

MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Volume XXV Issue: 046

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Date: May 12, 2025

High Water Safety Advisory: VTS Safety Measure at LMR MM 170 TO MM 237 AHP LMR (38' and Falling)

This Marine Safety Information Bulletin supersedes Volume XXV, Issue 042: VTS Safety Measure and Advisories between LMR MM 232 to MM 237 AHP LMR (40' and Falling) and Volume XXV, Issue 043: VTS Safety Measure and Advisories between LMR MM 170 to MM 235 AHP LMR (40' and Falling). **Changes from the previous bulletin are in bold print.**

1. As a result of the Baton Rouge gauge expected to reach **38' and continue to fall**, the COTP New Orleans has issued a Safety Advisory and VTS Safety Measure effective **Tuesday May 13th at 7:00 a.m.** for all waters of the Lower Mississippi River (LMR) from Mile 170 to Mile 237 Above Head of Passes (AHP) in accordance with the Waterways Action Plan Baton Rouge Annex. This VTS Measure is needed to protect persons and vessels from the potential safety hazards associated with the effects of high water levels on the LMR. VTS LMR has the authority to grant exceptions to the requirements in this bulletin based on the conditions and the size of the tow. **Exception requests should be made to the VTS LMR Watch Supervisor by telephone at (504) 365-2514.**
2. Line Tows Transiting Wilkinson Point LMR MM 232-237:
 - A. **The VTS LMR Wilkinson Point Vessel Movement Reporting System and Towing Assist Vessel will be suspended Tuesday, May 13, 2025 following the clearing of the existing downbound queue. VTS LMR will no longer manage a queue for this zone after this final downbound tow is cleared.**
 - B. The following requirements remain in effect:
 - a. Max tow size is limited to 30 barges with 280 HP per standard barge and 650 HP per oversize barge for southbound transits within this area. Barges with dimensions 290' x 50' or larger are considered oversized. Empty barges may be calculated at ½ the horsepower requirements to that of a loaded barge when computing the overall horsepower requirement. Vessels unable to meet the HP requirements must make adjustments to meet the requirements prior to transiting Wilkinson Point. Towing vessels with Z-drive propulsion types may be treated as having a horsepower 20% greater than the engine's rating for the purpose of this calculation. The VTS LMR Watch Supervisor may on a case-by-case basis approve exceptions up to 400 HP based on conditions and size of tow. The VTS LMR Watch Supervisor may also make horsepower exceptions to allow pushing up to 2 standard barges more than calculated for tows that are fully squared off.
 - b. All southbound traffic will transit Wilkinson point during daylight hours only.
 - c. 8000 HP towing vessel may push 30 standard barge tow makeups. (400 HP less than requirement) or 6600 HP Z-drive.
 - d. All southbound tows entering Devil's Swamp with more than one barge attached are **recommended** to hire a private assist vessel (PAV) to accompany them into the swamp.
 - e. Harbor Fleet Tows of 4 barges or less (whether loaded or unloaded) are exempt from daylight only and flanking restrictions.
 - C. No more than two southbound towing vessels will be allowed below Thomas Point at any time regardless of tow size.
3. Port Allen Lock LMR MM 219-229:
 - A. All tows greater than 600' (excluding the towboat) are required to employ an assist vessel of at least 1200 horsepower (HP) when entering or exiting the Port Allen Lock.
 - B. All tows exiting Port Allen Lock into the LMR intending to turn northbound shall use an assist vessel of at least 1200 HP or proceed southbound below MM 221 if topping around unassisted before heading north.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD SECTOR NEW ORLEANS

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- C. If a vessel is unable to meet HP requirements, an assist vessel of at least 1200 HP is mandatory for entering and exiting.
 - D. Tows are required to have 280 HP per standard loaded barge on canal tows entering/exiting the Locks. Empty barges may be calculated at ½ the horsepower requirements to that of a loaded barge when computing the overall horsepower requirement. Towing vessels with Z-drive propulsion type may be treated as having a horsepower 20% greater than its engine's rating for the purpose of this calculation. VTS LMR has authority to grant exceptions to these requirements up to 400 HP based on conditions and the size of the tow.
4. Tows Topping Around Between LMR MM 221 to 235 (Duncan Point to Hwy 190 Bridge):
- A. Tows greater than 600 feet in length are advised to use a minimum 1200 HP assist vessel when topping around.
 - B. Tows between 300 feet and 600 feet in length are advised to use a 1000 HP assist vessel when topping around.
 - C. Tows less than 300 feet in length are advised to use an 800 HP assist vessel when topping around.
5. Deep Draft Vessels, LMR MM 225 to 234:
- A. Ocean going vessels must use tug escorts with adequate horsepower alongside while transiting above the I-10 Bridge to the dock, as well as departing the dock and transiting southbound past the I-10 Bridge.
 - B. **Ocean going vessels will no longer be required to check in with VTS LMR while transiting this zone.**
 - C. Only one ocean going vessel at a time will be allowed to be underway between the I-10 Bridge and the US-190 Bridge.
 - D. Ocean going vessels shall not anchor in the upper half mile of the Baton Rouge General Anchorage. The Pilot must notify VTS LMR Watch Supervisor if it is necessary to anchor any vessel in the remainder of the anchorage.
6. Dangerous Eddies: 81-Mile Point, Bringier Point, and Plaquemine Point, MM 170-208:
- A. All vessels should stay 300 to 400 feet off the left descending bank within ½ mile of 81-Mile Point (MM 178 – 179) to avoid dangerous eddies.
 - B. Mariners are advised to proceed with caution in the vicinity of Bringier Point (MM 172-173) and Plaquemine Point (MM 206-208) where dangerous eddies have been previously reported.
 - C. Although the above locations have had eddies specifically reported, mariners are advised to be continuously on the lookout for irregular currents which may pose a threat to navigation throughout the LMR.

For further information, contact the following:

Vessel Traffic Service Lower Mississippi River: (504) 365-2514, VHF-FM CH 1005 (05A), CH 12, CH 67
Coast Guard Baton Rouge Waterways Management: (225) 298-5400 x 230
Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Waterways Management: (504) 365-2278
Coast Guard Sector Command Center New Orleans (24 hours): (504) 365-2209

CAPTAIN GREGORY A. CALLAGHAN
Captain of the Port, New Orleans