

which is set out as a note under section 1453 of Title 16, Conservation.

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, referred to in pars. (16) and (32)(C), is act Aug. 7, 1953, ch. 345, 67 Stat. 462, which is classified generally to subchapter III (§1331 et seq.) of chapter 29 of Title 43, Public Lands. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1301 of Title 43 and Tables.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, referred to in par. (23), probably means the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, Pub. L. 96-510, Dec. 11, 1980, 94 Stat. 2767, as amended, which is classified principally to chapter 103 (§9601 et seq.) of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 9601 of Title 42 and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

2018—Par. (32)(A). Pub. L. 115-232 struck out “(other than a vessel described in section 3703a(b)(3) of title 46)” before period at end.

2017—Par. (26)(A)(ii). Pub. L. 115-91, §3508(b)(1)(A)(i)(I), substituted “onshore facility, offshore facility, or foreign offshore unit or other facility located seaward of the exclusive economic zone, any person or entity” for “onshore or offshore facility, any person”.

Par. (26)(A)(iii). Pub. L. 115-91, §3508(b)(1)(A)(i)(II), substituted “offshore facility or foreign offshore unit or other facility located seaward of the exclusive economic zone, the person or entity that” for “offshore facility, the person who”.

Par. (32)(D) to (G). Pub. L. 115-91, §3508(b)(1)(A)(ii), added subpar. (D), redesignated former subpars. (D) to (F) as (E) to (G), respectively, and in subpar. (G) substituted “, offshore facility, or foreign offshore unit or other facility located seaward of the exclusive economic zone, the persons or entities that” for “or offshore facility, the persons who”.

2010—Par. (32)(A). Pub. L. 111-281 inserted “In the case of a vessel, the term ‘responsible party’ also includes the owner of oil being transported in a tank vessel with a single hull after December 31, 2010 (other than a vessel described in section 3703a(b)(3) of title 46).” after “chartering the vessel.”

2004—Par. (26). Pub. L. 108-293, §703(a), amended par. (26) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (26) read as follows: “‘owner or operator’ means (A) in the case of a vessel, any person owning, operating, or chartering by demise, the vessel, and (B) in the case of an onshore facility, and an offshore facility, any person owning or operating such onshore facility or offshore facility, and (C) in the case of any abandoned offshore facility, the person who owned or operated such facility immediately prior to such abandonment;”.

Pars. (38) to (44). Pub. L. 108-293, §703(b), added pars. (38) to (44).

1998—Par. (23). Pub. L. 105-383 amended par. (23) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (23) read as follows: “‘oil’ means oil of any kind or in any form, including, but not limited to, petroleum, fuel oil, sludge, oil refuse, and oil mixed with wastes other than dredged spoil, but does not include petroleum, including crude oil or any fraction thereof, which is specifically listed or designated as a hazardous substance under subparagraphs (A) through (F) of section 101(14) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (42 U.S.C. 9601) and which is subject to the provisions of that Act;”.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 101-380, title I, §1020, Aug. 18, 1990, 104 Stat. 506, provided that: “This Act [see Short Title of 1990 Amendments note below for classification] shall apply to an incident occurring after the date of the enactment of this Act [Aug. 18, 1990].”

SHORT TITLE OF 2006 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 109-241, title VI, §601, July 11, 2006, 120 Stat. 553, provided that: “This title [enacting sections 1232b and 2762 of this title, amending sections 1321, 2704, and 2761 of this title, and enacting provisions set out as notes under section 2704 of this title] may be cited as the ‘Delaware River Protection Act of 2006’.”

SHORT TITLE OF 1995 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 104-55, §1, Nov. 20, 1995, 109 Stat. 546, provided that: “This Act [enacting section 2720 of this title and amending sections 2704 and 2716 of this title] may be cited as the ‘Edible Oil Regulatory Reform Act’.”

SHORT TITLE OF 1990 AMENDMENTS

Pub. L. 101-537, title II, §2001, Nov. 8, 1990, 104 Stat. 2375, and Pub. L. 101-646, title IV, §4001, Nov. 29, 1990, 104 Stat. 4788, as amended by Pub. L. 104-332, §2(h)(1), Oct. 26, 1996, 110 Stat. 4091, provided that: “This title [amending section 2761 of this title] may be cited as the ‘Great Lakes Oil Pollution Research and Development Act’.”

SHORT TITLE

Pub. L. 101-380, §1, Aug. 18, 1990, 104 Stat. 484, provided that: “This Act [enacting this chapter, sections 1642 and 1656 of Title 43, Public Lands, sections 3703a and 7505 of Title 46, Shipping, and section 1274a of the Appendix to Title 46, amending sections 1223, 1228, 1232, 1236, 1319, 1321, 1481, 1486, 1503, 1514, and 1908 of this title, section 3145 of Title 16, Conservation, sections 4612 and 9509 of Title 26, Internal Revenue Code, sections 1334, 1350, and 1653 of Title 43, sections 2101, 2302, 3318, 3715, 3718, 5116, 6101, 7101, 7106, 7107, 7109, 7302, 7502, 7503, 7701 to 7703, 8101, 8104, 8502, 8503, 8702, 9101, 9102, 9302, 9308, and 12106 of Title 46, and section 1274 of the Appendix to Title 46, repealing section 1517 of this title and sections 1811 and 1812 to 1824 of Title 43, enacting provisions set out as notes under this section, sections 1203, 1223, and 1321, of this title, section 92 of Title 14, Coast Guard, section 9509 of Title 26, sections 1334, 1651, and 1653 of Title 43, sections 3703, 3703a, and 7106 of Title 46, and section 1295 of the Appendix to Title 46, amending provisions set out as a note under section 401 of Title 23, Highways, and repealing provisions set out as a note under section 1811 of Title 43] may be cited as the ‘Oil Pollution Act of 1990’.”

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

For transfer of authorities, functions, personnel, and assets of the Coast Guard, including the authorities and functions of the Secretary of Transportation relating thereto, to the Department of Homeland Security, and for treatment of related references, see sections 468(b), 551(d), 552(d), and 557 of Title 6, Domestic Security, and the Department of Homeland Security Reorganization Plan of November 25, 2002, as modified, set out as a note under section 542 of Title 6.

§ 2702. Elements of liability

(a) In general

Notwithstanding any other provision or rule of law, and subject to the provisions of this Act, each responsible party for a vessel or a facility from which oil is discharged, or which poses the substantial threat of a discharge of oil, into or upon the navigable waters or adjoining shorelines or the exclusive economic zone is liable for the removal costs and damages specified in subsection (b) that result from such incident.

(b) Covered removal costs and damages

(1) Removal costs

The removal costs referred to in subsection (a) are—

(A) all removal costs incurred by the United States, a State, or an Indian tribe under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (l) of section 1321 of this title, under the Intervention on the High Seas Act (33 U.S.C. 1471 et seq.), or under State law; and

(B) any removal costs incurred by any person for acts taken by the person which are consistent with the National Contingency Plan.

(2) Damages

The damages referred to in subsection (a) are the following:

(A) Natural resources

Damages for injury to, destruction of, loss of, or loss of use of, natural resources, including the reasonable costs of assessing the damage, which shall be recoverable by a United States trustee, a State trustee, an Indian tribe trustee, or a foreign trustee.

(B) Real or personal property

Damages for injury to, or economic losses resulting from destruction of, real or personal property, which shall be recoverable by a claimant who owns or leases that property.

(C) Subsistence use

Damages for loss of subsistence use of natural resources, which shall be recoverable by any claimant who so uses natural resources which have been injured, destroyed, or lost, without regard to the ownership or management of the resources.

(D) Revenues

Damages equal to the net loss of taxes, royalties, rents, fees, or net profit shares due to the injury, destruction, or loss of real property, personal property, or natural resources, which shall be recoverable by the Government of the United States, a State, or a political subdivision thereof.

(E) Profits and earning capacity

Damages equal to the loss of profits or impairment of earning capacity due to the injury, destruction, or loss of real property, personal property, or natural resources, which shall be recoverable by any claimant.

(F) Public services

Damages for net costs of providing increased or additional public services during or after removal activities, including protection from fire, safety, or health hazards, caused by a discharge of oil, which shall be recoverable by a State, or a political subdivision of a State.

(c) Excluded discharges

This subchapter does not apply to any discharge—

- (1) permitted by a permit issued under Federal, State, or local law;
- (2) from a public vessel; or
- (3) from an onshore facility which is subject to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act (43 U.S.C. 1651 et seq.).

(d) Liability of third parties

(1) In general

(A) Third party treated as responsible party

Except as provided in subparagraph (B), in any case in which a responsible party establishes that a discharge or threat of a discharge and the resulting removal costs and damages were caused solely by an act or omission of one or more third parties described in section 2703(a)(3) of this title (or solely by such an act or omission in combination with an act of God or an act of war), the third party or parties shall be treated as the responsible party or parties for purposes of determining liability under this subchapter.

(B) Subrogation of responsible party

If the responsible party alleges that the discharge or threat of a discharge was caused solely by an act or omission of a third party, the responsible party—

(i) in accordance with section 2713 of this title, shall pay removal costs and damages to any claimant; and

(ii) shall be entitled by subrogation to all rights of the United States Government and the claimant to recover removal costs or damages from the third party or the Fund paid under this subsection.

(2) Limitation applied

(A) Owner or operator of vessel or facility

If the act or omission of a third party that causes an incident occurs in connection with a vessel or facility owned or operated by the third party, the liability of the third party shall be subject to the limits provided in section 2704 of this title as applied with respect to the vessel or facility.

(B) Other cases

In any other case, the liability of a third party or parties shall not exceed the limitation which would have been applicable to the responsible party of the vessel or facility from which the discharge actually occurred if the responsible party were liable.

(Pub. L. 101-380, title I, §1002, Aug. 18, 1990, 104 Stat. 489.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This Act, referred to in subsec. (a), is Pub. L. 101-380, Aug. 18, 1990, 104 Stat. 484, known as the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 2701 of this title and Tables.

The Intervention on the High Seas Act, referred to in subsec. (b)(1)(A), is Pub. L. 93-248, Feb. 5, 1974, 88 Stat. 8, which is classified generally to chapter 28 (§1471 et seq.) of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1471 of this title and Tables.

The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act, referred to in subsec. (c)(3), is title II of Pub. L. 93-153, Nov. 16, 1973, 87 Stat. 584, which is classified generally to chapter 34 (§1651 et seq.) of Title 43, Public Lands. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1651 of Title 43 and Tables.

§ 2703. Defenses to liability**(a) Complete defenses**

A responsible party is not liable for removal costs or damages under section 2702 of this title if the responsible party establishes, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the discharge or substantial threat of a discharge of oil and the resulting damages or removal costs were caused solely by—

- (1) an act of God;
- (2) an act of war;

(3) an act or omission of a third party, other than an employee or agent of the responsible party or a third party whose act or omission occurs in connection with any contractual relationship with the responsible party (except where the sole contractual arrangement arises in connection with carriage by a common carrier by rail), if the responsible party establishes, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the responsible party—

(A) exercised due care with respect to the oil concerned, taking into consideration the characteristics of the oil and in light of all relevant facts and circumstances; and

(B) took precautions against foreseeable acts or omissions of any such third party and the foreseeable consequences of those acts or omissions; or

(4) any combination of paragraphs (1), (2), and (3).

(b) Defenses as to particular claimants

A responsible party is not liable under section 2702 of this title to a claimant, to the extent that the incident is caused by the gross negligence or willful misconduct of the claimant.

(c) Limitation on complete defense

Subsection (a) does not apply with respect to a responsible party who fails or refuses—

(1) to report the incident as required by law if the responsible party knows or has reason to know of the incident;

(2) to provide all reasonable cooperation and assistance requested by a responsible official in connection with removal activities; or

(3) without sufficient cause, to comply with an order issued under subsection (c) or (e) of section 1321 of this title or the Intervention on the High Seas Act (33 U.S.C. 1471 et seq.).

(d) Definition of contractual relationship**(1) In general**

For purposes of subsection (a)(3) the term “contractual relationship” includes, but is not limited to, land contracts, deeds, easements, leases, or other instruments transferring title or possession, unless—

(A) the real property on which the facility concerned is located was acquired by the responsible party after the placement of the oil on, in, or at the real property on which the facility concerned is located;

(B) one or more of the circumstances described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (2) is established by the responsible party by a preponderance of the evidence; and

(C) the responsible party complies with paragraph (3).

(2) Required circumstance

The circumstances referred to in paragraph (1)(B) are the following:

(A) At the time the responsible party acquired the real property on which the facility is located the responsible party did not know and had no reason to know that oil that is the subject of the discharge or substantial threat of discharge was located on, in, or at the facility.

(B) The responsible party is a government entity that acquired the facility—

(i) by escheat;

(ii) through any other involuntary transfer or acquisition; or

(iii) through the exercise of eminent domain authority by purchase or condemnation.

(C) The responsible party acquired the facility by inheritance or bequest.

(3) Additional requirements

For purposes of paragraph (1)(C), the responsible party must establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the responsible party—

(A) has satisfied the requirements of subsection (a)(3)(A) and (B);

(B) has provided full cooperation, assistance, and facility access to the persons that are authorized to conduct removal actions, including the cooperation and access necessary for the installation, integrity, operation, and maintenance of any complete or partial removal action;

(C) is in compliance with any land use restrictions established or relied on in connection with the removal action; and

(D) has not impeded the effectiveness or integrity of any institutional control employed in connection with the removal action.

(4) Reason to know**(A) Appropriate inquiries**

To establish that the responsible party had no reason to know of the matter described in paragraph (2)(A), the responsible party must demonstrate to a court that—

(i) on or before the date on which the responsible party acquired the real property on which the facility is located, the responsible party carried out all appropriate inquiries, as provided in subparagraphs (B) and (D), into the previous ownership and uses of the real property on which the facility is located in accordance with generally accepted good commercial and customary standards and practices; and

(ii) the responsible party took reasonable steps to—

(I) stop any continuing discharge;

(II) prevent any substantial threat of discharge; and

(III) prevent or limit any human, environmental, or natural resource exposure to any previously discharged oil.

(B) Regulations establishing standards and practices

Not later than 2 years after August 9, 2004, the Secretary, in consultation with the Ad-