



Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston Marine Safety Information Bulletin 57-20

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OVERSIZE TOW PERMITS SECTOR HOUSTON-GALVESTON COTP ZONE

The Sector Houston-Galveston Captain of the Port (COTP) is suspending the requirement to obtain advance permission for certain oversize tows regulated under 33 CFR 162.75(b)(5)(i) operating within the COTP Zone (as defined in 33 CFR 3.40-28) for the ports of Houston, Galveston, Freeport and Texas City and the portion of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) from MM 319.5 to MM-442, including all surrounding navigable waterways. Specifically, telephone notification requirements are suspended for oversize tows operating on the GIWW within the following parameters:

Tows of 108-feet in width or less if under 750-feet in length, including the towboat and portions of the hawser that cannot be broken down.

Tows operating under this notification suspension **must still comply with** 33 CFR 162.75(b)(5)(i), which states that “before entering any narrow section of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, tows in excess of one-half the channel width or 55 feet, will be required to stand by until tows which are less than one-half the channel width or 55 feet wide have cleared the channel. When passing is necessary in narrow channels, overwidth tows shall yield to the maximum.”

This suspension of notification requirements does not preclude owners and operators from the requirements of 33 CFR 162.75(b)(1), which includes reducing the size of a tow as necessary to ensure that “... A clear channel shall at all times be left open to permit free and unobstructed navigation by all types of vessels and tows normally using the various waterways covered by the regulations of this section.”

Oversized tows, which **cannot** be broken down, or that may require a closure of part of a waterway, including, but not limited to: large vessels being delivered, drill rigs, large derrick barges, etc. must be submitted for COTP approval through the office in which the tow originates. Requests must be received no less than 24-hours prior to movement. The evaluation of the tow permit request must meet the COTP’s full satisfaction that the proposed movement can be safely made, competently performed and there will be no undue risk or burden on the environment, other waterway users, or the waterway itself, prior to approval.

This notification suspension applies only to the Sector Houston-Galveston COTP Zone. Oversized tows intending to transit outside of the Sector Houston-Galveston COTP zone shall notify the cognizant COTP for their intended transit. The COTP retains the option to reinstate existing telephone notification requirements should conditions warrant.

This notice will be posted on the Coast Guard’s HOMEPORT website at <http://homeport.uscg.mil>. If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact the Sector Houston-Galveston Waterways Management office at (281) 464-4736.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. E. SMITH".

J. E. SMITH

Captain, United States Coast Guard
Captain of the Port