

Sec. 9608. Financial responsibility

- (a) Establishment and maintenance by owner or operator of vessel;
amount; failure to obtain certification of compliance

(1) The owner or operator of each vessel (except a nonself-propelled barge that does not carry hazardous substances as cargo) over three hundred gross tons that uses any port or place in the United States or the navigable waters or any offshore facility, shall establish and maintain, in accordance with regulations promulgated by the President, evidence of financial responsibility of \$300 per gross ton (or for a vessel carrying hazardous substances as cargo, or \$5,000,000, whichever is greater) to cover the liability prescribed under paragraph (1) of section 9607(a) of this title. Financial responsibility may be established by any one, or any combination, of the following: insurance, guarantee, surety bond, or qualification as a self-insurer. Any bond filed shall be issued by a bonding company authorized to do business in the United States. In cases where an owner or operator owns, operates, or charters more than one vessel subject to this subsection, evidence of financial responsibility need be established only to meet the maximum liability applicable to the largest of such vessels.

(2) The Secretary of the Treasury shall withhold or revoke the clearance required by section 91 of title 46, Appendix, of any vessel subject to this subsection that does not have certification furnished by the President that the financial responsibility provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection have been complied with.

(3) The Secretary of Transportation, in accordance with regulations issued by him, shall (A) deny entry to any port or place in the United States or navigable waters to, and (B) detain at the port or place in the United States from which it is about to depart for any other port or place in the United States, any vessel subject to this subsection that, upon request, does not produce certification furnished by the President that the financial responsibility provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection have been complied with.

(4) In addition to the financial responsibility provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection, the President shall require additional evidence of financial responsibility for incineration vessels in such amounts, and to cover such liabilities recognized by law, as the President deems appropriate, taking into account the potential risks posed by incineration and transport for incineration, and any other factors deemed relevant.

- (b) Establishment and maintenance by owner or operator of production, etc., facilities; amount; adjustment; consolidated form of responsibility; coverage of motor carriers

(1) Beginning not earlier than five years after December 11, 1980, the President shall promulgate requirements (for facilities in addition to those under subtitle C of the Solid Waste Disposal Act [42 U.S.C. 6921 et seq.] and other Federal law) that classes of facilities establish and maintain evidence of financial responsibility consistent with the degree and duration of risk associated with the production, transportation, treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous substances. Not later than three years after December 11, 1980, the President shall identify those classes for which requirements will be first developed and publish notice of such identification in the Federal Register.

Priority in the development of such requirements shall be accorded to those classes of facilities, owners, and operators which the President determines present the highest level of risk of injury.

(2) The level of financial responsibility shall be initially established, and, when necessary, adjusted to protect against the level of risk which the President in his discretion believes is appropriate based on the payment experience of the Fund, commercial insurers, courts settlements and judgments, and voluntary claims satisfaction. To the maximum extent practicable, the President shall cooperate with and seek the advice of the commercial insurance industry in developing financial responsibility requirements. Financial responsibility may be established by any one, or any combination, of the following: insurance, guarantee, surety bond, letter of credit, or qualification as a self-insurer. In promulgating requirements under this section, the President is authorized to specify policy or other contractual terms, conditions, or defenses which are necessary, or which are unacceptable, in establishing such evidence of financial responsibility in order to effectuate the purposes of this chapter.

(3) Regulations promulgated under this subsection shall incrementally impose financial responsibility requirements as quickly as can reasonably be achieved but in no event more than 4 years after the date of promulgation. Where possible, the level of financial responsibility which the President believes appropriate as a final requirement shall be achieved through incremental, annual increases in the requirements.

(4) Where a facility is owned or operated by more than one person, evidence of financial responsibility covering the facility may be established and maintained by one of the owners or operators, or, in consolidated form, by or on behalf of two or more owners or operators. When evidence of financial responsibility is established in a consolidated form, the proportional share of each participant shall be shown. The evidence shall be accompanied by a statement authorizing the applicant to act for and in behalf of each participant in submitting and maintaining the evidence of financial responsibility.

(5) The requirements for evidence of financial responsibility for motor carriers covered by this chapter shall be determined under section 31139 of title 49.

(c) Direct action

(1) Releases from vessels

In the case of a release or threatened release from a vessel, any claim authorized by section 9607 or 9611 of this title may be asserted directly against any guarantor providing evidence of financial responsibility for such vessel under subsection (a) of this section. In defending such a claim, the guarantor may invoke all rights and defenses which would be available to the owner or operator under this subchapter. The guarantor may also invoke the defense that the incident was caused by the willful misconduct of the owner or operator, but the guarantor may not invoke any other defense that the guarantor might have been entitled to invoke in a proceeding brought by the owner or operator against him.

(2) Releases from facilities

In the case of a release or threatened release from a facility,

any claim authorized by section 9607 or 9611 of this title may be asserted directly against any guarantor providing evidence of financial responsibility for such facility under subsection (b) of this section, if the person liable under section 9607 of this title is in bankruptcy, reorganization, or arrangement pursuant to the Federal Bankruptcy Code, or if, with reasonable diligence, jurisdiction in the Federal courts cannot be obtained over a person liable under section 9607 of this title who is likely to be solvent at the time of judgment. In the case of any action pursuant to this paragraph, the guarantor shall be entitled to invoke all rights and defenses which would have been available to the person liable under section 9607 of this title if any action had been brought against such person by the claimant and all rights and defenses which would have been available to the guarantor if an action had been brought against the guarantor by such person.

(d) Limitation of guarantor liability

(1) Total liability

The total liability of any guarantor in a direct action suit brought under this section shall be limited to the aggregate amount of the monetary limits of the policy of insurance, guarantee, surety bond, letter of credit, or similar instrument obtained from the guarantor by the person subject to liability under section 9607 of this title for the purpose of satisfying the requirement for evidence of financial responsibility.

(2) Other liability

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to limit any other State or Federal statutory, contractual, or common law liability of a guarantor, including, but not limited to, the liability of such guarantor for bad faith either in negotiating or in failing to negotiate the settlement of any claim. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed, interpreted, or applied to diminish the liability of any person under section 9607 of this title or other applicable law.

(Pub. L. 96-510, title I, Sec. 108, Dec. 11, 1980, 94 Stat. 2785; Pub. L. 99-499, title I, Secs. 108, 127(c), Oct. 17, 1986, 100 Stat. 1631, 1692.)

References in Text

The Solid Waste Disposal Act, referred to in subsec. (b)(1), is title II of Pub. L. 89-272, Oct. 20, 1965, 79 Stat. 997, as amended generally by Pub. L. 94-580, Sec. 2, Oct. 21, 1976, 90 Stat. 2795. Subtitle C of the Solid Waste Disposal Act is classified generally to subchapter III (Sec. 6921 et seq.) of chapter 82 of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 6901 of this title and Tables.

The Federal Bankruptcy Code, referred to in subsec. (c)(2), probably means a reference to Title 11, Bankruptcy.

Codification

In subsec. (b)(5), ``section 31139 of title 49'' substituted for ``section 30 of the Motor Carrier Act of 1980, Public Law 96-296'' on authority of Pub. L. 103-272, Sec. 6(b), July 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 1378, the first section of which enacted subtitles II, III, and V to X of Title 49, Transportation.

Amendments

1986--Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 99-499, Sec. 127(c)(1), inserted ``to cover the liability prescribed under paragraph (1) of section 9607(a) of this title'' after ``whichever is greater''.

Subsec. (a)(4). Pub. L. 99-499, Sec. 127(c)(2), added par. (4).

Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 99-499, Sec. 108(a), inserted provisions relating to evidence of financial responsibility and authority of the President regarding establishment of that evidence.

Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 99-499, Sec. 108(b), substituted ``as quickly as can reasonably be achieved but in no event more than 4 years'' for ``over a period of not less than three and no more than six years''.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 99-499, Sec. 108(c), amended subsec. (c) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (c) read as follows: ``Any claim authorized by section 9607 or 9611 of this title may be asserted directly against any guarantor providing evidence of financial responsibility as required under this section. In defending such a claim, the guarantor may invoke all rights and defenses which would be available to the owner or operator under this subchapter. The guarantor may also invoke the defense that the incident was caused by the willful misconduct of the owner or operator, but such guarantor may not invoke any other defense that such guarantor might have been entitled to invoke in a proceeding brought by the owner or operator against him.''

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 99-499, Sec. 108(c), amended subsec. (d) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (d) read as follows: ``Any guarantor acting in good faith against which claims under this chapter are asserted as a guarantor shall be liable under section 9607 of this title or section 9612(c) of this title only up to the monetary limits of the policy of insurance or indemnity contract such guarantor has undertaken or of the guaranty of other evidence of financial responsibility furnished under this section, and only to the extent that liability is not excluded by restrictive endorsement: Provided, That this subsection shall not alter the liability of any person under section 9607 of this title.''

Section Referred to in Other Sections

This section is referred to in section 9609 of this title.