



## *Coasting Trade Act and Seismic Activities*

To stimulate oil and gas exploration in Canada's offshore, the Government of Canada made changes to the [\*Coasting Trade Act\*](#). As of June 2012, any vessel may undertake seismic activities **above the continental shelf** (beyond the territorial sea, extending up to 200 miles) when the activities are in relation to the exploration for mineral or non-living natural resources of Canada's continental shelf. A coasting trade licence isn't required for these activities.

The *Coasting Trade Act* was amended to make sure that the most advanced global seismic vessels can be used to conduct seismic exploration of Canada's continental shelf. The data collected is used to decide whether conditions are favourable to explore for oil and natural gas.

### **The *Coasting Trade Act***

Coasting trade refers to any commercial marine activity within Canadian waters. Above the continental shelf of Canada, these activities must be related to the transport, exploration or exploitation of the minerals and non-living natural resources of the continental shelf.

The *Coasting Trade Act* supports Canadian marine interests by reserving the coasting trade of Canada to Canadian-registered and duty paid vessels. The legislation provides a process to temporarily import a foreign or non-duty paid vessel under a coasting trade licence when a suitable Canadian-registered duty paid vessel isn't available. A coasting trade licence can be valid for up to one year.

For more information and links to the licence process, forms and key contacts, please visit: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/policy/acf-acfs-menu-2215.htm>.

### **Seismic activities above Canada's continental shelf**

The *Coasting Trade Act*, section 3(2) (c.1), states that the coasting trade licence requirements don't apply to foreign or Canadian non-duty paid vessels engaged in seismic activities in waters **above the continental shelf** of Canada that are in relation to the exploration for mineral or non-living natural resources of Canada's continental shelf.

This means that both collecting the data (research) and transportation of the technical staff to operate the equipment are excluded from the requirement to obtain a coasting trade licence.

Different types of equipment and technology can be used to directly acquire seismic data or support its acquisition. This can include, but isn't limited to: sub-bottom profilers, air guns and streamers, multi-beam echo sounders, and side sonar scanning. Generally speaking, the activity doesn't touch the continental shelf; however, under special circumstances this might be necessary, such as when ocean bottom nodes need to be used in place of streamers due to possible interference with oil platforms. The activity must not disrupt the seabed under any circumstance.

The exclusion doesn't extend to other marine activity of commercial nature, including associated seismic exploration activities such as seabed coring, or the activities of support vessels (e.g. supply, ice breaking, and chase vessels). Vessels conducting associated exploration activities or support services continue to be subject to coasting trade licence requirements.

The exclusion isn't applicable in Canadian territorial waters (within the 12 nautical mile limit). Vessels conducting seismic activities in these waters continue to be subject to coasting trade licence requirements.

**Questions?**

Questions about seismic activities and the *Coasting Trade Act* can be sent to Transport Canada's Domestic Marine Policy Group: [tc.coastingtrade-cabotage.tc@tc.gc.ca](mailto:tc.coastingtrade-cabotage.tc@tc.gc.ca).