

## Oxnard Harbor District: Port Security and Safety

### Summary

The 2007-2008 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) visited the Port of Hueneme Oxnard Harbor District (District). During this visit the Grand Jury received an agency briefing from the management staff of the District and a comprehensive tour of District facilities. While touring the facilities the Grand Jury observed a pre-planned inter-agency security exercise involving the resources of the District.

As a result of this briefing and observation, the Grand Jury opened an investigation into the security and safety of the District.

The Grand Jury found that the District's designated internal security officers, \*"Wharfingers", are neither trained nor certified as are the private security officers who man the front gate under contract by the District.

The Grand Jury concluded that security of the District would be strengthened by certifying employees charged with security functions and making communication upgrades.

The Grand Jury recommends that all District employees charged with security functions meet the training and certification requirements of the State of California and that enhancements to the District's communications systems be implemented.

### Background

The District is an independent special enterprise District. It is a political subdivision of the State of California that owns and operates the commercial Port of Hueneme. The District was created in 1937 under the authority of the California Legislature which provides for the formation of Harbor Districts. The District is the only special District that operates a deep-water commercial port in Ventura County.

District properties encompass 120 acres of which all but 10 acres are within the City of Port Hueneme; the remaining 10 acres lie within the City Of Oxnard. The Port of Hueneme is adjacent to the 1,600 acre Naval Base Ventura County. Under the current Joint Use Agreement, the District utilizes land and facilities on the Navy side of the harbor, generating funds for Base improvements and long term maintenance.

The District is governed by an elected board of five Harbor Commissioners. The day-to-day business operations are administered by an Executive Director and a current staff of 28.

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\***wharf•in•ger**\hwôr'fin-jěr\ n: the operator or manager of a commercial wharf  
- *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Private Library Edition)

The Port of Hueneme (Port) opened in 1940 and is the only deep-water harbor between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area. It is the Port of Entry for California's central coast region. The Port serves international businesses and ocean carriers from the Pacific Rim and Europe. The Port ranks among the top seaports in California for general cargo. The niche market that the Port serves includes the import and export of automobiles, fresh fruit, and produce. The Port ranks among the top ten ports in the country for automobile and banana imports. It is a primary support facility for the offshore oil industry in California's central coast region because of its location near the Santa Barbara Channel. The District owns the Ventura County Railway Company which is managed by Rail America.

### PORT OF HUENEME



*THE PORT WITH TWO CARGO SHIPS, THREE BANANA BOATS, WAREHOUSES, THE FERTILIZER FACILITY, AND AUTOMOBILE STORAGE IN THE FOREGROUND*

The Transportation Security Administration, which is a part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has implemented an Infrastructure Protection Program which established a four tier security risk rating structure for ports. DHS groups 102 most critical national seaports into the top 3 tiers. Tier 1 includes the 8 highest risk port areas; Tiers 2, 3, and 4 contain those considered

to be at lower levels of risk. The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are rated as Tier 1. The Port of Hueneme is a Tier 3. [Ref-01]

Security of the Port is multi-faceted and is required to have a security plan that is reviewed and certified by the United States Coast Guard. The current plan is in compliance with DHS federal regulations.

The District has several specialized Memoranda of Understanding with local public safety agencies. Fire services are provided by the Ventura County Fire Protection District. Police services to District-owned properties are provided by the Cities of Port Hueneme and Oxnard. The Port Hueneme Police Department makes regular patrols of District properties under a municipal services contract.

District Wharfingers oversee the activities of the wharf and are utilized as internal port security designees.

The District employs a contract security service to control main gate traffic to the Port.

## **Methodology**

The Grand Jury visited District facilities and received a general agency briefing by District management and the Harbor Commissioners. The Grand Jury met with the Executive Director of the District as well as other management personnel.

Additionally, management personnel of the City of Port Hueneme were interviewed relative to security operations at the Port. An Internet search was completed to identify specific laws and rules pertaining to port security. Grand Jury members made several unannounced visits to the District to assess security practices. The Grand Jury reviewed written documentation from the District, researched newspaper articles, and conducted telephone interviews with District staff.

## **Findings**

- F-01.** District management states the Port is a Tier 3 port operating in a region subject to a Tier 1 security risk.
- F-02.** The District employs a State of California certified contract security service whose primary responsibility is main gate access to the Port.
- F-03.** The District employs eight Wharfingers who generally work 10 hour shifts. At least one Wharfinger is required to be on duty each shift; these shifts are round-the-clock 7 days a week.
- F-04.** District management states Wharfingers perform thirty-one essential functions; eleven of these relate directly to the security and safety of the Port. [Att-01]
- F-05.** Wharfingers are designated port security officers who patrol District properties on foot, in a vehicle, and when required, in a patrol boat. [Att-01, Item 2]

- F-06.** Wharfingers wear distinctive uniforms with shoulder patches and a metal badge stamped Wharfinger/Oxnard Harbor District.
- F-07.** Wharfingers are unarmed.
- F-08.** The Proprietary Security Services Act in Chapter 11.4 of Division 3 of the California Business and Professions Code, (§§7574-7574.7) requires private security officers to register with the California Department of Consumer Affairs. [Ref-02]
- F-09.** District Wharfingers are not required to comply with the Proprietary Security Services Act as a pre-condition of employment, nor are they required to have a California Security Certificate, commonly known as a Guard Card. [Att-02]
- F-10.** Once employed, Wharfingers are not required to receive training by the District to obtain their Guard Card.
- F-11.** The District has an administrative manual for all employees; it does not have a specific Operations Manual for Wharfingers.
- F-12.** The District has a twenty-four hour security camera and recording system.
- F-13.** According to District management there are periods when the camera is not observed by a District employee.
- F-14.** Wharfingers carry a portable two-way radio that is used for internal communication and ship traffic. The radios are not programmed to directly communicate with local public safety responders. When a public safety response, i.e., police, fire, is required at District facilities, the Wharfingers call 911 using the nearest telephone or cell phone.
- F-15.** Over the past four years, the District has received approximately \$1.3 million in DHS grants to strengthen port security.
- F-16.** Ports in the United States are eligible to apply for DHS port security grants which total \$400 million. The State of California has \$40 million available for port security grants state-wide. The District intends to apply for these grants.
- F-17.** In December 2007, the White House Office of Management and Budget proposed a nationwide \$1.4 billion reduction for the fiscal 2009 DHS grants, some of which specifically target port security.

## **Conclusions**

- C-01.** A Wharfinger position, as utilized by the District, is a multi-faceted position because of the variety of assigned duties to be performed. (F-03 through F-08)
- C-02.** Even though Wharfingers perform many sensitive security functions, they are not subject to security officer certification as outlined in the Proprietary Services Act. (F-04, F-05, F-08 through F-10)

- C-03.** Wharfingers perform security functions, although they are not subject to a comprehensive background evaluation, such as fingerprint checks, as required of private security officers under the Proprietary Services Act. (F-04, F-08)
- C-04.** Wharfingers would be better prepared to perform safety and security functions if they received similar certified training as outlined in the Proprietary Security Services Act. (F-08)
- C-05.** The lack of certified training, as outlined in the Proprietary Security Services Act, could raise liability issues for the District. (F-08, F-09)
- C-06.** Wharfingers' ability to contact emergency public safety responders is limited by primary reliance on the 911 system. Reliability would be strengthened by the development of additional means of communication. (F-14)
- C-07.** Port security is not optimal when only one Wharfinger is on duty. (F-02, F-03, F-13, F-14)
- C-08.** Port security is compromised by the failure to provide 24/7 observation of the Port security camera system. (F-12, F-13)
- C-09.** The proposed reduction of DHS funding will adversely affect future security enhancements at the Port. (F-17)

## **Recommendations**

- R-01.** Wharfingers, as utilized by the District, should receive security certification as outlined in the Proprietary Security Services Act. (C-01 through C-05)
- R-02.** Future employment requirements of Wharfingers should include the possession of a California Security Certificate (Guard Card). (C-02 through C-05)
- R-03.** The District should develop a Field Operations Manual for Wharfingers. (C-01)
- R-04.** Wharfingers' radios should provide direct two-way communications to primary public safety agencies. (C-06)
- R-05.** The District should develop backup systems of communication with responding public safety agencies. Additional methods of communication may include devices such as a dedicated telephone circuit, commonly known as a "ring down phone". (C-06)
- R-06.** The District should provide 24-hour uninterrupted observation of the port security camera system. (C-08)
- R-07.** The District should continue to pursue strengthening and upgrading Port security without regard to funding sources. (C-09)

## **Responses**

### Responses Required:

Board of Harbor Commissioners, Oxnard Harbor District (R-01 through R-07)

### Responses Accepted:

United States Coast Guard Station Channel Islands (R-01 through R-06)

Commanding Officer Naval Base Ventura County (R-01 through R-06)

## **References**

Ref-01 [http://www.tsa.gov/join/grants/ipp\\_faqs.shtm](http://www.tsa.gov/join/grants/ipp_faqs.shtm)

Ref-02 <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate?WAISdocID=85675516723+1+0+0&WAISac>

## **Attachments**

Att-01 Oxnard Harbor District Wharfinger Job Description

Att-02 Oxnard Harbor District Wharfinger Recruitment Flyer

**Attachment-01**  
**Oxnard Harbor District Wharfinger Job Description**

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OXNARD HARBOR DISTRICT  
JOB DESCRIPTION

WHARFINGER

**POSITION DESCRIPTION:**

Under the direction of the Director of Operations and Maintenance, Wharfingers execute duties related to port operations and safety.

**ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

A Wharfinger performs, but is not limited to, the following essential functions:

1. Enforces provisions, rules and regulations in the District's Port Terminal Tariff of the Oxnard Harbor District.
2. Acts as Port security officer designee as directed.
3. Patrols all areas of the District property and facilities and conducts routine defined safety/security rounds using a station detection system located throughout the Port area.
4. Assists port pilots with the alignment and placement of ships and barges along their assigned berths.
5. Communicates with all inbound and outbound vessels via marine band radio to insure safe and orderly vessel traffic control in harbor waters.
6. Ensures that all appropriate actions and notifications are made in the event of an oil spill or discharge of any hazardous materials.
7. Reviews cargo manifest and wharfage statements for accuracy.
8. Contacts, communicates and coordinates with the required Federal, State or local agency having operational area jurisdiction as an incident dictates.
9. Acts as liaison between District administration and its customers as necessary.
10. Controls and directs all vehicular traffic in harbor area.
11. Directs and assists customers with the movement of cargo in and out of the harbor property to provide the greatest level of efficiency and the least amount of operational conflict for all users.

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Wharfinger

12. Identifies damage done to District property, locates the responsible party and generates damage/incident reports as required.
13. Constantly monitors activities within Port boundaries related to navigation, cargo handling, vehicular traffic, and port access.
14. Coordinates the berthing assignments for all vessels utilizing District wharves.
15. Arranges shifting of berths for fishing boats, oil supply vessels and other small craft to provide berthing for ships, barges and other large vessels as necessary.
16. Implements directives from the Director of Operations and Maintenance relative to the berthing and cargo operations of commercial ships on Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) owned docks.
17. Makes arrangements with the NBVC Duty Officer after normal working hours for emergency berthing assignments on NBVC wharves if required.
18. Receives calls and records messages in the absence of the Director of Operations and Maintenance.
19. Collects dockage fees from transient vessels and issues receipts.
20. Maintains a card index of vessel owners' addresses and telephone numbers.
21. Maintains a daily log of vessel movements and cargo operations conducted on District docks.
22. Maintains and prepares a reference of index cards containing the ship's registry and characteristics including taking photographs of those deep draft vessels in port as necessary.
23. Acts as an authorized Weighmaster to weigh and issue weight tickets for any vehicle requesting this service and collect the appropriate fees.
24. Ensures that vehicles arriving for sport-fishing park in the designated general parking areas.
25. Maintains clear access for emergency vehicles to District facilities and performs other safety-related tasks as required.
26. Checks water meter and records the quantities of water taken by any and all vessels on District docks.

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Wharfinger

27. Ensures removal of obstructions and debris left behind on the docks and in staging areas by port users after each cargo operation.
28. Immediately reports to the Director of Operations and Maintenance and/or the appropriate public safety agency of all illegal or unauthorized incidents such as breach of security, fires, accidents, injuries, vandalism, unauthorized entries, unexpected gatherings, workplace violence, labor strife, etc.
29. Turns on lights in work areas as needed.
30. Periodically inspects the small craft moored at District floating docks for the purposes of: a) determining if there are unauthorized persons on board, b) detecting pilferage or vandalism, c) determining the adequacy of mooring lines during inclement weather, d) detecting evidence of taking aboard water, and e) other reasons as required or assigned.
31. Performs other related tasks as assigned.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

A high school graduate with at least four (4) years experience in port or harbor related functions with the ability to read and write to the level required to maintain official logs and prepare reports.

Strong familiarity with maritime matters pertaining to berthing vessels.

Ability to communicate professionally and clearly with the capacity of exercising authority in a professional and reasonable manner.

Ability to professionally interact with co-workers, port customers and dock workers.

Ability to compute volumes and convert weights into metric units.

Valid California Driver's license and capable of driving District's vehicles.

Ability to perform work requiring extensive standing and bending motion, walking on uneven and inclined surfaces, and climbing ladders and ramps.

Ability to work variable work schedules.

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**Attachment-02**  
**Oxnard Harbor District Wharfinger Recruitment Flyer**

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## WHARFINGER

The Oxnard Harbor District, a special district organized to manage the commercial Port of Hueneme, is seeking applicants for the position of Wharfinger.

Under the supervision of the Director of Operations and Maintenance, the Wharfinger enforces rules, regulations and safety procedures, is assigned to stand watches on a rotating work schedule, controls traffic, truck queuing and parking, assists in making arrangements for cargo and vessel activities, patrols all areas of the Port, prepares daily logs and reports on port activity, acts as a Deputy Weighmaster, and performs other duties as assigned.

Qualified applicants must possess strong reading, writing and math skills and be able to communicate effectively, perform work requiring extensive standing and bending motion as well as climbing ladders and other types of ramps and inclined surfaces. Qualified applicants must possess at least a high school diploma or equivalent, at least four (4) years of experience in port/maritime-related functions and the ability to work on a rotating work schedule.

The Oxnard Harbor District offers competitive compensation and a comprehensive employment benefits package. Employment applications may be obtained at the Oxnard Harbor District Administration Building at 333 Ponomo Street, Port Hueneme, California. Completed applications must be received by 5:00 P.M. March 12, 2004. Applications can be submitted in person or mailed to:

**Oxnard Harbor District  
Human Resources  
P.O. Box 608  
Port Hueneme, CA 93044-0608**

The Oxnard Harbor District is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages applications from all qualified individuals.

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