

Strengthening Washington's oil transfer inspection program: At-anchor oil transfer inspections



A foreign tanker loading cargo in Seattle.

WHY IT MATTERS

Because the risk of a catastrophic spill during an oil transfer over water is real, Washington regulations are designed to help prevent and minimize spills from these activities. The Washington Department of Ecology is authorized to conduct inspections of bulk oil transfer operations over state waters. These inspections can involve facilities such as refineries, as well as non-recreational vessels ranging from fishing vessels to cargo ships to tank vessels.

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Washington State's oil spill regulations have been largely successful in moving the state toward its zero-spills goal. In 2017, the volume of oil spilled from regulated oil transfers accounted for less than three percent of oil spilled to state waters.

Why is Ecology doing at-anchor inspections?

In 2017, over 400 regulated oil transfers occurred at anchorage locations. Ecology has the authority to conduct at-anchor inspections of oil transfer operations, but lacked funding for transportation to these inspections.

In 2018, the Legislature provided Ecology with additional funding to inspect oil transfers at anchorage locations. This new funding allows us to conduct at-anchor oil transfer inspections in addition to our ongoing oil transfer inspection work at the dock.

Why are certain oil transfers being prioritized?

Submerged or sunken oils pose a greater risk because these oils are more difficult to find and clean up. Under the 2018 Strengthening Oil Transportation Safety Act (E2SSB 6269), Ecology will conduct focused reviews and inspections of transfers of oils that may submerge or sink in water, along with routine inspections of transfers of other product types.

Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-7211 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

What to expect

At-anchor inspections will start in the summer of 2018. Ecology will continue to refine the at-anchor aspects of our oil transfer inspection program. We expect to fully implement at-anchor inspections in 2019.

Ecology will use commercial launch services for transportation to anchorage locations. Our initial goal is to conduct approximately 60 inspections at anchorages throughout the state each calendar year.

Our at-anchor inspections will be no different from our dockside oil transfer inspections. They will continue to help industry meet the mandates of state law and educate ship crews.

Coordination

Ecology will share inspection scheduling plans with vessels, agents and fuel deliverers whenever possible through VHF radio, phone, and/or e-mail. There will be no cost to the vessel for these inspections.

Resources

At-anchor boardings will primarily involve one or more of the following Ecology inspections:

- **Bunker operations monitoring**

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/ecy05029.pdf>

- **Delivering vessel transfer**

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/ecy070284.pdf>

Visit our website for more information about vessel inspections:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Guidance-for-oil-industry/Vessel-information>