

(Civic Center Complex), 515 West First Street, Duluth, Minnesota. Interested parties are invited to present oral statements at the hearing.

The hearing will be an informal one and will be conducted in accordance with Rule 25 of the FRA Rules of Practice (49 CFR Part 211.25), by a representative designated by the FRA.

The hearing will be a nonadversary proceeding and, therefore, there will be no cross-examination of persons presenting statements. The FRA representative will make an opening statement outlining the scope of the hearing. After all initial statements have been completed, those persons wishing to make brief rebuttal statements will be given the opportunity to do so in the same order in which they made their initial statements. Additional procedures, if necessary for the conduct of the hearing, will be announced at the hearing.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on September 21, 1999.

Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket MARAD-1999-6248]

Sea-Land Service, Inc., and U.S. Ship Management, Inc., Application for Approval of the Proposed Transfer of Maritime Security Program Operating Agreements (MA/MSP-29 Through MA/MSP-43)

By application completed September 21, 1999, Sea-Land Service, Inc. (Sea-Land), and U.S. Ship Management, Inc. (USSM) notified the Maritime Administration (MARAD) of the proposed transfer of 15 Maritime Security Program (MSP) Operating Agreements (MA/MSP-29 through MA/MSP-43) from Sea-Land to USSM, pursuant to section 652(j), Sub-title VI-B, Merchant Marine Act, 1936, as amended (1936 Act). The vessels originally subject to those contracts are also to be concomitantly transferred to USSM for operation. Sea-Land received the initial award of the MSP Operating Agreements on December 20, 1996.

The proposed transfer of MSP Operating Agreements MA/MSP-29 through MA/MSP-43 is part of a series of overall transactions whereby affiliates of the A.P. Moller Group (Maersk) will acquire the international container operations of Sea-Land. In all, 19 U.S.-

flag vessels will be transferred from Sea-Land to USSM, including the 15 associated with the MSP Operating Agreements.

With respect to the transfer of MSP Operating Agreements, section 652(j) of the 1936 Act provides that "A Contractor under an operating agreement may transfer the agreement (including all rights and obligations under the agreement) to any person eligible to enter into that Operating Agreement under this subtitle after notification of the Secretary [of Transportation] in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary, unless the transfer is disapproved by the Secretary within 90 days after the date of Notification. A person to whom an Operating Agreement is transferred may receive payments from the Secretary under the agreement only if each vessel to be covered by the agreement after the transfer is an eligible vessel under section 651(b)."

In implementing the proposed transaction, it is asserted that under a U.S. citizen owner trust structure, the MSP Vessels will be bareboat chartered to USSM, which will time charter them to Maersk Line Limited (MLL), an affiliate of Maersk and a documentation U.S. citizen. USSM will manage and operate the vessels utilizing former Sea-Land operations employees. USSM will crew the vessels with U.S. citizens, utilizing the same unions presently representing seagoing employees on the MSP Vessels. The vessels will continue to operate in the same combination of world-wide container services as have been provided since 1995 by cooperation between Maersk and Sea-Land.

Sea-Land and USSM have requested that MARAD allow the proposed transfers to become effective in accordance with the application and pursuant to law. This notice invites comment on legal and policy issues that may be raised by the Sea-Land and USSM application, including the transfer of the 15 MSP Operating Agreements to USSM.

A redacted copy of the transfer application will be available for inspection at the Department of Transportation (DOT) Dockets Facility and on the DOT Dockets website (address information follows). Any person, firm, or corporation having an interest in this proposal, and desiring to submit comments concerning the application, may file comments as follows. You should mention the docket number that appears at the top of this notice. You should submit your written comments to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, Nassif

Building, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Comments may also be submitted by electronic means via the internet at <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit/>. All comments will become part of the docket. You may call Docket Management at (202) 366-9324. You may visit the docket room to inspect and copy comments at the above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., EDT, Monday through Friday, except holidays. An electronic version of this document is available on the World Wide Web at <http://dms.dot.gov>. Comments must be received no later than the close of business on October 13, 1999.

This notice is published as a matter of discretion, and the fact of its publication should in no way be considered a favorable or unfavorable decision on the application, as filed, or as may be amended. MARAD will consider any comments timely submitted, and take such action with respect thereto as may be deemed appropriate.

By Order of the Maritime Administration.

Dated: September 22, 1999.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary, Maritime Administration.

[FR Doc. 99-25124 Filed 9-27-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Safety Performance Standards Program Meeting

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of NHTSA rulemaking status meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a public meeting at which NHTSA will answer questions from the public and the automobile industry regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program. **DATES:** The Agency's regular, quarterly public meeting relating to its vehicle regulatory program will be held on Thursday, December 16, 1999, beginning at 9:45 a.m. and ending at approximately 12:00 p.m. at the Tysons Westpark Hotel, McLean, VA. Questions relating to the vehicle regulatory program must be submitted in writing with a diskette (Wordperfect) by Thursday, November 18, 1999, to the address shown below or by e-mail. If sufficient time is available, questions received after November 18 may be answered at the meeting. The individual, group or company