

RVOC Report to the UNOLS Council
February 8, 2008

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The next RVOC meeting is scheduled for April 22-24, 2008 at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Registration is now open. Below is a current status of the issues facing RVOC:

1. **Transportation Workers Identification Credentials (TWIC) Exemption:**
RVOC initially began a process of seeking fleet-wide exemption from the TWIC program as “government-owned/non-commercial” vessels. However, it became apparent from discussions with USCG that this approach may not solve the underlying problem.

For any secure facility, whether a UNOLS operator or commercial port, the primary advantage of this exemption would be for the science party since the requirements of this program would be prohibitive to routine operations when in port for mobilization. Any person who does not have a TWIC in their possession that should normally have access to "restricted facilities" would need to be escorted at all times. The real issue goes back to whether or not an operation has a Facility Security Plan (FSP) and/or a Vessel Security Plan (VSP) in place, and how often they use other secure facilities for mobilization. Individual UNOLS operators will have to decide, in consultation with their local USCG group, whether or not they need to maintain their FSP and VSP. They may also need to closely consider which facilities they use for mobilization in the future.

All members of the ship's complement that hold USCG merchant mariners documents are required by the regulation to obtain a TWIC by September 25, 2008. In joint consultation with RVTEC, RVOC recommends the following for those that do not hold MMD's:

- All marine technicians should obtain a TWIC as required by their operation/institution based on the kind of facilities normally used for mobilization.
- In order to facilitate mobilizations, all Chief Scientist who routinely use UNOLS vessels that operate out of secure facilities should be required to have TWIC. Chief Scientists should consult with the UNOLS Office or their operating institution.

More information, including the locations and information on enrollment in TWIC, can be found at www.tsa.gov/twic.

2. **Final review of the Research Vessel Safety Standards (RVSS):** This revision of the RVSS continues to move ahead. Most chapters are in final review at this time. The *UNOLS Wire Safe Working Load Standards, Appendix A* was accepted

by RVTEC during their November 2007 meeting, and vessels are now in the process of implementing. The *UNOLS Load Handling System Design Standards, Appendix B* is still under development in consultation with Glosten Associates.

Target date for completion of the RVSSS and adoption by the RVOC membership is now the April 2008 RVOC meeting.

3. **Personnel Recruitment and Retention:** In July of 2007, the Chairs and Chair-elects of RVOC and RVTEC presented the UNOLS Council with a report outlining the current crisis in personnel throughout the marine industry. In the case of the UNOLS fleet, this includes both crew and technicians. Since then, more information has been gathered and possible solutions particular to the UNOLS fleet are now being formulated. This is a highly complex issue and a single, simple “fix” is not possible.

An important element of this process was a fleet-wide salary survey in order to compare UNOLS operators with other sectors of the maritime industry. The UNOLS Office has recently completed the data collection phase and the overall results (not individual institutions or ships) will be included in the final report for illustration.

Creative solutions within current budgetary constraints are now in the process of being developed. Please refer to the presentation from the October Council meeting for examples of proposed solutions. A formal list of recommendations will be presented to the UNOLS Council for review and consideration.

RVOC and RVTEC extend their thanks to the UNOLS Office for working diligently on gathering the salary information and evaluating the figures.