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Local News

Aleutian Risk Assessment team collecting comments on traffic study and oil spill baseline study

KUCB News (2010-02-12)

UNALASKA, AK (KUCB) - The Aleutian Islands Risk Assessment team is looking for public comments on the first two studies that make up phase A of the assessment. The studies look at vessel traffic in the region and the potential for oil spills. The first study identifies the characteristics of the vessels that transit through the area, the quantity of oil and hazardous cargo they are carrying, and what routes they are taking. Currently, 75 percent of the vessels are large, deep draft vessels that just transit through. Most of the vessels that stay in the area are fishing vessels.

Risk assessment facilitation team member Leslie Person said the study also looks at projected traffic in the region 25 years into the future. "The change is in the size of the container vessels and chemical carriers. So we're going to see an increase in those types of vessels. Also an increase in roll-on-roll-off vessels that transit through the area. They carry cars, primarily, from South Korea and Japan over to British Columbia and Washington."

This information is then used to create the baseline spill study. "For this study they ran five different scenarios based on the relative risk - the size of the vessel, the cargo, basically your top five potential scenarios for the vessel data. Then they tried to identify the frequency of spills that could occur in the region based on the types of accidents."

The study takes into account wind, current, the types of materials that could be spilled, different conditions during different times of the year, and other data to see what areas could be affected when. Unimak Pass is an area of concern. The model shows that the primary accident type of concern is drift grounding, where vessels lose power then drift near or on shore. It estimates that there could be up to 1.85 accidents per year by 2034, however the severity of these potential accidents is unknown.

Information from both of these studies will be the basis for the consequence analysis report, which looks specifically at how an accident might impact the area. Then, next fall, the risk

assessment team and advisory panel will start identifying prevention and response measures.

The risk assessment team is collecting comments on the report until 4 pm on Monday. They want to know if they have missed anything in the study, such as potential new sources of vessel traffic or smaller details. You can submit them at their [website](#).

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