

The Docket Management Facility maintains the public docket for this rulemaking. Comments and material received from the public, as well as documents mentioned in this preamble as being available in the docket, will become part of this docket and will be available for inspection or copying at room PL-401 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also find this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Chris Jaufmann, Office of Bridge Administration, United States Coast Guard Headquarters, (202) 267-0368. If you have questions on viewing or submitting material to the docket, call Dorothy Beard, Chief, Dockets, Department of Transportation, telephone 202-366-5149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Request for Comments

We encourage you to participate in this rulemaking by submitting comments and related material. If you do so, please include your name and address, identify the docket number for this rulemaking, USCG-2001-10881, indicate the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and give the reason for each comment. You may submit your comments and material by mail, hand delivery, fax, or electronic means to the Docket Management Facility at the address under **ADDRESSES**; but please submit your comments and material by only one means. If you submit them by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit them by mail and would like to know that they reached the Facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. We will consider all comments and material received during the comment period. We may change this proposed rule in view of them.

Public Meeting

We do not now plan to hold a public meeting. You may submit a request for

a meeting by writing to the Office of Bridge Administration at the address under **ADDRESSES** explaining why one would be beneficial. If we determine that one would be helpful, we will hold one at a time and place announced by a later notice in the **Federal Register**.

Background and Purpose

The last major update to the drawbridge regulations in part 117 was in 1984. The Coast Guard proposes to amend 33 CFR part 117 to provide clearer language and more easily understood regulatory requirements.

Discussion of Proposed Rule

The Coast Guard proposes to revise the winter operations provisions for drawbridges in the Ninth Coast Guard District and to expand those provisions to include drawbridges in the northern areas of the Eighth Coast Guard District, which are also affected by winter weather conditions. We propose adding a new deviation for drawbridge closures for local public events; to add six new definitions to the part; making a substantive revision to the regulation governing the removable span bridge across Lindsey Slough; and including in subpart A a specific requirement that all drawbridges be cycled a minimum of once every six months. We also propose to rewrite and reorganize sections in subpart A, and to make technical and conforming changes in subpart B.

Winter Operations in the Eighth and Ninth Coast Guard Districts

The Coast Guard proposes to revise § 117.45, *Operation during winter season in the Great Lakes area*. The revision would clarify the existing procedures for placing drawbridges in the Ninth Coast Guard District on advance notice operations during the winter season. This revision would allow the same procedures for placing drawbridges in the Eighth Coast Guard District on advance notice operation during the winter season. Historically, the winter season in both of these Districts runs from early December to early April, but winter conditions could start earlier or end later in the season.

Depending on the winter weather conditions, certain drawbridges in both

Coast Guard Districts are placed on winter operations schedules each year, although not all of the drawbridges are placed on winter operations at the same times during the winter season. Some of these drawbridges have specific operating requirements in subpart B, while others operate on signal as required by 33 CFR 117.5, so a single permanent deviation cannot cover all these bridges. Historically, 28 bridges for the Eighth District and between 10 and 20 bridges for the Ninth District are placed on winter operations each year.

This proposed revision to § 117.45 would provide that the District Commanders in the Eighth and Ninth Coast Guard Districts may issue deviations from existing regulations, authorizing 12-hour advance notice operations for these bridges and allowing them to be untended during the published dates for winter operations for the bridges. The deviation provision would allow the District Commanders the flexibility both to maximize the use of the waterways for navigation during mild winters and the ability to allow the drawbridges to go to winter operations schedules earlier based on the early onset of winter conditions. Each year, prior to the start of the winter operations schedules for these bridges, the District Commanders would publish a notice of deviation in the **Federal Register**.

Drawbridge Closures for Local Public Events

The Coast Guard proposes to add a deviation for local public events that need a drawbridge closure of six hours or less. The short duration and frequency of local public events, such as street parades, marathons, races, or sporting events, make a deviation for drawbridge closures of six hours or less an appropriate method for authorizing the change in operations and giving the public notice of these temporary closures.

The data in Figure 1 shows that the length of closure for most local public events during 1999 and 2000 was less than six hours.

FIGURE 1

Year	No. of drawbridges affected	< = 6 hours event	> 6 hours event
1999	44	42	2
2000	39	39	0