

Faster rescue by Coast Guard

Juneau—Alaskans needing maritime search and rescue services now have a faster means of reaching the Coast Guard. A toll-free telephone system is now in service which connects the caller directly to Coast Guard rescue centers in Juneau and Kodiak.

According to head of the Coast Guard in Alaska, the new service—obtained by asking long-distance operators for ZENITH 5555 (fifty-five fifty-five)—is to be used primarily for emergency calls. Rear Admiral John B. Hayes emphasized that routine business calls to the Coast Guard should be made on regular telephone circuits.

Admiral Hayes added that the ZENITH 5555 line can also be used to report other situations which require fast response time from the Coast Guard. These are to report water pollution incidents, advise of aids to navigation not working or missing; and, to report suspected violations of U.S. fisheries laws and treaties, or gear conflicts.

Calls to ZENITH 5555 can be made from anywhere in Alaska and toll charges will be billed to the Coast Guard. "Our intent," said Admiral Hayes, "is to achieve faster response to emergency situations by making it easier for those in need to reach us."

Under federal law, persons who spill pollutants in any body of water are required to notify the Coast Guard. Spills on land

"We need help to insure the continued high-quality of Alaskan waters," said Admiral Hayes, "and we think the ZENITH 5555 system will make it easier for the public to notify us about pollution incidents."

Addressing the use of the ZENITH system for reporting aids to navigation outages, Admiral Hayes pointed out that the lives of all mariners depend on lights, buoys, and beacons operating properly in their locations.

While the Coast Guard hopes that mariners will continue to report suspected fisheries violations via radio, the ZENITH system should be used once a vessel reaches port. "Too often," observed Admiral Hayes, "we respond to late reports of suspected violations only to find that the offending vessel has departed."

"We have a potentially-good reporting system with ZENITH 5555," concluded Admiral Hayes, "but it will only work if it is kept open for emergency situations."



which have the potential to enter water are also to be reported. This same law charges the Coast Guard with the responsibility for insuring clean-up of these spills.