

# **Federal Maritime Commission 2019 Chief FOIA Officer Report**

**Chief FOIA Officer: Rachel E. Dickon, Secretary**

The Federal Maritime Commission (Commission or FMC) is an independent federal agency responsible for regulating the U.S. international ocean transportation system for the benefit of U.S. exporters, importers, and the U.S. consumer. Our mission is to ensure a competitive and reliable international ocean transportation supply system that supports the U.S. economy and protects the public from unfair and deceptive practices. We are dedicated to the presumption of openness and keeping the public apprised of our efforts to accomplish this mission.

We continuously strive to improve the FMC's administration of the FOIA program. Specifically, during this reporting period, we have conducted informal discussions within the FOIA office, and with other FMC components on how to streamline our FOIA process. The FOIA specialist met with individuals from other Commission offices to better understand the type of documents each office maintains and how to best provide significant information to the public in the most efficient manner.

Requesters are sometimes not aware of how the Commission maintains records and what type of information is contained in those records. In that case, the FOIA staff will describe the records and information to the requester in way that is easy for them to understand and help the requester define or narrow the scope of the request, if necessary. We remain dedicated to this type of personalized customer service and responding to all FOIA requests with the presumption of openness.

During this reporting period, our internal systems have proven to be successful in the efficient processing of FOIA requests and the managing of our backlog. We have closed all pending FOIA requests from the previous years' report.

All new Commission employees are trained on the importance of the FOIA, their obligations under the FOIA, and the FMC's process for responding to requests. This training is also designed to focus on the specific program area where the employee will be working. During this reporting period, the FMC FOIA professionals attended relevant FOIA training and continue to keep abreast of any new FOIA requirements.

The Chief FOIA Officer works directly with the webmaster to timely post information regarding Commission actions and news alerts. The public is invited to subscribe to the [FMC's RSS feed](#) to keep informed.

FMC's management encourages employees to be transparent and to always consider ways to proactively and appropriately provide relevant information to the public. Commission Offices in conjunction with our Office of Information Technology ensure that relevant databases are up-to-date and posted to our website. For example, the [listing of Ocean Transportation Intermediaries \(OTI\)](#) consists of searchable information pertaining to entities licensed by the FMC. This list is refreshed daily and is available to the public as a downloadable spreadsheet from our website.

Also, of interest to the shipping public and posted to our website are agreement filings under the Shipping Act. This information is included in the online [Agreement Library](#) which provides real-time notice of recently filed agreements, synopses, and the full text of nearly all carrier and marine terminal operator agreements on file with the Commission. To provide the public with useful up-to-date information, 2018 saw the substantial completion of a comprehensive audit of all MTO Agreements on file with the Commission. This endeavor eliminated obsolete or inactive agreements from the FMC's Agreement Library and allowed for a clearer understanding of what activities are taking place pursuant to those agreements.

The Commission, at the highest level, is committed to proactively providing useful information to the public. The Commission will continue to evaluate and make any necessary improvements to our FOIA program through proactive disclosures and efficient administration of our FOIA program.