

## Cargo and Passenger Vessel Inspections

Cargo and passenger vessels are a significant part of the maritime transportation sector in Washington State. Large commercial vessel traffic affects all areas of Puget Sound, the Columbia River, Grays Harbor and the outer coast.

Washington State residents are concerned about oil spills from vessel traffic and have authorized the Department of Ecology to implement measures that would result in “zero spills.”

### Why does Ecology inspect cargo and passenger vessels?

Ecology believes prevention is the only way to achieve the goal of zero spills. Ecology vessel inspectors conduct inspections to ensure adequate policies and procedures are being used, and that ship crews and equipment are working safely and properly.

Ecology vessel inspections fill a critical role in ensuring marine safety and protecting Washington waters. Inspectors work together with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) under a memorandum of agreement (MOA) in support of our joint goal to prevent oil spills. Ecology also works with Oregon’s Department of Environmental Quality and has a separate MOA with them for joint inspections. Our cooperative efforts with federal and Oregon regulators and industry partners have decreased oil spills from commercial vessels over the past decade.

Ecology and the USCG have both historically conducted marine safety inspections. Under our legislatively mandated zero-spills goal, state inspectors are needed to ensure Washington State addresses commercial marine issues that affect our state waters. The USCG is the federal representative for marine safety; however, their inspectors do not enforce state law. State inspectors ensure the unique concerns of Washington State are addressed and our Accepted Industry Standards (AIS) are implemented.

Washington legislators decided our waters require a more stringent level of inspection because of the quantity of ship traffic and environmental sensitivity of our waters. State law RCW 88.46.050 authorizes Ecology to screen vessels for potential risk and inspect identified cargo and passenger vessels for compliance with state, federal, and international regulations.

Our inspections are conducted under state regulation WAC 317-31 to determine if such vessels pose a “substantial risk” of harm to public health and safety, or to the environment. To ensure the highest level of maritime safety for Washington waters, Ecology may take enforcement actions as needed, alone or working with the USCG.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Preventing oil spills is the only way to achieve our legislative goal of “zero spills. Inspections of vessels identify areas that can be improved to prevent oil spills and improve maritime safety. Ecology’s vessel inspectors have extensive experience in ship operations and regulatory requirements and ensure ships in Washington waters are operating safely.

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### Special accommodations:

If you need this publication in an alternate format, call the Spills Program at 360-407-7455. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.



**Inspections confirm compliance with Accepted Industry Standards.**

Ecology, working jointly with industry, developed Accepted Industry Standards for cargo and passenger vessels. These standards, based on international conventions and federal regulations, identify best marine practices.

**What is defined as “substantial risk?”**

A vessel is a substantial risk if it falls below accepted industry standards to a degree where there is a serious threat to the public health and the environment.

**What is the difference between the state and federal inspections?**

Ecology’s vessel inspections focus on policies and procedures that promote marine safety and pollution prevention. Our vessel inspections evaluate compliance with applicable laws and regulations and address the following items:

- Safety management policies and practices
- Vessel crewing
- Vessel and personnel safety
- Pollution prevention
- Management oversight
- Preventive maintenance
- Internal & external inspection procedures
- Vessel documents, logs and records
- Bridge resource management
- Navigation procedures
- Emergency preparedness
- Engineering organization and operations
- Overall condition of engineering and deck spaces

We believe these are the areas that when neglected are most likely to lead to an oil spill. By identifying areas of concern and assisting crews and companies to correct them, we reduce the overall chance of a spill.

All Ecology vessel inspectors are USCG credentialed mariners with many years of maritime industry experience. This experience provides them with a strong understanding of the commercial maritime culture and brings an immense level of knowledge to the inspections. Our inspectors are technically knowledgeable and examine vessels and their crews to ensure they are meeting the Washington State, federal and international requirements. When spills and incidents occur, our inspectors’ experience is useful in determining cause and formulating preventive actions as part of Ecology’s investigative process.

USCG Port State Control (PSC) examinations focus on the material condition of operational and life-saving equipment of foreign vessels calling at U.S. ports. The PSC exam also ensures the crew is trained in life-saving and shipboard firefighting operations, and that critical equipment, systems, and operations are adequate to meet federal and international requirements. Typically, the following areas are examined:

- Vessel documents, logs and records
- Emergency electrical power systems
- Main and emergency fire pump
- Fire detection systems
- Watertight doors and hatches
- Lifeboats & other lifesaving equip
- Ventilation and fuel pumps
- Steering gear
- Oil water separators and bilge monitoring systems
- Navigation safety equipment
- Engineering spaces – safety, fire and environmental hazards
- Safety management & security systems
- Ballast water management
- Cargo handling systems (tank vessels)



USCG PSC Examiners go through training and qualification procedures to ensure expertise in applying U.S. and international regulations for vessels. These qualifications ensure that USCG Examiners meet United States treaty obligations when exercising port state authority over visiting vessels.

While there may be some slight overlap in the scope of the respective vessel examinations, Ecology inspections complement USCG PSC examinations, but do not generally duplicate them. Ecology's primary focus is on operational practices and procedures. Both Ecology and USCG inspectors board vessels based on screening processes that weights factors that may elevate the risk a vessel poses. If a vessel has been recently boarded by the USCG, Ecology takes the results into consideration within our vessel screening and risk analysis.

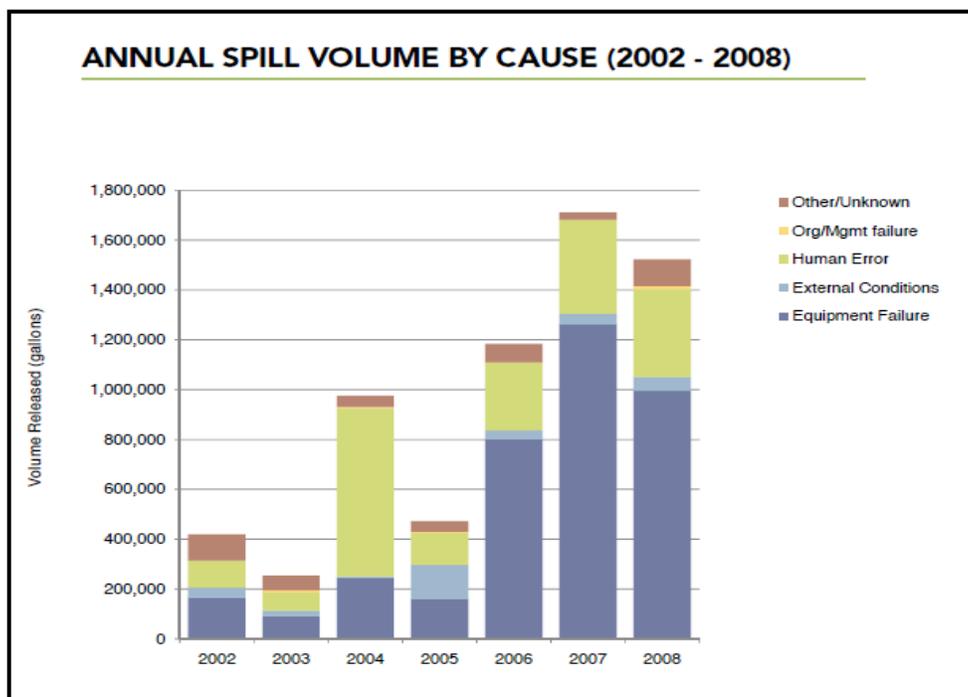
### How do Ecology inspections reduce the risk of a spill?

Ecology inspectors review the ship safety management systems to determine compliance with regulations and our Accepted Industry Standards. We are able to identify deficiencies and immediately recommend improvements to the master of the vessel. Observed major deficiencies of safety critical systems or violations of U.S. or international regulations are immediately shared with the USCG. Ecology enforcement actions are based on the type of regulatory violations identified during inspections.

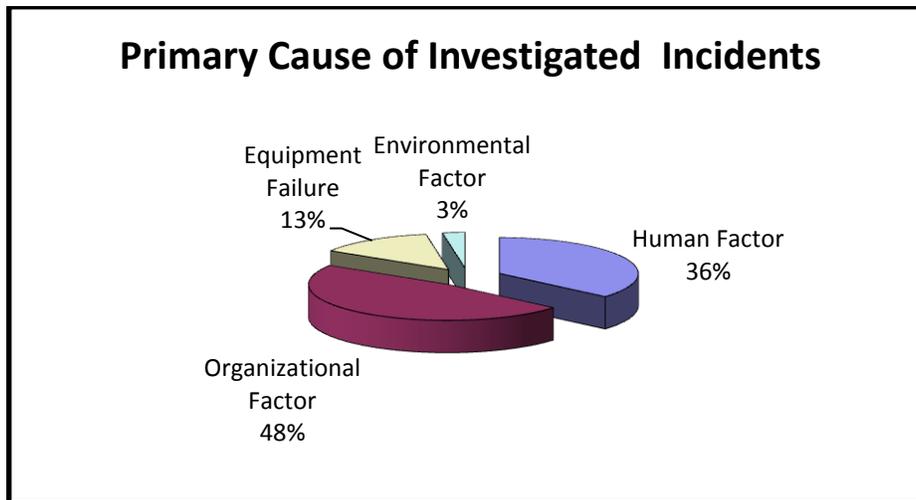
For violations of accepted industry standards, Ecology provides letters of concern to the owner/operator of vessels. These letters identify changes for improved vessel safety and environmental protection. In 2008, 14 companies including operators from Greece, Japan, Russia, China, and Denmark notified Ecology of changes they specifically instituted as a direct result of our inspections and recommendations. These fleet-wide changes mean that not only did the specific vessels we inspected become safer, but every vessel in that company's fleet worldwide did too.

### What causes oil spills from these ships?

This graph from the Pacific States – British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force annual report shows the causes of oil spills from vessels.



Ecology's own data shows that the main causes of oil spills from 1993 to 2010 in Washington waters were organizational factors and human error. These include such causes as: improper equipment use, inattention, inaccurate computations, poor judgment, procedural error, deliberate acts, lack of supervision, missing or inadequate maintenance, and inadequate policy or procedure.



The complementary aspects of the Ecology and USCG inspections address both the equipment and human error factors and improve the overall maritime safety level in Washington waters.

#### **How do Ecology and the USCG coordinate vessel inspections?**

On June 26, 2007 the Thirteenth U.S. Coast Guard District and the State of Washington renewed the MOA on Pollution Prevention and Response. Ecology and the USCG jointly developed protocols for marine safety and environmental protection activities, including coordination of our vessel inspection activities. We coordinate vessel inspections to avoid duplication and jointly inspect certain high risk or suspect vessels. We also inform each other of any situation where a vessel may pose a significant threat to public health and safety, or the environment. The agencies also meet regularly to discuss incidents, analyze trends and share information.

Working in combination with the USCG, Ecology inspectors help prevent oil spills, improve the safety of Washington waters and enforce international and domestic environmental regulations. Through the MOA and protocols, Ecology continues to augment Coast Guard efforts and ensure state interests are protected. This coordinated effort maximizes the efficiency and effectiveness of our agencies' resources in meeting our collective environmental protection goals and mandates.