

### Ports and Waterways Safety System

Recognizing the need to take advantage of this technology, the Coast Guard has embarked in a major capitalization effort to upgrade all existing and future VTSs with AIS capability.

The Ports and Waterways Safety System is an effort to establish a national transportation system that collects, processes, and disseminates information on the marine operating environment and maritime vessel traffic in major U.S. ports and waterways.

The VTS mission is to monitor and assess vessel movements, exchange information regarding vessel movements with other vessels and shore-based personnel, and provide advisories to vessel Masters. The AIS coverage capability and precision compared to other surveillance technology (*i.e.*, radar and closed circuit television (CCTV)), makes it the sensor of choice for all future VTS operations.

A major goal of the Ports and Waterways Safety System is to apply AIS and other technologies that enable information gathering and dissemination in ways that do not create an additional operational burden for the mariner. An AIS-based VTS will augment the mariner's navigational capability through automatic and effortless broadcast of vessel traffic data, navigational advisories, and safety alerts. Through AIS-based VTS technology and this rulemaking, we can maximize the benefits of our vessel traffic management mission, provide the same or more services, and enhance navigation.

Each VTS has a Vessel Traffic Center (VTC) that will receive vessel movement data from an AIS in addition to radar and CCTV, if so equipped. An AIS-based VTS reduces the need for voice interactions, expands situational awareness, and augments the VTS role to assist mariners in the performance of their duties, thus mitigating the risk of collisions.

We have started this upgrade process and expect to complete it for the following VTS ports by 2005: Berwick Bay, LA; Houston-Galveston, TX; Port Arthur, TX; New Orleans, LA; New York, NY; San Francisco, CA; Prince William Sound, AK; Puget Sound, WA; and St. Marys River, MI. As these VTSs become AIS-capable, per the schedule established today in 33 CFR 164.46, the Coast Guard will eliminate VTS Users voice position reports and rely upon AIS broadcasting. We will require all VTS Users within a VTS to use an AIS.

Given the reduced infrastructure needs of an AIS and associated cost and

operational efficiency, the Coast Guard intends to expand AIS surveillance to other VMRS areas, such as the approaches to Los Angeles and Long Beach Harbors, which is jointly operated by the Coast Guard and the Southern California Marine Exchange (under the California Code of Regulations, 14 CCR 852.20 through 852.30). Other VMRS areas are envisioned and would be the subject of future rulemakings. However, the Coast Guard in this interim rule defines VMRS centers, areas, and users to distinguish them from VTS centers, areas, and users. This will allow the Coast Guard to have monitoring capabilities in areas that may not warrant the full interactivity of a VTS (that is, informational, navigation assistance and active traffic organization services), but that do warrant the Captain of the Port's (COTP's) vigilance and greater situational awareness. It would also provide the COTPs a more effective means to carry out their duties and communicate with vessels reporting from within a vessel monitoring system area, and thus enhance their maritime domain awareness.

### Involvement of the Maritime Community

We have long recognized that use of AIS on the nation's navigable waters is a valuable asset to all mariners. In the past, many in the maritime community have noted that to have a successful VTS, the Coast Guard must strive to meet the needs of the users while imposing minimal burden, especially in terms of voice communications.

In 1997, the Coast Guard benefited from a national dialog conducted by the Marine Board of the National Academies and its Committee on Maritime Advanced Information Systems and *ad hoc* VTS committee formed under the auspices of the Lower Mississippi River Waterway Safety Advisory Committee. This *ad hoc* committee, which was made up of representatives from the maritime community, port community, government, and the public, was asked to define user requirements for VTS that would accomplish the joint overall goals of safety and efficiency. The result of this effort was a conceptual baseline VTS plan. (See USCG-1998-4399-3 at <http://dms.dot.gov>). One key finding of that plan was the need to implement AIS technology, and to incorporate AIS as a key component of future VTS implementation. The Coast Guard views AIS implementation not only as a key component of VTS, but also as a valuable awareness tool that should be

made available and required in all the nation's seas and waterways.

The Coast Guard also recognizes that wider implementation of a surveillance capability is imperative to maritime domain awareness and homeland security. Thus, it is moving forward with AIS capability as a component of our nation's marine distress system network-Rescue 21. Therefore, the Coast Guard wishes to avail itself of this opportunity to seek comments, via the Notice accompanying this interim rule published elsewhere in today's **Federal Register**, regarding expanding AIS carriage requirements beyond those vessels and areas required in this interim rule.

### Discussion of Interim Rule

This interim rule amends Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Regulations in 33 CFR part 26, Vessel Traffic Management regulations in part 161, Navigation Safety Regulations, in part 164, and the Prince William Sound, Alaska regulated navigation area regulations in 33 CFR 165.1704. We are making the following changes to existing regulations.

#### *Amendments to Part 26*

We are deleting Table 26.03(f) and directing the reader to newly designated Table 161.12(c) for the same information.

#### *Amendments to Part 161*

We are adding two definitions in § 161.2—"navigable waters" and "Vessel Movement Center"; and revising definitions for "Vessel Movement Reporting System"; and "Vessel Movement Reporting System User" to distinguish them from "Vessel Traffic Service", "Vessel Traffic Centers", and "Vessel Traffic Service Users". Vessels within a VTS receive a host of services (*e.g.*, weather and navigation advisories, reports of aids to navigation outages, and projected traffic encounters) that will not necessarily be available from a VMRS whose primary mission is to enhance Coast Guard maritime domain awareness and homeland security.

We are amending the Table 161.12(b), and redesignating it as Table 161.12(c) to reflect existing VTS and VMRS areas and their call signs, designated frequencies, and clarifying Notes.

We are revising § 161.21 to establish a mandatory reporting and broadcast requirement via AIS in denoted VMRS areas. The current regulation has a voice reporting exemption for those vessels carrying AISSE in VTS areas capable of receiving such reports, such as VTS Prince William Sound (where the AISSE