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Subj: VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES NATIONAL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES  
MANUAL (VTS NSOP)

- Ref:
- (a) Staffing Levels at VTS Centres, IALA Guideline No. 1045
  - (b) U.S. Coast Guard Sector Organizational Manual, COMDTINST M5401.6 (series)
  - (c) Staffing Standards Manual, COMDTINST M5312.11 (series)
  - (d) IALA VTS Manual, Edition 4 (2008)
  - (e) Operational Procedures for Vessel Traffic Services, IALA Recommendation V-127
  - (f) Standard Marine Communication Phrases, IMO Resolution A.918(22)
  - (g) Continuity of Operations, Policy and Planning, COMDTINST M3010.15 (series)
  - (h) Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series)
  - (i) Safety and Environmental Health Manual, COMDTINST M5100.47 (series)
  - (j) Personnel Resources and Reprogramming Manual, COMDTINST M5312.13 (series)
  - (k) Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series)
  - (l) Coast Guard Medical Manual, COMDTINST M6000.1(series)
  - (m)The Coast Guard Freedom of Information (FOIA) and Privacy Acts Manual, COMDTINST M5260.3 (series)
  - (n) Telecommunication Manual, COMDTINST M2000.3 (series)
  - (o) Coast Guard Incident Command System Implementation Plan, COMDTINST M3120.15 (series)
  - (p) IALA Manual on Training of VTS Personnel, IALA Recommendation V-103
  - (q) Casualty Reporting (CASREP) Procedures (Materiel) Manual, COMDTINST M3501.3 (series)
  - (r) Electronics Manual, COMDTINST M10550.25 (series)
  - (s) Navy Total Force Manpower Policies and Procedures, OPNAVINST 1000.16K

1. **PURPOSE.** This Manual establishes the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) National Standard Operating Procedures (VTS NSOP). This document contains policy, guidance, recommended procedures and general information about VTS operations, administration and training.

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No. 157

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A																										
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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION: B:a CG-7412, CG-7413; B:c DPW

2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commandants, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements shall comply with the provisions of this Manual. Internet release is not authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. Vessel Traffic Service National Standard Operating Procedures Manual (VTS NSOP), COMDTINST M16630.3, is canceled.
4. MAJOR CHANGES. Major changes to this Manual include: formal requirement for VTS's to request a waiver from their District Commander, via their operational chain-of-command, for any requirements from this Manual that the VTS cannot meet; clarification of the VTS's position within the Sector and MSU organization; establishment of minimum staffing structure for both multi-sector and single-sector VTSs; establishment of minimum staffing standards for watch positions; establishes VTS program role in selection of VTS Directors; establishes standard of communication between a VTS and embarked Pilot; establishes policy guidance on provision of Navigational Assistance Service (NAS), to include instances in which the application of NAS is appropriate; defines and establishes a requirement to report VTS Interventions; establishes policy for VTS Program post-incident review; changes minimum off-communications policy to one-hour off of the active communications watch per three-hour watch period for VTS sector operators; adds a requirement for annual VTS self-assessment; adds requirement for VTS Program approval of any publications related to VTS, USCG VTS program international engagement, or establishment of any MOU/MOA between a VTS and other entity; and it formally establishes the VTS Operational Evaluation (OPEVAL) procedures.
5. DISCUSSION.
  - a. Congress passed the Ports and Waterways Safety Act (PWSA) of 1972 to prevent damage to, or the destruction or loss of any vessel, bridge, or other structure on or in the navigable waters of the United States. This is the major goal and objective of a VTS. Through the practiced use of communications and surveillance equipment, and Captain of the Port (COTP) or VTS specific regulatory authority when necessary, VTSs are able to reduce the risk of vessel collisions and groundings. VTSs also have the capability to undertake defense- and security-related responsibilities specified by Maritime Defense Zone (MDZ) commanders, monitor aids to navigation and anchorages, and provide Search and Rescue (SAR) and law/security enforcement assistance.
  - b. This Manual and its accompanying enclosures provide programmatic guidance to all Coast Guard (CG) Sectors and Vessel Traffic Services. VTS Directors shall ensure that all VTS personnel receive a thorough indoctrination in the appropriate sections of the VTS NSOP. A thorough knowledge and understanding of the VTS NSOP by all VTS personnel is essential to the proper execution of assigned duties.
  - c. As the situation dictates, the VTS Program Manager may issue special instructions or waivers to adjust or amend policy and/or procedures or issue additional guidance, through the chain-of-command. The VTS shall request a waiver from their District Commander, via their operational chain-of-command, for any requirement of this manual for which they are deficient.
  - d. Every effort has been made to make this Manual useful and applicable to all VTS operations. In situations where this Manual does not address a specific procedure or

situation and the application of a particular provision is unclear, users should seek clarification from their reporting senior and advise the VTS Program Manager of the need to clarify the provision in question.

- e. The diverse nature of local VTS functions, responsibilities and internal/external relationships, means that this Manual cannot and is not intended to cover every procedural variation that may be encountered. VTS Directors must rely on their leadership and management skills, sound judgment, business practices, and common sense.
  - f. In cases of apparent conflict between policy stated in this Manual and provisions of statutes and regulations, the statutory or regulatory provisions shall be applied, and the VTS Program Manager shall be advised of the apparent conflict at the earliest opportunity. Likewise, in cases of apparent conflict with current local practice, the VTS Program Manager shall be contacted at the earliest opportunity for resolution of the matter.
6. PROCEDURES. VTS Directors may expand on the guidance contained in this Manual when needed; e.g., when information unique to a particular VTS is required. However, they may not change guidance provided by the Commandant and they may not change the format of this Manual. Using this Manual and reference (a) as a guide for content, each VTS Director shall create and maintain Internal Operating Procedures (IOP) that detail policies and procedures for VTS administration and operations, and may be included as a part of the local command's SOP.
7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this Manual and have been determined to be not applicable.
8. FORMS/REPORTS. None.

VINCENT B. ATKINS /s/  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard  
Assistant Commandant for Capability







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## CHAPTER 1. VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE ORGANIZATION

A. Headquarters Organization. Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) in the United States are organized under the auspices of the Coast Guard's Deputy Commandant for Operations (DCO) and the Assistant Commandant for Capability, Commandant (CG-7). The Office of Shore Forces, Commandant (CG-741) is the designated Competent Authority for VTS. Within Commandant (CG-741), the Vessel Traffic Services Division, Commandant (CG-7413) serves as the VTS Program Manager whose primary responsibilities are:

1. VTS system requirements management;
2. VTS doctrine management;
3. VTS regulatory management;
4. International engagement related to VTS;
5. Conducting VTS Operational Evaluations (OPEVAL);
6. VTS systems management;
7. VTS Program financial resources management, including management of VTS Program Electronic Resource Proposal (eRP) input;
8. VTS Personnel management, including training and staffing;
9. Strategic communication of VTS Program interests; and
10. Overall VTS Program administration.

B. Area Organization. Each Area Commander has a designated office within his/her organization that is responsible for waterways management functions and VTS issues.

C. District Organization. District Commanders are responsible for coordinating VTS issues within their districts. Waterways Management or ATON offices within parent Districts are typically designated as points of contact for VTS issues.

D. Sector Organization.

1. In the case of a Sector with an assigned VTS, as stated in Chapter 3 of reference (b), the VTS is organized as an entity within the Waterways Management Division, under the Sector's Prevention Department. Deviations from this organizational structure require prior approval from the VTS program.
2. In the instance of a VTS assigned under a Marine Safety Unit (MSU), the VTS shall be organized as a separate department reporting directly to the MSU Executive Officer. The VTS Director at a MSU assigned VTS may also be assigned as the Chief of Waterways Management for the MSU, as appropriate.

3. Organizational placement of each VTS is for administrative purposes and synergies of effort beyond the responsibilities of the Vessel Traffic Center (VTC).
  4. The VTC may or may not be physically located in close proximity to the Sector Command Center (SCC). However, the VTS director shall ensure the VTS is operating as an integral component of the Sector organization.
  5. Operationally, each VTC is a watch and shall exercise its responsibilities and authorities directly with the Command Duty Officer and the VTS Director as specified in IOP.
  6. VTC will be a node to any established Interagency Operations Centers, similar to an SCC.
  7. The VTS Director is responsible for daily traffic management operations in the VTC and coordinates and manages the administrative, training, maintenance, staffing and budget issues related to VTS. The VTS Director shall liaise with the:
    - a. VTS Program Manager to ensure alignment with the Commandant on VTS issues, ensuring the chain-of-command is informed.
    - b. Captain of the Port to carry out their duties and authorities as specified in Federal Regulations.
- E. VTS Organization. References (a) and (c) provide guidance on determining required staffing at a VTS. Each VTS has unique geographic and operational requirements. However, the VTS Program intends for each established Coast Guard VTS to have the following minimum positions:
1. Multi-Sector VTS. A VTS with more than one VTS Operator position shall include the following positions:
    - a. VTS Director;
    - b. VTS Operations Manager;
    - c. VTS Training Coordinator;
    - d. VTS Administrative Assistant; and
    - e. VTS Electronics Material Officer (EMO).
  2. Single-Sector VTS. A VTS with one VTS Operator position shall include the following positions:
    - a. VTS Director;
    - b. VTS Training Coordinator; and
    - c. VTS EMO.

3. Watch Positions. At a minimum, each VTS shall be staffed with appropriate numbers of personnel in VTS operational positions (VTS Supervisors and VTS Operators) to meet watch composition, rest, and relief requirements as indicated in paragraphs 4.B.5 – 8 of this Manual. Appendix E establishes minimum staffing calculations for watch positions.
- F. Selection of VTS Director. The Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) National Standard Operating Procedures Manual and Federal Regulations (33 CFR § 160 & 161) impose significant responsibility and authorities on VTS Directors. In view of this, the VTS Program is an active participant in the selection and hiring process for Civilian VTS Directors or assignment of active duty VTS Directors. The role of the VTS Program in the VTS Director selection process is:
1. Civilian Directors: Due to the infrequency of civilian VTS Director vacancies, the specialized work of VTS and the lack of VTS subject matter expertise at field commands, upon determination of the intent to announce the position vacancy, the affected Sector or MSU will notify the VTS Program of the planned open period (inclusive dates). The VTS Program will serve as a member of the selection panel and be involved in the interview and selection process.
  2. Active Duty Directors: The VTS Program will interact with the responsible Assignment Officer and Sector Commander or MSU Commanding Officer throughout the assignment process to ensure Program concerns are addressed.
- G. Absence of the VTS Director. The Captain of the Port (COTP) shall normally be the successor to the VTS Director, in his/her absence. In situations where a person other than the COTP is designated to serve in the VTS Director's absence, the Sector Commander or MSU Commanding Officer shall ensure that the VTS Director's successor is identified (by position title) in correspondence to the VTS Program Manager, Commandant (CG-7413).
- H. Operational Waivers: The VTS Director must request a waiver from their District Commander, through their operational chain-of-command, for any deviation from the requirements in this Manual. The District Commander will decide if a waiver is appropriate for this situation, or if a reduction in the level of service offered by the VTS is required. The VTS Program Manager (CG-7413) shall be copied on all waiver requests. The operational waiver shall include:
1. Mitigation steps to address each requirement deviation.
  2. Waiver period.
- I. Cooperative Vessel Traffic Services. In accordance with 33 CFR § 161.2, a Cooperative Vessel Traffic Service (CVTS) is a system of vessel traffic management established and jointly operated by the United States and Canada within adjoining waters. The only currently established CVTS is operated in the Strait of Juan de Fuca region, operated between the Canadian Coast Guard and VTS Puget Sound (PS). Until a VTS area is established as a CVTS within Federal Regulations, a VTS shall not be referred to as a Cooperative Vessel Traffic Service.

- J. Partnerships. The PWSA allows the Coast Guard to enter into partnership agreements to carry out the functions of the VTS, so long as non-governmental agencies involved are not responsible for inherently governmental functions.
1. Vessel Traffic Services involving partnerships with local port stakeholders, such as those in Tampa, Florida, Los Angeles-Long Beach, California, and New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Cooperative VTS in Puget Sound are organized under the local Sector Commander.
  2. Coordination and collaboration between the Sector Commander's staff, the VTS staff, the maritime industry or cooperative international partner and the VTS Program Manager are necessary to manage the operations, resources, staffing and training of the VTS.
  3. Any formal agreements (i.e. MOU or MOA) establishing any operational partnership with the VTS shall be reviewed by the VTS Program prior to implementation of the agreement.

## CHAPTER 2. VTS OPERATIONS

- A. Concept of Operations. Congress authorized the Coast Guard to establish the VTS program in the Ports and Waterways Safety Act (PWSA) of 1972, 33 USC § 1221 *et seq.* The Coast Guard's VTS regulations (33 CFR § 161) are the foundational regulatory instrument on which the VTS program is based. Through the VTS Program, the Coast Guard employs navigation safety systems and practices to reduce risk and to facilitate maritime commerce in U.S. ports and waterways.
1. VTS is a tool used by the program to promote safety in selected ports and waterways. The use of surveillance sensors (Automatic Identification System, radar, camera, meteorological/hydrological sensors, visual, VHF communications transceivers, etc) and VTS Command and Control Automated Systems, provide the operational capability to perform the mission. The type and number of surveillance sensors, as well as configuration of VTS Command and Control Automated Systems, varies at each VTS, dependent on specific operating conditions (e.g. geography, weather conditions, type of maritime commerce). The VTS Program Manager validates operational requirements for each VTS and approves requests to change operational capability.
  2. Operating a VTS is a form of active traffic management, while implementing Navigation Rules, routing measures, and the like are forms of passive traffic management. The decision to use active or passive traffic management tools largely depends on the assessed navigational risk in the port or waterway. However, the decision to use active or passive traffic management must not exceed or get ahead of established federal regulations.
- B. Services. In those ports where VTS has been determined to be the appropriate traffic management tool, consideration must be given to the level of service to be provided. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) has defined, in reference (d), three levels of service (listed below) to assist Competent Authorities in determining the service provided by a VTS:
1. Information Service. An information service may provide:
    - a. The position, intentions and destination of vessels operating within the VTS area (VTSA), usually by broadcasting information at fixed times and intervals or when deemed necessary by the VTS.
    - b. Information on meteorological and hydrological conditions.
    - c. Status of aids to navigation (ATON).
    - d. Information on the presence of traffic congestion in the waterway.
    - e. Waterway restrictions. Provision of information involves relaying of facts by the VTS Operator.

2. Navigation Assistance Service.

- a. A Navigation Assistance Service may be provided in addition to an Information Service and/or Traffic Organization Service. The Navigational Assistance Service is designed to assist in the on-board navigational decision-making process and is provided at the request of a vessel, or when deemed necessary, by the VTS. The Navigation Assistance Service provides essential and timely navigational information and may inform, advise and/or instruct vessels accordingly.
- b. Provision of Navigation Assistance Service generally involves extracting information from the VTS' sensors and relaying that information to the user. The VTS Operator does not apply any judgment or interpretation to the information.
- c. Navigation Assistance Service may also include specific warnings to individual vessels.

3. Traffic Organization Service.

- a. Traffic Organization Service provides advance planning of movements, and is particularly useful during times of congestion or waterways restrictions.
- b. Monitoring traffic and enforcing adherence to rules and regulations are integral parts of the Traffic Organization Service. The service may include prioritization of movements, allocation of space, mandatory position reporting, established routes, speed limits, and/or other measures that may be considered necessary and appropriate by the VTS.
- c. Provision of Traffic Organization Service involves interpretation of information and application of judgment on the part of the VTS Operator. All Coast Guard VTSs listed in 33 CFR § 161 are organized and equipped to provide Information Service, Traffic Organization Service and Navigation Assistance Service.

4. Publication of Levels of Service.

- a. VTS Directors shall ensure that their local IOP includes procedures for making all concerned parties aware of short-term changes to levels of services, such as Broadcast Notice to Mariners. In addition, the IOP shall indicate procedures for how a change in level of service is determined, to include authority to change levels of service and the procedures to document that decision.
- b. VTS Directors shall ensure that the level of VTS service provided in their established VTS Area is published in the following locations by coordinating with the responsible party for the publication indicated below (responsible party indicated):
  - (1) World VTS Guide (CG-7413)
  - (2) U.S. Coast Pilots (CG-7413)
  - (3) VTS User Manual (Individual VTS)

- (4) Notation on nautical chart(s) encompassing the VTS Area utilizing the following suggested format and language, modified to match the particular levels of service provided in the specific VTS Area: (Local VTS working with local NOAA representative):

NOTE A

“The U.S. Coast Guard operates a mandatory Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) in (VTS place name). This VTS provides Information Service, Traffic Organization Service and Navigation Assistances Service to vessels operating in the VTS area. Vessel operating procedures and designated radiotelephone frequencies are published in 33 CFR § 161, the U.S. Coast Pilot, and the VTS User Manual.”

- C. Management Activities. A VTS monitors, informs, recommends, and directs vessel traffic in a prescribed manner to instill good order and predictability in and around waterways. The four terms that follow must be understood as they encompass the entire range of VTS management activities. They are listed in order of increasing level of control exercised by the VTS, although they may be implemented in any order (e.g., a VTS may immediately issue a direction upon observing a hazardous situation, without first informing or recommending).
1. Monitor. A VTS uses surveillance, communications equipment and other resources to collect, organize, display and analyze information.
  2. Inform. A VTS uses its communications resources to disseminate information that vessel operators, shore-side facilities and other organizations use to facilitate vessel traffic movements, safety and security. It is essential that the VTS provide timely, relevant and accurate information.
  3. Recommend. A VTS uses its communications resources to highlight particular information or recommend particular actions to vessel operators, shore-side facilities and other organizations. Recommendations usually are given to resolve miscommunications or otherwise call attention to particular circumstances, hazards or conflicts when there is doubt that appropriate action is being taken.
  4. Direct. A VTS employs its communications resources to direct a course of action when necessary. VTS may direct the movement of vessels to minimize the risk of collision or damage to property or the environment, and to promote compliance with navigation regulations. Other forms of directions include designating temporary reporting points or procedures, establishing traffic routes to be followed, enforcing exclusion areas or speed restrictions, or relaying any COTP order, etc. Directions to vessels are normally given in the form of a desired outcome. VTS Internal Operating Procedures (IOP) will provide detailed procedures for employment of VTS direction.

### CHAPTER 3. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

#### A. Authority.

1. The PWSA, 33 USC 1221 *et seq*, contains the authority to establish, operate, and maintain VTS.
2. Title 33 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 161 (33 CFR § 161), titled Vessel Traffic Management, contains the implementing regulations. Requirements provided in 33 CFR § 161 are intended to facilitate vessel traffic flow in predictable patterns, having been established and practiced in the port, and typically do not require direct intervention by the VTS. If a hazardous or unsafe situation is detected in the Vessel Traffic Service Area (VTSA), these same regulations give the VTS the authority to interact with and respond to developing vessel traffic, waterway or port situations.

#### B. Traffic Management.

1. Internal Operating Procedures (IOP). The VTS Director is responsible for the development of VTS Internal Operating Procedures (IOP).
  - a. IOPs shall reflect internal VTS operating procedures that are consistent with the procedures/policy set forth in this document. Reference (e) may also be used as guidance in developing an IOP.
  - b. To the extent possible, IOPs should also follow the National SOP format.
  - c. VTS Directors shall ensure that IOPs are kept current and accurately capture the operational procedures actually being used by the VTS.
  - d. A consistent process shall be established to implement and document changes to the IOP, including temporary changes due to specific short-term operations or conditions.
2. Communications. VTS routinely communicates vessel traffic and safety related information to mariners by means of “advisories.” Advisories to vessels may contain information concerning vessel traffic, Aids to Navigation (ATON) discrepancies, channel conditions, anchorage availability, special port operations or circumstances, weather or other safety related information. Information provided in an advisory is generally limited to that which affects the vessel’s near-term decision making.
  - a. Traffic operators will communicate advisories in an unobtrusive manner at times when mariners can be expected to devote their full attention to the communication. Brevity is paramount. Advisories must not contain extraneous information, nor should advisories be repeated except for clarification or emphasis, or when requested. As circumstances warrant, VTS updates information provided to mariners to ensure that the most recent information is available on which to base navigation-related decisions.
  - b. When language difficulties are apparent, VTS Operators shall use the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) as described in reference (f).



- c. Local procedures shall ensure that communications with a vessel, at a minimum, use the vessel's identity, including within pilotage waters. Call sign/identifier may be used in combination with the vessel's identity in accordance with 47 CFR § 80.102.
  - d. In accordance with 47 CFR § 80.148b, vessels subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act (33 USC § 1201 *et seq*) and participating in a VTS system when the watch is maintained on both the bridge-to-bridge frequency and a separately assigned VTS frequency, need not maintain a watch on VHF Channel 16.
  - e. The VTS must ensure a Channel 16 guard is maintained for participating vessels. Maintaining the Channel 16 guard for a vessel requires the VTS to ensure that calls made by the vessel are answered and to make the vessel aware of any communication traffic on Channel 16 that might affect the vessel. This requirement may be met through coordination with the SCC.
3. VTS Measures or Directions.
- a. VTS may issue measures or directions to enhance navigation and marine safety and to protect the marine environment, through actions such as , but not limited to:
    - (1) designating temporary reporting points or procedures;
    - (2) imposing vessel-operating requirements; or
    - (3) establishing vessel traffic routes to be followed.
  - b. During conditions of vessel congestion, restricted visibility, adverse weather or other hazardous circumstances, a VTS may control, supervise or otherwise manage traffic by specifying times of entry, movement, or departure to, from, or within the VTSA. Standard wording for VTS-issued directions shall be developed and included in the VTS IOP.
  - c. According to 33 CFR § 160.5, Directors of Vessel Traffic Services are delegated authority to discharge the duties of the Captain of the Port that involve directing the operation, movement, and anchorage of vessels within a Vessel Traffic Service area. This authority may be exercised by Vessel Traffic Center personnel. Authority to be exercised by VTC personnel shall be clearly defined in local procedures.
4. Request for Navigational Assistance. The term "navigation assistance" is a service through which the VTS contributes to the navigational decision making process on board the vessel and monitors its effects.
- a. A Navigational Assistance Service may be initiated in response to traffic and navigational safety situations developing in the VTS area. It is important that information to assist the onboard decision making is provided in a timely manner. It should be clearly understood by both parties and not open to misinterpretation to minimize the risk of unexpected and dangerous reactions. Navigation Assistance Service may also include the use of VTS direction.

- b. When providing Navigational Assistance to vessels, communications should be result-oriented, leaving the details of execution to the master or pilot on board the vessel. Standard wording for VTS directions shall be included in the VTS IOP and shall incorporate the use of message markers.
- c. Navigational assistance provided by VTS should be conducted in a timely, unambiguous manner in an effort to prevent misinterpretation. Local procedures should include appropriate examples.
- d. Examples of developing situation where Navigational Assistance may be provided when requested by the vessel or if deemed necessary by the VTS include:
  - (1) Risk of grounding;
  - (2) Vessel deviating from the recommended track or sailing plan;
  - (3) Vessel unsure of its position or unable to determine its position;
  - (4) Vessel unsure of the route to its destination;
  - (5) Assistance to a vessel to reach an anchoring position;
  - (6) Vessel navigational or maneuvering equipment casualty;
  - (7) Inclement conditions (e.g., low visibility, high winds);
  - (8) Potential collision between vessels;
  - (9) Potential collision with a fixed object or hazard; and/or
  - (10) Assistance to a vessel to support the unexpected incapacity of a key member of the bridge team.
- 5. Non-VTS COTP Orders. The nature of the VTS mission and its accessibility to communications and surveillance resources make VTS a natural management tool for the COTP. In addition to relaying COTP orders, the VTS also may become involved in other COTP-generated events, such as hazardous cargo escorts, security/safety zone monitoring, and Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security (PWCS) activities where they affect safe navigation and/or may cause traffic congestion. Since procedures for handling these types of events depend on equipment, staffing, and port geography, each VTS Director will develop and promulgate appropriate procedures to carry out the COTP order. To the extent that these operations are intended to ensure navigational safety, they shall be considered a normal part of the VTS duties. However, VTS Directors shall be vigilant to ensure that the navigation safety responsibilities of VTS watchstanders are not degraded by the addition of duties unrelated to navigation safety.
- 6. Marine Events. VTS watchstanders must be aware of marine events taking place within their AOR. Not all marine events directly affect vessel traffic, but those that do can dangerously impact the safe navigation of large vessels. VTS must take an active role in

coordinating ship movements in and around marine events, and must continually evaluate the risks to shipping and vessels involved in the marine event. Communications between the marine event Patrol Commander (e.g. SCC or other CG platform), the IOC and the VTS are critical. Every effort must be made by the VTS and Patrol Commander to coordinate scheduled ship movements during the event. While suspension of the marine event due to transiting vessel traffic should be viewed as a last resort, it must be a consideration should the risk of loss of life and/or property damage be deemed too great. The decision to suspend the event lies with the Patrol Commander, with IOC involvement (as appropriate).

7. Deviations from Regulations. Deviations from any published provision of 33 CFR § 161 will likely require special handling of vessel traffic.
  - a. A verbal request for a one-time deviation due to circumstances that develop during a transit may be authorized by the VTS Director and must be thoroughly evaluated by the VTS Watch Supervisor for its impact on overall vessel traffic safety.
  - b. One time requests for deviation prior to a transit or recurring requests for deviation from a particular provision of 33 CFR § Part 161 must be forwarded to the District Commander to be considered for a permanent deviation if the deviation can be shown to enhance overall safety.
8. Environmental Conditions. Adverse weather conditions may affect the normal transit of vessels in the VTSA. VTS watchstanders must make every effort to ensure that mariners are aware of weather conditions that may affect their transit.
  - a. VTS Directors shall ensure that procedures for handling vessel traffic in adverse weather conditions are developed and understood by VTS watchstanders and VTS customers. These procedures may include the recall of watchstanders to augment the watch until conditions improve. In any event, the weather forecast must be checked at the beginning of each watch and monitored frequently throughout the watch.
  - b. Each VTS shall determine, through outreach efforts with port stakeholders, what environmental conditions critically impact vessels operating in the VTSA.
  - c. Where a VTS has access to real-time environmental information, procedures should be developed to make that information available to the mariner.
9. Vessel Casualties/Vessel Emergencies.
  - a. Vessel casualties that do not immediately threaten the vessel's safety, but reduce its maneuverability or navigation capability to a point below that specified by regulation or accepted as prudent seamanship usually are handled by notifying the COTP and advising nearby vessels.
    - (1) Should a vessel's request to transit under impaired conditions be granted, the VTS should exercise extra vigilance in monitoring the vessel's transit.

- (2) As a stipulation, the VTS may relay a COTP order directing the vessel to conduct itself in a specified manner (as prescribed by the COTP).
- b. Vessel emergencies are vessel-related events where damage, injury, pollution, or other hazardous conditions exist and without proper action, may allow the situation to worsen.
  - (1) The VTS response to notification of a vessel emergency may include orders to anchor or remain clear of a specified area.
  - (2) VTS, in coordination with the Sector Incident Management Division and SCC, should alert the marine community and immediately notify appropriate officials, response organizations, and allied services.
- c. Procedures shall be included in the VTS IOP to address the emergency situations described above. In addition, Quick Response Checklists (QRCs) for vessel emergencies shall be developed in coordination with Sector Response Personnel and the SCC.

10. Port Emergencies and Disasters.

- a. VTS Directors shall ensure COTP approved procedures are established to respond to catastrophic events such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, fires, oil or hazardous materials spills, toxic chemical releases, acts of terrorism, etc.
- b. Local/District Emergency Action Plans should be referenced in preparing VTS procedures.
- c. Procedures must be updated as necessary and exercised regularly.

11. VTS Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

- a. The VTS must have the ability to maintain effective traffic management operations with minimal interruption in the event of catastrophic equipment failure, loss of essential capabilities or evacuation.
- b. VTS Directors shall ensure that Sector or MSU Continuity of Operation Plans (COOP) address continued operation of the VTS.
- c. Reference (g) outlines requirements for alternate site selection in Case I and Case II situations and stresses the need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is incorporated in the COOP to support VTS operations.

12. Maritime Security (MARSEC). The Area Maritime Security Committee is responsible for creating the Area Maritime Security (AMS) Plan. The plan is designed to deter, to the maximum extent possible, a transportation security incident. The plan will define Federal, state and local government's obligations, along with the contributions and responsibilities of other port stakeholders to the Maritime Homeland Security (MHLS) mission.

- a. The primary purpose of the AMS Plan is to provide a framework for communication and coordination among port stakeholders and law enforcement officials, and to identify and reduce vulnerabilities to security threats in and near the Maritime Transportation System (MTS). The plan addresses port infrastructure throughout the COTP zone. It is designed to capture the information necessary to coordinate and communicate security procedures at each MARSEC level, complement and encompass facility and vessel security plans within a particular COTP zone, and ultimately be integrated into the National Maritime Security Plan.
- b. Pursuant to the AMS Plan, MTS stakeholders will take certain actions contingent upon changes in MARSEC Levels and develop unified preparedness strategies to deter and respond to security incidents.
- c. VTS Directors will ensure local MARSEC procedures are included in the VTS IOP as well as pertinent sections of the AMS Plan.

## CHAPTER 4. ADMINISTRATION

A. VTS Administration. Administrative requirements which may or may not be related to the VTS watch include the following:

1. VTS Information - Measurement and Reporting. VTSs are a valuable source of information for all Coast Guard missions. Vessel traffic statistical information gathered by VTS is used by the VTS Program Manager to develop Navigation and Waterway Safety measures of effectiveness and for other Coast Guard mission support measurement. At a minimum, VTS Directors are required to maintain Monthly Activity Reports (MAR) to be used for program documentation, planning, and analysis. While regular submission of these reports to Headquarters is not required, the VTS Program Manager occasionally receives short fuse calls for specific VTS or national vessel traffic statistical data. Therefore, the VTS Program Manager requires each VTS to maintain vessel traffic and facility statistical data in a manner that permits timely access and rapid transmission, when requested. Composition of the report is outlined in Appendix A. These reports shall be maintained in accordance with reference (h).
2. VTS User Manual.
  - a. VTS Directors shall publish and distribute a VTS User Manual.
  - b. Significant changes or complete rewrites of the VTS User Manual must be routed through the chain of command to the VTS Program Manager prior to publication and distribution. In the case of minor changes, the VTS shall notify the VTS Program Manager of the change via email and forward a copy of the revised document.
  - c. At a minimum, the Manual shall address the following:
    - (1) The purpose, capabilities, and applicability of the VTS;
    - (2) Chartlets with sector boundaries and a description of the VTSA;
    - (3) Reporting points;
    - (4) Communications requirements, including primary and secondary frequencies for each VTS sector;
    - (5) Description of any local procedures for participation in the VTS;
    - (6) Anchorage and navigation regulations peculiar to the VTSA; and
    - (7) Other navigation-related information that may be of interest to participants transiting the VTSA.
3. Watchstander Collateral Duties. To the extent possible, collateral duties shall not be assigned to VTS members regularly associated with the active VTS watch.
  - a. Collateral duties assigned to watch-standing personnel shall normally involve tasks that can be completed off-watch.

- b. Collateral duties shall not be performed when a watchstander is in a watch position requiring the monitoring or transmitting of VHF communications. When necessary, for the completion of critical tasks, watchstanders assigned these tasks should be removed from the watch rotation.
  - c. In any event, collateral duties must not interfere with the conduct of the watch.
- B. Watch Administration. Administrative requirements which are directly related to the VTS watch include the following:
  - 1. Record Keeping. VTS Directors shall establish procedures for collecting, maintaining, and disposing of records, reports, and files in accordance with reference (h). Common VTS records, reports, and files include:
    - a. Monthly Activity Report/waterway statistics;
    - b. Electronic or paper vessel data cards (VDCs);
    - c. Audio/video recordings, including transcriptions of audiotapes; and
    - d. Computer tapes/discs.
  - 2. VTS Incident. A VTS incident is defined as: “An event or occurrence within the VTS area that is considered notable by the VTS Watch Supervisor”.
    - a. Major VTS Incidents that may be expected to raise concerns, invoke questions or produce continued interest, in the view of the VTS Watch Supervisor, shall be recorded as an activity in the Coast Guard’s Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) system.
      - (1) MISLE capabilities provide for electronic case management, incident chronology, and instantaneous data sharing throughout all levels of the organization.
      - (2) VTS personnel should consult the MISLE process guides or VTS Program Manager for information on using MISLE.
      - (3) VTS use of MISLE for documenting VTS incidents should be coordinated with appropriate Sector departments and the IOC.
      - (4) Examples of incidents to be entered into MISLE include: collisions; allisions; and groundings that result in significant damage to the environment, involve injury or loss of life and/or significant damage to property (as described in paragraph 3.a of this chapter).
    - b. For Minor VTS Incidents, an internal Incident Review Board (IRB) may be assembled with select personnel, for the purpose of conducting a local review of an incident. Minor incidents are often associated with Class C and Class D mishaps.
      - (1) The focus of the IRB is to review VTS policy, procedures, training and resources to determine whether appropriate VTS procedures were followed and whether

existing procedures were adequate; to ensure VTS personnel are properly certified, trained and qualified and that VTSS are adequately resourced.

- (2) An IRB will be classified as a local unit mishap investigation conducted and documented according to the policies and procedures contained in reference (i), for a non-Commandant convened Class C or D Unit Mishap Board. Due to the serious legal nature of properly applying the Safety Privilege, officers convened and appointed to a local unit safety investigation must pay particular attention to Chapters 1 and 3, and Enclosures 2, 4, 9, 10, 13, and 15 of the Safety and Environmental Health Manual. These officers will have the special duty of properly administering and correctly documenting a grant of the safety privilege during a local unit mishap investigation. Therefore, any questions regarding the Class C and Class D unit mishap investigation or in applying the safety privilege should be addressed to the servicing legal office.
- (3) Given the unique nature of Coast Guard VTS operations, the cognizant commanding officer may delegate his “appointing and convening authority for Class C and Class D mishaps” to the VTS Director (See Enclosure (4), para. 1.b. of reference (i)). Upon receiving a proper written delegation, the VTS Director may decide to convene and appoint a Local Mishap Investigation and shall assume the responsibilities of the commanding officer in accordance with Enclosure (2), paragraph 9.a. of reference (i). The cognizant commanding officer and the VTS Director should constantly be mindful of the potential for multiple types of investigations to overlap when responding to VTS incidents (i.e. marine casualty, marine safety, criminal, and administrative investigations). Chapters 2.O & P and Enclosure (10) of reference (i) discuss the implications of overlapping investigations.
- (4) Make-up of the board is determined by the convening official. Enclosure (4) of reference (i) details the types of board members appropriate for appointment such as a safety specialist familiar with the mishap investigation process; any technical or subject matter specialists familiar with VTS operations and incidents; or a medical member if injuries occurred. Enclosure (4) also lists those personnel who are prohibited from being appointed to a local unit mishap investigation.
- (5) Generally, Local Unit Mishap Boards should be convened following VTS involvement in an incident involving minor vessel damage, minor personal injury or environmental damage, or any event which may identify possible deficiencies in current operational policy or procedures. In addition, local unit mishap boards should also be convened following VTS involvement with near mishaps, lessons learned events or other events with a High Potential (HIPO) for injury, damage or Coast Guard-wide implications which are reportable even though they result in minimal or no damage, do not result in personnel injury, or would otherwise not be reportable in the mishap reporting system. The board may make recommendations, suggestions or comments on VTS procedures, personnel or facilities (See reference (i), Chapters 3.F.5 & F.6).



- (6) Local Unit Mishap Boards are distinct from the formal Commandant Convened “Mishap Analysis Boards.” Therefore, a Local Unit Mishap Board need only complete “informal reports,” as opposed to the “formal Mishap Analysis Report (MAR) submitted for every Commandant appointed MAB” (Enclosure (4), paragraph 11 of reference (i)). Although not required to submit a formal MAR, the Local Mishap Investigator should consider Enclosure (2) as a general guide for the type of information and format that may be used in completing the informal report. The Informal Mishap Report shall be forwarded to the Program Manager, who is charged with the responsibility of maintaining a master catalog file. In addition, reports for Class C and Class D mishaps must be entered into the E-Mishap System or reported by message. “Class C mishaps must be entered within 14 days and Class D mishaps within 21 days.” (reference (i), Chapters. 3.J.2.c; Figure 3-1; and Enclosure (9)).
  - (7) The purpose of a safety investigation which governs issuance of the safety privilege’s “promise of confidentiality” requires special care by the local unit mishap board and investigators. This requirement includes an adequate understanding of the proper use and filing of the “Witness Statement Offer of Confidentiality Advisory Form” located at Figure 2-1 of Enclosure (2) of reference (i). In addition, any information collected under the safety privilege must be labeled in a manner indicating it is privileged information and not subject to release. Likewise the written report itself must be labeled a Safety Report and release of any material from the report first requires legal review in accordance with reference (i), Enclosure (10). “Failure to observe the prohibitions and mandatory provisions of [the Safety and Environmental Health Manual with regard to the safety privilege] by military personnel may be a violation of Article 92, *Uniform Code of Military Justice* (UCMJ). Violations by civilian employees may result in administrative disciplinary action without regard to applicable criminal or civil sanctions for violations of related laws” (Enclosure (4), paragraph 6 of reference (i)).
3. Post-Incident Program Review.
- a. Incidents which will result in a VTS Program-level review are those incidents which:
    - (1) Involve at least one VTS user; and
    - (2) Occurs within a designated VTS area; and
    - (3) Involves a collision, allision or grounding; and
    - (4) Is determined by management that the VTS may have neglected an opportunity to prevent or could have contributed to the incident; and
    - (5) Results in a fatality; and/or
    - (6) A serious injury; which shall include any injury to a crewmember, passenger, or other person which requires professional medical treatment beyond first aid; and/or

- (7) Substantial damage to vessels or property; which shall mean damage in excess of \$100,000 or the actual total loss of the vessel; and/or
    - (8) Substantial damage to the environment; which shall include discharge of oil of 10,000 gallons or more into the navigable waters of the United States, and/or discharge or release of a reportable quantity of hazardous substance into the navigable waters of the United States as stated in 49 CFR § 171.15.
    - (9) In the event of an incident meeting the criteria in paragraph 3.a, the respective District shall convene an IRB to review the incident and ensure the results of the IRB are provided to the VTS program.
  - b. In the event of an incident meeting the criteria in paragraph 3.a, the VTS Program shall:
    - (1) Within 14 days, conduct a review of the affected VTSs most recently completed OPEVAL checklist.
    - (2) Assign a member of the VTS Program Staff to the VTS IRB conducted by the VTS.
    - (3) Assign a member of the VTS Program to act as Subject Matter Expert for any Coast Guard investigations related to the incident.
  - c. In the event of an incident which does not meet the criteria in paragraph 3.a, yet may be of Program-wide interest, VTSs are strongly encouraged to share specific lessons learned through the VTS Program . The VTS Program shall provide a forum to share lessons learned with other VTSs (such as reporting out at periodic VTS Program teleconferences or as sessions during VTS workshops and meetings).
- 4. Messages. VTS Directors shall ensure that the Coast Guard Message System (CGMS) is available to the VTS Supervisor in the performance of his/her duties.
- 5. VTS Watch Composition. Each VTS watch section shall have a sufficient number of personnel assigned to ensure that at least one qualified VTS Supervisor and at least one qualified VTS Sector Operator for each VTS Sector. VTSs operating on an interim basis (e.g., only during high water situations), will be exempt from the requirement to maintain a VTS Supervisor watch position.
  - a. The VTS Director must advise the VTS Program Manager if a change in the number of assigned watchstanders is believed necessary.
  - b. The VTS Program Manager and VTS Director will coordinate amendments to the VTS PAL through the chain of command.
  - c. The VTS Program Manager will determine the appropriate number of VTS Operators and Supervisors based on port complexity, equipment configuration and watchstander workload.

- d. The VTS Director shall ensure that personnel designated and listed for VTS duty on the unit PAL, are actually employed in VTS operations. The VTS Director will address concerns with the utilization of VTS personnel through the Sector chain of command.
  - e. Sector Commanders desiring to reprogram billets or positions within the VTS shall refer to reference (j) for guidance.
6. Maximum On-Watch Policy. Unless specifically exempt by the VTS Program Manager, no VTS sector operator shall remain in an active communication watch status, without rest, for a period exceeding three hours. For every three hours on an active communication watch, a minimum off active communication period of one hour is required.
- a. The VTS Director may relax this requirement temporarily due to emergencies, but must inform the VTS Program Manager in a timely manner.
  - b. “Active communication watch”, in the context of this policy, will mean assigned to a VTS Operator position with duties that may require VHF-FM communications and monitoring of a VTS graphic situation display.
  - c. “Rest period,” in the context of this policy, generally represents a compensated period of work. However, scheduled non-compensated break periods will generally be scheduled during this off-active watch period.
7. Watch Relief. The VTS Director shall ensure that instructions for relieving the watch are outlined in the IOP. Prior to completing relief of the VTS watch (supervisor or sector operator), the off-going watchstander must provide a brief to the on-coming watchstander. At a minimum, the Sector Operator’s brief shall consist of:
- a. Name, location, and destination of each participant in the sector along with any pending advisories and/or special instructions to that participant.
  - b. Description of any ongoing special operations (e.g., vessels requiring special handling, marine events, SAR, MLE, waterway obstructions), and pending arrivals/departures.
  - c. Adverse weather forecast and VTC equipment status.
  - d. Any other information considered critical to safe navigation.
8. Watch Schedule.
- a. The VTS Director has the authority to employ watch schedules that best serve the needs of the VTS to maximize mission execution. VTS watchstanders are not permitted to work more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period, except in an emergency or exercise.

- b. The length and frequency of the watch is at the VTS Director's discretion. The Director must ensure that the minimum break policy is observed; or an approved waiver has been issued per chapter 4.B.5.
  - c. Federal Office of Personnel Management civilian pay procedures must be followed to the extent possible, particularly relating to 80 hours per pay period. VTS watchstanders and supervisors must be familiar with timekeeping requirements and the premium pay rules associated with working a nonstandard work schedule. Supervisors can contact their servicing civilian Command Staff Advisor (CSA) for further guidance.
  - d. To the extent possible, military and civilian watch schedules should be equivalent.
  - e. Overtime shall be managed closely and used to address operational needs. Ideally, overtime will be used sparingly or eliminated altogether.
9. Watchstander Currency. Each VTS watchstander shall maintain watch currency by regularly performing the duties of their position.
- a. The duties shall be demonstrated during scheduled watches totaling at least 24 hours of watch per month.
  - b. Specifics of the watch, such as number of hours per sector, etc., are determined locally.
  - c. Failure to maintain currency will result in remedial training for the watchstander until the training coordinator determines watch standing proficiency is adequate.
10. Drug Testing. As an integral part of the Coast Guard's core mission of maritime safety and security, personnel in Vessel Traffic Management positions perform duties in the operations centers of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) and are responsible for promoting the safe and efficient movement of maritime traffic. In recognition of the high degree of responsibility afforded these positions, they are classified as Testing Designated Positions (TDP) in accordance with Department of Transportation (DOT) Order 3910.1D.
- a. Under procedures outlined in the DOT Order, employees in TDPs are subject to:
    - (1) Random testing;
    - (2) Pre-employment/pre-appointment testing;
    - (3) Reasonable suspicion testing; and
    - (4) Post-accident or post-incident testing.
  - b. Post-accident or post-incident testing procedures. Testing may be required of any VTS watchstander when management determines an accident has occurred that qualifies for post-accident or post-incident testing according to the provisions set forth in the subparagraphs below:

- (1) Upon determining that testing is required, it shall be conducted as soon as practicable following the accident. For the purposes of this instruction, an accident that may require testing is one that occurs within the VTS area and involves (as stated in 46 CFR § 4.03) “. . . any casualty or accident involving a vessel occurring upon the navigable waters of the United States, its territories or possessions . . . including any accidental grounding . . . collision, allision, stranding . . . or any occurrence involving a vessel which results in damage by or to the vessel, its apparel, gear, or cargo. . .” Testing should be considered when an accident involves one or more of the following events:
  - (a) A fatality.
  - (b) A serious injury; which shall include any injury to a crewmember, passenger, or other person which requires professional medical treatment beyond first aid.
  - (c) Substantial damage to vessels or property; which shall mean damage in excess of \$100,000 or the actual total loss of the vessel.
  - (d) Substantial damage to the environment; which shall include discharge of oil of 10,000 gallons or more into the navigable waters of the United States, and/or discharge or release of a reportable quantity of hazardous substance into the navigable waters of the United States as stated in 49 CFR § 171.15.
- (2) Only employees whose job performance at or about the time of the accident provides reason to believe that such performance cannot be completely discounted as a contributing factor to the accident, shall be determined to be subject to post-accident or post-incident testing.
- (3) The determination to initiate post-accident or post-incident testing shall be made in the following manner:
  - (a) The Sector Commander, VTS Director or the designated representative shall determine whether the accident meets the criteria listed in 9.b.(1) above based on a review of all facts reasonably available.
  - (b) Following a determination that the accident qualifies for post-accident or post-incident testing, the Sector Commander, MSU Commanding Officer, VTS Director or the designated representative shall determine which, if any, VTS watchstanders should be tested.
  - (c) The process of determination shall be completed, proper written notification shall be given to the employee(s) and testing must be accomplished as soon as practicable after the accident or incident.
  - (d) A determination to not conduct testing shall be documented as well.
- (4) Whenever feasible, a drug test must be completed within four hours after the accident or incident. When testing Coast Guard civilian employee watchstanders,

if a required post-accident or post-incident test for illegal drug use is not conducted within four hours following the accident, the Sector Commander, MSU Commanding Officer, VTS Director or the designated representative shall submit a report to the designated Drug Program Coordinator at Coast Guard Headquarters, Commandant (CG-1213) stating the reason(s) why the test was not promptly conducted.

- c. Employees found to have violated the prohibitions of the DOT Order who have been permitted to return to duty following rehabilitation, are also subject to follow-up and return-to-duty testing.
  - d. Each District Office has a designated Site Coordinator who is responsible for working with the VTS Director or their representative to ensure that testing is conducted as required, by the contracted testing facility.
  - e. CG military watchstanders are subject to testing in accordance with reference (k). Post-accident testing for active duty watchstanders will be administered in accordance with “competence for duty testing following a mishap” as provided in Chapter 20.c.2.a.8 of reference (k).
  - f. VTS Directors shall ensure local procedures to implement this policy are developed and incorporated into local operating procedure documents. Training on these procedures shall be included in the VTS watchstander qualification program to ensure all employees are aware of the requirements and procedures outlined in DOT Order 3910.1C, reference (k) and this instruction.
11. Medical Standards/Physical Requirements. In order to perform the duties of the Vessel Traffic Management Specialist, certain medical standards and physical requirements must be met. The VTS Program Manager has a responsibility to ensure that personnel employed at VTSs across the country are medically and physically prepared to assume the duties of the Vessel Traffic Operator or Supervisor in the VTC. The VTS Program Manager accomplishes this in the following manner:
- a. Military members assigned to VTS as a Vessel Traffic Operator or Supervisor must adhere to medical standards and physical requirements stipulated in reference (k) and reference (l).
  - b. Medical standards and physical requirements for civilian watchstanders are now under development by the VTS Program Manager. Once completed and approved, the standards and requirements (or the reference) will be incorporated in this Manual.
12. Reporting of Injuries & Medication Usage. VTS watchstander duties require concentration, attention to detail and the ability to make critical, timely sensitive decisions. The effects of certain medications, both over-the-counter and prescription, may negatively impact the watchstander’s ability to perform in the manner required.
- a. VTS Directors must ensure that procedures are implemented requiring all VTS watchstanders , including Coast Guard civilian employees or military members, to

- report consumption of prescription medications and any over-the-counter medications that may temporarily affect their ability to stand a proper watch.
- b. VTS watchstanders who sustain injuries while in an off-duty status, that may temporarily impact their ability to stand a proper watch, must report the extent of the injury and their medical status to the duty Watch Supervisor or VTS Director as soon as possible following the injury.
  - c. **Note:** These requirements will become effective for civilian VTS watchstanders after development and implementation of the new civilian medical standards and physical requirements which are in development. In the interim, civilian employees may voluntarily comply with this paragraph.
13. Civilian Employee Conditions of Employment. Any changes to working conditions of bargaining unit employees (to include changes to policy, practices, rules, regulations, training, certifications, etc.) are subject to meeting labor relations obligations under Chapter 71 of Title 5 of the US Code. Prior to implementing changes addressed in this Manual, consult your servicing Command Staff Advisor/HR Specialist for advice and guidance.

## CHAPTER 5. QUALITY CONTROL

- A. Operational Evaluation (OPEVAL). The VTS Program Manager will review each VTS's IOP, equipment status, equipment maintenance, staffing level and training documentation.
1. OPEVALs will be conducted by the VTS Program at each VTS at intervals not to exceed three years, when conditions warrant such a review, or at the request of the VTS or its chain of command.
  2. Individual VTSs shall conduct an annual self-assessment of their operations utilizing the current OPEVAL checklist. Results of the self-assessment shall be maintained on file at the VTS for review during the next scheduled OPEVAL.
  3. The OPEVAL and annual self-assessments are intended to ensure that VTSs are operating in accordance with national standards and that they are adequately staffed and resourced.
  4. The outcome of an OPEVAL will provide the VTS Director with an overview of areas of VTS operations warranting closer internal review. The OPEVAL also serves as a forum for interaction between the Program Manager and the VTS Director.
  5. Representatives from the Program Manager's staff, a third party or both will conduct the OPEVAL. A final report with recommendations will be provided to the VTS, via the chain-of-command, shortly after conclusion of the OPEVAL.
  6. OPEVAL Procedures are included as Appendix C to this Manual.
- B. User Surveys. One measurement of a VTS's success is the level of confidence that the mariner expresses in the VTS's ability to provide relevant, accurate and time sensitive vessel-traffic information.
1. Program-wide surveys may be conducted every three to four years. Survey questions will be reviewed by the Program Manager's staff for relevancy prior to conducting each survey.
  2. Prior to the release of any public survey, Commandant (CG-0943) shall be consulted, and the survey will be conducted in accordance with all current Federal rules and regulations regarding the collection of information.
  3. Results of the program-wide survey will be recorded, analyzed and forwarded to each VTS.
- C. VTS Data Integrity/Standardization. Each VTS Director is responsible for ensuring that its Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS) database is verified periodically (at least once annually) and that a comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date database is maintained. Typographical errors and data duplication are common database problems that must be eliminated.



## CHAPTER 6. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### A. Release of VTS Information.

1. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests. The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552) generally mandates that the government make information available to the public consistent with the national interest.
  - a. Reference (m) delegates authority to District Commanders to grant or deny FOIA requests and authorizes District Commanders to further delegate the authority to grant requests. Reference (m) does not authorize re-delegation of the authority to deny requests beyond the District Commander.
  - b. VTS information collection benefits the public and is done at taxpayer's expense. Many external entities have interest in and use for VTS data. These entities include maritime exchanges providing information to the commercial maritime community, media, lawyers involved in investigations and lawsuits, researchers and engineers.
  - c. VTSs are required and have the capability to retain information (e.g. vessel transit data and camera video) and record voice (radio or telephone communications) for a period of 32 days. Specific communications log procedures and requirements are defined in reference (n), and shall be followed by the VTS. Information pertaining to a specific maritime incident may be retained longer, at the discretion of the VTS Director and in consultation with the responsible District legal office.
  - d. VTS Directors shall coordinate FOIA requests through their Sector or MSU FOIA officer. VTS Directors should ensure that responsible VTS personnel are properly trained in vetting and releasing allowable material/information.
2. Shipping/Port Activities Information. VTS Directors shall establish procedures for the release of information to the following categories of requestors:
  - a. Vessel Traffic. All information likely to enhance safety.
  - b. Other Federal Government Agencies. All reasonably accessible information consistent with security concerns.
  - c. State and Local Government Agencies. All reasonably accessible information consistent with security concerns.
  - d. General Public and Commercial Interests. All information likely to be released pursuant to formal requests made under FOIA.
3. Due care shall be taken not to release proprietary information obtained from such other sources as pilot associations and marine exchanges, unless those sources approve of the release, or the passage of time has eliminated the commercial value of the proprietary information. Release of personal information protected under the Privacy Act is not authorized. Questions concerning the release of information should be discussed with the District Legal Officer.

4. All agreements (MOU or MOAs) shall be reviewed by the VTS Program prior to implementation of the agreement.
- B. Public Outreach. The VTS Program Manager requires each VTS Director, in coordination with the unit Public Affairs Officer, to develop a dynamic public outreach program and shall coordinate VTS watchstanders active participation in the program.
1. VTC Tours. VTS Directors are encouraged to make their facilities accessible to the general public to the maximum extent consistent with security and operational concerns. VTS Directors shall establish procedures to ensure all visitors, including prospective contractors, visiting for the purpose of understanding VTS operations, have equal access to VTS spaces, personnel, and information.
  2. Ship Rides/Facility Visits. These activities serve as a means for VTS personnel to interact directly with their customers. They provide a means for VTS users to give feedback directly to the VTS and provide an opportunity for VTS personnel to maintain familiarity with the VTSA. Ship rides have the ability to improve the watchstanders' understanding of the duties, responsibilities, and concerns of the VTS user and watchstanders may gain an appreciation of various user vessels' maneuvering and ship-handling characteristics.
    - a. VTS Directors shall implement a proactive VTS ship ride and facility visit program. As envisioned, the ship ride and facility visit program permits the exchange of information between the VTS watchstander and the master, operator, pilot of a vessel or facility manager. Ship ride and facility visits also allow the VTS watchstander to view shipboard and shore side operations to gain a better understanding of the mariner's and maritime industry's "world of work" and how it relates to and is affected by traffic management.
    - b. Procedures for implementing the ship ride/facility visit program shall be included in the IOP.
    - c. VTS Directors must ensure that every precaution is taken to guarantee the safety of VTS personnel embarking and disembarking vessels, especially when underway. The safety of VTS personnel is the first priority. Should embarking or disembarking appear questionable from a safety standpoint, the ship ride shall be cancelled and rescheduled under more favorable conditions.
  3. VTS User Education Program. This program targets members of the maritime community who desire general knowledge of VTS operations. It must be flexible enough to adapt to the operational needs of any audience including pilots, licensed mariners, fishermen, yachting organizations, marine exchanges, Harbor Safety Committees (HSC), and non-traditional stakeholders/users, such as marine construction companies, shipping agents, and transportation authorities for other modes of transportation. At a minimum, the program should include:
    - a. An overview of the VTS mission;
    - b. Geographic boundaries of the VTSA;

- c. Equipment capabilities and limitations;
  - d. VTS personnel duties;
  - e. An explanation of VTS participation and communications requirements; and
  - f. National and local regulations for VTS users.
4. VTS Representation on Local Maritime Committees. Assigning a VTS representative to attend local maritime committee meetings provides the VTS with other means by which they can become proactive in issues affecting their AOR. Active participation in HSCs, Prevention Through People (PTP) work groups, commercial fishing committees, pilot board meetings and Area Maritime Security Committees (ASMC) ensures the development of strong working relationships with local stakeholders.
  5. VTS Articles. The VTS Program encourages each VTS to take advantage of opportunities to publicize the value of their respective VTS or the public value of the VTS program as a whole. In order to ensure a consistent and accurate message, the publication of articles related to VTS shall be reviewed by the VTS Program prior to publication.
  6. International VTS Representation. All VTS engagement outside the U.S. is required to be coordinated with, and approved by, the VTS Program.
- C. World VTS Guide. USCG VTSs included in the World VTS Guide shall annually review the contents of the section that applies to their VTS, to ensure it is complete and accurate. Recommended changes shall be forwarded to the VTS Program Manager for review and approval. All interaction with the World VTS Guide staff will be conducted through the VTS Program.

## CHAPTER 7. SUPPORT OF COAST GUARD MISSIONS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- A. Other Coast Guard Missions. According to 6 USC § 468, the Coast Guard has 11 statutory missions. The VTS program's primary statutory mission area is the Aids to Navigation (ATON) mission, but the VTS may be engaged in secondary mission area support as indicated in the following table:

U.S. Coast Guard Statutory Missions	Primary	Secondary
Ports, waterways, and coastal security		S
Drug interdiction		S
Aids to navigation	P	
Search and rescue		S
Living marine resources (fisheries law enforcement)		S
Marine Safety		S
Defense readiness		S
Migrant interdiction		S
Marine environmental protection		S
Ice operations		S
Other law enforcement		

- B. Support of Other Coast Guard Missions. While support of other Coast Guard missions is encouraged, VTS Directors must carefully weigh the impact of VTS involvement in support operations on accomplishing the VTS primary mission and overall vessel traffic safety in the port.
- C. Quick Response Checklists (QRCs). Procedures for the support of other mission areas shall be developed within Sector business processes and doctrine, and appropriate QRCs shall be developed to guide VTS actions.
- D. Maritime Defense Zone (MDZ). VTS has the capability to perform several tasks relative to mobilization. Each VTS is equipped with certain sensor capabilities, in addition to a VHF/FM communications system. COTP and District Commanders should consider these capabilities in developing their MDZ-related operating procedures. However, it is imperative that the broad capabilities afforded the VTS not be permitted to detract from its primary mission. With additional watch-standing personnel and operator workstations, the following activities may be supported from the VTC:
1. Monitoring critical facilities, including bridges and terminals;
  2. Monitoring security zones and vessels carrying critical mobilization-related equipment and personnel;
  3. Detecting vessels and activities in certain offshore areas;
  4. Vectoring response resources; and/or
  5. As a command center for Maritime Defense Zone (MDZ) sectors and/or sub sectors, collocating Naval Control of Shipping, Fishing Vessel Control, Military Traffic

Management Command (MTMC), Military Sealift Command (MSC), and other MDZ-related activities.

- E. SAR and MLE. The surveillance and communications capabilities of the VTS provide mission coordinators with a valuable tool to assist in the prosecution of SAR and MLE activities. Use of VTS assets has the potential to reduce air and surface Search and Rescue Unit (SRU) search time significantly, and may provide additional surveillance capability even during routine activities. VTS must be prepared to assist in all SAR cases and cooperate with all local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies.
- F. Marine Pollution Response. With its extensive knowledge of vessels in a waterway, VTS often receives the first notification or detection of a marine pollution incident. Although response to a marine pollution incident is not a primary mission of the VTS, VTS has the capability to support many facets of a marine pollution incident response, such as:
  - 1. Notification of SCC.
  - 2. Receipt of reports from vessels on the scene.
  - 3. Initial coordination of on scene response vessels.
  - 4. De-confliction of response vessels and other vessel traffic.
  - 5. Passing of waterway closures to affected vessels.
- G. Aids to Navigation. The VTS frequently receives notice of ATON outages or discrepancies, and possesses the capability to monitor ATON positioning within the limits of surveillance capability. VTS Directors shall ensure procedures are established for reporting ATON discrepancies. Available information on “knockdowns” or damage to aids will be collected by the VTS and forwarded as needed for investigations.
- H. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). MDA incorporates the information collection capabilities of VTS with the information fusion, analysis and decision making authorities of the Sector Interagency Operations Center to help achieve maritime domain awareness across the Federal government, with private sector and civil authorities within the U.S., and with our allies and partners around the world. MDA is defined as the effective understanding of objects and activities in or near the marine environment that could affect America’s security, safety, economy or environment.
  - 1. VTS plays an important role in attaining MDA through the collection, analysis and dissemination of vessel arrival, departure, position and status information. The VTS’s wide array of marine information gathering devices (electronic data and voice communications) serves to project the VTS as a focal point for decision makers desiring to see the maritime “big picture.”
  - 2. In addition to the collection and dissemination of vessel position and identification reports, VTS watchstanders’ responsibilities also include diligent monitoring of surveillance displays (radar, CCTV) to watch for suspicious activities (personnel or vessels) and Safety/Security zone or Regulated Navigation Area encroachments.

Whether observed or reported, the encroaching person or vessel's description should be documented and when possible, watchstanders should keep the person/vessel under constant surveillance and suspected violations reported to the SCC.

3. While MDA information collection is an important function, it should not detract from the VTS's mission of maintaining safe waterways by managing vessel traffic.
- I. Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS is the national response framework for command and control in response to emergencies, providing a means of coordinating the efforts of individual agencies working toward the common goal of stabilizing an incident while protecting life, limb, and property. Reference (o), contains additional information on ICS.
- J. Harbor Safety Committees (HSC). IAW Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 1-00, HSCs are comprised of representatives of government agencies, maritime organizations, environmental groups, and other public interest groups within a specific port. They may also be known as Port Safety Forums, Marine Advisory Associations, or Port Advisory Groups. U.S. port complexes and their associated waterways and terminals are extremely diverse in infrastructure, management, function, and markets served; therefore, local HSCs are often the only forums available to facility operators and other stakeholders to address port-specific issues.
  1. HSCs vary in scope and effectiveness within a port or region. Guidance for the establishment and development of the HSC, including responsibilities, representation, or organizational structures is contained in the NVIC. The NVIC serves as the Coast Guard's national coordinating mechanism to promote consistency or synergy among the many autonomous HSCs around the country.
  2. Each VTS shall have proper representation at the HSC within its AOR.
  3. The Coast Guard displays national HSC information on the Homeport web site (<http://homeport.uscg.mil>) under the Ports and Waterways mission heading.

**CHAPTER 8. VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE TRAINING**

A. National VTS Training Program. This program utilizes internationally recognized and standardized training designed to provide active duty and civilian employees of the Coast Guard with a solid foundation for performing watch-standing duties at a VTS.

1. The training program consists of the following elements:
  - a. Basic VTS Operator training (National VTS Certification Course);
  - b. On-the-job training (OJT) (local training);
  - c. Supervisor training (local training); and
  - d. Professional maritime training.
2. The National VTS Certification Course and local OJT lead to VTS Operator qualification and should be conducted in that order when possible. In any case, VTS watchstander Operators pursuing qualification for the first time must attend and successfully complete the National VTS Certification Course within one year of assignment or employment. CG-7413 will consider waivers to this policy on a case-by-case basis. Waivers should be submitted from the VTS through the chain-of-command to Commandant (CG-7413).
3. A National VTS Supervisor Course is under development that will require completion prior to final Supervisor qualification. Supervisor qualification requirements and any associated training are developed and administered locally.
4. Professional maritime training is available to all VTS employees, funded by Commandant (CG-7413). VTS training Coordinators will receive announcements of available courses and procedures for reserving quotas and funding travel.

B. VTS Operator Training and National VTS Certification.

1. The National VTS Certification Course consists of the following topics:
  - a. Introduction and Administration;
  - b. Traffic Management;
  - c. Nautical Knowledge including Navigation Rules;
  - d. Communication and Coordination;
  - e. Emergency Situations;
  - f. Language;
  - g. Equipment;
  - h. Personal Attributes; and

- i. VHF Radio.
2. The National VTS Certification Course is aligned with reference (p). Reference (p) describes the principles and objectives of VTS training and describes the basis for conduct and award of qualification, certification and assessment and revalidation. The Coast Guard's VTS Certification Course was designed with the newly hired civilian employee or newly assigned military employee in mind and is a required step to qualification. The course addresses basic VTS knowledge topics while including realistic simulation that allows the student to experience not only operations from the Vessel Traffic Center, but also from the simulated bridge of a ship transiting the VTS AOR.
3. The program's objective is to ensure that all training of VTS personnel for the purpose of certification is:
  - a. Structured in accordance with established training procedures based on clearly communicated, measurable and achievable objectives;
  - b. Able to ensure that the standard of competence as indicated in reference (d) is met and maintained; and
  - c. Conducted, monitored, evaluated and supported by qualified instructors as indicated in Chapter 3.4 of reference (p), and managed in a manner that ensures relevancy and accuracy according to experience gained, technological advances, national and international recommendations, rules and regulations.
4. Qualified watchstanders assigned to a VTS operating on an interim basis (e.g., only during high water situations), may be exempt from the requirement to complete National VTS Certification Course, as determined by the VTS Program Manager.
5. The National VTS Certification Course is expected to be amended from time to time to reflect changes in national or international traffic management concepts, policies or procedures.
6. The National VTS Certification Course is administered at a maritime training facility contracted by the Coast Guard. Training is delivered via classroom work, homework and simulation scenarios. While the Certification Course was designed for new employees, it may serve as a refresher for currently qualified employees.
- C. Revalidation. The VTS Program Manager has determined that a revalidation process shall be incorporated into the National VTS Training Program to ensure that there are certified, motivated and professional watchstanders in the VTC at all times.
  1. Revalidation will require VTS Operators who have not been actively standing watches in the VTC for more than five years to complete a revalidation examination.
  2. The examination shall be administered by the VTS Training Coordinator.
  3. The VTS Training Coordinator shall submit a certification recommendation to the VTS Director for action and to the VTS Program Manager for information.



4. Revalidation examinations are available from the VTS Program Manager.
- D. On-the-Job Training (OJT). VTS watchstander trainees will receive training to achieve qualification at their respective VTS. Since the training is developed and administered locally by the VTS Training Coordinator or a designated representative, the exact content and duration will vary from port to port. At a minimum, training and evaluation of the following topics shall include:
1. Navigation rules applicable to the local VTS area;
  2. Port geography;
  3. Internal operating procedures;
  4. Local regulations;
  5. Familiarity training with Sector operations, to include possible cross-training and observation watches in the IOC; and
  6. Operation of installed equipment.
- E. Re-qualification. Re-qualification is the process of verifying that a currently qualified VTS watchstander has retained the knowledge and skills acquired during tenure at a professional competency level.
1. Watchstanders will re-qualify on a regular basis (at least every five years). VTS Directors may reduce the period between re-qualification at their discretion.
  2. VTS Directors will ensure that a VTS re-qualification program is established and maintained. The re-qualification process formally evaluates knowledge and correct application of:
    - a. National and Local VTS regulations;
    - b. Applicable navigation rules and COTP directives; and
    - c. Local procedures, policies and equipment.
- F. General Mandated Training (GMT) Requirements. The Coast Guard requires training for uniformed and civilian employees to be conducted monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, etc. VTS Training Coordinators are responsible for identifying and notifying VTS employees of required training. Much of the required GMT is provided on the Coast Guard's learning portal at <https://elearning.uscg.mil/catalog/>.
- G. Collateral Duty Training. When assigning collateral duties, VTS Directors must keep in mind that any training required by assignment of collateral duties is typically funded using local training or operational funds.

## CHAPTER 9. EQUIPMENT

- A. Radio-Telecommunications Suite. To meet the intent and purpose outlined in 33 CFR § 161.1, each VTS shall have a viable radio-telecommunications suite that will allow it to effectively communicate with vessels operating within the VTS Area. The radio-telecommunications suite must permit clear communications on the frequencies defined in 33 CFR § 161.12, and should allow for the recording of voice communications.
- B. Surveillance Sensors. Each VTS may incorporate the use of surveillance sensors which may be comprised of radar, AIS or cameras as part of their operations.
- C. Casualty Reporting. VTSs shall report equipment malfunctions or deficiencies in accordance with reference (q).
- D. Modifications to Installed Vessel Traffic Management (VTM) Systems. Port surveys have been conducted at all existing VTSs to determine the best VTM system and apportionment of surveillance sensors that would allow for successful administration of VTS activities.
  - 1. VTM systems shall not be enhanced or modified unless approved by the VTS Program Manager.
  - 2. Desired changes or modifications to existing equipment suites shall be submitted for approval to the VTS Configuration and Control Board (CCB) through an Electronics Change Request (ECR) or Electronics Change Proposal (ECP), as outlined in Appendix D and reference (r).
  - 3. Unauthorized modifications to existing VTM systems will not be supported through the VTS System Maintenance & Engineering Facility (SMEF) and may negatively impact the security certification of a VTM system.

## APPENDIX A. VTS MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORTING

A. Each VTS is required to record and maintain statistics detailing its operations. These statistics will be used to evaluate local and program-wide resource allocation and policy effectiveness in addition to supporting local waterway risk assessment processes. The VTS Program Manager has determined that the following categories of statistics provide the data necessary to support the program:

1. Transit Statistics. These include intra and inter port transits and represent movements of all participating vessels. Transits will be counted separately for each category of vessel listed below:
  - a. Tanker. Self-propelled vessels carrying flammable or hazardous materials in bulk as cargo or residual. This number reflects ALL vessels in this type including those recorded in the Special Handling Transit category.
  - b. Freighter. Bulk dry cargo, container, break-bulk carriers, roll-on/roll-off (RORO), Lighter Aboard Ships (LASH). This number reflects ALL vessels in this type including those recorded in the Special Handling Transit category.
  - c. Tug/tow. Vessels designed for towing with one or more barges or vessels in tow. This number reflects ALL vessels in this type including those recorded in the Special Handling Transit category.
  - d. Ferry/passenger. Ferry movements may be calculated (based on published scheduled movements) or counted (actually observed).
  - e. Cruise Ships. Cruise ships shall be counted as a separate category of passenger vessels due to the high level of interest and visibility of cruise ship traffic within a VTS area.
  - f. Public. Includes Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, U.S. Naval Ship, Military Sealift Command, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, foreign navy, Federal, state and local government and city/county police and fire.
  - g. Other. Includes vessels not represented above, such as recreational vessels, fishing vessels, etc.
  - h. Total. Reflects the total number of transits that occurred in your port during the month. This is the sum of the above entries.
2. Special Handling Transits. This is a record of the number of transits that required special handling by the VTS. These may include vessels carrying certain dangerous cargo (as listed in 33CFR § 160.203) which may or may not require safety zones, other transits of a non-routine nature or handled differently by the VTS such as deep draft transits, vessels with hazardous operating conditions (33CFR § 161.2), vessels subject to COTP orders, etc.

3. Number of Incidents. This is the number of incidents, whether or not they were recorded in MISLE, in each of the following categories that occurred during the month:
  - a. Allision;
  - b. Collision;
  - c. Grounding;
  - d. Pollution;
  - e. Near Miss;
  - f. Vessel Casualties;
  - g. Anchorages; and
  - h. Any other event which is considered notable by the VTS Watch Supervisor.
4. Operational Controls. This number reflects the number of times that the VTS intervened or acted to ensure safety in the waterway.
  - a. Waterway Controls. When the waterway or portion of the waterway is closed/restricted.
  - b. VTS Interventions. When the VTS engages in a non-routine manner with a particular vessel or vessels to address an imminent waterway or navigation safety issue. Reportable interventions are any non-routine actions taken by the VTS where, in the absence of that action, there is a reasonable expectation that a collision, allision or grounding may have occurred involving a VTS user that may have resulted in SAR, pollution and/or an incident of national interest and/or might have significantly impacted waterway operations.
5. Other Support Activities. VTSs historically spend a good deal of time gathering information for other CG mission areas and other federal, state and local organizations. In the appropriate box, list the total number of hours spent providing the assistance.
6. Hours of Customer Outreach. Enter the hours expended to support activities with the VTS user community with regard to VTS operations and interaction with the mariner. This may include industry day visits, VTS tours, the VTS ship ride program and port facility visits, speaking engagements with marinas/yacht clubs, attendance at HSC or AMSC meetings and similar interactions, pilot on watch programs, training for pilot license candidates, etc.
7. Equipment Status. A narrative box is provided for the command's concerns and/or comments with respect to the VTS's equipment suite.
8. Narrative. This narrative should contain any input the VTS Director deems necessary to amplify information provided above (such as recommendations or vessel direction related

to an incident) or to explain any special VTS activities that may have affected or are outside the scope of the monthly statistics.



**APPENDIX B. GLOSSARY**

AOR	Area of Responsibility
AMSC	Area Maritime Security Committee
ATON	Aids to Navigation
BB	Berwick Bay
CCB	Configuration Control Board
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CGVTS	Coast Guard Vessel Traffic System (vessel traffic display system)
COOP	Continuity of Operations
COTP	Captain of the Port
CVTS	Cooperative Vessel Traffic Service
DOT	Department of Transportation
ECP	Electronic Change Proposal
ECR	Electronic Change Request
eRP	Electronic Resource Proposal
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GMT	General Military Training
H/G	Houston/Galveston
HSC	Harbor Safety Committee
IALA	International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities
ICS	Incident Command System
IOC	Interagency Operations Center
IRB	Incident Review Board
LALB	Los Angeles-Long Beach
LMR	Lower Mississippi River
LV	Louisville
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
MDZ	Maritime Defense Zone
MISLE	Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement
MLE	Marine Law Enforcement
NVIC	Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular
NY	New York
OJT	On-the-Job-Training
OPEVAL	Operational Evaluation
PA	Port Arthur
PAL	Personnel Allowance List
PAWSA	Port and Waterway Safety Assessment
PAWSS	Ports and Waterways Safety System (vessel traffic management system acquisition project)
PS	Puget Sound
PTP	Prevention Through People
PWS	Prince William Sound
PWSA	Ports and Waterways Safety Act
SAR	Search and Rescue
SCC	Sector Command Center
SF	San Francisco

## Appendix B to COMDTINST M16630.3A

SMCP	Standard Marine Communication Phrases
SMEF	System Maintenance and Engineering Facility
SMR	Saint Mary's River
TDP	Testing Designated Positions
TPA	Tampa
TSS	Traffic Separation Scheme (marine highways)
VDC	Vessel Data Card
VHF	Very High Frequency (radio frequency)
VTC	Vessel Traffic Center (center for VTS operations)
VTMIS	Vessel Traffic Management Information System
VTs	Vessel Traffic Services
VTSA	Vessel Traffic Services Area
VTS NSOP	VTS National Standard Operating Procedures



**APPENDIX C. OPERATIONAL EVALUATION (OPEVAL) PROGRAM**

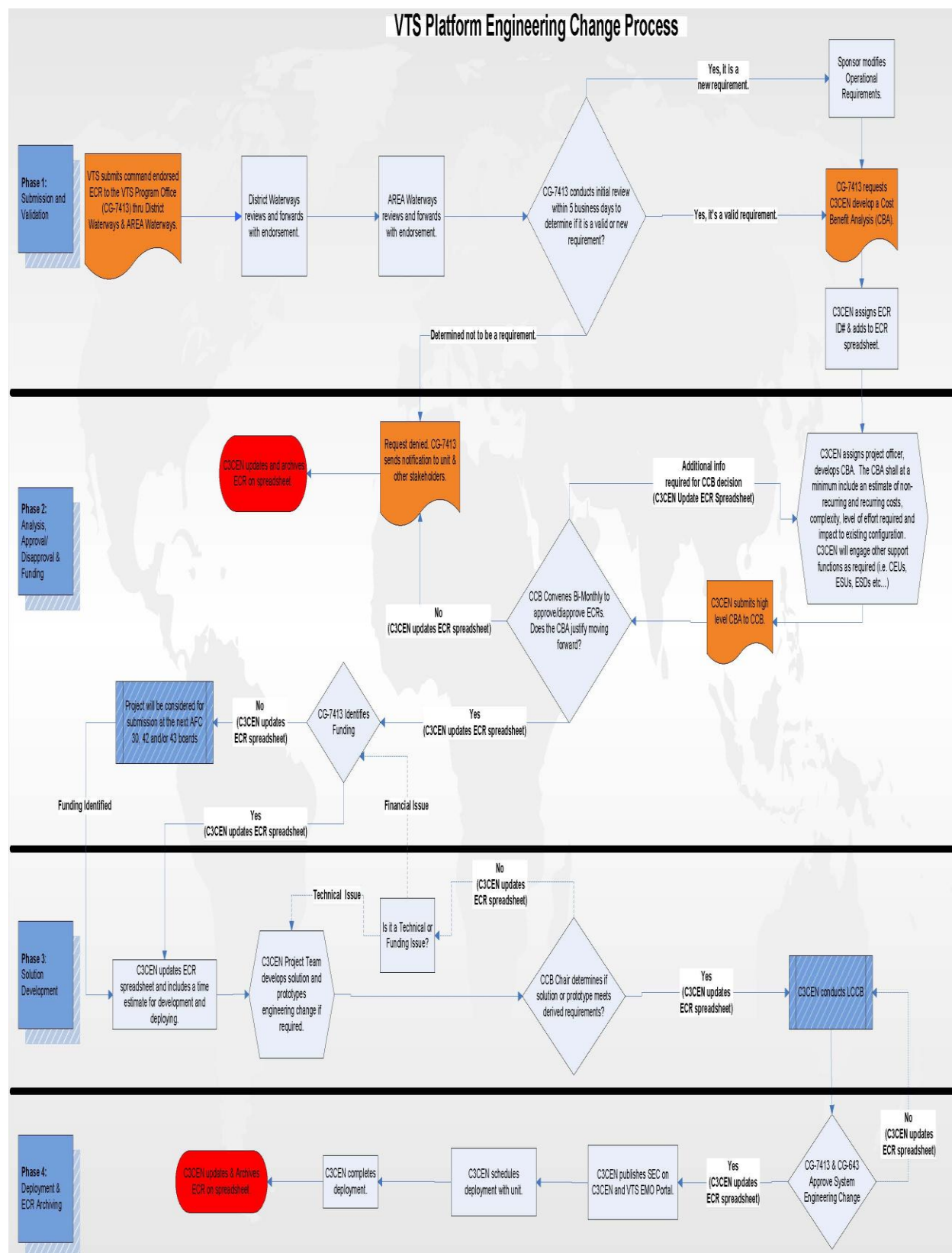
- A. The VTS program is responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the VTS are met and that the standards set by program for levels of service and operator qualifications are being met. An active OPEVAL program will ensure that standards are adhered to, and that each Coast Guard VTS provides the best possible service within their VTS area. In order to complete the OPEVAL, the following procedures will be followed:
1. Administrative Checklists. Units will be provided with advance copies of the administrative checklists prior to the arrival of the OPEVAL team. These checklists will include:
    - a. Doctrine & Policy. VTSs shall ensure that all required publications are kept on hand and up to date. Any unit derived VTS guidance (IOP, training manuals, etc.) shall be on hand for OPEVAL team review.
    - b. Procedures. Unit shall provide titles of any unit derived procedures. At a minimum, the VTS's IOP's date of last revision must be included. If available, electronic versions of unit derived guidance shall be provided to OPEVAL team leader two weeks prior to arrival of the OPEVAL team. Procedures checklist items will be filled out by the VTS, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
    - c. Personnel. Unit will fill out the personnel allowance and qualifications checklist. Each position on the official unit Personnel Allowance List (PAL) shall be indicated on the checklist, and whether that position is filled or not. In addition, VTS qualifications associated with each position shall be indicated on the checklist. Personnel checklist items will be filled out by the VTS unit, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
    - d. Radar. If the unit is equipped with radar sites, the unit shall complete the radar site summary and radar operation checklists, items will be filled out by the VTS unit, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
    - e. CCTV. If the unit is equipped with Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) sites, the unit shall complete the CCTV site summary and CCTV operation checklists, items will be filled out by the VTS unit, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
    - f. Communications. The VTS shall complete the VHF/FM site summary and Communications operation checklists, items will be filled out by the VTS unit, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
    - g. AIS. The unit shall complete the AIS site summary and AIS operation checklists, items will be filled out by the VTS, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
    - h. Maintenance. The unit shall indicate the primary VTS maintenance providers and the Coast Guard POC or COTR associated with each contract in the checklist. Maintenance checklist items will be filled out by the VTS, providing supporting comments as necessary or required.
  2. Watchstander Written Exam. A written exam will be administered as part of the OPEVAL process. The purpose of the written exam is to establish a unit baseline of knowledge and to gauge the efficiency of the National Certification Training program.

## Appendix C to COMDTINST M16630.3A

Each qualified watchstander will be required to complete a written exam covering basic VTS topics including:

- a. Relevant VTS sections of the Code of Federal Regulations;
  - b. Basic communications concepts;
  - c. VTS levels of service;
  - d. VTS concept of operations; and
  - e. Applicable navigation rules.
3. Practical Exercise. The OPEVAL team will select watchstanding personnel to review knowledge of established procedures and emergency procedures. Emergency procedures to be reviewed may include:
- a. Allision;
  - b. Collision;
  - c. Grounding;
  - d. Pollution;
  - e. Vessel Casualties; and
  - f. Security related incidents.
- B. Procedures and logistics for the OPEVAL process will be coordinated between the VTS Program team leader and the VTS Director. Specific items to be addressed are:
1. Scheduling. Each unit will be provided advance notice of the OPEVAL team visit, and the VTS Program will provide guidance outlining the specific schedule and personnel requirements. Generally, the OPEVAL will occur on a schedule not to exceed three years and may be scheduled in conjunction with a Command Center Standardization Team (CCST) visit.
  2. OPEVAL Team. The OPEVAL team will consist of at least one member of the VTS Program staff, but may include others as appropriate. In addition, members from respective District and Sectors shall be invited to participate as OPEVAL team members.
  3. Security Clearances. The VTS Program will send appropriate security clearance information prior to the OPEVAL team visit.
  4. Command Briefing. VTS OPEVAL in-brief and out-briefs will be provided to each command during the process. Generally, the in-brief and out-brief will be scheduled in conjunction with the CCST briefings, and will include the Sector Commander and/or Deputy Sector Commander, the Prevention Department Head, Chief of Waterways Management and the VTS Director.
  5. Written Report. Upon completion of the OPEVAL, the VTS Program will complete a written report of the results of the OPEVAL and provide copies to the Sector, District, Area, and appropriate support units.
  6. Resource Needs. If results of the OPEVAL indicate a need for additional resources for the VTS, the VTS Program will utilize the current Coast Guard Resource Proposal process to identify and appropriately resource the VTS need.

## APPENDIX D. ENGINEERING CHANGE REQUEST/PROPOSAL PROCESS





**APPENDIX E. VTS STAFFING STANDARDS**

The staffing calculations below for VTS watchstanders and watch supervisors are based upon guidance provided in references (a) and (c). The calculations are based upon normal operational conditions with a VTS providing full levels of service.

In the event that a VTS does not meet these minimum staffing standards, the VTS shall submit a request to deviate from the standard to their District Commander, via their operational chain-of-command. In the request, the VTS shall include, as a minimum: a copy of the current watch schedule; a list of qualified VTS Operators and Supervisors; current employment of non-watchstanding VTS personnel; and a description of what action has been taken in response to the watchstanding shortage (i.e. reduction of leave authorization, curtailment of training opportunities, amended watch schedule, altered watch hours, augmented watch with non-traditional watch standers such as the Training Coordinator).

	CIVILIAN W/S	CIVILIAN W/SUP	ACTIVE DUTY W/S	ACTIVE DUTY W/SUP
<b>(Note 1) Total Availability = (Civilian : 40 hour per week X 52.18 weeks: Active Duty: 42 hours * per week X 52.18 weeks)</b>	2087	2087	2192	2192
<b>Employment related factors affecting Availability</b>				
(Note 2) Public Outreach	-40	-40	-40	-40
Ship rides/familiarization visits	-40	-40	-40	-40
(Note 3) Incident review/Lessons learned	-30	-30	-30	-30
(Note 4) Training cycle (10 years for civilians/3 years for active duty)	-169	-169	-535	-535
(20 hrs travel + 80 hrs training - 10 yr cycle) Civilian Certification /				
(20 hrs travel + 80 hrs training - 3 yr cycle) Active duty	-10	-10	-33	-33
Qualification - PQS/OJT	-104	-104	-347	-347
Professional Training	-40	-40	-80	-80
GMT - (CG PERSCOM)	-15	-15	-15	-15
Rating Training			-60	-60
(Note 5) Leave - annual, sick, comp	-240	-240	-300	-300
(Note 6) Diversions - voting, jury duty family matters, etc.	-10	-10	-10	-10
Admin ovrrhd - 3 yr cycle - impact of in/out processing, proceed , etc			-25	-25
<b>Hours lost annually</b>	-489	-489	-940	-940
<b>Remaining Availability</b>	1598	1598	1252	1252
<b>Watchstanding Related Factors Affecting Availability</b>				
Position Breaks (1 hr break for every 3 hrs on position)= X 7 watches per pay period (21hrs X 26 PPD) = 546	546		546	
Total work hrs lost per year (position breaks X (remaining availability / total availability))	-418.06		-311.85	
<b>Total Work Availability</b>	1179.9	1598	940.14	1252
Hrs of watch required annually (365.25X24)	8766	8766	8766	8766
<b>Personnel required per watch position</b>	7.43	5.48	9.32	7.00
<b>Personnel required per watch position (rounded up)</b>	8	6	10	7

**Notes:**

- (1) Total Availability hours per week based on Staffing Standards Manual, COMDTINST M5312.11A.
- (2) Public Outreach hours are based on the average time spent by VTS watchstanders conducting this effort. (VTS Directors Workshop, July 2009).
- (3) Incident review/lessons learned hours are based on average time spent by VTS watchstanders conducting this effort. (VTS Directors Workshop, July 2009).
- (4) The training cycle is based on the average time an individual remains in the VTS job. For civilian VTS watchstanders 10 years is used, for active duty watchstanders 3 years is used. VTS Certification Course, OJT and recurrent qualification training make up the bulk of VTS Watchstander training activities.
- (5) Civilian leave calculations obtained from Navy Total Force Manpower Policies and Procedures, OPNAVINST 1000.16 (series). Active duty leave calculations from Staffing Standards Manual, COMDTINST M5312.11A.
- (6) Diversions factor taken from Navy Total Force Manpower Policies and Procedures, OPNAVINST 1000.16 (series).





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# Vessel Traffic Service National Standard Operating Procedures Manual (VTS NSOP)

COMDTINST M16630.3A