STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT MARINE
INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY AND SECURITY

REGARDING
PROTECTING OUR SHORES FROM OIL SPILLS – OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND
SHIP DESIGN

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CHAIRMAN LAUTENBERG, RANKING MEMBER SMITH, AND DISTINGUISHED SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS, it is my honor to have the opportunity to appear before you today to tell you about how the maritime industry is using vessel tracking technology to help prevent oil spills and more effectively respond to marine casualties and environmental emergencies. My name is Edward Page and I am the Executive Director of the Marine Exchange of Alaska, a non-profit maritime organization established to provide information, communications and services to aid safe, secure, efficient and environmentally responsible maritime operations.

The Marine Exchange of Alaska is a member of the Maritime Information Service of North America (MISNA), a national coalition of maritime information organizations that represents the commercial maritime community's shared commitment to proactively address the challenges faced by the maritime industry, the U.S. Coast Guard, their respective states, and other federal and state agencies in a cooperative and cost effective manner. MISNA membership also includes maritime exchanges in New England, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Virginia, Florida, New Orleans, Houston, Los Angeles-Long Beach, San Francisco and Seattle. Several of the people who oversee the operations of these maritime exchanges are former Coast Guard Captains of the Port, and all the people who run these maritime exchanges have extensive maritime experience, including as licensed master mariners and senior maritime industry executives. MISNA, whose membership is comprised of over 8,000 maritime organizations is recognized as an honest broker of maritime information and collectively serves as the "eyes and ears" of the maritime community.

As a representative of the maritime industry, and just like Congress, I want to identify the best ways to prevent oil spills and environmental harm and improve the effectiveness of oil spill responses when maritime accidents occur. I am confident that substantial improvements to current practice can be made quickly and at minimal cost by expanding the application of existing vessel tracking technologies that have been developed through joint efforts by the Coast Guard, the Marine Exchange of Alaska, and the entire marine industry.

Prior to establishing the Marine Exchange of Alaska seven years ago, I served as an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard for 29 years. After serving as the Chief of the Coast Guard's Marine Environmental Protection branch for Alaska, I served as the Captain of the Port of Los Angeles-Long Beach. During this time, I responded to numerous search and rescue cases, maritime accidents and oil spills. My three-year involvement in the *Exxon Valdez* response in particular convinced me that considerable resources should be devoted to the prevention of oil spills, as the recovery of oil is a daunting and costly challenge that historically has limited effectiveness. The phrase, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" has clearly proven to apply to oil spills.

During my time as Captain of the Port of Los Angeles-Long Beach, my strongest and most effective ally in preventing maritime accidents was the Marine Exchange of Los Angeles, along with the pilots, towing industry and vessel operators, and everyone who shared the same commitment and goal of ensuring safe and environmentally sound maritime operations. Our single most important and effective prevention resource was the vessel tracking information obtained from the expedited stand up of a vessel tracking system at the marine exchange. The

information we obtained on vessels' movements was an eye opener; it provided me with important information that I did not have before we established the vessel tracking system, and it quickly led to the implementation of several risk mitigation measures including tug escort requirements in certain areas, relocation of pilot boarding areas, speed restrictions, changing of traffic lanes, special operating procedures for fog conditions, and many others. Cumulatively these changes turned one of the world's busiest ports into one of the world's safest.

I am proud to say that this joint Coast Guard/Marine Exchange LA/LB vessel traffic center that we established in 1994 is still going strong, and in fact was recognized by the National Academy of Sciences and by Congress as an industry/Coast Guard joint venture that should be replicated to save costs and increase effectiveness in ensuring safe, secure, efficient and environmentally responsible maritime operations.

The lesson I learned from my 40 years in the Coast Guard and working in the marine industry is that the most powerful tool for protecting our shores from oil spills and other environmental disasters is the information on vessels' locations provided by vessel tracking systems. Analysis of historical vessel tracks aid risk assessment and risk management, and the ability to see vessel positions in real-time aids prevention of incidents and emergency response. The Coast Guard calls this Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), or the effective understanding of anything in the maritime environment that can affect the safety, security, economy, or environment of the United States.

The best way to achieve maritime domain awareness quickly and effectively is through strong public-private partnerships. This is recognized in *The U.S. Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship* which states that "Government and private stakeholders must establish an unprecedented level of information sharing and intelligence integration" in order to enhance maritime domain awareness. This document also states that prevention efforts "work best when implemented through strong partnerships with the commercial and recreational users of the nation's ports and waterways."

I have learned first hand that the marine industry is more effective than the government when it comes to providing vessel tracking capabilities, and is also best suited for ensuring that information obtained from their vessel tracking systems is effectively shared with those in the marine industry and government. I took these lessons with me when I retired from the Coast Guard to stand up the marine exchange for Alaska to help address the challenges of ensuring safe and environmentally sound operations in the largest and most daunting maritime region in the U.S.

When the International Maritime Organization (IMO) mandated in 2004 that all vessels be equipped with Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) – which are like airplane transponders – the Marine Exchange of Alaska, and other marine exchanges around the country realized that AIS would not improve maritime safety unless there were also receiving stations on shore able to receive, process and disseminate the information. As a result, we constructed a network of AIS receiving stations around the country, and today marine exchanges operate a network of more than 100 AIS receiving sites on all three coasts and in Hawaii.

In Alaska, we went one step further, and along with our extensive network of maritime stakeholders, my staff of five people deployed a tracking system that uses both satellite (long range) and an Automatic Identification System (AIS) network of over 50 receiving sites extending from the Arctic, 1,500 miles west through the Aleutian Islands, and 1,200 miles south to Ketchikan. In Alaska, we have shared the information obtained from our tracking system with the State of Alaska, the Coast Guard and the marine industry. Our vessel tracking system has been used to assist vessels in distress, aid oil spill response operations by locating rescue and oil spill recovery vessels, and to compliment maritime security efforts. The Coast Guard, State of Alaska and the marine industry have all invested in the establishment and operation of this vessel tracking network which we plan to expand into areas of the Arctic, Chukchi, and Bering Seas that currently lack AIS coverage.

While the Coast Guard recognizes the importance of having this capability in Alaska and other regions of the US, their focus has been on establishing a National AIS network that is projected to be fully operational after 2014. We in the marine industry believe that utilization of the vessel tracking system currently operated by marine exchanges across the country provides a today solution that should be tapped right now to serve as a bridging and complementary solution until the Coast Guard's national AIS system is in place.

There are many examples of how the vessel tracking system established and operated by the Marine Exchange of Alaska has been used to aid maritime safety. For example:

- In order to minimize whale ship strikes, e-mail alerts are automatically transmitted in real-time to the U.S. Park Service when vessels are exceeding speed limits imposed in regions of Glacier Bay, Alaska where humpback whales are present;
- Erratic and high risk vessel operations in Alaska waters are graphically provided to the Coast Guard for investigation and follow up;
- The historical tracklines and detailed information on vessels transiting Alaska waters and traveling to and from the Far East are provided to the Coast Guard for risk assessment;
- The locations of oil exploration vessels in the Arctic have been tracked in real time and shared with the Coast Guard and State agencies;
- The location of oil spill response vessels responding to the *Selendang Ayu* oil spill in the Aleutian Islands was provided in real time with satellite transponders to the Coast Guard, State of Alaska agencies and commercial spill responders;
- The location of a grounded tanker *Seabulk Pride* in Cook Inlet Alaska and the locations and transits of response vessels was provided to the Coast Guard, State of Alaska agencies and the commercial tugs and response vessels; and
- The location of Good Samaritan vessels used to rescue passengers from the grounded cruise ship *Empress of the North* in Alaska was provided to the Coast Guard this past summer.

Similar capabilities are being provided around the U.S. by other maritime exchange organizations that are networked together by MISNA. Off the coast of Washington State, for instance, e-mail alerts are automatically transmitted when vessels enter a NOAA established "Area To Be Avoided."

In closing, I would like to reiterate that vessel tracking technologies are critical in protecting our shores from oil spills and other environmental disasters. I urge the Coast Guard to utilize the vessel tracking network developed by the marine industry and that is operational today to help prevent and respond to oil spills as well as aid the execution of the services' search and rescue and maritime security missions. Such efforts will help achieve our common goal of providing for safe, secure, efficient and environmentally sound maritime operations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Marine Exchange of Alaska and the Maritime Information Service of North America. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.