

A Long Road Home



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One significant piece of the merchant mariner licensing and documentation centralization project was the physical move of the National Maritime Center (NMC) from Arlington, Va. to Martinsburg, W.Va. This nearly two-year-long journey is now complete. The new building, located at 100 Forbes Drive in Martinsburg, W.Va. was constructed via a lease contract through the General Services Administration (GSA). Currently housing 57 government employees (military and civilian) and 100 contractors, the building still has ample space to accommodate the workforce growth expected to support the completely transitioned MLD program.

GSA worked closely with the Coast Guard to determine the projected needs of the NMC, issue the lease contract, and complete a building design on an exceptionally accelerated time schedule. The contract was awarded in September 2006, which signaled the start of the actual design process. This iterative process included a concerted effort to become certified under the

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System.[™]

Construction began in January 2007 with site clearing and excavation. Built on rock, there was a significant amount of blasting done to enable footings and utilities to be installed. The use of prefabricated concrete panels for the exterior walls was crucial to the construction process and timeline.

Temporary Facilities During Construction

With a targeted completion of November 2007, initial occupancy occurred in December 2007, with final occupancy in January 2008. Construction and occupancy of a nearly 60,000-square-foot building in less than one year is quite a feat, and one that would not have been possible without the outstanding teamwork of the building owner, construction contractor, GSA, and the Coast Guard, as well as some innovative construction techniques.



Building Green

Sponsored by the U.S. Green Building Counsel, LEED is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance “green” buildings. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health:

- sustainable site development,
- water savings,
- energy efficiency,
- materials selection,
- indoor environmental quality.¹

While all of this may sound complicated, it’s really quite a common-sense approach. For example, this building has a significant amount of windows to enable the transmission of ambient light throughout the building, reducing reliance on artificial light and energy consumption.

Other features such as low-volume water regulation, low volatile organic compound substances (paint, glue), products made from recycled materials, and recycling of construction waste all contributed to the building attaining LEED certification during the construction phase.

Through ongoing energy and water saving, product management, and recycling, the management team (consisting of the building owner, GSA, and the Coast Guard) intend to maintain the LEED certification as we transition from construction to occupancy. Currently, the project has enough “points” for LEED Silver certification, and is still working toward the LEED Gold rating. Only a dozen leased facilities across the nation have achieved either silver or gold certification.

Endnote:

¹www.usgbc.org.



Once the NMC's new location was chosen and simultaneous to construction, the Coast Guard began to relocate portions of the NMC to the Martinsburg area. As new employees were hired, they began work in temporary facilities in Kearneysville, W.Va., only a 20-minute ride from the new facility. Use of this temporary facility allowed the NMC to overcome space constraints at the Arlington facility, reduce the number of employee relocations, and generally reduce the workforce upheaval and stress associated with multiple relocations in a short time frame.

By the end of October 2007, the entire NMC was shoehorned into the temporary facilities in Kearneysville, marking the first time in over a year that the entire command was together in one location. While no major reorganization/relocation is free from employee angst, the NMC transition went about as well as can be expected, with 12 government employees relocating from Arlington, Va., and 34 hired directly to the Martinsburg area. The majority of the contract staff are local to the Martinsburg area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Main NMC website:
<http://www.uscg.mil/nmc>
Homeport: <http://homeport.uscg.mil>
Call center: (888) IASKNMC
Main phone: (304) 433-3400
E-mail: iasknmc@uscg.mil

So just where is the new National Maritime Center? It's located about one mile off of Interstate 81 in Martinsburg, W.Va. Take exit 16E from I-81 and travel east for about one mile, then turn right at the CVS. However, since we are located on what is a new road, I would not recommend inputting "100 Forbes Dr." on your GPS. Instead, input the address of the CVS, 1200 Edwin Miller Blvd., Martinsburg, W.Va., and you will be sure to find us.

About the author:

Mr. Jeffrey Brandt was the program support division chief for the National Maritime Center. He is currently NMC's chief of the mariner information division. He is a retired Coast Guard commander with nearly 27 years of active and reserve service. Mr. Brandt holds an unlimited master license and is a Department of Homeland Security-certified, level II program manager.

National Maritime Center personnel. USCG photo.

