

MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Volume XXI Issue: 024

Time: 1600

Date: April 21, 2021

HIGH WATER SAFETY ADVISORY:
VTS Measure at Wilkinson Point (37' and falling)

When the Baton Rouge gauge reads 37' and falling, a U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) Measure is established in accordance with the Navigation Safety Regulations, Code of Federal Regulations Title 33, Subpart 161.11, for Wilkinson Point, Lower Mississippi River (LMR) from Mile 232 Above Head of Passes (AHP), to Mile 237 AHP. This VTS Measure is needed to protect persons and vessels from the potential safety hazards associated with the effects of high water levels on the Lower Mississippi River. This Measure is effective at 6:00 A.M. on Friday, April 23, 2021 with the following provisions:

1. All vessels are limited to a max tow size of 36 barges with 280 HP per standard barge and 650 HP per oversize barge for southbound transits within the Wilkinson Point special area. For the purpose of this calculation, barges with dimensions 290' x 50' or larger are considered "oversize" while barges with dimensions less than 290' x 50' are considered "standard." If one of the barge dimensions (length or width) meets or exceeds the 290' x 50', then the barge is considered "oversize." Empty barges may be calculated at $\frac{1}{2}$ the horsepower requirements to that of a loaded barge when computing the overall horsepower requirement. Vessels unable to meet the HP requirements must make adjustments to meet the requirements prior to transiting the Wilkinson Point special area. Towing vessels with Z-drive propulsion types may be treated as having a horsepower 20% greater than the engine's rating for the purpose of this calculation. VTS may approve exceptions up to two standard barges on a case-by-case basis based on conditions and size of tow. An 8000 HP standard towing vessel or a 6600 HP Z-drive towing vessel may push a 30-barge tow.
2. VTS LMR is managing the vessel queue at the Wilkinson Point special area. Vessels will contact the Vessel Traffic Center via VHF-FM channel 12; and can be hailed using the Call Sign "BATON ROUGE TRAFFIC". In the event the VTS cannot be reached via radio, they may also be contacted via the 24-hour contact number at (504) 365-2512. VTS will establish "check in/reporting procedures" for down bound tows at MM 255 (Port Hudson Light) and MM 245 (above Thomas Point), as well as up bound tows at MM 219 (Sardine Crossing) and MM 226 (Bottom of Baton Rouge Anchorage). All tows operating between MM 255 to MM 219 will be required to provide a sail plan to the VTS with the following information:
 - a. Name of vessel.
 - b. Current location.
 - c. Vessel type, horsepower, and propulsion type (Z-drive or conventional).
 - d. Tow configuration.
 - e. Number of loaded barges & number of empty barges (distinguishing oversize and standard).
 - f. Number of red flag barges in tow.
3. All down bound traffic will transit the Wilkinson Point special area during daylight hours only. Up bound traffic may transit Wilkinson Point any time during which the queue is empty of down bound traffic. Passenger vessels will have a priority position in the queue.
4. Local harbor fleet tows of up to four barges may transit down bound at Wilkinson Point at night but must first coordinate with VTS. Horsepower requirements still apply. Northbound vessels have priority in the queue at night.
5. Up bound vessels unable to average 3 MPH around Wilkinson Point must use a Private Assist Vessel (PAV).

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6. **Vessels are prohibited from meeting or overtaking other vessels** from MM 232 AHP to MM 237 AHP unless cleared by VTS to do so.
7. Tows shall be squared off. On tows with five or more barges, there shall be no spiked barges that extend 50' beyond the head of the tow. VTS may grant exceptions to this requirement on a case-by-case basis based on conditions and the size of tow.
8. Whenever possible, tank barges shall be placed in a protected position in the tow makeup (not on the head of the tow or on either outboard string).
9. All southbound tows entering Baton Rouge Harbor (Devil's Swamp) with more than one barge attached shall hire a private assist vessel (PAV) to accompany them into the harbor and contact VTS to enter the queue.

This Marine Safety Information Bulletin **supersedes** Volume XXI **Issue 023** VTS Measure at Wilkinson Point (Above 38' and Falling), and **is in addition to** Volume XXI, **Issue 015** Baton Rouge 35' and Rising MM 167.5 – 234 VTS Measure.

For additional information, contact the following:

Vessel Traffic Center Lower Mississippi River: (504) 365-2512 (24 HR), VHF-FM ch 05A, 11, or 12
Coast Guard Baton Rouge Waterways Management: (225) 298-5400 X230
Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Command Center: (504) 365-2200



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