

MERIT Working Group Charter

Maritime Evaluation for Risk, Insight & Trends

Pronounced: “Merit.”

Purpose

The MERIT Working Group brings together experts from across the regional transportation community to evaluate how navigational, environmental, and operational factors influence exposure and system readiness. Its purpose is to convert complex information into clear, actionable insight that supports safe and efficient maritime operations throughout the San Francisco Bay Region.

Scope

MERIT focuses on identifying, organizing, and prioritizing exposure factors across the regional transportation domain. Using empirical, qualitative, and historical information, the group identifies emerging challenges and develops recommendations to strengthen coordination, preparedness, and risk awareness.

Objectives

1. Review and interpret findings from the Ports and Waterways Safety Assessment (PAWSA) 2025 and related documentation.
2. Integrate operational, environmental, scientific, and historical information to assess exposure trends.
3. Develop an organized taxonomy of exposure types, locations, and contributing factors.
4. Recommend assignment of mitigation or response tasks to existing HSC subcommittees or propose short-term working groups.
5. Identify immediate, practical best practices that can be implemented through HSC coordination.
6. Recommend partnerships or funding opportunities that enhance analytical and implementation capacity.
7. Reassess and update findings as new data, trends, or incidents emerge.

Membership and Participation

Membership: Formal membership—used for quorum recognition—consists of individuals drawn from existing HSC subcommittees. These members ensure consistency with HSC procedures and coordination across established working bodies. The appointing authority (HSC Chair or Subcommittee Chair) determines formal membership and ensures sector balance.

Contributors: Contributors represent a broad cross-section of the regional transportation community, including both HSC and non-HSC members. This diverse group may include pilots, tug and ferry operators, port and terminal representatives, Vessel Traffic Service, bridge and infrastructure operators, environmental and scientific experts, and agency partners. While these participants provide essential expertise, they are non-voting members and are not counted toward a quorum for procedural purposes.

Methods and Procedures

MERIT functions as a temporary advisory working group that reports findings and recommendations through the appropriate HSC channel. The group establishes a consistent analytical framework for evaluating exposure and prioritizing action areas. Findings and recommendations are documented in writing and presented for review through the HSC. The working group may reconvene periodically to review new data, reassess conditions, or update its recommendations. Decisions are made by consensus whenever practical.

Structure and Reporting

MERIT may operate under the Harbor Safety Committee or under a designated subcommittee, depending on which structure best supports its work. Formal membership will remain below the quorum threshold of its parent body to preserve flexibility and efficiency. All recommendations and summaries will be transmitted through the parent chair for inclusion in regular HSC proceedings.

Future Re-establishment

MERIT is expected to be re-established periodically to review evolving conditions and incorporate the most current risk-assessment references, data, and methodologies available at the time. Each future iteration will update its analytical framework accordingly, ensuring the group's work remains timely and relevant to emerging regional risks.

Operating Principles

- Empirical: Ground conclusions in verifiable data and credible analysis.
- Collaborative: Engage a broad network of operational, technical, and scientific expertise.
- Transparent: Maintain clear documentation and accessible summaries of results.
- Action-Oriented: Deliver recommendations that strengthen safety and readiness.
- Adaptive: Adjust focus and methods as conditions change.

Deliverables

- A concise list of specific risk and exposure areas for HSC review and resolution.
- A taxonomy organizing those risks by type, location, and contributing factors.
- Immediate actions and best practices the HSC can implement without further analysis.
- Recommendations for assignment of complex or longer-term issues to existing subcommittees or new working groups.

Duration

MERIT operates as a temporary working group, reconvening or re-establishing as necessary to address new information, updated risk-assessment products, or emerging regional priorities.