

El Faro Marine Safety Legislation Advances in the U.S. Congress

JUNE 27, 2018

The tragic loss of the steam ship *El Faro* on October 1, 2015 and the loss of all 33 persons aboard led to the issuance of a December 19, 2017 U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Final Action Memorandum containing recommendations for future action. Those recommendations are the basis for legislation ([H.R. 6175](#)) introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on June 21 and reported favorably by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on June 27.

The Commandant's recommendations were based on the results of a Formal Investigation conducted by a Marine Board of Investigation established for the purpose of investigating the loss of the *El Faro*. Moving to legislation following a marine disaster is in keeping with many prior marine casualties, including the loss of the vessel *Marine Electric* in 1983, and was expressly supported in the Committee as a step in the direction of preventing future vessel casualties.

The bill, entitled the Maritime Safety Act of 2018, was introduced by Representatives Duncan Hunter and John Garamendi, the Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Coast Guard Subcommittee of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The bill has 14 operative sections and includes the following provisions:

- Requiring the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct an audit of the implementation and effectiveness of vessel safety management plans;
- Setting forth new equipment requirements relating to distress signaling and locating technology;
- Coast Guard procurement of equipment to allow search and rescue units to attach a locator device on any object not immediately retrievable;
- Requiring the Commandant to
 - seek International Maritime Organization approval to require float-free voyage data recorders;
 - improve training of marine inspection personnel particularly relating to steam plan inspections;
 - review major vessel conversion determinations and other policies and to brief Congress on those findings;
 - work with classification societies to create a single U.S. supplement to class rules; and

- regularly update Congress on the status of implementation of other actions outlined in the *El Faro* Final Action Memorandum.

1 Min Read

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