



# Rear Admiral Joel R. Whitehead

Commander, Eighth Coast  
Guard District



Rear Admiral Joel Whitehead is presently serving as Commander of the Eighth Coast Guard District and Commander of Maritime Defense Command Eight, headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana. As District Commander, Rear Admiral Whitehead is responsible for U.S. Coast Guard operations covering 26 states, more than 1,200 miles of coastline and 10,300 miles of inland waterways from Florida to Mexico and including the entire navigable lengths of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee River Systems. A native of Newport News, Virginia, Rear Admiral Whitehead graduated from Walsingham Academy in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1971 and from the United States Coast Guard Academy at

New London, Connecticut in 1975 with a Bachelor of Science degree in History and Government. Rear Admiral Whitehead holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the State University of New York at Albany and from 1996-1997 was a National Security Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He also completed Seminar XXI, a year-long Washington, DC based program in foreign politics and international relations sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Rear Admiral Whitehead has served in a variety of operational and policy tours during his career. His most recent assignment was Assistant Commandant for Governmental and Public Affairs in Washington, D.C. From 2001 to 2003 he served as the Chief of Staff and second in command of the Eighth Coast Guard District in New Orleans, Louisiana. Other assignments have included Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Office, Boston/Captain of the Port of Boston from 1999 to 2001, and Chief of Strategic Planning for the U.S. Coast Guard in Washington, DC from 1997 to 1999 where his team developed the Coast Guard's strategic vision, Coast Guard 2020. Other tours of duty have included Deputy Group Commander of Group Woods Hole, Massachusetts from 1993 to 1996, and Program Reviewer in the Office of the Chief of Staff in Washington, DC from 1991 to 1993 where he was responsible for program oversight and budget development for almost one-third of the Coast Guard's operating budget. He also served in the Port Safety and Security Division at

Coast Guard Headquarters and in 1989 was detailed as a marine safety advisor to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator in Valdez, Alaska during the Exxon Valdez oil spill. As a junior officer, he served on the 378' high endurance cutter MORGENTHAU in New York, at the Marine Inspection Office, New York, and as Executive Officer of Marine Safety Office, Albany, New York where he was Alternate Captain of the Port during the first "Superfund" cleanup in the nation's history.

From 1996 to 1999, Rear Admiral Whitehead was a Director of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association. He served from 1999 – 2003 as a member, and in his final year as Chairman of the Alumni Executive Council at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, which represents over 20,000 alumni in 120 nations.