



# TOWING VESSEL CERTIFICATION

CERTIFIED SAFE

SUBCHAPTER  
**M**

CERTIFIED SAFE

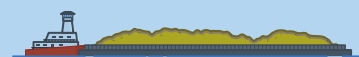
## A MAJOR MILESTONE FOR WATERWAYS SAFETY

Nearly 20 years ago, member leaders of the American Waterways Operators – the tugboat, towboat and barge industry’s advocate, resource, and united voice for safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation on America’s waterways, oceans, and coasts – took an extraordinary step: they asked Congress and the Coast Guard for more regulation to make the tugboat, towboat and barge industry safer.

Driven by a deep commitment to safety leadership and inspired by a bold vision, AWO members asked the Coast Guard to seek authority from Congress to bring all towing vessels under a new safety and inspection system that would raise safety standards industry-wide. They proposed an innovative approach to inspection that would leverage safety management systems and Coast Guard-approved third parties to drive better safety outcomes and use limited government resources in an efficient, risk-based way.

For nearly two decades, AWO members worked with the Coast Guard to make this vision a reality. After Congress passed legislation making towing vessels subject to Coast Guard inspection in 2004, the agency launched an intensive and inclusive process of stakeholder engagement to development a new regulatory regime establishing requirements for towing vessel certification, operations, lifesaving and fire protection equipment, mechanical and electrical systems, and construction. A new section of the Code of Federal Regulations, “Subchapter M,” was published in June 2016 and took effect in July 2018, kicking off a four-year phase-in period during which towing vessels were required to obtain Certificates of Inspection from the Coast Guard.

July 19, 2022, was a historic milestone on this safety journey, the deadline for all towing vessels that operate on America’s rivers and intracoastal waterways; Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coasts; Great Lakes; and ports and harbors – moving nearly 700 million tons of critical cargo annually – to carry a Coast Guard-issued Certificate of Inspection as a condition of doing business.



### CERTIFICATE OF INSPECTION FACTS

**4,523**

TOTAL COIs  
ISSUED SINCE 2018

**67%**

TSMS OPTION  
VESSELS

**33%**

COAST GUARD  
OPTION VESSELS

**236**

UNCERTIFICATED  
VESSELS PROHIBITED  
FROM OPERATING



**The American  
Waterways Operators**

*The Tugboat, Towboat & Barge Industry Association*

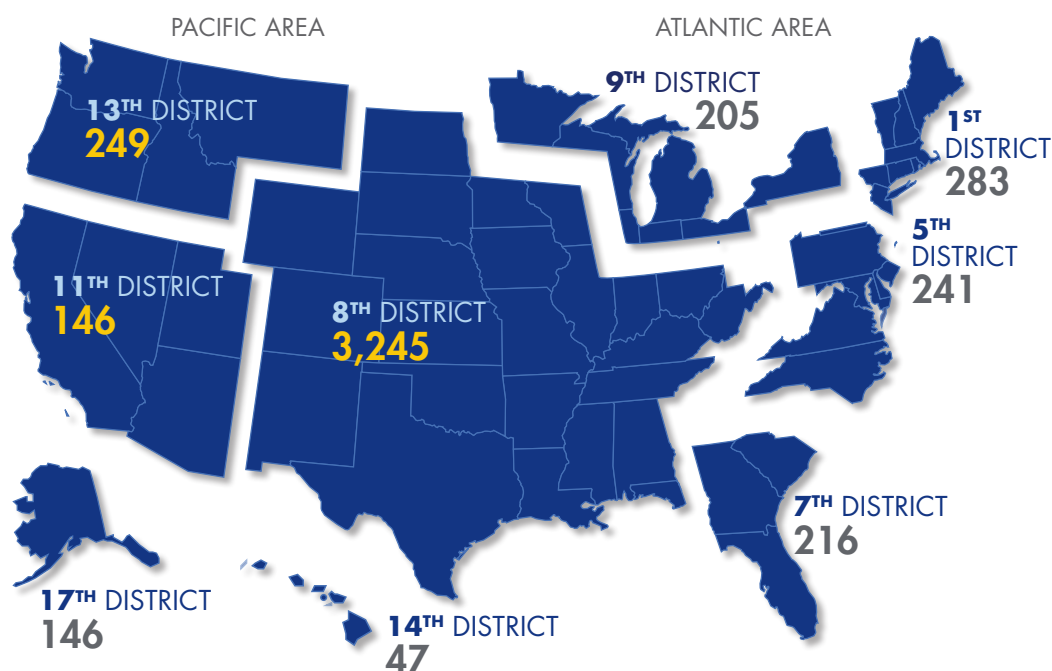
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To achieve this goal, vessel owners have invested millions of dollars and countless hours in equipment, maintenance, and training; mariners and shoreside personnel have worked tirelessly to implement and upgrade procedures; and the Coast Guard has nearly doubled the fleet its marine inspection workforce oversees. Nearly 70 percent of the towing vessel fleet has adopted the Towing Safety Management System option, in which a company develops a comprehensive set of safety policies and procedures and undergoes regular management and vessel audits by Coast Guard-approved third parties, enhancing effectiveness and efficiency for government and the private sector alike.

## COI ISSUANCE BY U.S. COAST GUARD DISTRICT



AWO members are committed to making our waterways safer, for mariners, the public, and the marine environment, and to working collaboratively with government toward that end. The Subchapter M certification milestone is an historic step forward on this journey of continuous safety improvement.



**The American Waterways Operators**  
The Tugboat, Towboat & Barge Industry Association

[www.americanwaterways.com](http://www.americanwaterways.com)