MEMBER ALERT

MAY 18, 2020

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD (USCG) MARINE INCIDENT BULLETIN—AUTOMATIC IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS (AIS)

The USCG has recently issued Marine Safety Alert 04-20, *Automatic Identification Systems (AIS)—Accurate Broadcasts Don't Happen Automatically*, summarizing a recent incident in the Mississippi River, and highlighting the hazards of inaccurate AIS data.

Furthermore, the USCG Navigation Center has produced an *AIS Encoding Guide,* providing instructions on how to populate all data fields in AIS, including steps to report the total length of the vessel and the vessel's tow.

Considering the wide variety of sizes and lengths of tows, and the heavy density of these types of vessels transiting the marine transportation networks of the United States, accurate AIS input is vital to an operator's ability to make informed navigational decisions.

The US Coast Guard strongly recommends that vessel owners and operators:

- Use the AIS Encoding Guide to ensure that accurate and up-to-date information is entered into the AIS, including, but not limited to, the overall dimensions of the vessel and its tow.

- For vessels towing ahead or alongside, use Ship Type 57 (not Ship Type 31) within the static data fields in order to broadcast the overall dimensions of the vessel and its tow.

- Ensure towing vessel personnel responsible for navigational duties have the appropriate training and resources in order to update AIS data when tow sizes change.

- Investigations and inspection personnel are encouraged to maintain an acute awareness of AIS data issues while investigating marine casualties and initiate corrective actions as needed.

Your Managers recommend that Members take note of this information and be guided accordingly.