

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*



## M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

*The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"*

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### **OCEAN GIANT IS AT THE END OF THE EARTH**

The Waterman-managed heavylift vessel M/V OCEAN GIANT arrived at McMurdo Station, Antarctica this week and began offloading nearly 7 million pounds of cargo in support of Operation Deep Freeze 2022. The vessel, with expert M.E.B.A. engineers aboard, was chartered by the Military Sealift Command for the annual mission to resupply scientists at the South Pole station. MSC has supported the mission since 1955, the year the station was established.

OCEAN GIANT arrived safely at the McMurdo ice-pier carrying mechanical parts, vehicles, construction materials, office supplies and electronics equipment, and also a modular building, comprising 80 percent of the supplies needed for the year's survival at the station.

Before departing McMurdo, the OCEAN GIANT will be loaded with ice core samples to be delivered to the U.S. for scientific study. In addition, retrograde cargo will be loaded onto the ship for transportation off the continent. These include trash and recyclable materials for disposal and equipment no longer required on the station.

M.E.B.A. Chief Engineer Rodney Kittelson is heading up the engine room in Operation Deep Freeze 2022. 1<sup>st</sup> A/E Devin Savoie, 2<sup>nd</sup> A/E Adam Belson and Crane Technician Andrey Pakhomov are part of the crew along with MM&P deck officers and an SIU unlicensed crew.

### **NMC ADVISORY ON AVOIDING MEDCERT DELAYS**

On the heels of a helpful National Maritime Center advisory breaking down reasons why Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMCs) get held-up, NMC has issued another communication offering assistance on how to avoid Medical Certificate (MedCert) delays.

NMC receives over 50,000 MedCert applications every year. On average, over 10 percent of those applications are missing information, which causes delays in processing and frustration for mariners. Here are some of common reasons "awaiting information" (AI) letters are sent back to the mariner following a MedCert application:

Visual acuity does not meet regulations as listed in the Merchant Mariner Medical Manual; Additional tests not provided when there is an abnormal vision exam; Conditions listed in the Manual need

further documentation. Common conditions needing further documentation are: Diabetes; Sleep Apnea; Substance Abuse; Heart Condition; and Seizure Disorder. The communication also lists a series of specific reasons regarding how the certificate form is filled out, resulting in delays. You can examine the full text of the notice on the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) found in the Documents & Member Notices section.

### **M.E.B.A. & COMPANIES WORK ON MEMBER SAFETY ISSUES AT TRUSTEES MEETINGS**

At the recent February M.E.B.A. Trustees meetings, the Union Trustees and Employer Trustees continued taking steps to provide additional protections to guarantee safe workplaces for our members and others. A previously formed Training Plan subcommittee to safeguard against assault/harassment, led by Executive V.P. Claudia Cimini, had its inaugural meeting to examine actions that the shipping companies & the Union are taking to prevent occurrence of any such issues, as well as reducing any barriers to reporting incidents. They also discussed ideas and goals moving forward. M.E.B.A. has been vocal in stressing that sexual assault and sexual harassment are completely unacceptable in any context and won't be tolerated in M.E.B.A.-represented workplaces. The Union has amplified and reinforced policies and training to help better ensure that everyone is treated with respect.

Recently, M.E.B.A. Hotline responders were instructed on Victim Assistance Training and the Union is working on a format and questionnaire for M.E.B.A. members/applicants to anonymously provide input to further enhance our action plan. Making our workplaces safe and welcoming is a team effort, and we need everyone's input and involvement.

### **INTERLAKE OFFERS EMPLOYEES PRESCRIPTION SAFETY EYEWEAR BENEFITS**

M.E.B.A. shipping company Interlake has launched a voucher/reimbursement program to help its employees secure prescription safety glasses. The forward-thinking company understands that its shipboard workers with prescription glasses feel more comfortable wearing custom PPE eyewear.

Interlake has set up two ways for eligible employees to take advantage of this offer including direct reimbursement and EyeMed voucher. Details of the program were sent to Interlake ships and employees as well as at the Cleveland Union hall.

### **NOAA REPORT: SEA LEVEL RISING FASTER THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT**

The U.S. is expected to experience as much sea level rise by the year 2050 as it witnessed in the previous hundred years. That's according to a NOAA-led report updating sea level rise decision-support information for the U.S. released in partnership with half a dozen other federal agencies.

The Sea Level Rise Technical Report provides the most up-to-date sea level rise projections for all U.S. states and territories by decade for the next 100 years and beyond, based on a combination of tide gauge and satellite observations and all the model ensembles from the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report projects sea levels along the coastline will rise an additional 10-12 inches by 2050 with specific amounts varying regionally, mainly due to land height changes.

The report updates the federal government's 2017 sea level rise projections, and provides additional information on tide, wind, and storm-driven extreme water levels affecting current and future coastal

flood risk. The report also finds that the sea level rise expected by 2050 will create a profound increase in the frequency of coastal flooding, even in the absence of storms or heavy rainfall.

“By 2050, moderate flooding — which is typically disruptive and damaging by today’s weather, sea level and infrastructure standards — is expected to occur more than 10 times as often as it does today,” said Nicole LeBoeuf, NOAA National Ocean Service Director. “These numbers mean a change from a single event every 2-5 years to multiple events each year, in some places.”

You can read the *Sea Level Rise Technical Report* at <https://tinyurl.com/noaawarns>

### **CDC LOWERS CRUISE TRAVEL WARNING**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has lowered its Travel Health Notice threat level for passenger vessels from Level 4 (Very High) to Level 3 (High) as the Omicron surge that affected cruising begins to wane. **The news comes a month after** CDC let its restrictive cruise ship Conditional Sailing Order expire and made the policy voluntary. The CSO implemented a series of COVID-related health and safety conditions that had to be met before large passenger vessels were permitted to operate in U.S. waters.

Norwegian Cruise Line-America hopes to restart cruise operations on its U.S.-flagged vessel PRIDE OF AMERICA in April.

The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), which represents 95% of the industry including M.E.B.A.-contracted NCL-America, said that the CDC’s lowering of its travel threat level “is a step in the right direction and recognizes the leadership and effectiveness of the cruise sector’s health and safety protocols that are unmatched by virtually any other commercial setting.”

### **DANGEROUS WATERS FOR U.S. MARINERS IN BLACK SEA REGION**

The Maritime Administration is reminding mariners transiting in the Black Sea/Sea of Azov to be ever present of suspicious activities in those vicinities stemming from heightened tensions and increased naval activity. MarAd’s latest Advisory (2022-02) warns that vessels operating in those areas may encounter GPS interference, AIS spoofing, and/or other communications jamming. The Advisory remains in effect until August 12.

For maritime industry questions about the advisory, contact [GMCC@uscg.mil](mailto:GMCC@uscg.mil). Supplemental information may also be found on the MarAd Office of Maritime Security website at: <https://go.usa.gov/xUKsb>.

### **1<sup>st</sup> of 6 MSC NEWBUILD UNREP OILERS READIES FOR DELIVERY**

The 742-foot USNS JOHN LEWIS, the first of six planned fleet oiler newbuilds that will join the Military Sealift Command fleet, completed its initial Builder’s Trials earlier this month inching closer to its delivery which could take place as soon as this spring.

The LEWIS and the Lewis-class vessels will provide underway replenishment of fuel and stores to US Navy ships at sea and jet fuel for aircraft assigned to aircraft carriers. M.E.B.A. represents the engineers in MSC’s Civilian Mariner fleet.

NASSCO is currently in production on USNS HARVEY MILK (T-AO 206), USNS EARL WARREN (T-AO 207), and USNS ROBERT F. KENNEDY (T-AO 208). The future USNS LUCY STONE (T-AO 209) and USNS SOJOURNER TRUTH (T-AO 210) are under contract.

### **FMC'S VEKICH READY TO TACKLE SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES**

As reported in last week's issue, the Federal Maritime Commission has been joined by newly confirmed Commissioner Max Vekich, a former ILWU longshoreman and official. The new Commissioner was sworn in this week for a four-year term and replaces outgoing Commissioner Michael Khouri. The FMC is an independent federal agency responsible for regulating the U.S. international ocean transportation system

M.E.B.A. backed the Vekich nomination and appealed for his support in a letter sent to Senators late last year saying that Max's experience and smarts will help him make profound and significant contributions "upon the FMC's deliberative process and upon the ability for this country to once again become the greatest shipping nation on earth."

Prior to joining the Commission, Commissioner Vekich had a more than 40-year career as a longshoreman, joining the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in 1979. Over the course of his career, he held leadership positions within the ILWU, serving as President of ILWU Local 52 and on the ILWU International Executive Committee. "Since my first day on the waterfront my work ethic has always been keep cargo moving, and that will be my priority in executing my duties as a Commissioner. Keeping cargo moving is the mindset and emphasis needed to identify and address port and supply chain issues. I look forward to getting to work and am humbled at the opportunity to serve," said Commissioner Vekich.

### **BILL TO GET CARGO MOVING, BEEF UP FMC GETS PORT ENDORSEMENT**

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) recently gave their endorsement to a bill that would beef up the Federal Maritime Commission to give them greater rulemaking authority to regulate harmful practices by carriers. S. 3586, introduced by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and John Thune (R-S.D.) seeks to level the playing field for American exporters by making it harder for ocean carriers to unreasonably refuse goods ready to export at ports. AAPA, which represents more than 140 seaports, said the legislation would help the system by prioritizing cargo fluidity and increasing access for American businesses and consumers. AAPA President Chris Connor said, "The pandemic has laid bare the need for a transport system to be able to surge and stretch — across all links, from sea, to land, to rail, to warehouse, to consumer. Incentives like fluidity charges keep cargo from piling up on the proverbial 'baggage carousel.' These fluidity charges are 100 percent proven to decrease the long-dwelling cargo at ports, which was a major cause of congestion during the early stages of the pile-ups. We look forward to seeing this bill through the mark up process, and to both the strengthening of fluidity provisions and putting Federal investment dollars to their highest use."

### **UNION PLUS AUTO BUYING SERVICE**

Presidents' Day car events are happening all month long and the Union Plus Auto Buying Service is here to help you find the right vehicle! They have upfront price offers on local inventory and you can compare new and used vehicles to find your next car. Union Plus programs, which are available to M.E.B.A. members, applicants, retirees and our affiliates, provide a vast range of money-saving benefits and services. The M.E.B.A. is enrolled in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to auto services discounts. You can use the Union Plus Auto Buying Service to find a great deal on a new or used vehicle. Just go to <https://unionplus.truecar.com/> and they'll make it easy

for you. There are also rebates available on new, qualifying union-assembled vehicles and you can access up to \$2,000 in auto repair expense and deductible reimbursements.

A feature of the Union Plus Auto Buying program allows union members to get a quote for a trade-in or sale for their used vehicle. They just need to go to the site and enter their license plate, VIN, or make and model information and answer some questions about the vehicle's condition. They will then be given an offer on the spot for their vehicle from a local dealer. Members do not have to sell or trade with the dealer, but can use the service just to get a sense of the value of their current vehicle. Check out the feature at <https://unionplus.truecar.com/trade/>

### **HALLS, OFFICES CLOSED MONDAY FOR PRESIDENTS DAY; FUN FACTS**

As always, the third Monday in February marks the observance of Presidents Day. M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed on February 21. The holiday was officially approved in 1968 as "Washington's Birthday" in honor of our first President George Washington (born Feb. 22, 1732). It eventually morphed into "Presidents Day" and became an occasion to also celebrate the birthday of another one of our greatest Presidents – Abraham Lincoln (born Feb. 12, 1809). But on Monday, feel free to also honor the memories of the other two February Presidents - William Henry Harrison (born Feb. 9, 1773) and Ronald Reagan (born Feb. 6, 1911). However, the way the calendar works, it's impossible that one of those Presidential birthdays can actually fall on Presidents Day. Incidentally, October and November are the months with the most Presidential birthdays – 6 each.

Here are some other fun Presidential facts! John Tyler was the President with the most children (15); John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826 – 50 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence; William McKinley regarded red carnations as "lucky." During a gathering in New York, he gave away his lucky carnation boutonniere to a little girl minutes before his assassin shot him twice; John Quincy Adams started his day by walking four miles and skinny dipping in the Potomac River; Woodrow Wilson's wedding reception was catered by the man who later headed up the Chef Boyardee canned pasta empire (Hector Boiardi); Benjamin Harrison was afraid that light switches might electrocute him and he never touched them, even going to bed with the lights on sometimes; Lyndon Johnson had an amphibious car and enjoyed tricking passengers into thinking they were going to drown as he sped towards a lake often screaming, "The brakes don't work! We're going in! We're going under!"; Future President Andrew Johnson showed up hammered and incoherent at Lincoln's inauguration, went on an extended whiskey-influenced rant and smooched a Bible for effect - or as one Senator framed it, "slobbered the Holy Book with a drunken kiss." Happy Presidents Day!

### **MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS** *(All times are local)*

**Monday, March 7** – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300.

**Tuesday, March 8** – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

**Wednesday, March 9** – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – **Register now at [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

**Thursday, March 10** – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

**Friday, March 11** – Honolulu@1100.

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