UMPQUA RIVER BAR HAZARDS

BAR AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

Listen to the local broadcast on 1610 AM

CROSSING THE BAR

The bar is the area where the deep waters of the Pacific Ocean meet with the shallower waters near the mouth of the river.

Most accidents and deaths that occur on coastal bars are from capsizing.

Coastal bars may be closed to recreational boats when conditions on the bar are hazardous. Failure to comply with the closure may result in voyage termination, and civil and/or criminal penalties. The regulations are enforced by Coast Guard boarding teams.

Improper loading and/or overloading are major causes of capsizing. Improper/overloaded boats have less stability and less freeboard, which can allow seas to break into the vessel, causing the boat to become even less stable.

Boats are more likely to capsize when crossing the bar from the ocean because the seas are on the stern and the boater may have less control over the vessel.

Boaters must make sure the bar is safe prior to crossing. Check with other boaters or the Coast Guard to find out the condition of the bar.

If you are caught on a rough bar running in…

- Make sure everybody aboard is wearing a personal flotation device.
- Keep the boat square before the seas.
- Keep the boat on the back of the swell. Ride the swell and stay clear of the following wave.

Avoid sudden weight shifts from passengers or gear moving around in the boat. If possible, have passengers lie down as near the centerline of the boat as possible.

Do not allow the waves to catch your boat on the side (beam). This condition is called broaching, and can easily result in capsizing.

TIDES

Tides are the vertical rise and fall of the water and tidal current is the horizontal flow of the water. There are roughly four tides each day in the Pacific Northwest. Tidal movement toward the shore or upstream is the flood current. Movement away from the shore or downstream is the ebb current. The period between the two is known as slack water. Tidal currents may gain tremendous velocity, particularly when the ebb current is augmented by river runoff.

- It is extremely dangerous to get caught on the bar during strong ebb current. Even on days that are relatively calm, fast moving ebb can create bar conditions that are too rough for small craft.
- Always know the stage of the tide!
- Avoid getting caught on the bar during an ebb tide.

It is normally best to cross the bar during slack water or on a flood tide, when the seas are normally calmest.

REGULATED NAVIGATION AREAS

The Coast Guard has established a Regulated Navigation Area in the area surrounding and on the Umpqua River Bar. If the yellow lights on this sign are flashing, indicating a restriction has been placed on recreational and uninspected passenger vessels crossing the bar. In accordance with 33 CFR 165.1325, the U.S. Coast Guard has the authority to restrict all recreational and uninspected passenger vessels from crossing the bar when hazardous conditions exist. Failing to comply with posted bar restrictions may result in a maximum civil penalty of $25,000.00.

WARNING SIGN LOCATIONS

White diamond shape signs with an orange boarder indicating "Rough Bar" and amber flashing lights are located at Umpqua River Channel Marker #6 facing north toward the Winchester Bay Boat Basin. Additional warning signs are located at the local boat ramp areas in Winchester Bay. These signs are blue in color and have amber flashing lights that read: Warning When Flashing, Bar Restrictions in Effect, Tune to 1610 AM. When the amber lights are flashing on any of the warning signs hazardous conditions are present and a bar restriction is in place. Mariners should tune in to listen to the restriction information.

BAR CONDITIONS AND OBSERVATION REPORTS

Observed weather and bar conditions are updated every four hours or more frequently if there is a significant change in weather. Marine Information Broadcasts on Channel 16 VHF FM are conducted by the Coast Guard when hazardous bar conditions and restrictions are put into place or are lifted. Mariners are strongly encouraged to monitor channel 16 VHF/FM for all notices and weather updates. Bar condition reports for Umpqua River are given hourly (daylight hours only) during summer months by station personnel and recordings are available by calling (541) 271-2138. Bar information can also be obtained by contacting Coast Guard Station Umpqua River via radio, VHF-FM Channel 16/22A.

The AM radio broadcast is audible within a six mile radius from the Coast Guard Station in Charleston. It provides a continual broadcast on radio station 1610 AM containing bar conditions, bar restrictions, and local weather. Current weather advisories are also posted at the Coast Guard Station in Winchester Bay.

You can also access current bar conditions and restriction on your smart phone or hand held device by going to, http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/marine/BarObs.php.

EMERGENCIES

VHF-FM Radio: Channel 16

If in distress (threatened by grave and imminent danger):

1. Make sure radio is on
2. Select Channel 16
3. Press/Hold the transmit button
4. Speak slowly, and clearly say: MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY
5. Give the following information:
   - Vessel Name and/or Description
   - Nature of Emergency
   - Position and/or Location
   - Number of People Aboard
6. Release the Transmit Button
7. Wait for 10 seconds – If no response, repeat "Mayday" call. If not in immediate danger, switch to CH 22 and follow the same steps as above, except do not use the word "MAYDAY."

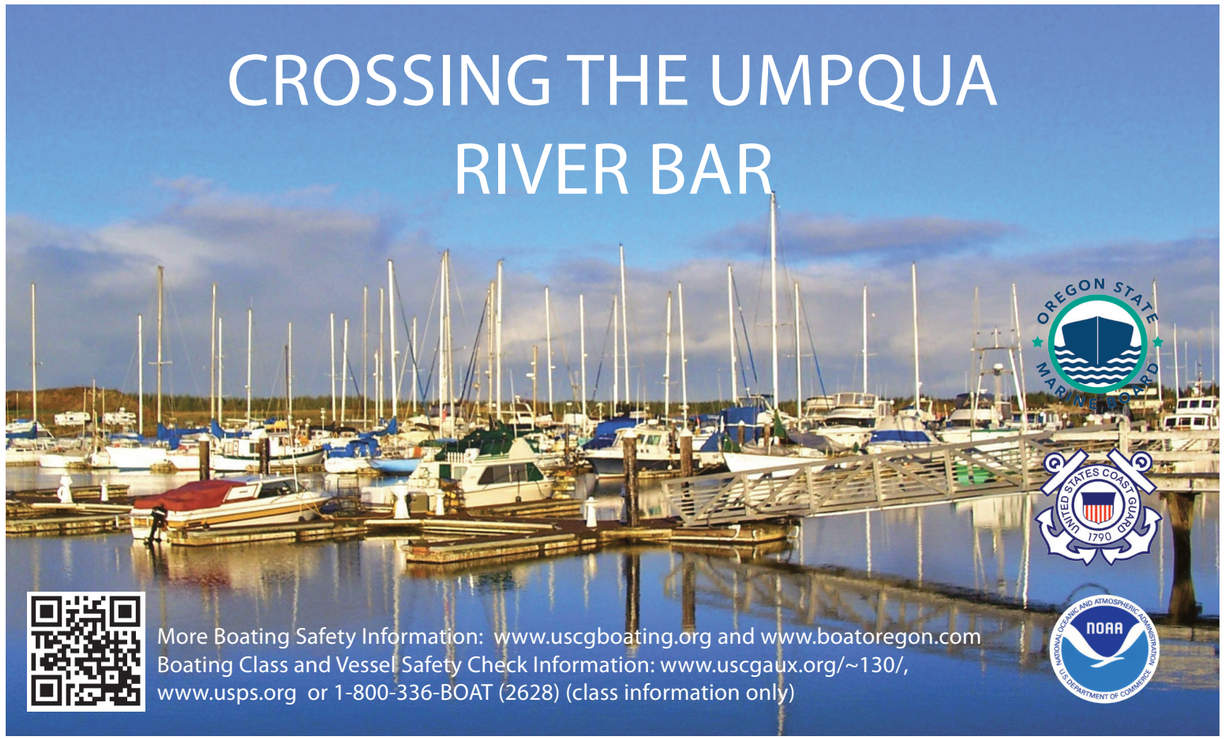
Make Sure Everyone is Wearing a Life Jacket!

Phone 911. Tell the operator that you have a marine emergency. Be ready to provide the same information required in item number 5 of the mayday call.

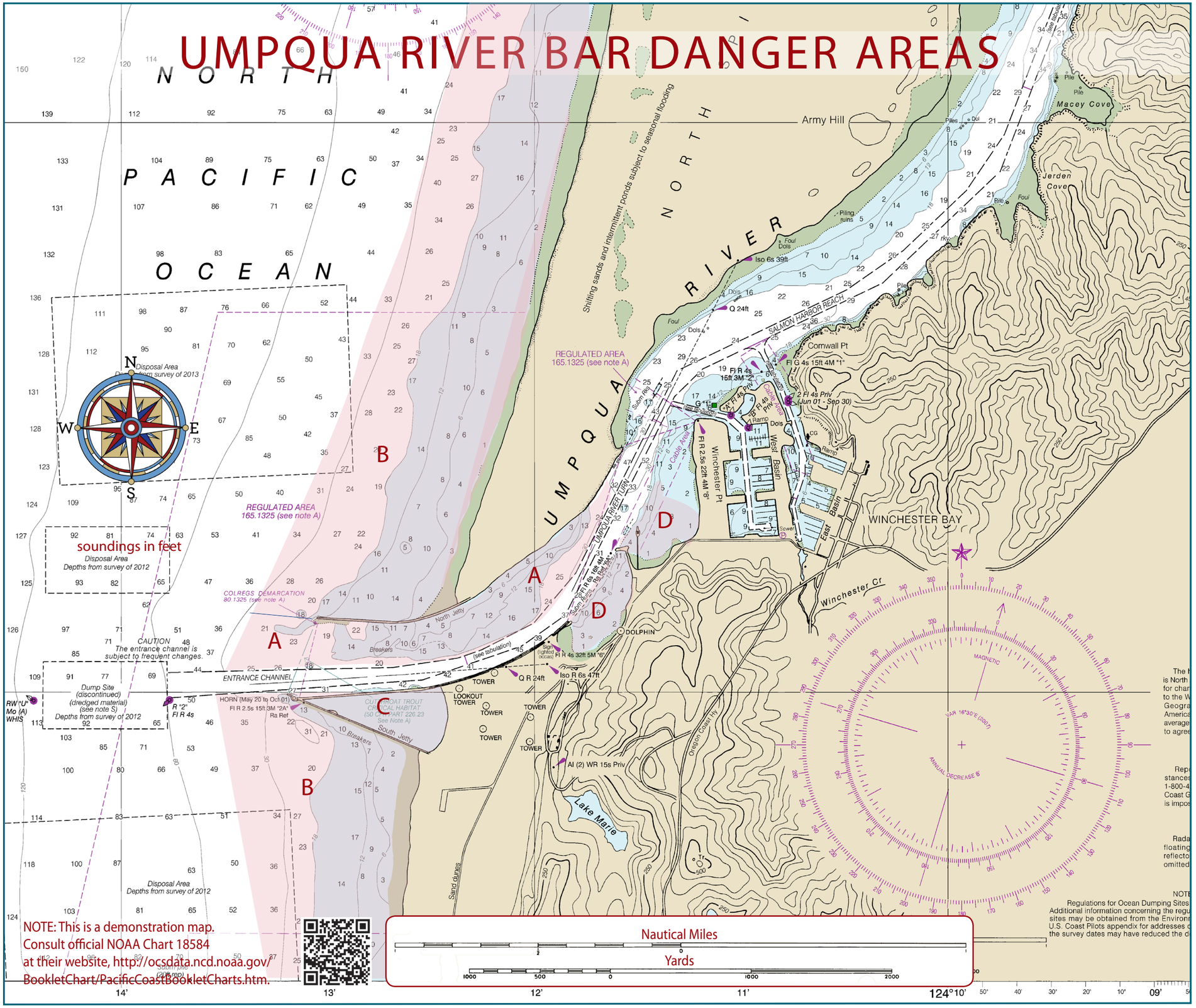
Coast Guard Stations:
Umpqua River
Reedsport, OR
(541) 271-2138

BOATING SAFETY TIPS

- Check Weather, Tide, and Bar Conditions – The latest Information Can Be Heard on 1610 AM
- File a Float Plan With Friends/Relatives
- Don't Overload Your Boat
- Wear Your Life Jacket
- Carry Flares and a VHF-FM Radio
- Stay Well Clear of Commercial Vessels
- Have Anchor With Adequate Line
- Boat Sober



UMPQUA RIVER BAR DANGER AREAS



A. Middle ground and north spit. The North Spit is to your right as you proceed down the Umpqua River, starting from the first rock spar jetty and long pier on the east side of the channel. The North Spit area has small breakers when a swell is running, and gets rougher toward the north jetty. The north spit is very dangerous because large breakers may come into this area from the middle ground. The north spit meets the middle ground at the outer end of the triangle jetty. The middle ground area extends from the north jetty to the north edge of the main channel and is dangerous because a little swell can create large breakers which can capsize a vessel. Boaters should not linger near the mouth of the river during ebb tide, because if their power fails, their boats could be carried out to sea before an anchor would be effective or oars could be put to work.

B. North and south jetties. The areas north of the north jetty and south of the south jetty can be very dangerous. Whenever breakers are observed, boaters should avoid this area.

C. Triangle jetties. The shoal water inside the confines of the triangle jetty is not navigable. Boats may be pushed on to the triangle jetty by wind or current especially during the ebb tide. Refraction waves are often encountered in this area and can create extremely hazardous conditions.

D. Umpqua River light 6A old coast guard docks. Current on either the ebb or flood will often set boats into this area.

Warning: Safe navigation is the responsibility of the operator of each vessel. The Coast Guard and NOAA provide information to assist mariners in navigating safely. The information is updated every four hours or when local bar conditions and or restrictions change. The information provided reflects conditions at the time the bar was observed and may not reflect current conditions. Bar conditions are subject to change without notice. This report should NOT be used as the sole source of information when making a decision to cross the bar. Mariners are advised to use all means available to safely revaluate bar conditions and risk before crossing the bar.