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Maritime Industry Recommends Coast Guard Allow More Domestic OSVs be Used for Disaster Recovery

New Orleans, LA – Last week, the National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee (NOSAC) overwhelmingly approved recommendations that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) remove the hinderances that prevented U.S. energy-industry vessels, from assisting Puerto Rico with recovery efforts after Hurricane Maria.

The offshore energy industry is serviced by highly specialized vessels. Offshore supply vessels (OSVs) have large open decks to carry cargo to offshore rigs. OSVs typically also have massive internal tanks to carry and pump water, drilling mud, or fuel to offshore facilities. Additionally, crewboats, are designed to quickly deliver passengers and small amounts of deck cargo. Lastly, liftboats, self-elevate above the water to provide a stable platform from which crews can perform heavy lifting or repairs. These attributes make these vessels attractive assets for many other purposes outside of the offshore energy industry.

Due to these vessel's highly complex and specialized nature, their operations, and their equipment are all tightly governed by Federal regulations written and enforced by the USCG.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, several Louisiana-based energy vessels attempted to carry cargo to Puerto Rico or between ports within Puerto Rico. While these vessels were capable of safely completing these tasks, many were turned back due to strict or differing interpretations of USCG regulations.

To prevent this situation in the future, OMSA proposed that NOSAC empanel a subcommittee of industry experts to study how OSVs, crewboats, and other energy vessels could be safely utilized to provide disaster assistance. NOSAC accepted OMSA's proposals and in the Fall 2018 meeting created a Subcommittee "Provide Recommendations for the Use of Offshore Supply Vessels (OSVs) And Other Non-Purpose-Built Vessels to Assist in Restoration and Recovery Efforts in Response to Natural and or Man-Made Disasters." As OMSA submitted the proposal to NOSAC, the Association was provided a seat on the Subcommittee. Additionally, numerous OMSA members graciously donated their time and expertise in agreeing to be part of the Subcommittee, which was ably led by co-chairs Chad Fuhrmann and Terry Bono.

The Subcommittee worked for five months crafting recommendations for the USCG to consider. Specifically, the Subcommittee proposed:

- The creation of a new response, restoration, and recovery vessel (Triple R Vessel or TRV) Certificate of Inspection (COI) endorsement. This would allow pre-approval of vessels that may want to provide disaster assistance, thereby speeding their ability to engage in disaster operations,

- That USCG Districts around the country adopt the energy-vessel related policies written by the U.S. Coast Guard's Eight District (the District which covers the Gulf of Mexico where most energy vessels operate.
- That USCG redefine the phrase "international voyage" to clarify that a U.S. vessel is not on an international voyage when it sails from the U.S. mainland to Puerto Rico.

Aaron Smith, President of OMSA, commented on the report by saying, "The technology and expertise contained in the offshore service industry is second to none. And those of us that live and work in south Louisiana know the power of neighbors helping neighbors to endure and recover from a natural disaster. Smith continued, it is great to see so many experts combine these two facts and push for common-sense ways to allow those in need to receive expedited and safely provided aid from the amazing assets and professionals we have right here in South Louisiana."

The Subcommittee's full report will be released in the coming weeks and posted on the NOSAC website.

About NOSAC

The National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee (NOSAC) is established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act to provide expert industry advice to the U.S. Coast Guard. For more information about NOSAC, please click [here](#).

About OMSA

The Offshore Marine Service Association OMSA is the leading association of and spokesman and advocate for the offshore marine transportation service industry in the United States. The association represents 170-member companies and their 12,000 U.S. employees based throughout the U.S. For more information, please visit www.offshoremarine.org.