

CONTACT section of this document for alternate instructions.

To view documents mentioned in this rule as being available in the docket, find the docket as described in the previous paragraph, and then select “Supporting & Related Material” in the Document Type column. Public comments will also be placed in our online docket and can be viewed by following instructions on the <https://www.regulations.gov> Frequently Asked Questions web page. We review all comments received, but we will only post comments that address the topic of the rule. We may choose not to post off-topic, inappropriate, or duplicate comments that we receive. Additionally, if you click on the “Dockets” tab and then the rule, you should see a “Subscribe” option for email alerts. Selecting this option will enable notifications when comments are posted, or if/when a final rule is published.

We accept anonymous comments. Comments we post to <https://www.regulations.gov> will include any personal information you have provided. For more about privacy and submissions in response to this document, see DHS’s eRulemaking System of Records notice (85 FR 14226, March 11, 2020).

List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 117

Bridges.

For the reasons discussed in the preamble, the Coast Guard amends 33 CFR part 117 as follows:

PART 117—DRAWBRIDGE OPERATION REGULATIONS

■ 1. The authority citation for part 117 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 33 U.S.C. 499; 33 CFR 1.05–1; Department of Homeland Security Delegation No. 00170.1. Revision No. 01.3

■ 2. Section 117.261 is amended by revising paragraph (p).

§ 117.261 Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from St. Marys River to Key Largo.

* * * * *

(p) *Indiantown Road Bridge, mile 1006.2, at Jupiter.* The draw shall open on the hour and half hour except that the draw need not open from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday except Federal holidays until 11:59 p.m. on August 31, 2025.

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Dated: October 18, 2024.

Douglas M. Schofield,

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, Commander, Coast Guard Seventh District.

[FR Doc. 2024–24711 Filed 10–24–24; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

33 CFR Part 165

[Docket Number USCG–2024–0957]

RIN 1625–AA00

Safety Zones; Houston Ship Channel and Morgan’s Point, TX

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DHS.

ACTION: Temporary final rule.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard is establishing two temporary safety zones, a 100-yard radius moving safety zone and a 25-yard radius fixed safety zone, around the M/V PIETERSGRACHT, in the navigable waters of the Houston Ship Channel and its vicinity. The temporary safety zones are necessary to protect persons, property, and the marine environment from potential hazards associated with the transfer of gantry cranes. Persons and vessels are prohibited from entering, transiting through, anchoring in, or remaining within the safety zones unless specifically authorized by the Captain of the Port Sector Houston-Galveston or a designated representative.

DATES: This rule is effective from 1 a.m. on October 29, 2024, through 5 p.m. on November 15, 2024.

ADDRESSES: To view documents mentioned in this preamble as being available in the docket, go to <https://www.regulations.gov>, type USCG–2024–0957 in the search box, and click “Search.” Next, in the Document Type column, select “Supporting & Related Material.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about this rule, call or email First Class Marine Science Technician Christopher Morgan, Sector Houston-Galveston Waterways Management Division, U.S. Coast Guard; telephone 713–398–5823, email houstonwwm@uscg.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Table of Abbreviations

COTP Captain of the Port
CFR Code of Federal Regulations
DHS Department of Homeland Security
FR Federal Register
NPRM Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

§ Section

U.S.C. United States Code

II. Background Information and Regulatory History

The Coast Guard is issuing this temporary rule under authority in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B). This statutory provision authorizes an agency to issue a rule without prior notice and opportunity to comment when the agency, for good cause, finds that those procedures are “impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest.” The Coast Guard finds that good cause exists for not publishing a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) with respect to this rule because it is impracticable. Prompt action is needed to respond to potential safety hazards associated with the transfer of this equipment. It is impracticable to publish an NPRM because we must establish these safety zones by October 29, 2024.

Also, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), the Coast Guard finds that good cause exists for making this rule effective less than 30 days after publication in the **Federal Register**. Delaying the effective date of this rule would be impracticable because prompt action is needed to respond to the potential safety hazards associated with the transfer of gantry cranes scheduled to begin on October 29, 2024.

III. Legal Authority and Need for Rule

The Coast Guard is issuing this rule under authority in 46 U.S.C. 70034. The Captain of the Port Sector Houston-Galveston (COTP) has determined that potential hazards associated with the transfer of gantry cranes starting October 29, 2024, will be a safety concern for anyone within a 100-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT while in transit and within a 25-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT while moored. This rule is needed to protect persons, property, and the marine environment within the navigable waters of the safety zones while the M/V PIETERSGRACHT transits to and unloads gantry cranes in Morgan’s Point, Texas.

IV. Discussion of the Rule

This rule establishes two temporary safety zones from 1 a.m. on October 29, 2024, through 5 p.m. on November 15, 2024. The temporary safety zones include a moving safety zone, covering all navigable waters within a 100-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT, a general cargo ship, while underway and a fixed safety zone covering all navigable waters within a 25-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT while moored. The duration of these

zones is intended to ensure the safety of the public, vessels and the navigable waters in the specified areas during the transit of the gantry cranes in the Houston Ship Channel and while the vessel is moored and unloading. No vessel or person will be permitted to enter, transit through, anchor in, or remain within the safety zones without obtaining permission from the COTP or a designated representative.

Moving Safety Zone: This area includes all waters within a 100-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT as the vessel transits from the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Galveston and through the Houston Ship Channel. The approximate start position is 29°19'01.21" N, 094°38'38.1" W, located in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Galveston, Texas.

Fixed Safety Zone: This area includes all waters within a 25-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT once the M/V PIETERSGRACHT is moored at Barbours Cut Terminal in Morgan's Point, Texas, at coordinates 29°41'03" N, 094°59'40" W.

V. Regulatory Analyses

We developed this rule after considering numerous statutes and Executive orders related to rulemaking. Below, we summarize our analyses based on a number of these statutes and Executive orders, and we discuss the First Amendment rights of protestors.

A. Regulatory Planning and Review

Executive Orders 12866 and 13563 direct agencies to assess the costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives and, if regulation is necessary, to select regulatory approaches that maximize net benefits. This rule has not been designated a "significant regulatory action" under section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866, as amended by Executive Order 14094 (Modernizing Regulatory Review). Accordingly, the Office of Management and Budget has not reviewed this rule.

This regulatory action determination is based on the safety zones' size, location, duration, and time-of-day. The safety zones will be subject to enforcement the entire duration of the effective period to facilitate the safe transfer of gantry cranes in the Houston Ship Channel. Although the rule prohibits persons and vessels from entering, transiting through, anchoring in, or remaining within the regulated area without authorization from the COTP or a designated representative, persons and vessels may be present in the surrounding areas during the enforcement period. The Coast Guard will provide advance notification of the

safety zones to the local maritime community by Local Notice to Mariners or Broadcast Notice to Mariners, and the rule will allow persons and vessels to seek permission to enter the zones.

B. Impact on Small Entities

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, 5 U.S.C. 601–612, as amended, requires Federal agencies to consider the potential impact of regulations on small entities during rulemaking. The term "small entities" comprises small businesses, not-for-profit organizations that are independently owned and operated and are not dominant in their fields, and governmental jurisdictions with populations of less than 50,000. The Coast Guard certifies under 5 U.S.C. 605(b) that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

While some owners or operators of vessels intending to transit the safety zone may be small entities, for the reasons stated in section V.A above, this rule will not have a significant economic impact on any vessel owner or operator.

Under section 213(a) of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104–121), we want to assist small entities in understanding this rule. If the rule would affect your small business, organization, or governmental jurisdiction and you have questions concerning its provisions or options for compliance, please call or email the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

Small businesses may send comments on the actions of Federal employees who enforce, or otherwise determine compliance with, Federal regulations to the Small Business and Agriculture Regulatory Enforcement Ombudsman and the Regional Small Business Regulatory Fairness Boards. The Ombudsman evaluates these actions annually and rates each agency's responsiveness to small businesses. If you wish to comment on actions by employees of the Coast Guard, call 1–888–REG–FAIR (1–888–734–3247). The Coast Guard will not retaliate against small entities that question or complain about this rule or any policy or action of the Coast Guard.

C. Collection of Information

This rule will not call for a new collection of information under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501–3520).

D. Federalism and Indian Tribal Governments

A rule has implications for federalism under Executive Order 13132, Federalism, if it has a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the National Government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. We have analyzed this rule under that Order and have determined that it is consistent with the fundamental principles of federalism and preemption requirements described in Executive Order 13132.

Also, this rule does not have tribal implications under Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, because it does not have a substantial direct effect on one or more Indian tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian tribes.

E. Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

The Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1531–1538) requires Federal agencies to assess the effects of their discretionary regulatory actions. In particular, the Act addresses actions that may result in the expenditure by a State, local, or tribal government, in the aggregate, or by the private sector of \$100,000,000 (adjusted for inflation) or more in any one year. Though this rule will not result in such an expenditure, we do discuss the effects of this rule elsewhere in this preamble.

F. Environment

We have analyzed this rule under Department of Homeland Security Directive 023–01, Rev. 1, associated implementing instructions, and Environmental Planning COMDTINST 5090.1 (series), which guide the Coast Guard in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321–4370f), and have determined that this action is one of a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. This rule involves safety zones that will prohibit persons and vessels from entering, transiting through, anchoring in, or remaining within the safety zones around the M/V PIETERSGRACHT while underway and moored in the Houston Ship Channel. It is categorically excluded from further review under paragraph L60(a) of Appendix A, Table 1 of DHS Instruction Manual 023–01–001–01,

Rev. 1. A Record of Environmental Consideration supporting this determination is available in the docket. For instructions on locating the docket, see the **ADDRESSES** section of this preamble.

G. Protest Activities

The Coast Guard respects the First Amendment rights of protesters. Protesters are asked to call or email the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section to coordinate protest activities so that your message can be received without jeopardizing the safety or security of people, places, or vessels.

List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 165

Harbors, Marine safety, Navigation (water), Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Security measures, Waterways.

For the reasons discussed in the preamble, the Coast Guard amends 33 CFR part 165 as follows:

PART 165—REGULATED NAVIGATION AREAS AND LIMITED ACCESS AREAS

■ 1. The authority citation for part 165 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 46 U.S.C. 70034, 70051, 70124; 33 CFR 1.05–1, 6.04–1, 6.04–6, and 160.5; Department of Homeland Security Delegation No. 00170.1, Revision No. 01.3.

■ 2. Add § 165.T08–0957 to read as follows:

§ 165.T08–0957 Fixed and Moving Safety Zone; Vicinity of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT, Houston Ship Channel and Morgan's Point, TX.

(a) *Location.* The following areas are temporary safety zones:

(1) *Moving Safety Zone.* All waters within a 100-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT, as the vessel transits from the approximate coordinates 29°19'01.21" N, 094°38'38.1" W, off the coast of Galveston, TX, and proceeds through the Houston Ship Channel to the assigned docking station.

(2) *Fixed Safety Zone.* All waters within a 25-yard radius of the M/V PIETERSGRACHT while moored at the Barbours Cut Terminal in Morgan's Point, Texas.

(b) *Definition.* The term “designated representative” means Coast Guard Patrol Commanders, including Coast Guard coxswains, petty officers, and other officers operating Coast Guard vessels, and Federal, state, and local officers designated by or assisting the Captain of the Port Sector Houston-Galveston (COTP) in the enforcement of the safety zones.

(c) *Regulations.* (1) Under the general safety zone regulations in subpart C of

this part, all persons and vessels are prohibited from entering, transiting through, anchoring in, or remaining within the safety zones described in paragraph (a) of this section unless authorized by the COTP or the COTP's designated representative.

(2) Persons and vessels may request authorization to enter, transit through, anchor in, or remain within the safety zones by contacting the COTP by telephone at 866–539–8114, or the COTP's designated representative via VHF radio on channel 16. If authorization is granted by the COTP or the COTP's designated representative, all persons and vessels receiving such authorization must comply with the lawful instructions of the COTP or the COTP's designated representative.

(d) *Enforcement period.* This rule will be subject to enforcement from 1 a.m. on October 29, 2024, through 5 p.m. on November 15, 2024.

Keith M. Donohue,

Captain, U.S. Coast Guard, Captain of the Port Sector Houston-Galveston.

[FR Doc. 2024–24757 Filed 10–24–24; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

38 CFR Part 14

RIN 2900–AR93

Fee Reasonableness Reviews; Effect of Loss of Accreditation on Direct Payment

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is issuing this final rule to address its process for reviewing, determining, and allocating reasonable fees for claim representation, and to address the effect on direct payment of the termination of a claims agent's or attorney's VA accreditation.

DATES:

Effective date: This final rule is effective April 1, 2025.

Applicability date: The provisions of this final rule shall apply to all fee allocation notices issued on or after the effective date of this final rule.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jonathan Taylor, Office of General Counsel (022D), 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420, (202) 461–7699. (This is not a toll-free telephone number.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On

December 21, 2023, VA published in the

Federal Register (88 FR 88,295) a proposed rule to address its process for reviewing, determining, and allocating reasonable fees for claim representation, and to address the effect on direct payment of the termination of a claims agent's or attorney's VA accreditation. The proposed rule allowed for a comment period ending on February 20, 2024. During the comment period, VA received 15 comments, which are discussed below. After considering these comments, VA has decided to finalize the proposed rule without amendment.

Comments on Representatives and Fees Generally

One commenter stated that “the tone of [VA's] proposal suggests that attorney involvement in the [claims] process is part of some problem.” VA thanks the commenter for this comment, but, to be clear, VA takes no issue with VA-accredited attorneys and claims agents (hereinafter “agents”) assisting claimants and recognizes the important service they provide. But the fact of the matter is that there has been an increase in multi-attorney and multi-agent cases and, when those agents and attorneys request direct payment, VA needs an efficient process to allocate fees in all those cases. This rule provides such a process. And this rule's process will (1) empower agents and attorneys to negotiate fees on their own and (2) deliver fees to agents and attorneys more expeditiously (and benefits to veterans more expeditiously). Those are not anti-attorney or anti-agent measures or results.

Another commenter stated that fees should be a matter between a veteran and representative, and that representatives should not get fees from VA. VA thanks the commenter, but—to be clear—VA does not pay representatives independently. VA only pays representatives (out of a claimant's past-due benefits) when the claimant and the representative have requested it. And, under this rule, VA will only get involved with the question of fees when (1) direct payment is requested or (2) a fee reasonableness review is requested or otherwise warranted. Moreover, consistent with this commenter's general view on fee matters, this rule sets forth reasonable default allocations that will allow claimants and representatives to resolve fee matters on their own in many cases. Nevertheless, if that effort is unsuccessful, VA's Office of General Counsel (OGC) remains available to review and decide a reasonable fee allocation for the case.

A third commenter stated that VA should “require agents or attorneys to