

# Coast Guard



April 2001

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## Breaking the ice

**CGC Penobscot Bay  
clears way for  
winter vessel traffic  
on Atlantic coast**

## Bering Sea Patrol reunites

**Alaska veterans meet to remember  
their service in Arctic waters**

**Michigan plane crash**



**Major iceberg**



**Free associate's degree?**

# Breaking it up on the Hudson

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1st District (South)

**W**ith the Northeast facing a potential shortage of home heating oil, the crew of the CGC Penobscot Bay did its part to ensure petroleum shipments reached their destinations to keep homes heated during the recent winter season.

With the mission of creating shipping lanes out of solid ice, the Penobscot Bay's crew implemented a common sense approach to enhance communication and make ice travel easier for everyone involved.

The icebreaker's crew used cell phones to contact vessels that need safe passage or that were stuck in the ice. By communicating directly with oil tankers and tugs, the need to free them from the

ice has been less frequent.

Communicating directly to the vessels by cell phone was the idea of Lt. Andy M. Raiha, commanding officer of the Penobscot Bay for the last two and a half years. He says the plan has really taken off, and everybody reaped the benefits during the winter.

"It [using cell phones] is happening more this year than last, and it didn't happen at all my first year," said Raiha.

Oil carriers were able to find out ice conditions immediately by cell phone and form convoys behind the powerful icebreakers, which led the way up the Hudson River.

"We plan ahead so we don't have to break them out of the ice," said Raiha.

In the past, commercial vessels transiting up the Hudson would contact Coast Guard Activities New York, which would relay position and ice breaking requests to the icebreakers. By eliminating the third party, ice breaking on the Hudson proved to be more effective and efficient.

"In the old days, the tug would have to call the dispatcher. There was a lot of middleman involvement," said Tom Sullivan, vice president of a shipping company in New York that relies on Coast Guard icebreakers to transport home heating oil. "The method of talking directly to them has worked wonderfully."

Ice season began Dec. 15, 2000 and lasted until March 15 of this year.



The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center in Silver Spring, Md., predicted initially that the recent winter would be worse than the past three. Regardless, icebreakers on the Hudson more than met the needs of the carriers.

"Service has not been interrupted at all," said Morten Bouchard, president of a transportation company in New York. He has been president of the 83-year-old, family-owned shipping company since 1987.

Due to the economy and the expected harsh winter, the need to transport more rapidly than in years past is a must, Bouchard said.

"This year, particularly more than any other year, the amount of petroleum going up the Hudson has increased," Bouchard said.

The job of ice breaking is not an easy one, and an experienced crew who understands the mission as well as the river is a must, said Raiha.

"A ship is the crew; it is not the Captain," he said. "We need every person here qualified so we can perform this mission and keep things moving."

Bouchard has been impressed with the resourcefulness and commitment of the icebreakers on the Hudson. Understanding what they are up against, his respect for the Coast Guard grows year after year.

"They continuously look for ways to improve their operation," Bouchard said. "They are continuously behind the eight ball with budget cuts ... but always find a way to get the job done ... and better." 



The CGC Penobscot Bay leads the way for a barge through the icy Hudson River.

