

Ever Forward owner queries \$100m demand from State of Maryland

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Taiwan-based Evergreen Marine, the owner and operator of container ship **Ever Forward** (IMO 9850551), has questioned the immediate \$100m goodwill deposit requested by the US state of Maryland as part of what would eventually be a compensation package paid to local stakeholders as a result of the month-long grounding of the vessel in Chesapeake Bay off the Maryland city of Baltimore.

Evergreen has asked whether the ship had really caused tens of millions of dollars of damage to the local environment. A couple of weeks ago the State of Maryland asked Evergreen to establish a so-called “responsibility fund” to the sum of \$100m to pay for costs related to the month-long grounding.

Evergreen noted that the ship was refloated without any damage or oil leak, while the US Coast Guard also emphasized its vigilance in monitoring the vessel. Even Maryland’s Department of the Environment has reported it was prepared to remove grey water from the vessel to prevent environmental contamination during the grounding.

Evergreen said the concerns raised by the comptroller had been avoided by successfully refloating the ship and denying any environmental damage.

In a letter sent earlier this month to Benjamin Tsai, president of Evergreen Shipping Agency (America) Corporation, Maryland comptroller Peter Franchot asked the company to set up a \$100m fund to cover the environment-related costs, as well as economic costs, in particular for the seafood industry.

Evergreen said that “We will be fully cooperating with the investigation into what caused this incident. After this investigation has been completed, a more decisive view on accountability will be available”.

Meanwhile 40 days after she departed, Ever Forward has returned to the Seagirt Marine Terminal in Baltimore to recommence its long-delayed voyage. First it had to reload the containers lightered from the vessel so that it could be refloated. After

reloading the containers, the vessel began to make its way back along the Chesapeake Bay toward Norfolk, Virginia, before heading for its final US leg of the voyage, New York.

During the lightering operation some 500 containers in total were removed both from the port and starboard side stacks to maintain balance and an even keel to assist the refloating effort.

The containership got underway after undergoing an inspection earlier in the week during which divers and the US Coast Guard confirmed that it had not suffered any significant damage. It had been at anchor near Annapolis, Maryland since being refloated on April 17th. The vessel was scheduled to call at Norfolk on April 25th and New York on April 28th, before proceeding to the Panama Canal. It is expected to return to China at the end of May and resume its normal rotation.

While the vessel is underway, the investigations will continue. The US Coast Guard is looking at the causes of the grounding. Claims consultant WK Webster reported it had a private investigation underway as it sought to represent clients in the General Average cases that will result. As of April 24th, the vessel was at anchor some 25 miles east of Virginia Beach.

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.

[VIDEO](#)