

vessel is exempt from this chapter when engaged in Aleutian trade if the vessel either operated in that trade before Sept. 8, 1990, or was purchased before that date to be used in such trade and entered into service in that trade before June 1, 1992, did not undergo a major conversion, and did not have a load line assigned at any time before Nov. 16, 1990, see section 602(f) of Pub. L. 101–595, set out as a note under section 4502 of this title.

#### FISH TENDER VESSELS IN ALEUTIAN TRADE

Pub. L. 107–295, title IV, § 436(b), (c), Nov. 25, 2002, 116 Stat. 2129, provided that:

“(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—Except as provided in subsection (c), a fish tender vessel that before January 1, 2003, transported cargo (not including fishery related products) in the Aleutian trade is subject to chapter 51 of title 46, United States Code (as amended by subsection (a) of this section [amending this section]).

“(c) EXCEPTION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Before December 31, 2006, the BOWFIN (United States official number 604231) is exempt from chapter 51 of title 46, United States Code (as amended by subsection (a) of this section) when engaged in the Aleutian trade, if the vessel does not undergo a major conversion.

“(2) ENSURING SAFETY.—Before the date referred to in paragraph (1), a Coast Guard official who has reason to believe that the vessel referred to in paragraph (1) operating under this subsection is in a condition or is operated in a manner that creates an immediate threat to life or the environment or is operated in a manner that is inconsistent with section 3302 of title 46, United States Code, may direct the master or individual in charge to take immediate and reasonable steps to safeguard life and the environment, including directing the vessel to a port or other refuge.”

[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.]

### § 5103. Load line requirements

(a) A vessel may be operated only if the vessel has been assigned load lines.

(b) The owner, charterer, managing operator, agent, master, and individual in charge of a vessel shall mark and maintain the load lines permanently and conspicuously in the way prescribed by the Secretary.

(c) A fishing vessel built on or before July 1, 2013, that undergoes a major conversion completed after the later of July 1, 2013, or the date the Secretary establishes standards for an alternate loadline compliance program, shall comply with such an alternative loadline compliance program that is developed in cooperation with the commercial fishing industry and prescribed by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 99–509, title V, § 5101(2), Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1915; Pub. L. 111–281, title VI, § 604(d)(2), Oct. 15, 2010, 124 Stat. 2965; Pub. L. 112–213, title III, § 305(d)(2), Dec. 20, 2012, 126 Stat. 1565.)

#### HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

##### Revised section 5103

Source: Section (U.S. Code) 46 App. U.S.C. 86c, 88b.

Section 5103(a) prohibits a vessel that is subject to load line requirements from operating, unless it has load lines assigned by the Secretary.

Section 5103(b) requires that load lines be permanently and conspicuously maintained in the manner prescribed by the Secretary.

#### AMENDMENTS

2012—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 112–213 substituted “July 1, 2013,” for “July 1, 2012,” in two places and substituted “major conversion” for “substantial change to the dimension of or type of the vessel”.

2010—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 111–281 added subsec. (c).

### § 5104. Assignment of load lines

(a) The Secretary shall assign load lines for a vessel so that they indicate the minimum safe freeboard to which the vessel may be loaded. However, if the owner requests, the Secretary may assign load lines that result in greater freeboard than the minimum safe freeboard.

(b) In assigning load lines for a vessel, the Secretary shall consider—

(1) the service, type, and character of the vessel;

(2) the geographic area in which the vessel will operate; and

(3) applicable international agreements to which the United States Government is a party.

(c) An existing vessel may retain its load lines assigned before January 1, 1986, unless the Secretary decides that a substantial change in the vessel after those load lines were assigned requires that new load lines be assigned under this chapter.

(d) The minimum freeboard of an existing vessel may be reduced only if the vessel complies with every applicable provision of this chapter.

(e) The Secretary may designate by regulation specific geographic areas that have less severe weather or sea conditions and from which there is adequate time to return to available safe harbors. The Secretary may reduce the minimum freeboard of a vessel operating in these areas.

(Pub. L. 99–509, title V, § 5101(2), Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1915.)

#### HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

##### Revised section 5104

Source: Section (U.S. Code) 46 App. U.S.C. 86c, 88a.

Section 5104(a) requires the Secretary to assign load lines indicating the minimum safe freeboard to which a vessel may be loaded. It also authorizes the Secretary to assign a load line that results in a freeboard that is greater than the minimum freeboard, if the owner requests.

Section 5104(b) sets forth guidelines that the Secretary must consider when assigning load lines on vessels.

Section 5104(c) allows an existing vessel to retain its load line assigned before January 1, 1986, unless the Secretary decides that a change made in the vessel requires the assignment of a new load line.

Section 5104(d) is a new provision that requires that a vessel comply with all the provisions of this chapter before the Secretary will consider a reduction in its minimum freeboard. This provision is similar to Article 4(4) of the International Convention on Load Lines.

Section 5104(e) is a new provision that authorized the Secretary to designate specific geographic areas having relatively non-severe weather or sea conditions and from which there is adequate time to return to safe harbors. Section 5104(e) also authorizes the Secretary to reduce the minimum freeboard of vessels operating in these areas. Regulations that have been issued under this authority (46 C.F.R. 44) authorize special service load lines for vessels operating not more than 20 nautical miles offshore or between islands in a group.

**§ 5105. Load line surveys**

(a) The Secretary may provide for annual, renewal, and other load line surveys.

(b) In conducting a load line survey, the Secretary shall consider whether—

(1) the hull and fittings of the vessel—

(A) are adequate to protect the vessel from the sea; and

(B) meet other requirements the Secretary may prescribe by regulation;

(2) the strength of the hull is adequate for all loading conditions;

(3) the stability of the vessel is adequate for all loading conditions;

(4) the topsides of the vessel are arranged and constructed to allow rapid overboard drainage of deck water in heavy weather; and

(5) the topsides of the vessel are adequate in design, arrangement, and equipment to protect crewmembers performing outside tasks necessary for safe operation of the vessel.

(Pub. L. 99-509, title V, § 5101(2), Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1916.)

## HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

*Revised section 5105*

Section 5105 authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to provide for load line surveys and requires that while conducting a load line survey, the Secretary must consider various strength, stability, design, and construction features of the vessel.

**§ 5106. Load line certificate**

(a) On finding that a load line survey of a vessel under this chapter is satisfactory and that the vessel's load lines are marked correctly, the Secretary shall issue the vessel a load line certificate and deliver it to the owner, master, or individual in charge of the vessel.

(b) The certificate shall be maintained as required by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 99-509, title V, § 5101(2), Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1916.)

## HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

*Revised section 5106*

Source: Section (U.S. Code) 46 App. U.S.C. 86c.

Section 5106(a) requires the Secretary to issue a load line certificate upon finding that a vessel has received a satisfactory load line survey and that the vessel's load line is marked correctly.

Section 5106(b) requires that the load line certificate be maintained as required by the Secretary of Transportation. It is expected that the Secretary will require in most cases that the certificate be carried on board the vessel. However, certain types of vessels such as barges do not have facilities for the carriage of certificates. In this case, this provision would give the Secretary the discretion to require that the certificates for the barges be carried on the towing vessels.

**§ 5107. Delegation of authority**

(a) The Secretary shall delegate to the American Bureau of Shipping or other similarly qualified organizations the authority to assign load lines, survey vessels, determine that load lines are marked correctly, and issue load line certificates under this chapter.

(b) Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary, a decision of an organization delegated authority under subsection (a) of this section re-

lated to the assignment of a load line may be appealed to the Secretary.

(c) For a vessel intended to be engaged on a foreign voyage, the Secretary may delegate to another country that is a party to the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966, the authority to assign load lines, survey vessels, determine that the load lines are marked correctly, and issue an International Load Line Certificate (1966).

(d) The Secretary may terminate a delegation made under this section after giving written notice to the organization.

(Pub. L. 99-509, title V, § 5101(2), Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1916.)

## HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

*Revised section 5107*

Source: Section (U.S. Code) 46 App. U.S.C. 86d, 88b.

Section 5107(a) requires the Secretary to delegate the performance of various load line functions to the American Bureau of Shipping or other similarly qualified organizations. In providing for the delegation to a "similarly qualified organization," the Committee expects that the Secretary will ensure that that organization complies with the same stringent standards and requirements for conducting business that apply to the American Bureau of Shipping.

Section 5107(b) permits an appeal to the Secretary of a decision by an organization that has received delegated authority. This ensures that the Secretary has full oversight of the delegated load line functions.

Section 5107(c) permits the Secretary to delegate various load line functions to another country for vessels that are engaged on a foreign voyage, provided that the country is a party to the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966.

Section 5107(d) clarifies the Secretary's authority to revoke a delegation at any time without cause. This authority is given so that no delay occurs administratively in revoking a delegation whenever the Secretary decides a revocation is warranted.

**§ 5108. Special exemptions**

(a) The Secretary may exempt a vessel from any part of this chapter when—

(1) the vessel is entitled to an exemption under an international agreement to which the United States Government is a party; or

(2) under regulations (including regulations on special operations conditions) prescribed by the Secretary, the Secretary finds that good cause exists for granting an exemption.

(b) When the Secretary grants an exemption under this section, the Secretary may issue a certificate of exemption stating the extent of the exemption.

(c) A certificate of exemption issued under subsection (b) of this section shall be maintained as required by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 99-509, title V, § 5101(2), Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1916.)

## HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

*Revised section 5108*

Source: Section (U.S. Code) 46 App. U.S.C. 86e, 88a.

Section 5108(a) authorizes the Secretary to exempt a vessel from load line requirements if the vessel is entitled to an exemption under an international agreement to which the United States is a party. It also provides the Secretary with the new authority to exempt a vessel from load line requirements if the Secretary finds that there is good reason for granting the exemption. A