



## St. Simons Sound Incident Response FAQ

### **Q: Who is the official source of information for M/V Golden Ray response operations?**

**A:** The St. Simons Sound Incident Unified Command is the official source of information for the M/V Golden Ray response operations.

### **SALVAGE**

### **Q: Why can't the ship be refloated or removed in one piece?**

**A:** Maritime experts have concluded through a detailed analysis of the vessel's structure and its position on the seafloor, that the vessel, in its current condition, cannot support the stress exerted on the hull and keel during parbuckling operations (righting the vessel). The safest way of removing the vessel for the public, responders, and the environment, is to dismantle the vessel and remove it in pieces.

### **Q: How will the ship be dismantled?**

**A:** Unified Command is developing a plan to fully remove all of the vessel's hull, components, and cargo by dismantling it in place. The plan will focus on ensuring the protection of the public, responders, and the environment. Additional information about the removal plan and the expected timeline will be explained to the public once it is developed and approved by all members of the Unified Command.

### **Q: When will the plan be made available?**

**A:** Removal plans will be explained to the public as they are developed and approved by all members of the Unified Command. As the removal operation progresses, the plan may need to evolve, and the public will be informed of changes.

### **Q: Will cutting up the vessel release further pollution?**

**A:** While there are risks associated with any removal operation, protection of the environment is a top priority for Unified Command. The plans being developed will include measures to mitigate and respond to any potential pollution events.

### **Q: How long will removing the vessel take?**

**A:** Removing a ship of this magnitude is very complex with many variables that can affect the overall duration of operations. At this point it's impossible to give an exact date of completion, but this will be a long-term operation lasting many months, possibly more than a year.

### **Q: Why is rock being placed around the M/V Golden Ray?**

**A:** Unified Command response crews will strategically place rocks next to the hull of the M/V Golden Ray in order to minimize erosion caused by strong tidal currents in the sound. These currents have been eroding sediment underneath the bow and stern of the M/V Golden Ray causing stress to the center of the vessel. The purpose of the rock is to reduce further erosion and stress on the hull.

**Q: Is there a possibility the M/V Golden Ray will break into pieces?**

**A:** The vessel's structure is showing signs of deterioration; however, marine engineers believe that the possibility of the vessel breaking into pieces is remote. Stress on the ship could cause structural failures as the center of the hull slowly flexes upward due to sediment erosion underneath the bow and stern. This constant stress on the hull will eventually cause welds to separate, along with cracking, bending and buckling as the vessel settles on the seafloor. UC personnel continually monitor the vessel to track and respond to changes as the vessel settles.

**Q: If the M/V Golden Ray suffers a structural failure, will the vessel release any further pollutants?**

**A:** While a potential structural failure could result in a pollution event, protection of the environment is a top priority for Unified Command. Contingency plans have been developed to mitigate and respond to any potential discharges.

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Q: Is the water quality being tested to identify any contaminants from the M/V Golden Ray?**

**A:** The Unified Command in conjunction with Georgia Environmental Protection Division is collecting water samples at 22 locations. The samples are analyzed and validated by accredited third-party analytical labs for independent analysis. These results are shared between Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the Department of Public Health. For information on current health advisories please visit the [Coastal Health District](#) website.

**Q: Is the air quality being tested to identify any contaminants from the M/V Golden Ray?**

**A:** Air quality is monitored continuously in and around the vessel for the safety of responders and the public. Mobile testing is also being conducted in surrounding communities. None of the areas tested have indicated any public health concerns. For more information on air monitoring please visit <https://ssi.gallagherresponse.com/public-safety-2/>

**Q: Are there hazards to public health?**

**A:** The [Coastal Health District](#) is responsible for alerting the public if there is a health hazard. For public health questions regarding the M/V Golden Ray incident, please contact the [Coastal Health District](#) information line at 1-844-863-0325.

**FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**Q: Can I eat fish from the area?**

**A:** The Georgia Department of Public Health Coastal Health District is urging the recreational and commercial fishing industry to exercise caution and be mindful of the potential for oil to be in the area. For more information on fisheries advisories please visit the [Coastal Health District](#) website. Report any impacted fisheries to DNR at 1-912-264-7218.

**Q: Have there been impacts to birds/wildlife?**

**A:** Wildlife surveys for birds, marine mammals, and turtles are performed twice weekly by the Georgia DNR, and members of the Unified Command are addressing every report of oiled wildlife. Some oiling has been observed in the area. The Unified Command has permitted wildlife rehabilitation specialists to respond to reports of impacted wildlife. Report any impacted wildlife to 1-800-261-0980.

**Q: What is boom?**

**A:** Boom is floating, physical barriers used to contain oil spills or protect sensitive locations such as wildlife habitats and marinas. Boom floats on the surface of the water, but parts extend above and below it to control the movement of floating oil.

**Q: What is the safety zone around the M/V Golden Ray?**

**A:** A 150-yard safety zone has been established around the M/V Golden Ray to ensure the safety of boaters and responders. No one is authorized to enter the safety zone without the approval of the U.S. Coast Guard or Unified Command response vessels on scene.

**Q: Are there no-wake zones (NWZ)?**

**A:** Under Georgia's 100-foot law, mariners are required to operate at idle speeds in the vicinity of any salvage, dive, shoreline, and booming operations. A boat's wake can push the boom onto the marsh, damaging the marsh and potentially allowing pollution to impact the area. Georgia's 100-foot law prohibits people from operating any vessel at a speed greater than idle speed within 100 feet of any vessel which is moored, anchored or adrift outside normal traffic channels, or within 100 feet of any wharf, dock, pier, piling, bridge structure or abutment, person in the water, or shoreline of any residence or public use area.

**Q: What if my boat is oiled?**

**A:** The public can file a claim through the official claims number at 1-888-850-8486.

**Q: How can I file a claim?**

**A:** To file a claim, the public should call the official claims number at 1-888-850-8486.

**Q: What should I do if I see oil or pollution?**

**A:** Report any sightings of oil to the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802

[www.ssiresponse.com](http://www.ssiresponse.com)

Revised 11/04/2019