

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Senator Drue Pearce District F

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## Legislature Passes Non-Tanker Spill Bill

(JUNEAU) – Protection for Alaska’s environment was strengthened today when the House passed a bill that tightens up regulations on oil spill clean-up.

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.

Sen. Drue Pearce (R-Anchorage) sponsored Senate Bill 273 during the Twenty-First Alaska Legislature to address 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 language 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 get to this point, and I look forward to actual implementation,” said Pearce. “By working together toward a consensus, the task force ensured that carriers will be able to comply with the new regulations without excessive costs. Most importantly, our precious Alaskan waters will be further protected.”

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**Excerpts from Rep. Pete Kott’s floor speech in support of SB 16 are available on the Senate Majority Actuality Line, 800-478-6540.**