

THE MANDATORY SHIP REPORTING SYSTEM FACT SHEET

- The mandatory ship reporting system is aimed at increasing mariners' awareness of the severity of the problem of ship strikes of the highly endangered Northern right whale and to seek their help in minimizing the threat.
- Starting July 1, 1999, all commercial ships of 300 gross tons and greater will be required to report to a shore-based station when they enter two areas off the east coast of the United States: one off Massachusetts and one off Georgia and Florida. The reporting system off Massachusetts will operate year round while the one off Georgia and Florida will operate each year from 15 November to 15 April, which corresponds with periods of right whale occurrence.
- Ships will be required to report the ir name, call sign, course, speed, location, destination, and route.
- In return, a vessel receives an automated message that provides where the latest information about right whale sightings and avoidance procedures that may prevent a collision may be found. For example, mariners will be advised to refer to navigational publications such as the U.S. Coast Pilot, Sailing Directions, and nautical charts for information on relevant regulations, and the boundaries of right whale critical habitats.
- The reporting system will affect no other aspect of vessel operation and there is no cost the mariner. For the large majority of ships, the information is transmitted in minutes by satellite to the ship's bridge computer.
- Information about the location of right whales is also being provided to mariners through various broadcast media, including the U.S. Coast Guard's Broadcasts to Mariners, satellite-linked marine safety broadcasts, and NOAA Weather Radio.
- Mariners will be advised that information placards, videos, and other educational materials are available from shipping agents, port authorities, relevant state agencies, the Coast Guard, and the National Marine Fisheries Service.
- Collectively, the reports will yield data on ship number and routes in right whale habitat, which will be useful in identifying possible further measures to reduce ship/whale interactions. The entire program will be reviewed in three to five years to assess its effectiveness, and to introduce advances in ship communication technologies that have become available.

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