

City of Unalaska

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security
**United States
Coast Guard**



ALASKA
Department of
Environmental
Conservation



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Unalaska's Emergency Towing System Passes the Test

Local assets now in place to rescue disabled vessels

Unalaska—With the help of the M/V Baltic Prosperity, Alaska Marine Pilots, the U.S. Coast Guard, and three tug boats, Unalaska's emergency towing system has been successfully tested in Unalaska Bay. It is now fully operational and ready for deployment.

"The opportunity for all response parties to assess the system first hand on the water with a 'disabled' vessel was tremendously valuable. It is a positive step forward to better protect our marine environment and economic stability," said Unalaska Mayor Shirley Marquardt, who spearheaded the July 31st demonstration. Marquardt was motivated to form a defensive strategy workgroup to develop the emergency towing system after the March 9th near grounding of the Salica Frigo in local waters.

"The grounding or sinking of a vessel in our near shore waters could cause calamitous impacts to the marine environment and economic stability of our healthy community of over 4,000 full-time residents," said Marquardt.

Marquardt called the highly successful partnership between City, State and Federal agencies, as well as private business, extraordinary and highly appreciated by the entire community of Unalaska/Dutch Harbor.

Under the scenario, two deployment methods were practiced, helio-ship-tug and tug-ship, to come to the aid of a tramper vessel with a non-English speaking crew in need of towing assistance. There were no constraints due to time, sea state or weather. The goal was to practice, verify, and modify procedures for safe and effective ETS deployment.

The Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation, U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Marine Pilots Association, City of Unalaska, Samson Tug and Barge, and the Tug Gyrfalcon met in March to begin the process of designing an emergency towing system (ETS) for vessels up to 50,000 dead weight tons (dwt). The City of Unalaska purchased the ETS, designed to be deployed by helicopter or from a local tug. DEC has purchased a second ETS for vessels over 50,000 dwt and will store it in the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities hanger.

The successful exercise proves the capability of the emergency towing system, which will be readily available to assist disabled vessels.

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Photographs are available at:

<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/perp/aiets/home.htm>

Video footage available from: Kelly O'Brien, UBC Television Operations, (907) 581-1888