

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 27, 2011

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BARGE INDUSTRY TAKING EXTRA PRECAUTIONS DURING FLOODING

Washington, D.C. – The American Waterways Operators (AWO), the national trade association for the U.S. tugboat, towboat and barge industry, announced today that following consultations with the U. S. Coast Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers, the industry is establishing new and additional voluntary precautions for safe transit on the inland waterways during the unprecedented flooding event now being experienced.

Working closely with the Coast Guard and the Corps of Engineers through the River Industry Executive Task Force (RIETF), the barge industry has both suggested safety enhancements and agreed to heightened safety practices, such as using assist tugboats to navigate through especially challenging areas, reducing the number of barges in each tow to no more than 20, following newly-designated channels in certain areas of the Mississippi River, and working with local officials to keep towboats and barges away from vulnerable levees. Additionally, at certain times tows have proceeded in a single file through certain channels in the river.

AWO members have a longstanding reputation as safety leaders and have a strong record of commitment to safe operations. The Coast Guard-AWO Safety Partnership has worked for 16 years to identify and resolve safety challenges. The AWO Responsible Carrier Program is a mandatory safety management system for AWO members that governs vessel operations, maintenance, and crew training. All AWO member companies must undergo a third-party audit every three years to demonstrate compliance with the program.

AWO President & CEO Thomas Allegretti commented, “The unprecedented Mississippi River flooding has prompted a heightened sense of responsibility among towing companies and vessel operators to take extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of vessel crews, the public, the environment, and property. AWO

members will continue to operate under these enhanced practices for as long as river conditions require this additional safety margin.”

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