



State Compulsory Pilotage:

Protecting the Marine Environment and Facilitating Responsible Maritime Commerce Through Modern, Safe, Efficient and Reliable Pilotage Service

What is pilotage?

Compulsory maritime pilotage is **navigation safety regulation** and by far the most effective mechanism available to the twenty-four Coastal State governments to assure the safety of human life, protect the marine environment, and facilitate the environmentally friendly flow of maritime commerce. It is effective because it places on the bridge of a ship a highly trained, government-licensed compulsory pilot¹:

- possessing **unmatched knowledge** of the local waterways;
- with **expert ship-handling skills**; and
- whose sole purpose is to **protect the public interest** and the waters for which they are licensed.

Why pilotage is so effective facilitating the efficient movement of maritime commerce while protecting the marine environment?

Compulsory pilots are required to **exercise informed independent judgment** while resisting the commercial and economic pressures commonly faced by shipping companies. A pilot must continually decide between different courses of action. For example, whether a ship should proceed in heavy fog, thick ice or other unexpected conditions; whether a ship should wait for particular tides, currents, or weather conditions; whether one route or maneuver should be used rather than another that might take more time; or whether a ship should move at a lower than normal speed despite its schedule. **Pilots are insulated from these economic pressures and are empowered to make decisions based solely on safety considerations.**

Each day, pilots are asked to take all sizes and types of vessels through narrow channels in congested waters where one miscalculation could mean disaster. They are trained, highly professional individuals, whose judgments must be spot-on for the hundreds of decisions they must make at every turn to bring a vessel safely to its berth or out to sea.

*- Vice Admiral Brian Salerno
U.S. Coast Guard*

Although compulsory pilots are not government employees, they perform what is, in fact, a public service. *A pilot's primary responsibility is to **protect the interests of the people and marine environment on and near waters for which they are licensed.*** In that respect, the principal customer of a pilot's service is NOT the ship or shipowner but rather the citizens and the public interests.

How pilotage is overseen?

Compulsory pilotage is provided through a comprehensive regulatory system administered by each of the 24 Coastal States (and the U.S. Coast Guard for pilots on the Great Lakes). These systems do far more than merely set rules for the issuance of pilot licenses to individuals. In addition to requiring ships to use a pilot, these systems seek to ensure, through the establishment of pilotage rates that generate adequate revenues, that **trained, competent, and physically capable pilots are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.**

What it takes to maintain a modern, safe, efficient, and reliable pilotage system?

Although piloting is a service provided by an individual, pilotage operations are necessarily capital intensive. A modern, safe, efficient, and reliable pilotage operation requires such things as pilot boats, crews, and maintenance staffs; dispatchers; training programs; radios; and hi-tech electronic navigation equipment. While this infrastructure has a cost, compulsory pilotage services are provided at **no cost to State or U.S. taxpayers.** The costs of maintaining the pilotage systems are funded through government established pilotage fees, which are paid principally by foreign flag shipping interests.

¹ Pilot groups in the American Pilots' Association (APA) are comprised of fifty (50) groups of State-licensed pilots and U.S.-registered pilots on the Great Lakes. For more information on APA, pilotage, and pilots, please visit: www.americanpilots.org