



# BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations  
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

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One City Hall Square 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ [city.council@boston.gov](mailto:city.council@boston.gov)

## REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

March 12, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred the following docket for consideration:

***Docket #0137, An Ordinance regarding employee safety within Boston's oil terminals.***

This matter was sponsored by Gabriela Coletta Zapata and was referred to the Committee on January 8, 2025.

### ***Summary of Legislation***

***Dockets #0137*** is proactive legislation aimed at improving employee safety at Boston's oil terminals. This legislation seeks to strengthen oversight, enhance safety standards, and ensure that oil terminals operate with the highest commitment to public health and environmental protection.

To ensure safety, the ordinance establishes staffing and training requirements for all oil terminals within the city. It mandates that at least two trained employees must be on duty at all times. One of these employees must be a certified Marine Terminal Operator with expertise in handling storage tanks, piping, valves, emergency venting, loading rack operations, offloading procedures, fire suppression systems, and spill response. The second employee must also be trained in emergency procedures, fire suppression, and spill response. During offloading operations involving hazardous materials, a minimum of two Marine Terminal Operators must be present, with one stationed at the loading rack and the other at the dock to ensure immediate response capability.

Training standards outlined in the ordinance require that employees complete programs compliant with OSHA, NFPA 30, and HAZWOPER regulations. All employees must undergo annual refresher training, with documentation maintained on-site for inspection by regulatory authorities. In addition to staffing and training requirements, the ordinance mandates that all oil terminals submit an Emergency Response Plan to the Boston Fire Department annually. These plans must include procedures for spill containment, fire suppression, evacuation, and coordination with emergency services. Furthermore, oil terminals must maintain a 24/7 communication line to facilitate immediate contact with emergency responders.

### ***Information Received at Working Session***

The Committee held a working session on Thursday, March 6, 2025, to discuss Docket #0137. Representatives from the Administration and local Teamsters joined the discussion, including Paul Burke, Commissioner of the Boston Fire Department; Tania Del Rio, Commissioner of the Inspectional Services Department; Brian Hatch, Business Agent for Teamsters Local 25; and Bridget Quinn, Legislative Director for Teamsters Local 25.



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During the session, the Committee reviewed key provisions of the ordinance, including the requirement to maintain a minimum of two employees on duty at all times, with additional personnel mandated during high-risk operations. The ordinance also calls for the implementation of industry-recognized training standards and requires each terminal to submit a comprehensive emergency response plan to the Boston Fire Department. The Committee also pointed to similar legislation enacted in the neighboring City of Chelsea, which among other things, also established minimum staffing requirements.

Brian Hatch of Teamsters Local 25 provided an overview of terminal operations, highlighting the critical role of staffing in maintaining safety. He explained that each facility consists of a command center and a loading rack area responsible for managing communications and emergency notifications in the event of a spill. Mr. Hatch emphasized that when a vessel is docked, an operator must be present to monitor loadings. With two employees on-site, one can remain in the command center while the other oversees dock operations. Hatch explained that two employees are necessary because when no vessel is docked and if only one employee is on duty, that individual may be required to cover an expansive area—spanning over 38 acres—while managing other tasks, making continuous command center oversight difficult.

The Committee then inquired about the public notification process in the event of a hazardous spill that could affect nearby residents and community. Fire Commissioner Paul Burke explained that in an emergency, a trigger alert is sent to the local fire department, which then notifies the public. In the case of a triggered emergency, he explained that depending where the spill is at the oil terminal, Boston along with neighboring fire departments—such as Chelsea and Everett—operates based on assigned response boxes, which designate jurisdictional authority. Once a fire is reported, the department responsible for that area takes command, and the chain of command is established accordingly. In some cases, Massport would also be a part of the response and take the lead based on jurisdiction.

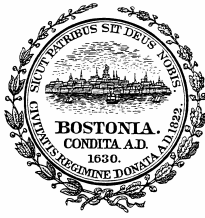
The Committee inquired into whether there is a distinction between fire and oil spill responses. The Commissioner clarified that the initial response is the same for both incidents. The Fire Commissioner further stated that the standard initial response includes three engines, two ladder trucks, a rescue unit, and the Chief. Once on scene, responders assess the situation. If it is determined to be an oil spill, the response is upgraded to a hazardous materials incident, bringing in additional resources, such as the marine unit, to contain the spill. An environmental company is then called in to mitigate environmental impact and limit toxic exposure. Meanwhile, fire crews maintain hose lines to prevent ignition.

The Committee lastly discussed the importance of allowing employees sufficient time to meet new training standards to which it was mentioned that ordinance includes a 180-day ramp-up period, providing workers time to comply.

## ***Summary of Amendments***

The original ordinance was amended to include the following into a new draft under Section 2. Staffing And Training Requirements:

*“3. Emergency Preparedness; Language added to the coordination procedures section, specifying that these procedures should include both the Boston Fire Department (BFD) and Massport Fire Rescue.”*



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*“4. Inspection and Compliance; Initially, this section mirrored the City of Chelsea’s approach, which imposes fines for violations placing enforcement under ISD. However, following a discussion with Commissioner Del Rio of ISD, it was decided that enforcement responsibilities would instead be led by BFD. Language was added to clarify that when BFD conducts inspections, it will also ensure compliance with equipment standards along with staffing, training, and safety requirements. The title of this section was also changed from Inspection and Compliance to Enforcement”*

## **SECTION 2. as amended:**

### 3. Emergency Preparedness:

- a. Oil terminals shall develop and submit an Emergency Response Plan to the Boston Fire Department for approval annually. This plan must include:
  - i. Spill containment, cleanup procedures, and notification protocols.
  - ii. Fire suppression and evacuation protocols.
  - iii. Coordination procedures with local emergency services including the Boston Fire Department and MassPort Fire Rescue for terminals within proximity to MassPort owned facilities.
    1. Terminals must maintain a dedicated 24/7 communication line to facilitate immediate coordination with emergency services.

### 4. Enforcement:

- b. The City of Boston Fire Department, in collaboration with the Inspectional Services Department, shall conduct unannounced inspections of oil terminals to ensure compliance with staffing, training, equipment, and safety requirements.
- c. Violations of this ordinance shall result in fines as determined by applicable laws and enforced by the Boston Fire Department. Repeated or severe violations may result in the suspension or revocation of fire safety permits until deficiencies are rectified.

### ***Committee Chair Recommended Action***

As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS IN A NEW DRAFT**.

Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair  
Committee on Government Operations