

Michael K. Bell | Senior Counsel
Maritime

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Michael Bell is a member of our Maritime Emergency Response Team (“MERT”).

Michael Bell concentrates his practice in complex maritime litigation and corporate transactions. He has more than 40 years of experience, both domestically and internationally, counseling shipping companies, oil service companies, major petrochemical producers, refiners, offshore construction companies, and terminal operators in various matters, including:

- Maritime casualties, including ship collisions, sinkings, groundings, explosions, and fires
- Charterparty disputes
- Insurance coverage disputes
- Coastwise trade
- Negotiating and drafting complex maritime agreements, including vessel construction, purchase and sale; time, voyage and bareboat charterparties; towage; contracts of affreightment; bills of lading; master services agreements; general terms and conditions; indemnity and insurance provisions
- General commercial litigation
- Maritime environmental law, including oil spills
- Maritime general average cases
- Maritime piracy cases
- OCSLA transactions, disputes and oilfield contracts

Chambers USA notes that “Clients describe Michael as ‘probably the top maritime lawyer in Houston’” and further notes, “He has significant experience handling

maritime casualties, charterparty disputes and insurance coverage disputes as well as contentious environmental matters.” *Chambers USA* has also noted that “Clients admire that he ‘tends to speak freely and directly’ and that ‘he’s well connected to the industry so gets different perspectives.’”

Michael served as an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard and also served as an attorney for both the Coast Guard and the U.S. Department of Justice.

He also acts as a mediator, an arbitrator, and is a member of the Houston Maritime Arbitration Association.

Admissions

- Maryland
- Texas
- Virginia

Memberships

- American Bar Association
- Inter-Pacific Bar Association
- International Bar Association
- Maritime Law Association of the United States
- Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute
- State Bar of Texas
- Texas Bar Foundation
- Women's International Shipping & Trading Association

Education

- U.S. Coast Guard Academy, BS, with honors
- George Washington University Law School, JD, with honors

Recognitions

- 2024–2025, Product Liability Litigation - Defendants in Houston, listed in *Best Lawyers in America*© (Woodward/White, Inc.)
- 2019–2025, Admiralty and Maritime Law in Houston, listed in *Best Lawyers in America*© (Woodward/White, Inc.)
- 2016–2024, Transportation: Shipping/Maritime: Litigation Law – Band 1, listed in *Chambers USA*
- 2017–2022, listed in *The Legal 500 United States*
- 2023–2025, Thought Leader: USA in Shipping, listed in *Lexology Index* (formerly *Who's Who Legal*)
- 2019–2023, Global Leader in Shipping, listed in *Who's Who Legal*
- 2009–2010, 2017–2018, listed in *Who's Who Legal – Shipping* (Law Business Research Ltd.)

- 2008, Texas – Shipping and Maritime Law, listed in *Who's Who Legal* (Law Business Research Ltd.)

Professional Activities

Michael serves on planning committees for several maritime law organizations. He is a member of the Board of the Houston Marine Insurance Seminar and the Houston Maritime Association. He is also a former member of the U.S. Coast Guard's Navigation Safety Advisory Council. He has served as a Board member of the Maritime Law Association of the U. S. and as a Board member of the U. S. Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association.

Michael frequently speaks at continuing legal education program for the Texas Bar.