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New Employee Training at the Port of Everett Helps Prevent Human Trafficking

Everett, Wash. – The Port of Everett announces a new partnership with the Seattle-based nonprofit organization, Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST), to provide employees at the Port of Everett with an important new human trafficking awareness training, Ports to Freedom.

This new training program, specifically designed and delivered to the maritime industry, helps ports educate their employees to support the prevention and identification of human trafficking in the industry. The Port of Everett is the second Washington state port to join in this new nationwide training effort, that also includes the Port of Seattle.

“While I’m happy to report we haven’t had a specific incident here in Everett that led us to implement this new training program, we recognize that identification and prevention is a collective effort,” Port of Everett CEO, Lisa Lefeber said. “As an active seaport that serves a critical link in our regional, national and global transportation networks, it’s important to do what we can to support these crucial efforts underway to end human trafficking in the maritime industry.”

Seaports can be a key location for identifying people who are victims of human trafficking, so it is essential that employees working at ports are properly trained in what to watch for. *Ports to Freedom* will educate Port of Everett employees about how human trafficking can be a problem in the maritime industry, and the training will help employees learn how to spot the behaviors that are indicators of human trafficking and how to safely report it.

Victims of human trafficking can include children and adults who are subjected to sexual exploitation or forced labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

According to BEST, labor traffickers can more easily operate at sea when ships fly flags of convenience, allowing them to operate under the rules of a country with lenient labor laws. When human trafficking victims are stuck on maritime vessels, they can be forced to work long hours, compelled to extend their contracts, be paid less than they agreed to work for, or their wages can be withheld entirely. Often, the only opportunity these victims have to seek help is when a ship is docked at port.

Sex trafficking can also take place at port facilities or onboard ships when sailors participate in commercial sexual exploitation, either while ships are at dock, or at sea.

Both forms of human trafficking—labor trafficking and sex trafficking—can be thwarted when seaport employees are properly trained and know how to spot the warning signs of human trafficking.

BEST's new training, *Ports to Freedom*, was created specifically for employees at seaports. BEST hosted several focus groups with human trafficking experts, survivor experts, and key leaders in the maritime industry and law enforcement, in order to collect feedback to make sure the training is survivor-informed and includes the most current reporting protocols to follow, should an employee witness a human trafficking situation.

"Maritime employees are in a unique position to help people who are forced or coerced to work against their will," explains Mar Brettmann, CEO of BEST. "*Ports to Freedom* can help employees become advocates for victims when they are trained to know how to spot a potential trafficking situation. This can allow more exploited people the chance to escape their traffickers and rebuild their lives."

The Port of Everett is providing this training because it supports the human trafficking prevention efforts of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The DOT recently launched a national [pledge](#) program against human trafficking, asking transportation leaders to commit to helping end human trafficking. Signing the pledge includes committing to train employees to recognize and report the signs of human trafficking. So far, more than 200 transportation groups—including seaports—have joined the DOT's pledge. In January 2020, DHS released a new [report](#) outlining their commitment to ending human trafficking. This report summarized their priorities for the next five years, including plans for prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. *Ports to Freedom* is helping seaport facilities align their workforce with these anti-trafficking priorities.

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About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization with the mission to align and equip leaders to use the power of business to prevent human trafficking. BEST is the first organization in the country dedicated entirely to working with employers to disrupt human trafficking. BEST has provided consultation and training to thousands of employers on how to prevent human trafficking. For more information about BEST visit www.bestalliance.org. For more information about using *Ports of Freedom*, visit www.bestalliance.org/maritime.html

About the Port of Everett Seaport

The Port of Everett Seaport, located 25 miles north of Seattle, is a natural deep-water, self-operating seaport that supports nearly **\$21 BILLION** worth of U.S. exports annually, ranking as the #2 export customs district in Washington state – #5 on the U.S West Coast. The Port of Everett is the third largest container port in Washington state and is the region's premiere breakbulk cargo facility, handling high-value, conventional and overdimensional cargoes in support of the aerospace, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and forest products industries. Most notably, the Port of Everett serves as an extension of the aerospace manufacturing process, accommodating 100-percent of the oversized aerospace parts for the 747, 767, 777, 777X and K-C Tanker programs. The Port of Everett's regional transportation network supports more than 40,000 jobs and \$433 million in state and local tax revenue. With more than 60 percent of jobs tied to trade in Snohomish County, the Port of Everett continuously looks for ways to expand cargo handling capabilities and keep freight moving efficiently.