



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

Commander
United States Coast Guard
Sector Lower Mississippi River
2 A. W. Willis Ave
Memphis, TN 38002

MSIB: 01-20
Date: April 16, 2020

Vicksburg Bridges Transit Recommendations During COVID-19 and High Water Conditions

As of Wednesday March 25, 2020, the Vicksburg Information Center (VIC) suspended operations until further notice to safeguard marine industry personnel from possible exposure to COVID-19.

To address gaps in risk mitigation normally covered by the VIC, the COTP Sector Lower Mississippi River (LMR) and LOMRC recommend all vessels follow these actions before and during the transit through the Vicksburg Bridges.

- 1) Each vessel shall have a briefing with a designated company representative, preferably with an individual who is seasoned and experienced navigating the Vicksburg Bridge, before transiting to Kings Point, LMR MM 439.8. This briefing shall include but is not limited to the following:
 - a) Confirm tow size and horsepower of vessel meet COTP requirement.
 - b) Review the river stage and conditions at Vicksburg, MS.
 - c) Review all information reported from the SLMR Command Center (CC) and other vessels.
 - d) Evaluate wheelhouse experience level of both Captain and Pilot.
 - e) Identify which wheelhouse person has the most recent experience with current conditions through the Vicksburg Bridges.
 - f) Determine who will be operating the vessel through the area based on the discussion.
 - g) Confirm everyone involved has a clear understanding of the circumstances.
- 2) Once the discussion and plan are complete with a designated company representative, the wheelhouse is encouraged to receive an update from any on-scene vessels before proceeding below Kings Point MM 439.8.
- 3) The company should confirm the wheelhouse personnel has answered "YES" to the following questions before clearing the vessel to proceed Down Bound and transit the area.
 - a) Are you comfortable, given this tow configuration, and at this river stage, to transit the bridge?
 - b) Is the tow configured correctly?
 - c) If they answered "NO" to any of these questions, tow shall stop until all criteria are corrected.
- 4) Down Bound tows greater than 110 feet and Red Flag vessels shall only transit through the Vicksburg Bridges from sunrise to sunset.

- 5) Down Bound dry-cargo, mix tow, and Red Flag tows:
- 6) All loaded Red Flag barges in mixed tows shall be placed in inboard strings, shall not be a lead load in any string, and shall be covered/protected by a dry-cargo barge or empty Red Flag barge when possible.
- 7) Up Bound tows will normally be cleared during the night but can pass during the day if Down Bound traffic is light.
- 8) The company should confirm wheelhouse personnel has answered "YES" to the following questions before clearing the vessel to proceed Up Bound and transit the area.
 - a) Are you maintaining a minimum of 3 mph from Sgt. Pt. MM 422 to Race Track MM 432?
 - b) If answered "NO"; tow must make use of an assist boat to transit the Vicksburg Bridge.
- 9) Vessel queues will be maintained by KHB (ERGON Marine) during evening hours. During daylight hours, individual vessels are advised to determine amongst themselves the order in which to transit.
- 10) The KHB (ERGON Marine) Dispatch can be reached via telephone at (601) 636-6552 or on CH-19 VHF-FM.
- 11) Prior to transiting the bridges, down bound vessels should submit evidence that they confirm with the above guidance by emailing SLMR at STL-SMB-SECLMR-WWM@uscg.mil.
- 12) All tow vessels shall have a paper or electronic copy of this MSIB in the wheelhouse.

For additional information, contact the following:

Waterways Management: (901) 521-4825

Email: STL-DG-SECLMR-WATERWAYS@uscg.mil

Sector LMR Command Center (24 hour): (901) 521-4822 or CH-16 VHF-FM



R. TAMEZ
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard
Captain of the Port
Memphis, Tennessee