

ILTA

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ASSOCIATION

60 Seconds with... **The ILTA Leadership Team**

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Leakhena Swett

President

STM: What are the key highlights of this year's event that you believe attendees should not miss and are there any new initiatives or innovative features at this year's event that you're particularly excited about?

LS: This year's event is truly one to remember. Our team has worked hard to make it an inspiring experience with valuable insights and actionable takeaways. We're especially excited about our keynote speakers, Carly Fiorina and Admiral Stavridis, who will deliver impactful talks.

One highlight is the Industry Summit at the GRB on June 11, which brings local colleges and trade schools together to introduce students to the liquid terminal industry. Another item of note is the expanded Women in Terminals networking event, featuring a panel of professionals sharing their unique perspectives. There's so much to look forward to and attending ILTA 2025 is the best way to see it firsthand!

STM: What challenges have you faced as President and how have you overcome them?

LS: My first year as President of the International Liquid Terminals Association was filled with opportunities to drive meaningful progress. Early on, we undertook a significant project—a complete rebuilding and relocation of ILTA's headquarters to the heart of Washington, DC. One of my key priorities was navigating an increasingly complex regulatory landscape while ensuring our members stayed informed and prepared to adapt.

Equally important was fostering stronger industry collaboration, focusing on enhanced communication and innovation. By actively engaging with our members, building strategic partnerships, and prioritizing transparency, I have worked to address these challenges and lay the groundwork for sustained growth and future success.

STM: How has ILTA worked to foster community engagement and collaboration among attendees this year?

LS: ILTA has focused on fostering community engagement by creating opportunities for natural connections. We've added networking spaces with seating and tables at events and introduced badge ribbons highlighting areas like Health & Safety, Security, and Environment to help attendees connect with peers and explore new perspectives. Moderators are also paired with speakers to enhance collaboration. Additionally, we've brought in a consultant to survey attendees for feedback, ensuring we keep improving for ILTA 2026 and beyond.

STM: What are your goals for ILTA in the coming years, and how do you see the organization evolving?

LS: In summer 2024, the ILTA team and Board of Directors came together to map out a plan for the next 3-5 years. Our goal? Staying relevant and delivering real value to our members. We're focusing on building stronger government connections, growing our global presence, and ensuring we're listening to what our members need. This year, our focus is on key initiatives such as launching certification programs, amplifying our presence on Capitol Hill, and collaborating closely with our members to maximize their value. Our goal is to remain agile and responsive, addressing the evolving needs of our industry with purpose and precision.

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STM: How has your experience as President changed your perspective on the tank storage community?

LS: I started my journey with ILTA back in 2019, focusing on membership and getting fully immersed in the Tank Storage community. As I enter my second year as President, I'm constantly inspired by this industry's incredible support and camaraderie. Our ILTA events bring together professionals from various companies and backgrounds, creating a space where transparency and collaboration thrive. People openly share their knowledge, offer support, and work toward a shared goal of improving safety and driving professional growth across the industry.

STM: Can you share insights on the keynote speakers and what topics they will cover that are particularly relevant to the sector?

LS: Carly Fiorina became CEO of Hewlett-Packard during the technology industry's worst downturn in 25 years. Tasked with transforming the company, she led with vision, inspiring others to embrace change. Through bold decisions, including acquiring Compaq Computer Corporation, she doubled revenues, achieved record innovation, and set the foundation for HP to become the first \$100B tech company. Drawing from her leadership at HP, AT&T, and Lucent Technologies, Fiorina offered her insights on how leaders and



organizations can adapt to change, challenge conventional wisdom, and shape the future.

Named "The Most Powerful Woman in Business" by FORTUNE magazine and the first female CEO of a Fortune 20 company, Fiorina's best-selling memoir, *Tough Choices*, has been translated into 12 languages. In 2015, she ran for the Republican presidential nomination, advocating citizen government.

This fireside chat discussion will cover navigating change, driving innovation, and aligning teams with business goals in complex industries like terminal operations. Topics include large-scale transformation, balancing innovation with operational precision, inclusive leadership, fostering diversity, and maintaining motivation under pressure. It also explores resilience, decision-making, and practical strategies for future leadership and transformation.

Adm. James Stavridis, USN (Ret.), renowned for his distinguished leadership and strategic expertise, brings unparalleled insights to his speaking events. With a career spanning 37 years in the Navy, including his role as the 16th Supreme Allied Commander at

NATO, Adm. Stavridis offers a unique perspective on global security, diplomacy, and leadership in a rapidly transforming world. Drawing on his experience overseeing pivotal operations in regions like Afghanistan, Libya, and Latin America, as well as his tenure as Dean of The Fletcher School at Tufts University, he delivers thought-provoking discussions on history, strategy, and current events. From analyzing historical precedents to addressing the role of soft power and the influence of nations on global affairs, Adm. Stavridis engages audiences with timely insights and compelling narratives.

STM: What advice would you give to first-time attendees to make the most out of their experience at the event?

LS: Explore the ILTA 2025 webpage and download the app to plan your schedule. Prioritize key sessions and speakers, and don't miss networking opportunities—introduce yourself, exchange contacts, and build connections. Stay curious, take notes, and make the most of the event. The ILTA team is always here to help if you have questions or need further assistance!



Loren Eisenlohr

Senior Director of Brand and Member Strategy

STM: How does the ILTA prioritize member engagement, and what strategies have you found most effective in fostering strong relationships with members?

LE: Member engagement is the cornerstone of ILTA's success and long-term growth. As the industry continues to evolve—alongside the ways professionals connect and collaborate—we remain committed to developing new and meaningful methods of engagement. These include member-focused resources, surveys, webinars, educational sessions, and a variety of networking opportunities, from large-scale events to smaller, more targeted gatherings focused on specific roles or disciplines, such as EGHSS.

Our recent terminal member survey reaffirmed that networking is among the most highly valued benefits of ILTA membership. What truly sets ILTA apart is our ability to foster a sense of community where members feel heard, supported, and connected. By prioritizing open communication and responsive programming, we strive to build strong, lasting relationships that reflect the needs and priorities of our members.

STM: How has the shift to digital marketing influenced your approach to reaching and engaging with members and potential members?

LE: The rise of digital marketing has undoubtedly expanded our ability to reach and engage with a broader audience. Through digital advertising, social media, and email marketing, we're able to deliver timely, consistent messaging that increases our visibility and reinforces ILTA's brand across a much wider network than ever before.

That said, our members—like many in the industry—continue to place high value on tangible, traditional marketing tools. Printed materials such as direct mailers,

industry publications like Storage Terminals Magazine, and ILTA's annual Membership Directory remain important touchpoints. These formats offer a sense of permanence and focus that can sometimes be lost in the digital space.

We've found that a balanced marketing strategy—one that embraces the efficiency and reach of digital while honoring the impact and credibility of print—best serves our diverse and engaged membership. Digital marketing keeps us relevant, while traditional marketing keeps us grounded.

STM: What are some of the biggest challenges you face in marketing and member relations within the liquid terminal sector, and how do you address them?

LE: One of our greatest challenges—and opportunities—lies in balancing the preferences of a deeply rooted, tradition-valuing community with the need to engage a younger generation that favors faster, digital-first interactions. Traditional marketing remains highly effective with our core audience, but it's often more time-consuming and resource-intensive to execute. Meanwhile, digital marketing tends to resonate more with younger professionals, a demographic the industry is actively working to attract and retain.

In many ways, the challenges I face in marketing and member relations mirror the broader challenges facing the liquid terminal industry itself: how to evolve while honoring the foundation that brought us here. Success often comes down to identifying the right call to action—the message or moment that resonates and prompts someone to take that first step. Once engaged, members tend to see the value quickly. The key is finding that initial touchpoint that sparks interest, generates excitement, and opens the door to long-term connection.

STM: How does ILTA gather feedback from its members, and how is that feedback used to improve services and marketing efforts?

LE: At ILTA, we are always open to feedback—whether it comes through a phone call, an email, or a conversation at an

event. We genuinely value member input, both positive and constructive, and see it as essential to our continuous improvement.

This year, one of our most significant initiatives was a comprehensive terminal member survey. The goal was to assess member sentiment, identify which ILTA resources and services are most valued, and evaluate satisfaction levels across various offerings. The results were both affirming and enlightening. They validated many of our assumptions, while also revealing new opportunities to enhance our value proposition and better serve our members.

Importantly, the survey also highlighted the need to engage a broader cross-section of employees—from operations to government affairs to human resources—within our member companies. The insights gained are actively shaping our strategy, helping us tailor services, improve communication, and refine our marketing efforts to meet members where they are and provide greater value across the board.

STM: What key performance indicators (KPIs) do you use to measure the success of your marketing initiatives?

LE: Marketing analytics tell a story—one grounded in data that helps shape and refine our strategy. On a daily basis, I monitor key email performance metrics such as open rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates to better understand what drives members to engage. Is it the subject line? The timing? A compelling graphic or call to action? These insights help us continually improve our outreach.

Social media is another critical component, particularly LinkedIn, which consistently delivers the highest engagement for ILTA. I closely track post performance—likes, reactions, comments, shares—to determine what content resonates. Unsurprisingly, it's often the "people posts" that generate the most interaction, reinforcing the value of community storytelling.

Beyond traditional marketing KPIs, I also review core member engagement metrics, including:

- New member acquisition and renewal rates

- Event participation and registration trends
- Member involvement in webinars, surveys, and networking opportunities

All of these data points form a larger picture. When we see alignment between marketing efforts and member activity—when that synergy happens—that's when we know we're achieving meaningful, comprehensive success.

STM: Can you elaborate on any educational programs or resources ILTA provides to its members to enhance their knowledge and skills?

LE: ILTA is proud to offer a wide range of educational programs designed to support professional growth and knowledge-sharing across the terminal industry. Our most comprehensive offering is the annual ILTA Conference program, developed each year by our member-led Professional Development Committee in collaboration with industry consultants. The conference features four dedicated tracks, each aligned with key focus areas in the sector:

- **Leadership** – Examines workforce trends, diversity and inclusion, professional development, and strategic planning for industry leaders.
- **Health, Safety & Security** – Covers critical topics such as process safety management, facility security, emergency response, and incident prevention.
- **Environment** – Focuses on emissions reduction, environmental compliance, remediation, and sustainability initiatives.
- **Operations & Engineering** – Highlights advancements in inspection, automation, maintenance practices, and asset integrity.

We are intentional in delivering programming that is timely, practical, and directly applicable—recognizing that our members count on us to provide high-value, thought-provoking content that meets rising expectations and real-world needs. In addition to the conference, ILTA offers several other key educational opportunities throughout the year:

- **EGHSS Committee Meetings** – Tailored for environment, government, health &

safety, and security professionals, these meetings address the most pressing topics in their disciplines.

- **TOPS (Terminal Operator Practices Symposium)** – A highly valued, confidential forum where terminal operators engage in candid discussions about safety and operational challenges, working together to share solutions and best practices.
- **Subcommittee Collaboration** – Members in specific roles connect regularly for peer-to-peer learning and issue-based dialogue, fostering consistent, year-round knowledge exchange.
- **Membership Webinars and Calls** – ILTA hosts virtual sessions featuring expert speakers and consultants who address timely issues, regulatory updates, and emerging trends.

These offerings reflect our commitment to helping members enhance their expertise, stay current with industry developments, and build strong professional networks.

STM: What role do events and networking play in your marketing strategy, and how do you ensure they align with members' needs?

LE: Events are at the heart of ILTA's marketing strategy. By nature, they are a form of experiential marketing—an approach that creates lasting impressions by engaging people on a deeper, more emotional level. Attendees may forget an email or ad, but they rarely forget a meaningful conversation, a hands-on experience at the trade show, or the connection made while waiting in line. These shared moments are what foster community, spark ongoing engagement, and inspire members to return year after year.

Because events play such a vital role, we treat them as a living, evolving part of our strategy. We gather detailed feedback from participants, track sentiment over time, and adapt based on what our members tell us they value most. At the same time, we proactively scan trends across other industries to stay informed on the latest innovations in event design, technology, and user experience.

We rely on input from a wide range of stakeholders—our Board of Directors, consultants, vendors, members, and suppliers—to collectively evaluate how we can raise the bar. Ultimately, our goal is to create purposeful, high-impact experiences that reflect the evolving needs of the terminal industry while deepening the value of ILTA membership.

STM: What is your vision for the future of ILTA, and how do you see marketing and member relations evolving in the next few years?

LE: ILTA is poised for continued growth, and with that growth comes renewed purpose and opportunity. Our role in advocating for the industry in Washington, DC, delivering high-value educational programming, and amplifying the story of what the terminal industry is—and just as importantly, what it is not—will remain central to our mission. As collaboration, regulatory compliance, and knowledge sharing become even more critical, ILTA will be there to support our members every step of the way.

Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome more members from across the U.S. and around the world, while deepening our partnerships with the industry suppliers that help drive innovation and efficiency throughout the sector. Growth also allows us to reframe and strengthen how we communicate the importance of liquid terminals in the broader energy and supply chain conversation—especially in times when public discourse may not fully reflect the value and necessity of this industry.

On a more tactical level, marketing and member relations will continue to evolve through more personalized, tech-enabled, and community-driven engagement. Later this year, we'll begin development on a new, more interactive ILTA website and mobile app, aimed at making it easier for members to access resources, connect with peers, and stay informed in real time.

The momentum is strong, and the opportunities ahead are significant. We're committed to building on that energy and ensuring ILTA remains a vital and valued force for the terminal industry's future.



Meredith DeZemler

Senior Director of Events and Trade Show

STM: What inspired you to pursue a career in event management and partnership development?

MD: I've always been a very organized and detail-oriented person, and event planning naturally aligns with those strengths. What truly inspires me is seeing a project go from just an idea to full execution—there's something incredibly rewarding about watching all the moving parts come together to create a successful experience. I also love that this career allows me to interact with a wide range of people, from vendors to clients to attendees. Building relationships and making meaningful connections is one of the most fulfilling aspects of the job for me.

STM: What trends are you currently seeing in the events industry?

MD: One trend I'm seeing is a stronger focus on quality over quantity—trade shows in the liquid terminal industry are becoming more targeted, attracting the right audience rather than just a large crowd. There's also more emphasis on hands-on learning and technical education, with sessions and demos that offer real value. Another big trend is stronger partnerships—companies are using these shows not just for exposure, but to build long-term relationships and stay ahead on safety, sustainability, and technology. It's all about making deeper, more meaningful connections that help the industry move forward.

STM: How do you incorporate feedback from past events into future planning?

MD: We take feedback seriously and use it as a key tool for continuous improvement. After each event, we send out a post-event survey to attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors. We carefully review that data to understand what worked well and where we can improve. In addition, we have an Exhibitor Council for our conference and trade show. This group provides valuable insights and guidance from an industry perspective, which helps us make meaningful enhancements that directly reflect the needs and expectations of our audience. Combining survey data with direct input from our stakeholders allows us to deliver a better experience year after year.

STM: How do you see the role of associations like ILTA evolving in the next decade?

MD: I think associations like ILTA will become even more important in the years ahead. As the liquid terminal industry deals with new

regulations, technology changes, and a growing focus on safety and sustainability, members will really rely on ILTA for guidance and support. I see ILTA offering more hands-on education, helping companies stay ahead of industry changes, and being a strong voice for the industry in Washington. Events like the trade show will keep growing in value—not just for networking, but for sharing new ideas and practical solutions. ILTA's role in connecting people and helping them learn from each other will be key to keeping the industry moving forward.

STM: What has been your proudest achievement in your career so far?

MD: One of the proudest moments in my career was having former President George W. Bush speak at our show last year. It was a major milestone—not just because of the caliber of the speaker, but because of the level of planning, coordination, and security that went into making it happen. The



logistics were intense, and our team had to be incredibly detailed, prepared, and aligned every step of the way. Seeing it all come together so smoothly was an unforgettable experience and something I'll always cherish. It really reinforced what can be accomplished when a team is focused and committed.

STM: What is your approach to building and maintaining relationships with partners?

MD: My approach is rooted in consistent communication, active listening, and mutual respect. I believe strong relationships start with networking and making genuine connections, but they're maintained by regularly checking in and staying engaged—not just when something is needed. I also make it a priority to understand my partners' goals and challenges by being open-minded and considering their perspectives. That way, we can find solutions that work for both sides and build long-term trust. To me, it's about being a reliable, collaborative partner who adds value beyond the immediate transaction.

STM: What advice do you have for someone looking to advance in the events industry?

MD: I'd say the most important thing is to be detail-focused and never treat any task as too small. In events, every piece matters—from the big picture to the smallest detail—and showing you can handle all aspects well builds trust and credibility. At the same time, for career growth, it's key to stay curious and keep learning—whether that's new technology, industry trends, or leadership skills. Building strong relationships and being open to feedback also helps you grow. Ultimately, combining a strong work ethic with continuous learning and networking will open doors and create opportunities for advancement.



STM: What final thoughts would you like to share with our audience about your work and the industry?

MD: I'm truly passionate about the events industry because it's all about bringing people together to share ideas, build relationships, and create meaningful experiences. In our space, especially within the liquid terminal sector, events are more than just gatherings—they're opportunities to drive innovation, improve safety, and strengthen the community. I'm lucky to work with an amazing team who works

incredibly hard but also knows how to have a great time together. I think that energy and camaraderie really shine through in our events and make a positive difference. My focus is on making sure every detail supports our goals, and I'm excited to see how the industry continues to evolve with new technology and stronger collaboration. At the end of the day, it's about connecting people and helping the industry grow—something I'm proud to be a part of.



Jay Cruz

Senior Director of Government Affairs

STM: Can you share your primary focus as the Senior Director of Government Affairs at ILTA?

JC: My primary focus is making sure our nation's elected officials and agency leads in Washington DC are aware of the critical role bulk liquid storage plays in our day-to-day lives. As the global economy and energy network become ever-more complicated, we cannot expect officials to be experts in all aspects of commerce. As the advocacy lead for ILTA, my role is to inform federal legislation and policymaking, foster public-private partnerships, and ensure the tens of thousands of workers in the terminals sector have their voices heard.

STM: What are the most pressing issues currently facing the tank storage industry from a government perspective?

JC: Currently, the industry is facing two major challenges to their operations: adapting to handle the new forms of bulk liquid energy that are taking up a larger share of the market and how facilities prepare to handle would-be fires.

On the former, within the wider energy evolution, renewable, low-carbon forms of energy are becoming more prevalent. Products like liquid hydrogen and biofuels like ethanol or sustainable aviation fuels are becoming increasingly used to power our nation. As such, terminals are having to adapt to the market's needs, expanding their facilities and developing new storage capabilities to house these goods. This takes time, investment, and routine communication from our federal partners to make sure that the bulk



liquid sector is ready to handle the growing demand for storage.

For the latter, terminals have historically relied on aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF), a PFAS-based variety of firefighting foam, to combat any fires at their facilities. With the emergence of public health research on the effects of PFAS, the sector has been actively moving away from AFFF usage. Finding a meaningful replacement, though, will take time, as producers need to supply enough non-PFAS product to all terminals, military installations, firefighting stations, and beyond. Likewise, terminals will need to refit their foam storage and dispersal systems to use the new product, all the while finding a proper, government-approved disposal method of their current AFFF stock.

STM: How has ILTA worked to foster community engagement and collaboration among attendees this year?

JC: ILTA has focused on fostering community engagement by creating opportunities for natural connections. We've added networking spaces with seating and tables at events and introduced badge ribbons highlighting areas like Health & Safety, Security, and Environment to help attendees connect with peers and explore new perspectives.

STM: How does ILTA advocate for its members on legislative matters?

JC: Since taking over ILTA's advocacy at the start of 2024, it has been my mission to expand ILTA's advocacy presence on Capitol Hill. We are actively working to secure federal liability protections for our members—through legislation that would shield them from CERCLA liability related to PFAS remediation—as well as to achieve a straightforward, long-term reauthorization of the CFATS program. In doing so, ILTA has looked to our membership to strengthen our

advocacy efforts. We founded a Government Affairs Subcommittee in the middle of last year to leverage the in-house advocacy expertise of our members and bolster our footprint in Washington, DC. At the same time, the ILTA PAC is growing with the support of our terminal members, which we use to support champions of the bulk liquid sector currently serving in Congress.

STM: What recent policy changes have had the most significant impact on the industry?

JC: I believe that the second Trump administration's deregulatory and government-downsizing approach has had—and will continue to have—a profound impact on the industry. We've already seen the EPA begin to reevaluate how PFAS chemicals are classified under CERCLA, which will again affect how terminals prepare for firefighting. Similarly, several major regulations from the previous administration, such as the Gasoline Distribution rule and the NSPS Subpart Kc final rule, are being revisited. These are welcome developments, but regulatory certainty remains paramount to ensuring the safe, uninterrupted flow of liquid products across the country.

STM: In your view, what role does communication play in bridging the gap between the industry and government?

JC: Communication is nothing short of vital. Given the sector's role in our bulk liquid ecosystem and the wide variety of products it handles, having routine and ready communication with government partners is necessary to ensure the nation's energy needs are met. Public-private forums like the Oil & Natural Gas Sector Coordinating Council (ONGSCC) and the Chemical Sector Coordinating Council (CNCC) are incredibly beneficial in strengthening

the country's energy network.

STM: What advice would you give to companies looking to engage more effectively with government stakeholders?

JC: Simply reach out! I have found that partners across all agencies and levels of government want to help where they can. Explaining the critical role of terminals within the wider liquid supply chain and offering yourself as a point of contact for governmental partners is the easiest way to either avert or remedy a major issue that could arise.

STM: How do you see the future of the tank storage industry evolving in relation to regulatory changes?

JC: I believe we will continue to see terminal companies adapting to the increasingly diverse and complex landscape of state regulations. Federal regulations come and go with every new presidential administration, both in terms of regulatory burden and frequency,

but with the increasing partisanship in Congress and the Executive Branch, state governments are looking to fill the regulatory gap that federal agencies would normally provide. As such, terminal companies will need to balance the competing requirements of 50 governments on top of federal regulations, further complicating their already difficult operations.

STM: What is one common misconception about government affairs in our industry that you would like to address?

JC: I would like to shift the perspective, both within the industry and outside of it, that the terminals sector only raises its voice in reaction to a policy or law that it does not like. ILTA, as the trade association representing the sector, wants to be proactive in meeting with officials, educating Hill offices and regulators on issues, and driving policy development in a forward-thinking manner.



