: The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (Cook RCAC), Alaska Department of Environment Conservation and U.S. Coast Guard launched the Cook Inlet Risk Assessment to examine the risk of oil spills posed by the marine vessels transiting through, near and/or servicing the region. The goal of the risk assessment is to answer the following questions:

- What can go wrong?
- How likely is it?
- What are the impacts?
- Can the impacts be mitigated?

The risk assessment is examining the current types and sizes of vessels plying Cook Inlet and dominant accident types and identifying future oil spill risks based on vessel size, type and frequency. The first phase of the risk assessment was limited to a semi-qualitative analysis, relying primarily on historical data, expert opinion, and lessons learned from prior studies. Study results provided a basis for the identification and initial ranking of risk reduction measures.

We have sought extensive stakeholder engagement throughout the process of defining and analyzing risks and identifying risk reduction measures.

Initial funding for the risk assessment was secured through a legislative appropriation by the State of Alaska and is being administered by the Kenai Peninsula Borough and Cook Inlet RCAC.

More information can be obtained at www.cookinletriskassessment.com

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