



Fish News

August 21, 2007

TELL THE COAST GUARD HOW CRITICAL HIGH FREQUENCY WEATHER BROADCASTS ARE TO FISHERMEN

The Coast Guard broadcasts the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS) weather forecasts and warnings using 24 high frequency (HF) radio transmitters located at seven Coast Guard communications stations in the United States and Guam. Unfortunately, the transmitters are not providing the reliability expected because of their age. These particular transmitters are no longer manufactured. Generally, replacement parts are not available, making it difficult, if not impossible to repair them. If the HF weather broadcasts are to continue, the infrastructure necessary for the broadcasts must be replaced. Significant costs will be incurred to replace the requisite transmitters and associated infrastructure. Before seeking funds for this undertaking, the Coast Guard must gather evidence relating to how frequently, and under what circumstances the maritime community uses the various types of HF radio weather broadcasts. It would also be helpful for the Coast Guard to learn about current and future needs of the maritime community with regard to receiving weather forecasts and warnings over HF radio, and what alternatives are being used or might become available.

Here are a few things you can do to ensure small communities in Western Alaska continue to receive high frequency radio broadcasts of weather forecasts and warnings:

- Write an email/letter/fax to the U.S. Coast Guard, stating how often you listen to high frequency radio broadcasts of weather forecasts and warnings. Include any personal experiences that illustrate how it has helped you in the past. We have provided a sample letter to copy and paste. Or if you prefer, write your own letter using some of the key points as a guide.

The only way to ensure we continue getting high frequency radio broadcasts of weather forecasts and warnings is to make sure your voice is heard on this important issue! (See sample letter below and attached).

DEADLINE: Comments and related material must reach the Docket Management Facility **on or before August 24, 2007.**

You may submit comments identified by Coast Guard docket number USCG-2007-27656 to the Docket Management Facility at the U.S. Department of Transportation. To avoid duplication, please use only one of the following methods:

- **Email your comments directly to:**
Russell.s.levin.uscg.mil . You can cut and paste from the sample letter below, if you like.
- Web site link for online comments:
<http://dms.dot.gov/search/searchResultsSimple.cfm?numberValue=27656&searchType=docket>
on that website there is a button on top that will take you to Comment/Submissions.
- Please include your name and address, identify the docket number for this notice (USCG-2007-27656) and give the reason for your comment.
- **Fax: (202) 475-3927 or (202) 493-2251**

SAMPLE LETTER:

August 21 , 2007

Mr. Russell Levin
CG-622 JR10-1216
Spectrum Management Division
Coast Guard Headquarters
1900 Half St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20593

Docket number: USCG-2007-27656

Dear Mr. Levin,

I am a resident of the Aleutians East Borough in southwest Alaska. I'm writing to you to let you know that the high frequency radio broadcasts of weather and warnings are a critical service provided to fishermen like me.

The weather and subsequently, the forecasts, change frequently for communities along the Bering Sea and the North Pacific Ocean. Without up-to-date forecasts, there is a much higher risk of life, vessel or gear loss for those who depend on fishing to feed their families and pay their bills.

I am a captain of a fishing boat. I generally operate my vessel in the North Pacific Ocean and in the Bering Sea. My primary source of obtaining marine weather forecasts is the U.S. Coast Guard's very high

frequency radio broadcasts. I listen to your broadcasts frequently throughout the day during fishing season. It is critical to my operation and safety.

There is no reliable alternative currently available. This is the kind of public service fishermen living in my region rely on heavily. Losing the VHF radio broadcasts would adversely affect me and my operation as well as others in the fishing community.

I understand the infrastructure needed to continue providing these services has exceeded its life expectancy. I also understand the equipment is no longer manufactured, that getting repairs done is challenging and spare parts are generally not available. As a result, continuing these services is costly for the Coast Guard. However, **this service often means the difference between life and death for those who spend nearly every waking hour out on the water during fishing season.** When the weather changes and the seas become dangerous, there is little time to react. Staying ahead of the weather is a matter of survival.

I ask that you give serious consideration to how critical it is to continue providing high frequency radio broadcasts of weather and warnings to fishermen living and working in southwest Alaska. The Coast Guard's broadcasts make a significant contribution to our livelihoods and our safety.

Sincerely,

Name _____

Signature _____

Address _____

Phone # _____ email _____

In your correspondence, **answer the following questions:**

1. What is your position in the maritime community? (Please be as specific as possible , e.g., captain of 600 [min] oil tanker, 1st mate on 500 unit containership, owner/operator of 45 [min] cruising sailboat, fleet manager of a 27 vessel shipping company, captain of a fishing boat, etc.)
2. What are your primary sources for obtaining marine weather forecasts? (For example, Inmarsat-C/SafetyNet, USCG HF radio broadcasts, USCG medium frequency (MF) Radio Broadcasts, USCG very high frequency (VHF) radio broadcasts, NOAA Weather Radio, NAVTEX, shoreside Internet, radio/television, commercial service/system, etc.
3. Do you use Coast Guard HF radio voice broadcasts to receive marine weather forecasts? (Yes or No). If yes, how often do you use Coast Guard HF voice broadcasts, and how critical are they to your safety and operation as compared to other sources you listed in your response to Question 2?
4. Do you use Coast Guard HF radio fax broadcasts to receive marine weather forecasts? (Yes or No) If yes, how often do you use Coast Guard HF radio fax broadcasts, and how critical are they to your safety and operation as compared to the other sources you listed in your response to Question 2?
5. Do you use Coast Guard HF radio Simplex Teletype over Radio (SITOR) (also known as Narrow Band Direct printing (NBDP)) to receive Coast Guard SITOR

- radio broadcasts, and how critical are they to your safety and operation as compared to the other sources you listed in your response to Question 2?
6. What alternative source(s) for obtaining marine weather forecasts would you pursue if Coast Guard HF broadcasts were no longer available? How would you rate the alternative source(s) in terms of (a) user cost and (b) usefulness of the information as compared to the Coast Guard HF broadcast it replaces?
 7. Would the loss of Coast Guard HF marine weather broadcasts affect you? Please explain.
 8. How far seaward does your vessel primarily operate? (For example, coastal (0 – 25 nautical miles (nm) seaward); offshore (25-200nm seaward); or, high seas (more than 200 nm seaward). In what geographic area(s) do you generally operate your vessel? (For example, mid-Atlantic, New England, North Central Pacific, Hawaii, Gulf of Mexico, etc.)

As noted previously, comments regarding these questions, and any other pertinent matters brought to the Coast Guard's attention during the comment period, will be taken into account in future actions regarding the issues raised by these questions.

If you have questions on this notice, please contact Mr. Russell S. Levin, Spectrum Management Division (CG-622), U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters at (202) 475-3555. Fax: (202) 475-3927. Email: Russell.S.Levin@uscg.mil . If you have questions on viewing or submitting material to the docket, call Renee V. Wright, Program Manager, Docket Operations at (202) 493-0402

Please send, fax or drop off a copy to our Aleutians East Borough office in Sand Point or in Juneau.

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