

LEGAL UPDATES

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JULIE E. MAURER

PHOENIX:

480.824.7883

JULIE.MAURER@

HUSCHBLACKWELL.COM

BENJAMIN L. NASHED

WASHINGTON:

202.378.9335

BENJAMIN.NASHED@

HUSCHBLACKWELL.COM

SERENA L. TANG

WASHINGTON:

Chief Engineer Admits to a Criminal Violation of the *Ports and Waterways Safety Act* Related to Francis Scott Key Bridge Casualty

On June 18, 2026, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland announced that Karthikeyan Deenadayalan, the chief engineer aboard the M/V Dali at the time of the March 2024 Francis Scott Key Bridge allision, entered into a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) with the United States in connection with the ongoing criminal investigation arising from the bridge collapse.

Under the agreement, Deenadayalan admitted to conduct constituting a criminal violation of the *Ports and Waterways Safety Act* based upon his failure to report a hazardous condition to the U.S. Coast Guard. The admitted conduct centered on the use of a non-redundant flushing pump that could impair the vessel's ability to recover from a loss of power, and the failure to report that condition as required under 33 C.F.R. § 160.216. The DPA is the latest development in the government's broader criminal investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Dali casualty.

What this means to you

This case underscores the importance of staying apprised of reporting obligations within a complex and layered regulatory framework governing maritime safety. Specifically, the DPA highlights the significant regulatory and criminal exposure that can arise when vessel operators, managers, engineers, and shoreside personnel fail to disclose known safety deficiencies affecting vessel operations. The case also signals continued federal scrutiny of safety-management practices, maintenance decisions, and internal communications relating to vessel operations. Companies involved in vessel management

should review reporting procedures, escalation protocols, and documentation practices to ensure that known safety concerns are appropriately disclosed to regulators and other stakeholders when required.

Contact us

Husch Blackwell's Transportation, Logistics, and Maritime team continues to monitor developments arising from the Dali allision and related government investigations in an increasingly complex and evolving regulatory landscape governing vessel operation. We assist clients in identifying applicable requirements, strengthening reporting and compliance frameworks, and mitigating enforcement risks. If you have questions regarding the implications of this matter for vessel operations, regulatory compliance, casualty response, or maritime risk management, please contact Julie Maurer, Benjamin Nashed, Serena Tang, or your Husch Blackwell attorney.