

## Washington State Department of Transportation - NEWS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2012

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## New drawspan rules keep SR 520 peak traffic flowing

*1-2 hours notice for drawspan openings midday, nights and weekends*

SEATTLE – Under new rules published today, the State Route 520 floating bridge drawspan will not open to boats from 6-9 a.m. or 4-7 p.m. on weekdays – a move that keeps peak commute traffic flowing between Seattle and the Eastside.

The rules are spelled out in the U.S. Coast Guard's [Local Notice to Mariners](#), which updates SR 520 drawspan requirements that were published last month. The rules were revised because construction barges block one of the routes owners of taller vessels previously used to pass beneath the highway.

Marine traffic taller than 45 feet can request the Washington State Department of Transportation open the bridge's drawspan during the midday, nights and weekends with a minimum of one or two hours advance notice, depending on the time of day.

"These rules guarantee that the bridge is open to vehicle traffic when commuters need it most, and we appreciate the Coast Guard's efforts as we balance the needs of boaters with bridge users and construction," SR 520 Program Director Julie Meredith said.

"By working collaboratively with WSDOT, Lake Washington will remain navigable for our maritime community," said Coast Guard Bridge Administrator Randall Overton.

Many boaters continue to use the western navigation channel, which accommodates vessels up to 45 feet tall. Since April 1, construction barges building a replacement floating bridge have prevented boats from using the SR 520 eastern navigation channel. Except for special holidays when boat traffic is heaviest, the eastern channel is no longer passable for boats as crews install anchors for the future floating bridge and prepare to build a new east highrise.

The new rules for drawspan openings keep traffic moving and still allow boats taller than 45 feet to pass through SR 520. Details are posted online at the Coast Guard [website](#) and summarized on the [SR 520 drawspan page](#).

### New SR 520 drawspan requirements at a glance

- Drawspan openings are not required during the peak commutes, 6-9 a.m. and 4-7 p.m. weekdays.
- Boaters with vessels taller than 45 feet must give at least one hour notice if they wish to pass through the SR 520 floating bridge drawspan between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., seven days a week.

Drawspan openings during this time will occur on the hour and half-hour, with the latest at 3:30 p.m. Drawspan operations take up to 30 minutes to complete.

- Boaters must give at least two hours for a drawspan opening between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. on weekdays, or between 4 p.m. and 9 a.m. on weekends.
- The contractor will assure that both the west and east navigation channels will be open for several major events and holidays when boat traffic is heaviest. Those dates include opening day of boating season, Memorial Day weekend, Fourth of July, Seafair weekend and Labor Day weekend.

The new drawspan opening rules are expected to be in place until August 2015. WSDOT will work with vessel pilots and the boating community to minimize highway traffic disruptions. WSDOT will use several tools to give the public as much advance notice as possible when the bridge is scheduled to close to traffic for a drawspan opening.

- Electronic message signs on highways approaching SR 520 will list the scheduled time for the closure, allowing drivers to plan for delays or choose an alternate route.
- On weekdays and when possible after hours and on weekends, updated information will be posted on the WSDOT [What's Happening Now construction page](#).
- Updated information will be posted on the WSDOT [traffic](#) and [travel alert](#) Web pages.
- Follow WSDOT on Twitter: [@wsdot\\_traffic](#) for Puget Sound traffic.
- Updated information via WSDOT's 511 information line in advance on weekdays and during a closure at night and on weekends.

Each year, up to 20 vessels taller than 64 feet pass through the SR 520 drawspan after hours and on weekends. Since construction started in the eastern navigation channel, WSDOT has conducted a handful of daytime drawspan openings with advance notice.

The target for opening the new floating bridge to traffic is the end of 2014. The completed floating bridge will not have a movable drawspan and will have an eastern navigation channel able to accommodate vessels 70 feet tall. Information about the [SR 520 floating bridge project is online](#).

#### **Hyperlinks in this release**

- Coast Guard Local Notice to Mariners [www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=lnmDistrict&region=13](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=lnmDistrict&region=13) and [www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/lnms/lnm13172012.pdf](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/lnms/lnm13172012.pdf)
- WSDOT drawspan page [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/BridgeAndLandings/DrawspanInfo.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/BridgeAndLandings/DrawspanInfo.htm)
- WSDOT What's Happening Now [www.wsdot.wa.gov/construction/pugetsound/today.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/construction/pugetsound/today.htm)
- WSDOT traffic and travel [www.wsdot.com/traffic/seattle/default.aspx](http://www.wsdot.com/traffic/seattle/default.aspx)  
[www.wsdot.com/traffic/trafficalerts/PugetSound.aspx](http://www.wsdot.com/traffic/trafficalerts/PugetSound.aspx)
- WSDOT traffic on Twitter [twitter.com/#!/wsdot\\_traffic](https://twitter.com/#!/wsdot_traffic)

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