

## Lightering operation will be required to refloat Ever Forward

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The US Coast Guard has admitted that, after two failed attempts to shift the **Ever Forward** (IMO 9850551) from its grounding position on the sea floor in Chesapeake Bay off Baltimore, Maryland, the best strategy would now be a lightering operation. The USCG warned that any refloating of the 12,118 teu ship could take a further two weeks after everything was in place, although even that extended timeline could be impacted by weather conditions and other variables.

The USCG said on Twitter that “refloat attempts to resume next week following additional dredging to depth of 43 feet. A 500-yard safety zone, around-the-clock monitoring for potential pollution and stability checks on-going.”

Containers will now be removed as soon as the installation of two crane barges, with suitable lift heights to remove containers, is completed.

The 334-metre containership has been stationary since March 13th, with dredgers digging out around the vessel. Last week groups of tugboats were twice unsuccessful in trying to dislodge the vessel from the mud. The first attempt consisted of five vessels and the second attempt consisted of seven. “Salvage experts determined they would not be able to overcome the ground force of the Ever Forward in its current loaded condition. The new strategy offers the best chance of successfully refloating the Ever Forward.” the USCG said. It was noted as soon as the first tide went out that the Ever Forward had grounded very high, meaning that the final option of lightering was always considered a real possibility.

Boxes will be removed from both the port and starboard sides of the Ever Forward and placed on barges, on which they will be shuttled back to and offloaded at their original onboarding facility, Seagrit Marine Terminal in

Baltimore. For safety reasons lifting work will only take place during daylight hours.

The USCG said that the vessel was carrying 4,964 containers of general dry goods. Once the containers are removed, another refloat attempt will occur using tugs and pull barges.

The Coast Guard said the response team continues to monitor the vessel for signs of pollution. "In addition to regular soundings of fuel and ballast tanks, a naval architect and salvage master are remotely monitoring a recently installed sensor system to constantly evaluate the ship's stability and integrity and will continue to do so throughout the refloat operation. They will also continue to conduct regular visits to the ship."

A 500-yard safety zone around the ship will continue for the duration of the operation, and the adjacent shipping channel will remain unaffected, the USCG said.

The shipping channel will remain open to one way traffic during these operations.

The vessel's draft was 13 metres at the time of the grounding whereas the depth of water at the location of the grounding is reported to be only approximately 7.5 metres.

Evergreen Marine Corp declared general average late last week. 2020-built, Hong Kong-flagged, 117,340 gt Ever Forward is owned and managed by Evergreen Marine Corporation of Taoyuan City, China. It is entered with Gard P&I on behalf of Evergreen Marine (HK) Ltd.