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**U. S. COAST GUARD**

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## Important Update from the U.S. Coast Guard on Pollution Response Policies

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The United States Coast Guard (USCG) recently released updated internal guidelines called the Marine Environmental Response and Preparedness Manual (COMDTINST 16000.14B). This document replaces the previous version from 2016 and introduces important changes that you should be aware of. This updated manual provides US Coast Guard personnel with guidelines for how they perform responses and investigations related to environmental issues involving vessels and facilities. It also provides the industry with insight into what to expect from the US Coast Guard in response to an environmental-related incident.

### What are the Main Changes?

#### 1. Easier-to-Follow Structure

The guidelines are now organized into four clear sections, called the “Four Pillars”:

- Administration & Training: Details about who does what and what training is required.
- Planning: How the USCG prepares for potential pollution incidents.
- Preparedness & Compliance: How plans are checked and tested through drills and inspections.
- Response & Enforcement: How the USCG responds to pollution incidents and ensures rules are followed.

#### Why this matters

The new structure makes it easier to understand what the Coast Guard expects during pollution incidents and routine checks.

**2. All-in-One Guide: Several older documents** have now been merged into this single manual, making it simpler for everyone to find the information they need.

#### Why this matters

Having one document streamlines and simplifies processes and ensures consistency across all US ports and operations.

#### 3. New Qualification for Responders

The Coast Guard introduced a new role called Environmental Response Investigator (ERI). ERIs are trained not just to respond but also to investigate pollution incidents thoroughly. Each Coast Guard Sector or Marine Safety Unit will have a designated number of ERI who will work in conjunction with the traditional Coast Guard responder but will have the training to conduct deep, detailed investigation into the cause of an incident.

#### Why this matters

Coast Guard responders are now more skilled investigators. You can expect them to carefully examine the causes of spills, not only their clean-up.

#### 4. Greater Focus on Compliance

The USCG will more actively verify the readiness of plans and crews through regular drills and unannounced exercises. Response plans for vessels and facilities will be reviewed and tested more rigorously.

##### Why this matters

Companies must ensure their response plans are always up-to-date and that their crews know what to do in case of pollution emergencies.

#### 5. Stronger Enforcement Measures

The updated guidelines clearly state that the USCG will strictly enforce environmental laws during pollution incidents. Companies that fail to follow required procedures could face stronger penalties or vessel delays.

##### Why this matters

It's essential to follow your vessel response plan carefully and cooperate fully during any incident or inspection to avoid penalties.

#### 6. Improved International Cooperation

The new guidelines highlight the Coast Guard's increased cooperation with international partners, especially in sensitive areas like the Arctic. There are clearer procedures for international support during major incidents.

##### Why this matters

Companies operating near international borders or in environmentally sensitive areas can expect smoother coordination with international response teams.

##### What Should You Do Now?

- Review your current pollution response plans and update them according to these new guidelines.
- Train your crew to be ready for increased inspections and drills.
- Stay informed about the Coast Guard's requirements to avoid any compliance issues.

##### Where Can You Learn More?

To explore the changes in more detail, you can access the full updated manual [COMDTINST 16000.14B] directly from the official USCG website: [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)

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