



U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System

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CMTS Establishes Interagency COVID-19 Working Group

The U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS) established the COVID-19 Working Group to facilitate interagency coordination in response to shared challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. CMTS Coordinating Board Chair RDML Richard Timme and Maritime Administrator retired RADM Mark Buzby led the formation of the Working Group in recognition of the importance of supporting the efficient operation of the Marine Transportation System (MTS) under COVID-19. The Working Group provides a forum not only for the sharing of best practices between federal agencies, but also to engage with stakeholders and to learn from industry experiences on the front lines of the pandemic.

Administrator Buzby stated, “I have sincerely appreciated the outstanding collaboration between federal agencies working to support the MTS under unprecedented conditions due to COVID-19. The new COVID-19 Working Group will enable us to more effectively coordinate our efforts across the federal enterprise and enhance our support of MTS stakeholders.”

RDML Rich Timme, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy, U.S. Coast Guard also noted, “COVID-19 has presented new challenges across the entire MTS that require a coordinated approach to ensure the continued efficient operation of our national supply chain. As the new Coordinating Board Chair, I am committed to ensuring that the CMTS partnership is well-positioned to support enhanced collaboration through the COVID-19 Working Group.”

Twenty agencies have joined the working group, bringing with them their expertise and experience in responding to COVID-19. Highlighted agency actions include:

- The Maritime Administration (MARAD) coordinated to receive and distribute 2.39 million face coverings from FEMA to MTS stakeholders, in order to more fully respond to maritime workforce personal protection requirements.
- The U.S. Coast Guard has proactively adjusted policies impacting mariners and operations within the MTS to support the continued efficient movement of cargo vital to nation’s economic recovery.
- The Federal Maritime Commission instituted two fact finding initiatives to assess critical issues in the MTS under COVID-19 and possible remedies under FMC authorities. Fact Finding 29 is investigating the impacts to the supply chain and Fact Finding 30 is investigating impacts within the cruise industry.

The CMTS COVID-19 Working Group work plan includes tasks to support: the facilitation of interagency communications and stakeholder engagement; the review of federal policies, regulatory practices, and guidance impacting safe, effective, and efficient operation of the MTS under and after the COVID-19 pandemic; providing feedback on MTS industry-developed COVID-19 best practices and resources; sharing and improving resources for addressing U.S. merchant mariner mental health and safety; and assessing MTS performance under the COVID-19 pandemic and developing lessons learned. As activities and products are shared with industry, they will be posted at www.CMTS.gov.

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