

Research Vessel Operator's Committee
Report to the UNOLS Council
March 2009

Below is a current status of the issues facing RVOC:

1. Transportation Workers Identification Credentials (TWIC):

The Coast Guard has announced that compliance dates will be phased in by Captain of the Port Zones between Oct. 15, 2008, and April 15, 2009, after which all ports must be in compliance and all credentialed mariners must be in possession of a TWIC. A TWIC costs \$132.50 and is good for five years.

The UNOLS home page has the following link:

http://www.unols.org/info/UNOLS_TWIC_INFO_051408.pdf

which provides much detailed and useful information on the issue.

The Law:

- TWIC implements the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 and the Security and Accountability for Every Port Act of 2006.
- All MTSA-regulated facilities and vessels are subject to the TWIC program.
- If you require unescorted access to one of these facilities or vessels, you need a TWIC.
- All mariners who hold valid Coast Guard issued licenses, Merchant Mariner Documents (MMDs), Certificates of Registry (COR), and or Standards of Training, Certification, and Watch keeping (STCW) endorsements must obtain a TWIC.

As a reminder, at the winter meeting in February of last year, the Council passed the motion to accept the RVTEC/RVOC recommendations that:

- All Technicians should be required by their institution to get a TWIC.
- All Chief Scientists normally sailing out of secure facilities should get a TWIC, otherwise science mobilizations/logistics may be jeopardized.

2. Approval of the Research Vessel Safety Standards (RVSS): The UNOLS Research Vessel Safety Standards, Edition 9 have been approved by the UNOLS Marine Superintendents (RVOC Voting Members) and are ready for approval by the UNOLS Council.

The new format attempts to uniformly show those requirements mandated by laws and regulations; those required by the UNOLS RVSS; and any further recommendations, best practices or resources.

Changes made since last revision (March 2003):

- Overall Organization: Revised the overall structure of the standards to uniformly show those requirements required by laws and regulations, those required by the UNOLS RVSS in addition and any further recommendations, best practices or resources. The chapters were re-ordered and include extensive review and update of references and content throughout the RVSS's.
- *Chapter 10*: Removed chapter on explosives and inserted relevant information in Chapter 8 - Hazardous Materials.
- *Chapter 5*: Added chapter on Personal Safety with sections covering alcohol and drug policies, sexual harassment and accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- *Chapter 12*: Added chapter on Human Occupied Vehicle (Submersible) Safety.
- *Appendix B*: UNOLS Load Handling System Design Standards. This Appendix will be finalized and inserted at a later date.
- *Appendix E*: Added Sexual Harassment Brochure.
- *Appendix A*: Added UNOLS Rope and Cable Safe Working Loads for wire:

It has long been recognized that there is a need to establish consistent safe working loads for wire ropes and cables in the UNOLS fleet. UNOLS (RVOC/RVTEC) has been trying to establish safe working load (SWL) criteria for .322 cable for close to ten years now.

46 CFR 189.35 - "Weight Handling Gear" describes design standards for handling systems aboard inspected oceanographic research vessels. However, this standard does not address FS on the cables and/or wire rope. The purpose of this appendix to the RVSS is to establish safe and effective operating limits for vessels in the UNOLS fleet for cables and ropes loaded beyond traditional shore-side limits.

One goal of this standard is to minimize damage to cables and handling equipment, and the loss of scientific equipment, while

still permitting the science objective to be met. More importantly, the standard seeks to define the requirements, which must be adhered to during over-the-side deployments in order to maintain a safe working environment for all personnel aboard.

Normal operation beyond the parameters defined in this standard is forbidden. Exceptions to this are an emergency situation declared by the Master or other officer in charge of the vessel.

Appendix A defines the operating requirements, or loading limitations on wire, and are expressed in terms of Factor of Safety (FS) on the Nominal Breaking Load (NBL) and divided into three different categories:

- FS of 5 or greater
- FS of 4.9 to 2.5
- FS of 2.4 to 1.5

Appendix A also defines the INSPECTION AND TESTING REQUIREMENTS for wire.

Future Revisions:

We have been considering a process that will make changes easier. Rather than wait for 3 years before changing something, the new RVSS may be issued so that chapters can be replaced when the need exists. There will be a record of changes that will reflect the current version of each chapter and Appendix. If we decide Appendix A needs a significant modification, that can be done quickly and new record of changes and affected sections will be distributed to replace prior versions.

3. Crew and Technician Recruitment and Retention:

A Crew-Technician Recruitment and Retention Workshop was held in Austin Texas on February 18th and 19th. The outcome and recommendations will be provided in another report.

4. Ship-Berthing Policy formulation request by DESSC

The Committee made a request that a standard fleet-wide science party ship-berthing policy be developed that allows for maximum access to on-board berthing while in port.

There was an email exchange within RVOC, with responses to this request that varied across the table. We are finding that the request to maximize science-berthing days onboard is at odds with establishing a fleet wide policy. The issue will be discussed at length during our upcoming RVOC meeting in April.

The next RVOC meeting is scheduled for April 14-16, 2009 at the University of Texas in Port Aransas.

The UNOLS Safety Committee will meet on April 13, 2009 (the day prior to RVOC meeting) to review appendix A and work on Appendix B of the RVSS. Other discussion items will include RVSS change procedures to keep document current; new regulations requiring inclusion in RVSS ; Refusal of personnel to follow medication recommendations by MedAire; and an upgrade to the Safety Training Video.

Other important agenda items scheduled for the RVOC meeting include:

- Crew and technician retention workshop findings and actions
- US EPA and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Vessel General Permits
- Installation and support for cabled observatories
- Presentation on advanced handling systems
- Experiences from the Fleet on Vessel Maintenance Management Systems

Report submitted by Peter Zerr

- TWIC requirement (for Mariners as of April 15th 2009)
- RVSS to Council for approval
- Installation and support for cabled observatories
- Crew and technician retention workshop findings and actions
- US EPA and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Vessel General Permits



EPA's Vessel General Permit (VGP)

www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels/

2/5/09





Clean Water Act

National Pollutant Discharge
Elimination System (NPDES)
Vessel General Permit (VGP) for
Discharges Incidental to the
Normal Operation of Vessels





The following list identifies and describes “some” effluent streams eligible for coverage under the permit:

- *Deck Washdown and Runoff and Above Water Line Hull Cleaning*
- *Cathodic Protection*
- *Firemain Systems*
- *Graywater*
- *Refrigeration and Air Condensate Discharge*

