

Oil tanker's owner settle with state

The State of Alaska has reached an agreement with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and Keystone Shipping to enhance transit procedures for tankers carrying crude oil through the Valdez Narrows.

The agreement follows an incident last November when Keystone's tanker, SS Kenai, had a near miss in the Narrows. The SS Kenai ventured well outside of the outbound lane for tankers and ended up in dangerously shallow waters.

A state investigation reported that there was little, if any, verbal communication between the tanker captain, state pilot, and escort vessel captains about correcting the ship's course.

The new agreement establishes guidelines to pinpoint tanker course deviation. It also spells out which boats are responsible for advising the tanker to take action and correct its course.

Keystone and Alyeska will set aside \$250,000 to improve the training capabilities of marine bridge simulators for Prince William Sound. Keystone will now require transit evaluations on board its vessels to ensure that reliable and safe practices are followed consistently.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation will also be reimbursed for the costs of the investigation.