

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Senator Drue Pearce District F

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## **Senate Passes Non-Tanker Spill Bill**

(JUNEAU) – The Senate passed a bill on Thursday that further protects Alaska’s environment from oil and gas spills.

While Alaska has one of the world’s best oil spill prevention and response programs, the state is still plagued by spills from carriers that are not required to prepare for spill response. Large vessels such as cruise ships and cargo ships don’t fall under spill response requirements for tanker vessels, even though they carry huge fuel supplies through Alaska’s waters.

Senate Bill 273, sponsored by Sen. Drue Pearce (R-Anchorage) during the Twenty-First Alaska Legislature, addressed this problem. The bill required vessels of 400 gross registered tons or more and the Alaska Railroad Corporation to prove financial ability to respond to spills. SB 273 also required carriers to establish a plan to contain and control up to 15 percent of a vessel’s maximum oil capacity within 48 hours, and to clean up spills as quickly as possible with minimum damage to the environment.

The Task Force on Motorized Oil Transport was created to provide a plan for carriers to meet the new standards with minimal impact to industry. Twenty-three representatives from industry, state government and the U.S. Coast Guard met repeatedly over a five-month period, working through the legal and technical issues of prevention, contingency plans and response planning standards.

The draft legislation produced by the task force was introduced as Senate Bill 16, sponsored by the Senate Rules Committee. SB 16 contains the minimum changes necessary to:

- Activate the contingency planning process, establishing a streamlined procedure for non-tank vessels
- Limit liability for response action contractors, including those providing incident management team services and response planning facilitator services
- Enable the department to adopt regulations consistent with the task force report.

“It’s taken a long time to bring these regulations on line, and I am glad to the end is in sight,” said Pearce. “By working with the affected industry, the task force ensured that carriers will be able to comply with the new regulations without excessive costs.”

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**An actuality from Sen. Pearce is available on the Majority Actuality Line, 800-478-6540.**