

Coast Guard advises mariners of hazardous waterways along the Oregon coast

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The Coast Guard advises recreational boaters and waterway users Thursday of the dangers related to hazardous waterways and bars along the Oregon Coast.

Recent incidents have highlighted the importance of exercising caution while operating and recreating in and around the water.

On Jan. 22, watchstanders at Coast Guard Station Tillamook Bay received a report that two children aboard an inflatable raft in Tillamook Bay were being pulled out to sea by the outgoing tide.

A station 47-foot Motor Lifeboat crew responded to the situation and rescued both children.

“Conditions and tides in Tillamook Bay and along the Oregon Coast can change at a rapid rate, particularly during the winter months,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Diego O’Brien, one of the boatcrew members involved with the rescue. “It’s important to do adequate research before entering the water as the tides are

moving the water at a speed of several knots and ocean swells can increase in size within a very short amount of time.”

The Coast Guard encourages all persons planning to be on or near the water to check forecasts and tide conditions, have appropriate clothing and survival equipment and wear a life jacket.

In addition to safety, understanding current bar conditions and restrictions can prevent mariners from incurring costly fines and penalties.

The Coast Guard previously established regulated navigation areas for specific locations on the Oregon and Washington coasts and created guidance for these locations. When conditions become hazardous, the Captain of the Port (COTP) for the Coast Guard, having jurisdiction over a particular area, will either restrict or close the bar. See Title 33 CFR Part 165.1325 for additional information.

Typically, a successful prosecution for a bar violation will result in a \$3,000 penalty.

Since January of last year, Coast Guard Sector Columbia River has issued nine violations for bar violations, resulting in over \$15,000 in adjudicated penalties.

“Bar restrictions save lives,” said Lt. Cmdr. Colin Fogarty, the Enforcement Chief at Coast Guard Sector Columbia River. “Bar assessments are conducted by highly trained surfmen who utilize years of experience and training to determine whether vessels can safely navigate the dangerous waters. When a boater violates a bar restriction, they not only place their own lives at risk, but the lives of their passengers and ultimately Coast Guard members, should we need to save them. If a boater violates the restriction, the Coast Guard will seek to hold the boater responsible through fines or criminal referral.”

You can access current bar conditions and restrictions on your smart phone or handheld device by going to: <https://www.weather.gov/pqr/AllBars>