

employed by a TPO but these are just a baseline standard. Owners should consider the geographic coverage that a TPO can provide to readily respond to survey and audit requests. Other questions that should be asked include: “Has the leadership of the TPO’s program actually worked and lived on towing vessels themselves?”, “Have they lived through the challenges that we face on a daily basis?” and “What is the TPO’s history of working with USCG on flag State compliance matters?” Those who have worked on towing vessels are better positioned to identify common and uncommon issues before they become actual problems. TPOs who have a longstanding working history with the USCG have working relationships in place to quickly assess situations and facilitate uninterrupted operations under permitting circumstances. Most importantly, interviewing various TPOs is essential to finding out which personalities are most compatible with your organization’s leadership. This TPO-owner relationship will play a large role in the long-term prosperity of a towing vessel operation.

5. THE REGULATION

The published regulation is 145 pages long and over half of that is dedicated to the preamble, discussing industry commentary with the USCG and providing background on how the final rule was determined. The final rule begins almost 100 pages in, and is broken down into the following Parts:

46 CFR CHAPTER I

- Part 1** Organization, General Course and Methods Governing Marine Safety Functions
- Part 2** Vessel Inspections
- Part 15** Manning Requirements

46 CFR SUBCHAPTER M

- Part 136** Certification
- Part 137** Vessel Compliance
- Part 138** Towing Safety Management System (TSMS)
- Part 139** Third-Party Organizations
- Part 140** Operations
- Part 141** Lifesaving
- Part 142** Fire Protection
- Part 143** Machinery and Electrical Systems and Equipment
- Part 144** Construction and Arrangement

Knowing where to look to quickly access the information needed is critical to navigating through Subchapter M. Just knowing the parts listed above will provide a good starting point for various searches. Word search functionality also makes this job considerably easier. Each part is divided into sections for “existing” and “new” vessels with different requirements for each. Industry must comply with new vessel requirements for vessels with keels laid on or after July 20, 2017, or when a major conversion to an existing vessel has been made on or after July 20, 2017. Additionally, towing vessel owners and operators must verify they are in compliance with the specified Rule sets required by each Part.

The preamble often expands on the requirements listed in Subchapter M and should not be overlooked. Further, the USCG has compiled a list of frequently asked questions of each Part and has posted these questions and answers on the Towing Vessel National Center of Expertise’s (TVNCOE) website. Located in Paducah, Kentucky, the TVNCOE was established by the USCG to assist industry stakeholders in the interpretation and application of the Rule. To this end, they employ personnel with both regulatory and industry backgrounds to effectively inform on towing vessel matters.