

Harbor Safety Guide for Humboldt Bay

Before you leave the Dock



- *Listen to NOAA weather radio*
- *Check your safety equipment*
- *Check your fuel level*
- *File a float plan*

Welcome Boaters!

Humboldt Bay is the second largest natural bay in California. Humboldt Bay's deep channels and shallow mud flats are used for a variety of human activities that must coexist with each other and with the environment. These activities include windsurfing, kayaking and rowing, sailing, recreational fishing and power boating, commercial fishing, channel maintenance dredging, oyster farming and cargo shipping on both tugs and barges and by large freighters. Although boating on Humboldt Bay can be fun, large swells, strong currents and unpredictable weather changes can turn a pleasant outing into a disaster if you are not prepared.

This booklet has been prepared by the Humboldt Bay Harbor Safety Committee to provide you with general information important to boating on Humboldt Bay. It is our hope that this information will help you have a safe, responsible and fun boating experience!

Humboldt Bay Harbor Safety Committee



Hundreds of recreational boaters, huge ships, tugs, barges, and commercial fishing vessels must share the use of the **Port of Humboldt Bay**.

This booklet is intended to increase public awareness of the rules under which commercial vessels operate in order to provide recreational boaters with the best protection against navigational dangers within the **Port of Humboldt Bay**.

Information contained in this booklet is only a supplement to other recreational boater information on seamanship and the **“Rules of the Road”** and can change without notice. It is important to thoroughly prepare before boating by obtaining the most current information available.

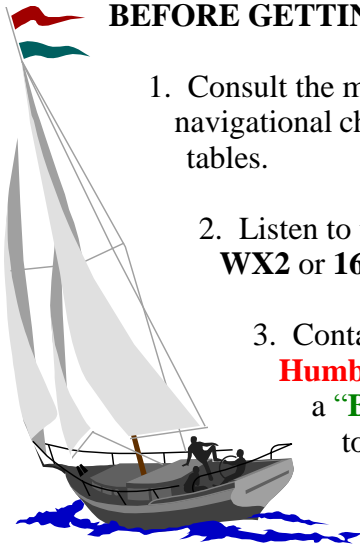


The assumption is made that all recreational boaters know the rules and appropriate marine signals. For a “refresher” class in boating safety, contact the **United States Coast Guard Auxiliary** at 1-800-869-SAIL.

Port of Humboldt Bay
Woodley Island Marina
601 Startare Drive
P.O. Box 1030
Eureka, CA 95502-1030
(707) 443-0801



Advice From the Port of *Humboldt Bay*



BEFORE GETTING UNDERWAY:

1. Consult the most recent and proper scale navigational chart of the area and local tide and current tables.
2. Listen to the **NOAA** Weather Radio broadcast **WX2** or **162.55 MHz**.
3. Contact **U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay** on VHF channel 16 and ask for a **“Bar Report”**. Mariners should feel free to contact **U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay** at (707) 443-2213 for information concerning the **“Bar”**. Remember, the conditions at the entrance to *Humboldt Bay* are subject to change at any moment.

The **U.S. Coast Guard** has a **“ROUGH BAR”** sign and yellow lights on **U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay’s** pier at Samoa. Please take notice of this sign and the lights as you travel down *Humboldt Bay*. When the lights are operating in the **“Wig - Wag”** (alternating flashing yellow), this indicates a **“Rough Bar”**. Do not rely on these lights as your only source of information regarding the conditions at the bar and entrance.



U.S. Coast Guard will have hourly broadcasts on VHF Channel 16 and 22A when **“Rough Bar”** conditions exist. Always ask for a **“Bar Report”** prior to crossing. The **U.S. Coast Guard** also recommends wearing a lifejacket while transiting this area.

BEFORE GETTING UNDERWAY: continued...

4. Be aware of local traffic patterns, vessel traffic lanes, and the VHF channels which commercial traffic use. (See Map)
5. Improve your chances of being seen on a ship's radar by installing a radar reflector as high as possible above the deck of your boat and make sure your navigation lights are bright and not obscured by anything.

WHILE UNDERWAY:

1. Turn on your navigational lights between dusk and dawn and in restricted visibility such as fog, which is a common occurrence in *Humboldt Bay*.

2. Maintain a proper lookout. The autopilot does not free you from the responsibility of keeping a good lookout.

3. Develop a situational awareness of all the vessels in your vicinity.



4. Pay attention to the sidelights rather than the masthead lights.

If you see both sidelights, you're dead ahead – move out fast.

5. Know and follow the **“Rules of the Road”**.

NAVIGATING INSIDE THE PORT OF *HUMBOLDT BAY*

The following offers information on transiting *Humboldt Bay* safely among large ships.

Typical deep draft vessels that enter *Humboldt Bay* are between 300 and 650 feet in length. Tugs, barges, and dredges are also frequent visitors to *Humboldt Bay* and all operate 365 days a year.

The speed of a ship, towboat, or any large vessel can be deceptive. Large vessels must maintain their speed to steer safely and they must stay in the main channel – it's the only place deep enough for them to maneuver.

Deep draft vessels take many lengths to stop and **Coast Guard Rule 9** means that in a harbor channel, the ship has the right-of-way over small boats. That includes sailboats. Avoid large ships and cross well behind them whenever possible. **DO NOT** put your life at risk by thinking a ship can get out of your way. It takes a large ship a couple of minutes and thousands of feet to come to a stop after the engines have been reversed.

➤ **If you hear five or more short blasts you are in danger, and you should take action.**

➤ If you hear a very long blast (7-10 seconds), it is likely a vessel is attempting to attract your attention.



➤ Tugs and Ships monitor VHF-Channels 13 and 16.

When tugboats are towing or pushing barges and ships, the danger of “**Wheel Wash**” is a regular occurrence. Wheel wash is a strong underwater current caused by towboats or large vessel engines that

NAVIGATING INSIDE THE PORT OF *HUMBOLDT BAY* **continued...**

creates a severe wake turbulence hundreds of yards behind these vessels. Never pass closely behind a tugboat or a large vessel.

Be particularly cautious around commercial shipping docks. Do not pass close to ships leaving or approaching piers. Never maneuver between a ship and its destination pier. Ships, tugs, or barges may be maneuvering in the vicinity and sudden wheel wash or wakes generated by these vessels can be extremely dangerous to small craft.

“Prop Wash” and **“Bank Draft”** are also a danger. No amount of speed will overcome the suction of a large ship’s prop wash. Personal Watercraft (PWC) must never jump a large ship’s wake. A ship’s wake may be inviting, but it is deceptive. This wake causes a vacuum and will suck a PWC and other small vessels under the ship in a matter of seconds. Also, a large vessel can **“steal your wind”**. Don’t expect to have the same wind you started with when executing a sailing maneuver near a ship, tug, or dredge.

A tugboat without barges in front could be towing a barge or other objects on a long submerged line that is difficult to see. Under no circumstances ever pass between a tug and its tow. Remember, barges are not self propelled.

A **“blind spot”** can extend for hundreds of feet in front of deep draft ships, tugboats, and towboats pushing barges. Keep your distance from these vessels.

When referring to your navigational chart, take notice of the names of the different channels within *Humboldt Bay*. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains all of the main shipping channels at different depths. The Bar and Entrance to *Humboldt Bay* is dredged to a depth of -48’ MLLW. The North Bay and Samoa Channels are maintained at -38’. The Outer Reach and Inner Reach are maintained at -26’ and -18’ respectively. In addition, the Fields Landing Channel in South Bay is maintained at -26’.

NAVIGATING INSIDE THE PORT OF *HUMBOLDT BAY* continued...



The black lines on the map (See next page) indicate the main channels of *Humboldt Bay*. These are the areas the dredge works and the black line leading from *Humboldt*

Bay in a NW direction shows the path the dredge uses to get from *Humboldt Bay* to the Humboldt Open Ocean Disposal Site (HOODS). Use extreme caution when transiting in the same area as a working dredge.

Hopper dredges move like a ship. Normally you can tell when they are dredging by the signals on the main mast. During the day, a black ball over another black ball will be shown. At night, they display a red light over a white light over another red light. These signals also indicate that the dredge is restricted in its ability to maneuver and you must stay clear of the vessel. These huge powerful “vacuum cleaners” are helping to keep *Humboldt Bay* deep and safe for all of us.



NOT FOR NAVIGATION – FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

The above map is not to scale, but is intended to show general description. Commercial ship traffic *usually* takes place well out to sea. However, tugs, barges, dredges, and fishing vessels sometimes travel close to the coast. Always have your VHF radio on and set to Channel 16, and keep a proper lookout.

MARINE RADIO:

All vessels should have on board a working marine VHF radio. In the event of an emergency, the VHF radio will be your immediate source for assistance.

Some helpful tips for proper radio use:

- Monitor Channel 16 while underway. Channel 16 is an international hailing and distress frequency only.
- Do not use Channel 16 to conduct a radio check. You may hail Coast Guard on Channel 16 and ask to switch to Channel 22. Once on Channel 22 you may ask for a radio check.
- Do not broadcast a MAYDAY unless there is immediate danger to life or property.
- Do not use CB “lingo” or police “10” codes. They are not appropriate for marine communications.
- It is a criminal offense to transmit obscene, profane or indecent language.
- Always speak clearly and slowly with the microphone about one inch from your mouth. There is no need to shout; it distorts your transmission.

IMPORTANT MARINE RADIO CHANNELS FOR *HUMBOLDT BAY*

CH 16 INTERNATIONAL **HAILING AND DISTRESS**
156.800 MHz monitored by **U.S. Coast Guard**

CH 14 Port of *Humboldt Bay*, Woodley Island Marina
156.700 MHz

CH 13 Tugs and Ships
156.650 MHz

WX2 [NOAA](#) Eureka Marine Weather Radio
162.400 MHz

Miscellaneous Working Channels
68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 78

Cellular phone coverage can be unreliable. Do not rely on your cellular phone as your only source of communication. Cellular phones cannot replace the VHF-FM marine radio's ability to communicate marine safety information with multiple marine users at one time.

EMERGENCY RADIO CALL PROCEDURE

1. Make sure radio is turned on.
2. Select CHANNEL 16 and switch to high power.
3. Press the transmit button and clearly say:
‘MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY,
THIS IS THE _____, VESSEL _____
MY POSITION IS _____ (GIVE YOUR CURRENT POSITION OR LOCATION)
(DESCRIBE THE EMERGENCY); THERE ARE _____ PERSONS ON BOARD.
(DESCRIBE YOUR VESSEL) _____ HULL _____ HOUSE _____ TRIM
_____ LENGTH.

HAVE ALL PERSONS ON BOARD PUT ON LIFE JACKETS



Port of Humboldt Bay/Woodley Island Marina

**California Department of Fish and Game
Office of Spill Prevention and Response**



California Coastal Commission



Humboldt County Sheriff's Department

This brochure is provided by the Harbor Safety Committee of the Humboldt Bay Area.
For more information on Humboldt Bay, you may contact the

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P.O. Box 1030, Eureka, California 95502-1030
(707) 443-0801
www.portofhumboldtby.org