

Island Tug and Barge Ltd. Honoured for Marine Safety Excellence

By David Rahn

In late April, Vancouver-based Island Tug and Barge Ltd. receive Washington State's top award for excellence in marine safety and environmental stewardship. The company was honoured for meeting and exceeding standards set by the Washington Department of Ecology under its Exceptional Compliance Program (Ecopro). To qualify for the Ecopro Award, a company must meet or exceed all 26 of the department's marine-safety standards for tank barges. Island Tug and Barge, the largest marine petroleum transporter in BC, is the first tug-and-barge company to ever receive the award.

Washington's Ecopro spill-prevention standards are considered to be among the toughest in the world, exceeding other US and international marine safety and environmental protection standards. The Ecopro standards cover: management practices, maintenance and inspection programs, emergency preparedness, vessel-position tracking, voyage planning, security issues, English-language proficiency, and alcohol and drug testing.

At the Seattle award presentation, state officials, including spills program manager Dale Jensen, prevention section manager Stan Norman, vessel inspector Capt. Laura Stratton, Coast Guard Commander Mark Dix and others, praised the company for going far beyond what was expected and taking an active role in helping the state develop the spill prevention safety standards.

Island Tug and Barge president Capt. R. L. (Bob) Shields accepted the award on behalf of the company and in turn commended the state's program officials, particularly Capt Stratton, for their long-term commitment to tank-barge safety and their willingness to work closely with industry to achieve it.

"Our goal is operational excellence and enthusiastic achievement," said Shields. "Incorporating the Ecopro



Photo by David Rahn

Capt. Bob Shields, president of Island Tug and Barge Ltd., and Capt. Laura Stratton, policy analyst and vessel inspector with the Washington State Department of Ecology at the Ecopro award ceremony held at the Odyssey Maritime Discovery Center in Seattle. Shields credits Capt. Stratton for much of the Ecopro spill prevention program's success.

standards aligns very nicely with our vision."

Shields emphasized that his company's enthusiastic participation in the Ecopro program was primarily due to the high standards of integrity instilled by the voluntary nature of the project.

"It means a lot to us that these standards are voluntary and we had a hand in shaping them. If they were prescriptive, yes we could write the manuals and put the procedures in place, but we wouldn't have the commitment as a company and a partner with government that makes this work." ^

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