

# Southern Towing Company

Newsletter

November 2006



## Dress Right for Safety

Whenever you are working on the boat or a barge you are to wear the proper attire. Our STOP Manual explains the right thing to wear for different circumstances. As a basic requirement you are to wear long pants, work shoes and a T-shirt with sleeves, and a work vest. We never allow you to work in shorts, cutoff or tanktop shirts or sneakers. It is up to the wheelhouse personnel to set the example and to enforce our safety rules. Depending on the work you are doing additional safety gear may be required. For example, safety goggles, chemical protective suit, ear plugs, gloves or other safety equipment may be required.

## Nautical Trivia

**Shows his true colors.** Early warships often carried flags from many nations on board in order to elude or deceive the enemy. The rules of civilized warfare called for all ships to hoist their true national ensigns before firing a shot. Someone who finally "shows his true colors" is acting like a man-of-war which hailed another ship flying one

flag, but then hoisted their own when they got in firing range.

## Training/Drills

By regulation, fire drills are required each month. Each new crewmember who has not participated in a drill must receive a safety orientation within 24 hours of reporting on board. The safety orientation must ensure that they know how to operate fire-extinguishing equipment and operate the fuel shutoff for the engine room.

## Licensing Information: Fingerprinting & Criminal Background Checks

The Coast Guard amended their rules to include new security requirements when applying for an original, renewal, or raise in grade licenses. The new rule requires an identity check, meaning that fingerprints must be taken for a criminal record review. This means that you must appear in person at an REC sometime during the process. You will need to present 2 forms of identification, one of which must have your photograph. For the first time criminal record reviews will be required each time an application is made. This new requirement will likely cause many more delays in the renewal process.

## USCG Proposed NVIC

The Coast Guard has published a proposed Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular establishing "Medical and Physical Evaluation Guidelines for Merchant Mariner Credentials." These are the standards that will be used to evaluate your fitness for duty when applying for your license or MMD. You have to identify prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications you are taking as well as

any herbal supplements you may be taking. You will be evaluated to determine whether your license or MMD should be issued or renewed. The standards are stricter than in the past.

## EMD School

Congratulations to Paul Schelinski, Robert Strickland and John Dressing for completing the EMD Marine Engine course and the Person-in-Charge of fuel transfer training.

## Welcome Aboard

Welcome aboard to Roy Victory who will be working out of the shop as a mechanic.

## Company Policy Violations

Company policies are in place for many reasons. Some are there to protect crewmembers; others are there to protect equipment from damage; some help us comply with federal and state regulations. Violation of our policies can cause a multitude of problems. One such policy is to report groundings to the office. We need to know when things happen. This is to protect you, our equipment and the products with which our customers entrust us. We shouldn't be learning of damage to a barge from the Coast Guard during a boarding or from a customer dock.

## Licensing Centralization

The Coast Guard is in the process of centralizing their credentialing functions from the REC's to their National Maritime Center in Arlington, VA. This is an effort to streamline the licensing process. The mariner will still be able to make application at any of the REC's or at the NMC. The evaluations will all be completed at the NMC once the transition is completed. Remember to renew early.

## **TWIC Update**

The TSA and the USCG are proceeding with plans to promulgate the final rule regarding TWIC's by January 1, 2007. On October 13<sup>th</sup> the president signed the SAFE Port Act of 2006. This law limits the offenses that will disqualify an individual from receiving a TWIC to treason, espionage or sedition.

### **W-2 Forms**

You should have received a letter asking you to verify the information on hand that will appear on your W-2 form. If changes need to be made, be sure to return the corrected form to the office.

### **401k Plan**

The next enrollment period for the 401k Plan is in January. If you want to enroll or make changes let Paula know by Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>. Remember, this is a chance to get some free money. Ask Paula how. The federal limit for 401k plans for 2007 is \$15,000 (\$20,500 if over age 50.) IRA limits are \$4,000 for 2007 (\$5,000 if over age 50.)

## **SSN**

As of October 16<sup>th</sup> the Social Security number (SSN) is no longer printed anywhere on a license or merchant mariner document. A "mariner number" has replaced it. This USCG generated number allows you and the REC to ensure you are talking about the same person without using the SSN. The SSN can still be used, but the mariner number will be the preferred way to identify a mariner to the USCG.

### **FCC License**

All wheelhouse personnel are required to hold a Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Permit issued by the FCC. This is an easy license to get and does not expire. Visit [www.FCC.gov](http://www.FCC.gov) for info or contact Mike Slack.

### **Service Awards**

Congratulations to Ralph Cole, Chuck Dressler, Jason Roberts and Robert Elrod for completing 5 years and to James Waren for completing 10 years of service with Southern Towing Company.

## **2006 Light Lists**

Light Lists for the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico for 2006 have been distributed to the boats. If you did not receive one call Mike Slack.

### **401(K) Safe Harbor Plan**

Beginning On Jan. 1, 2007 you are eligible to join the plan if you are 21 and have 90 days of service with Southern Towing Company. Southern Towing Company will make a 100% matching contribution up to 5% of your pay for the payroll period each month. You will be 100% vested in the plan from the day you enter into it. Everyone will be receiving a detailed letter about the changes. Also, we will be having open meetings to explain the changes to the 401(k) plan. The dates are February 5, March 12, and April 9, 2007. You and your spouse are invited to attend one of these meetings while you are off the boat. There will be a representative from Principal Insurance Co., who administers our 401(K) plan. You will be able to ask any questions concerning the new changes to the plan, how to participate and your investment options.