

# Gulf Coast Mariners Association



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NEWS BULLETIN  
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## GCMA ELECTION RESULTS

The fifth annual election of officers was held on Monday April 21, 2003 at 7:00 PM. At that meeting, Penny Adams was re-elected President for a three-year term by unanimous vote. Captain Ray Adams and Jimmy Deano will serve three-year terms. Captain Roland Rodney will serve a two-year term. Mark Cheramie was elected to a one-year term. The Board of Directors then appointed the following members to the Board to serve for one-year terms: Captain Eric Vizier, Tony Adams, Tony Elliot, and Gwen Block (Treasurer). Continuing to serve their unexpired terms are Captain Nick Mastrodonato, Captain David Whitehurst, Wayne Savoie, and Richard A. Block (Secretary). Retiring Board members are Captain Bill Munson, Captain Ronnie Lemoine, and Captain Mark Duplantis.

## A NTSB "MOST WANTED": REDUCE HUMAN FATIGUE IN TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS

While our well-publicized experience with the Coast Guard throughout the past three years clearly demonstrates that that Agency couldn't care less how many hours our mariners work on tugs, towboats, and offshore supply vessels each day, at least the National

Transportation Safety Board has made the connection between fatigue and accidents. In fact, the NTSB has been concerned about this problem in all modes of transportation for well over a decade.

Each year the NTSB chooses its "Most Wanted" list of recommendations that will have the greatest positive impact on transportation safety. The list is updated annually and the recommendations that are selected receive intensive Safety Board scrutiny follow-up during the year. The NTSB wants "To help eliminate fatigue as a causal factor in transportation accidents by studying the relationship between fatigue and accidents within the transportation industry; and updating each industry's hours-of-service regulations."

The Coast Guard has studied the problem for years. Their research and development lab in Groton, CT, has come up with "good science" while other branches of the Coast Guard have been busy trying to protect the boat owners' sacred cows, namely a two-watch system that calls for an 84-hour workweek with unlimited freedom to violate mariner work hours at will.

GCMA fought the stalling tactics of the Coast Guard's National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee (NOSAC) and the Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) for a year and a half to sabotage our efforts to have the Coast Guard act on the complaints we revealed in the "Yellow Book" titled Mariners Speak Out on Violations of the 12-Hour Work Day in June 2000. We finally sent a dozen representatives to Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington in April 2002 to speak of our displeasure at a public meeting that almost came to blows.

This April, GCMA formally requested NOSAC to review NTSB Recommendation M-99-1 that calls on the Coast Guard to develop "scientifically-based hours-of-work regulations". The studies are over—so let the action begin to resolve this issue once and for all!

## LITTLE SLEEP IMPAIRS MIND AS MUCH AS NO SLEEP

By Dana Frisch

New York (Reuters Health March 14, 6:30 PM ET)—Many nights of little sleep—fewer than six hours a night—can impair mental performance as much as not getting a wink for two nights in a row, new research shows.

The data contradict a popular notion that our bodies can become accustomed to functioning on sustained periods of little sleep without any consequences, said lead author Dr. Hans P.A. Van Dongen, a research assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

The 48 participants in the study were divided into four groups that slept either four, six, or eight hours a night for two weeks, or had no sleep for three days.

The groups were monitored in a laboratory throughout the two weeks to ensure that they did not nod off or use caffeine. They were assessed on a battery of mental and physiological tests periodically every day and were also asked to evaluate how tired they felt.

People sleeping less than eight hours a night were slower to react, less able to think clearly and perform simple memory tasks, the researchers report in the March issue of the journal Sleep. They also performed as poorly on certain tasks as the individuals evaluated after one or two nights of sleeplessness. However, getting some sleep made individuals feel less tired than those who went without sleep despite test results that showed they were just as impaired. As a consequence, Van Dongen told Reuters Health, there should be countermeasures in place for people who cannot avoid being chronically sleep-deprived, such as military personnel, trainee doctors, shift workers, and others.

Van Dongen recommends that these professions limit the number of hours people are allowed to work, give people the opportunity to nap at "strategic times" or allow them to use caffeine or other chemical stimulants to maintain alertness.

This study is important and "relevant" because it shows what happens when the body must deal with its tiredness. [*Contributed by Captain Bill Beacom. Bill confides that there is a lot more to this story, but his one-finger typing needed a rest. Captain Beacom, Richard and Gwen Block visited the National Transportation Safety Board in early April to present mariner concerns over the fatigue issue.*]

#### NEW AND REVISED GCMA REPORTS

*[GCMA Reports deal with a variety of subjects of interest to mariners. Many are designed to answer questions that our mariners ask or to explore situations they may become involved in. Many of these reports appear on our web site on the internet at [www.gulfcoastmariners.org](http://www.gulfcoastmariners.org) maintained through the devoted efforts of Captain David Miller. If you do not have an internet connection, a printed copy of each report is available through the GCMA office. Please order these reports by number. If you want to add or correct anything in any report, please write us.]*

- **R-371.** Richard Plant's Letter to NBC "DATE-LINE" about what really causes accidents like the bridge knock-down at Webbers Falls last year and what is really happening throughout the inland towing industry. Richard Plant is the Director of Special Projects for the International Organization of Masters, Mates, and Pilots and a supporter of GCMA.
- **R-370.** 12-Hour Rule Violations: The Verret Case. (Report now in preparation). This case, discussed in GCMA monthly meetings in Spring 2000, is

one of the worst cases of mariner abuse we have seen. After working for almost 48 hours without rest, Captain Collins Verret suffered a stroke in the pilothouse of his anchor-handling tug that paralyzed and permanently disabled him. Find out about the ignorance, incompetence, and lies that almost killed him and how his company, one of the largest boat conglomerates in the Gulf, pulled out all the stops to prevent or delay a fair settlement in this case for more than 2½ years.

- **R-369.** 12-Hour Rule Violations: The Winkler Case. The first case involving a GCMA member wins a landmark victory for our mariners in a Louisiana Court of Appeals. Provides information on what our mariners should know about "Whistle-blower Protection" in Louisiana.
- **R-368.** Fire Suppression Systems and Voyage Planning for Towing Vessels. These controversial new fire-fighting regulations for all towing vessels as well as voyage planning regulations for towing vessels operating offshore (Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere) go into effect on August 27, 2003. GCMA commented on a number of points in these regulations. We urge our mariners to send written comments to us before July 1, 2003 so that we may collect and forward them to the Coast Guard. It is clear that boat owners' comments caused the Coast Guard to make changes that may not be in your best interests. This will be your **only chance** to comment.
- **R-367.** USCG, 8GCD Marine Safety Information Bulletin 03-001. This bulletin announces Regulated Navigation Areas within the Eighth District along with **reporting requirements** for barges loaded with **certain dangerous cargoes** (as listed on pg. 2) on inland rivers in the 8<sup>th</sup> District. These rules are effective April 16 through Oct. 31, 2003. If this notice applies to you, ask for a copy or read it on the internet at [www.uscg.mil/d8/Divs/M/CGD8M.HTM](http://www.uscg.mil/d8/Divs/M/CGD8M.HTM).
- **R-366.** New May 1, 2003. The Plight of Towing Vessel Personnel. This report defines "Lower-Level" as this term is applied to our mariners. It compares "inspected" to "uninspected" vessels and covers important issues in towing vessel officer licensing and vessel manning. It deals with employment issues and goals for tug- and tow-boatmen by citing other GCMA reports containing additional information on these topics. (5 pages).
- **R-365.** New USCG regulation effective Feb. 28, 2003. Notification of Arrival in and Departure From U.S. Ports. (68 FR 9337-9347, Feb. 28, 2003). If you engage in an international voyage of any sort, you need to be familiar with this new regulation now in effect. We included the "Preamble" from the Federal Register to make the regula-

tion more understandable. Some regulations apply to towing vessels operated by some of our mariners, especially barges carrying "certain dangerous cargo".

- **R-365.** Remarks of Captain Roland Rodney to the National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee, Washington, DC, April 3, 2003. Roland "told it like it is" from the mariners point of view to the National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee NOSAC. (2 pages).
  - **R-363.** Report from the Subcommittee on Liftboats to NOSAC. Informative article useful to all our mariners who work on liftboats. (10 pages).
  - **R-362.** GCMA supports NTSB Recommendation M-99-1 to establish "scientifically based hours-of-work regulations". We believe that the existing 84- to 105-hour workweeks common in this industry exploit mariners and are NOT conducive to safety. GCMA has made two visits to the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington and will continue to work with NTSB to work for better work-hour regulations for our mariners. March 16, 2003. (6 pages).
  - **R-361.** Bayou Sorrel Lock Improvements. Recommendations by Captain David Whitehurst, GCMA. Applicable USCG Regulations at 33 CFR 162.75 governing waters tributary to the Gulf (except the Mississippi R.). March 14, 2003. (3 pages).
  - **R-356.** Detained on Board. Treatment of foreign seamen arriving in the United States. This article authored by Dr. Tom Matyock and is recommended by GCMA member Father Sinclair Oubre.
  - **R-355.** Maritime Security Issues. A discussion of the subject followed by 10 comments to the Docket by the GCMA Board of Directors. Searches, seizures, and arrests (14 U.S.C. 89) followed by 8CGD 24-hour telephone numbers. Feb. 17, 2003.
  - **R-354.** Lifesaving Issues for Lower-Level Mariners. (Replaces and updates GCMA Report #R-208). Discusses the problem with life floats and buoyant apparatus commonly used on many small vessels. Deficient lifesaving regulations govern towing vessels. Cold water protection for inland deck crews. GCMA's memorandum to TSAC. Man Overboard: A Serious Challenge for River Mariners. February 7, 2003. (15 pages)
  - **R-342, Revision 2.** License Defense and Income Protection Insurance. We urge members of our Association to take advantage of the special rates offered by policies GCMA has been looking into for several years. These policies are described in mariner terms in GCMA Report #R-342, Rev. 2.
- For "sales" information on rates and to obtain a policy call Cheryl Guidry at (985) 632-7635 or on her cell phone at (985) 665-7135. Do not call the GCMA office.
- **R-353.** Lower-Level Mariners Are a Majority of All Licensed Mariners...so why don't we act like it? It's pathetic, but the Coast Guard doesn't have a clue as to how many mariners there are or who they are and where to find them! (4 pages).
  - **R-350.** Mariners Seek Help From Congress on Safety-Related Problems. GCMA brought 16 issues the Coast Guard could not or would not work on to Congress...and then visited a number of Congressmen to discuss the issues. This is the culmination of four years of hard work fighting an uncooperative agency insensitive to the needs of our mariners. Feb. 14, 2003. (23 pages).
  - **R-311, Revision 2.** Loss of the OSV Cheramie Botruc 26 With Two Fatalities. (Revised March 26, 2003). The revision includes major excerpts from the Coast Guard's report two years in the making with GCMA comments. (14 pages).
  - **R-276, Revision 4.** Towing Vessel Regulatory Standards. Every mariner working on a towing vessel should have a copy of this report. It shows the protections our mariners **DON'T** have compared to mariners working on OSVs and small passenger vessels. We asked Congress to make the changes listed in this report that we believe are necessary for your health, safety and welfare.
  - **R-258, Revision 1, May 5, 2002.** Watchkeeping and Work-Hour Limitations on Towing Vessels, Off-shore Supply Vessels (OSV) and Crewboats Utilizing a Two-Watch System. The Coast Guard Policy Letter G-MOC-4-00 on this subject was revised slightly in April 2001. We added this change as well as copies of each law or regulation mentioned in that letter to make it more complete and useful.

**ADD YOUR STORY TO THE  
GCMA "YELLOW BOOK"**

June 1<sup>st</sup> marks the third anniversary of the GCMA "Yellow Book" that relates how GCMA mariners were driven to violate "the 12-Hour Rules" by their employers. This book is an important record of events the Coast Guard insists never took place. GCMA distributed the original book to almost 300 government officials and concerned mariners both in this country and overseas. It now contains 58 mariner entries. We encourage our mariners to bring the book up to date by contributing your TRUE story. We encourage you to be accurate, name names, provide dates, name the boat you worked on, the company you worked for,

and—as suggested by the Chairman of NOSAC—the name of the company the vessel was chartered to at the time. We will ask you to have the statement notarized. We will remove your name before adding the page to the book but will ask you to be prepared to respond to a bona fide investigation if and when one is undertaken.

### THOUGHTS FROM NOSAC

*Extract from the “Minutes” of the National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee meeting of April 3, 2003:*

“Chairman Ryan reminded everyone that the function of NOSAC, as written in its Charter, is purely an advisory capacity; NOSAC cannot legislate, regulate, enforce or investigate complaints. He recommended that mariner complaints be submitted in writing to the oil companies. The oil companies, who contract the work of OSVs, are all committed to eliminating unsafe acts, and they would not allow mariners to be forced to commit violations of the 12-hour rule.”

“Mr. Larry Rigdon said it was wrong to suppose that all the OSV owners were forcing their crews to work unreasonable hours. There may be one or two companies responsible, but one should not blame the whole OSV industry. Maybe the solution should be to identify these companies and then the operators would be more likely to consider the complaints.”

Think these ideas are far-fetched? **Think GCMA!!!!**

### TOWING VESSEL LICENSES

It's not as complicated as you might think! It has just gotten more specific.

Out with the old, in with the new. OUTV is out—Master of Towing Vessel is in. The new regulations went into effect on May 21, 2001, when NVIC 04-01 was published.

#### New License Categories

- Apprentice Mate/Steersman is a mariner in a training program to become a Mate/Pilot of Towing Vessels. (Gaining more service and working on the Towing Officer Assessment Record (TOAR).
- Mate/Pilot of Towing Vessels used to be called a 2nd class OUTV.
- Master of Towing Vessels is the replacement for the current OUTV license.

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- May 21, 2001 is a key date after which license endorsements for towing vessels changed. It is used in determining which requirements an applicant must follow in order to qualify for a towing vessel license.
- If an applicant for an original Master of Towing Vessel license has at least one day of service or training on a towing vessel prior to May 21, 2001, he only has to meet the lesser service requirements in 46 CFR 10.464(h) for Master Towing Vessel if

he meets all his requirements before May 21, 2004. Otherwise, the new requirements apply. New requirements include additional service and on-the-job training program documented in a Towing Officers Assessment Record (TOAR).

- If applicant for an original Mate/Pilot of Towing Vessels license has at least one day of service or training on a towing vessel prior to May 21, 2001, he will only have to meet lesser service requirements (NMC Policy Letter 07-02) if all the requirements are met prior to May 21, 2003. Otherwise the new requirements apply. These requirements include additional service in an on-the-job training program documented in a TOAR.
- Licenses issued for Master, Mates, and First Class Pilots prior to May 21, 2001 authorize service on towing vessels within the route and tonnage on their license. Master and Mates licenses issued after May 21, 2001 do not, unless also accompanied with a completed TOAR. First Class Pilots pilots do not and must be converted.
- A license issued after May 21, 2001 endorsed for OUTV is an invalid endorsement.
- OUTV and Second Class OUTV endorsements will be converted into the corresponding Master and Mate of Towing Vessels licenses upon the first renewal or upgrade.

#### Who must test?

- Eligible Masters with 200 GT and smaller licenses will have that tonnage limitation on their new Master of Towing Vessels endorsement unless they qualify for and take the towing vessel exams.
- Eligible Mates with 200 GT or smaller and First Class Pilot licenses do not have a tonnage limitation on their Mate of Towing Vessel license.

#### Examples:

- Master 100 GT Steam or Motor Vessels Near Coastal can be grandfathered into Master of Towing Vessels 100 GT Near Coastal, or
- Master 200 GT Steam or Motor Vessels Near Coastal can be grandfathered into Master of Towing Vessels 200 GT Near Coastal). Both of these licenses have tonnage restrictions, whereas a true Master of Towing Vessels is an unlimited tonnage (but limited to service on towing vessels).

**Do not confuse** any of these Master/Mate of Towing Vessels licenses with the Assistance Towing endorsement. They are not related. Assistance towing authorizes assisting (towing) a disabled vessel for consideration (money, etc.), but not moving barges. REMEMBER TIME IS RUNNING OUT IF YOU WISH TO HOLD A TRUE TOWING LICENSE WITHOUT ANY TONNAGE LIMITATIONS YOU ONLY HAVE UNTIL MAY 21, 2004

[References: 46 CFR 10.210, 10.463 thru 10.466, 15.610, 15.805, 15.810 and 15.910 NVIC 04-01 NMC Policy 07-02.

**If you have any questions please feel free to call Lafourche Merchant Marine at 985-537-1222.**

**FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

GCMA is “the voice for mariners. Unfortunately, there are many interests that do not believe mariners should have a voice or say anything other than, “Yes, Massa.” Nevertheless, we do have interests that are separate and distinct and, when expressed in reasonable terms, should merit the attention of both employers and the government.

GCMA regularly monitors three Federal advisory committees: NOSAC, TSAC, and MERPAC. Two GCMA members have received appointments from the Secretary of Transportation to serve on these committees: Glenn Pigott on MERPAC representing engineers and Captain Roland Rodney on NOSAC. GCMA President Penny Adams previously served on MERPAC for three years.


We have sent GCMA mariners to attend various meetings in all parts of the country including Washington, Cleveland, Fort Lauderdale, Houston, Seattle, and New Orleans. We are looking for additional candidates who are willing to “do their homework” and attend these meetings to represent lower-level mariners. If you are interested, please call the GCMA office and leave your name and committee preference. The number of persons selected for each trip depends upon available funds.

**MARINER EXEMPTION FROM PASSPORT FEES**

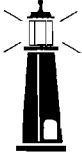
[Source: Title 22, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 22.2]

The following individuals are exempted from passport fees:

(b) American seamen who require a passport in connection with their duties aboard an American flag vessel. (22 USC 214)



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