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Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



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PORT OF BOSTON BULLETIN

Nationwide Differential Global Positioning System Site Closures

As part of a larger system reduction, the Coast Guard will shut down 9 Nationwide Differential Global Positioning System (NDGPS) sites on August 5th, 2016.

The Coast Guard will close the Brunswick, Maine NDGPS site on August 5th, 2016.

The NDGPS transmissions will continue from the 39 Coast Guard and 7 Army Corps of Engineers sites that will remain open. The remaining Coast Guard system will provide single-site NDGPS coverage for port and harbor approaches in all areas currently covered by single or multiple-site coverage.

The details and rationale of the reduction are discussed in the Federal Register Notice, which can be found linked on the NAVCEN webpage and at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/07/05/2016-15886/nationwide-differential-global-positioning-system-ndgps>

Questions/Answers:

Q1. How many maritime sites will be closed, when will they be closed and where are they located?

R1. The 9 Coast Guard sites that will be closed on August 5th, 2016, are in Cold Bay, Alaska; Lompoc, California; Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin; Pickford, Michigan; Saginaw Bay, Michigan; Brunswick, Maine; Elgin, Florida; Key West, Florida; and Isabela, Puerto Rico.

Q2. Did stakeholders have a chance to comment on the closures?

R2. The Coast Guard posted Federal Register Notices in April 2013 and August 2015. In 2015, we accepted comments through mid-November. We took these comments into consideration when deciding which sites to close. The Coast Guard posted another Federal Register Notice in June 2016 announcing its decision.

Q3. Did stakeholder input change your initial proposal?

R3. Based on the 2015 Federal Register comments, the Coast Guard decided to retain all but nine of its existing sites and will only close sites where another site already provides coverage or where no maritime users expressed a need to keep the site open. With the exception of Isabela, Puerto Rico and Cold Bay, Alaska, where the Coast Guard will no longer provide NDGPS coverage, the remaining Coast Guard system will provide single-site NDGPS coverage for port and harbor approaches in all areas currently covered by single or multiple-site coverage.

Q4. Why won't Puerto Rico and Cold Bay, Alaska, retain single-site NDGPS coverage?

R4. Due to the lack of expressed maritime user interest in the NDGPS sites in Puerto Rico and Cold Bay, Alaska, the Coast Guard decided to close those two sites.

Q5. Will this impact mariner safety in the areas where the NDGPS sites are closed?

R5. A total of 46 Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers NDGPS sites will remain available to mariners in the maritime and coastal regions. Mariner safety and situational awareness are our top priorities and these changes will not impact those priorities.

Q6. Why did the Coast Guard decide to go to single NDGPS coverage in many areas?

R6. With the numerous positioning, navigation and timing tools available, we determined that single coverage provides sufficient NDGPS support to maritime users.

Q7. What other agencies were involved in the decision and are they closing sites too?

R7. We made this decision in consultation with the Department of Transportation and the Army Corps of Engineers. You will need to contact their public affairs office for information on changes to their NDGPS sites.

Q8. Why is the Coast Guard maintaining the maritime DGPS system?

R8. Based on Federal Register comments received in 2015, the Coast Guard decided that current user needs exist in the maritime environment for position accuracy greater than what GPS alone can provide. A minimum, single-coverage maritime system, in areas where the need was expressed by maritime users, will be provided as the Coast Guard continues to evaluate positioning and navigation requirements.

Q9. Will the NDGPS system be decommissioned permanently?

R9. The Coast Guard will continue to evaluate the navigational safety requirements of the maritime users. The accuracy of un-augmented GPS increasingly exceeds the 10m accuracy requirements for harbor navigation and harbor approaches. However, the Coast Guard continues to recognize the maritime use of DGPS for greater navigational accuracy, particularly by marine pilots. This is why the Coast Guard will continue to provide a basic maritime DGPS system as it continues to evaluate the ability of other GPS improvements and augmentations to meet the more rigorous accuracy requirements of certain maritime users.



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