

## Operators support inspections of towing vessels

Sunday, November 23, 2008

Re: "A cry for reform," Our Opinions, Nov. 2.

Your readers should know that the American Waterways Operators actually took the unprecedented step of asking the Coast Guard to establish the towing vessel inspection program referenced in your editorial, supported Congressional enactment of the 2004 inspection law and strongly supports the forthcoming regulations.

In fact, AWO has been urging the Coast Guard to get the new rules out for quite some time. Why? AWO has a longstanding reputation for safety leadership, and the new inspection regulations will raise the bar of safety for the industry.

Since 2000, AWO members have been required as a condition of membership to comply with the AWO Responsible Carrier Program, a third-party, independently audited safety and environmental protection program that exceeds current Coast Guard regulations. The Responsible Carrier Program is a dynamic, evolving program and since the July oil spill involving DRD Towing, the AWO board of directors has approved changes to further strengthen the rules.

AWO members have made a huge commitment to, and investment in, safety. The industry has achieved dramatic reductions in oil spills, fatalities and accidents over the past 15 years, with record lows recorded last year.

But our goal is zero spills and accidents, and we continue to work hard to achieve that goal as we transport the commodities that constitute the building blocks of America's economy.

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