



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

October 8, 2025
Agenda Item No. 6.3

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

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TITLE: Harbormaster Update – September 2025 Activities

ABSTRACT:

The Harbormaster oversees the City Harbor Department and is responsible for the management of the City's mooring fields and Balboa Yacht Basin marina, support for the Harbor Commission, municipal code enforcement on the harbor, events and marine activities permitting, safety and rescue operations, management of the Marina Park visitor serving marina, marine sanitation pump out equipment and public pier maintenance, water quality monitoring and maintenance, impound and disposition of abandoned and unclaimed vessels and public relations and information dissemination on and about Newport Harbor as well as several special projects.

This report will update the Harbor Commission and the public on the Harbor Department's recent activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- 2) Receive and file.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Harbor Department is pleased to provide the following summary of departmental activities for September 2025, the department's mission of keeping Newport Harbor **CLEAN, SAFE, and WELL-ENJOYED.**

Clean

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the cleanliness of the harbor. Highlights included:

- **Construction Site BMP Enforcement:**

Several Harbor Safety Officers (HSOs) attended a symposium on Construction Site Best Management Practices hosted by OC Public Works. Within a week, HSOs identified noncompliance at a site adjacent to the Harbor and issued a Stop Work Order, directing the contractor to clean the storm drain system. Unfortunately, the contractor attempted to wash debris into the drain, resulting in an administrative citation.

- **Pump-Out System:**

The pump-out station at Marina Park was repaired and improved, ensuring continued support for vessel operators seeking compliant wastewater management. (Quest #643252)

- **Impound Vessel Bird Control Program:**

A new program was initiated to keep impounded vessels clean and free of bird waste. (Quest #643425)

- **Trash Rover Operations:**

The “trash rover” was successfully reintroduced and deployed in the West Anchorage. HSOs conducted a satisfactory operational test, collected debris, and interacted with numerous members of the public, explaining the rover’s functionality. The rover is now secured at Harbor Department Base. (Quest #643824)

- **Fishing Regulation Enforcement:**

Enforcement efforts increased on fishing rules, including prohibitions on overhead casting, compliance with restricted fishing locations, and a two-pole limit per angler. Several Notices of Violation (NOV) were issued for violations. (Quest #644823 and others)

- **Unpermitted Dock Construction:**

Code Enforcement Case HD25-0827 was initiated for dock construction without a permit in the Balboa Coves

- **Rhine Trash Skimmer:**

The trash skimmer at the Rhine Wharf was intentionally deactivated during a period of increased jellyfish activity to prevent equipment damage.

Safe

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the safety of the harbor.

Highlights included:

- **Small Vessel Rental Safety Training:**
Rental operator personnel were educated on COLREGS and the need to provide customers with basic safety instruction after an incident involving the Harbormaster.
- **Anchoring Enforcement:**
HSOs addressed multiple incidents of vessels anchored outside designated boundaries. (Quests #643264, #643263 and others)
- **PFD & Speeding Violations:**
Numerous safety violations were observed and corrected, including bow riders, excessive speed, and minors not wearing PFDs. (Quests #643261, #643260, #643259, #643256, #643245, #643235 among others)
- **Social Service Outreach:**
Staff collaborated with a City social worker to conduct a welfare check on a liveaboard permittee.
- **Vessel Incidents:**
 - An electric vessel fouled its propeller in the Marina Park swim line and spent the night on the long dock. (Quest #643851)
 - A Personal Water Craft (PWC) operator capsized after creating their own wake; education was provided. (Quest #643896)
 - Additional PWC speeding violations addressed. (Quests #644020, #644021)
- **Major Vessel Theft Incident:**
A 55' Sunseeker was stolen from a private dock on the Peninsula, resulting in significant damage to three vessels (including one sunk) in the Alpha and BYC mooring fields. Minor damage to several other vessels was investigated. The suspect was apprehended. Harbor Department provided support to the OC Sheriffs Harbor Patrol, which is the lead agency on the investigation and disposition. We also collaborated with TowBoatUS and local marine contractors on cleanup and restoration. (Quests #644519, #644521, #644536, #644538)
- **Tow Requests:**
A vessel well-known to the department requested assistance onto a mooring after entering the harbor without a mooring sub-permit reservation. As neither

the vessel nor the operator was in peril and the vessel was leaking fluids, the request was denied. The owner was advised to arrange commercial tow services to a boat yard.

- **Rescues & Safety Actions:**

- Kayaker rescued off 15th Street Pier. (Quest #645021)
- Dawn Patrol identified multiple berthing problems, including vessels side-tied and a chase boat operating without lights. (Quest #645697)
- Unsafe rental boat operation observed; follow-up with management was initiated. (Quest #646293)
- Double-berthed vessel blocking channel at a waterfront restaurant. (Quest #646497)
- Bridge jumping addressed at 38th Street. (Quest #646612)

Well-enjoyed

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the enjoyment of the harbor. Highlights included:

- **Unpermitted Charters:**

Staff observed repeated activity from a known vessel likely operating as an unpermitted charter. Discussions held and citations issued. (Quest #643272)

- **Noise Violations:**

A loud music complaint resulted in a citation. (Quest #643270)

- **Sub-Permit Oversight:**

At the insistence of a Peninsula resident, a visiting mariner utilizing a series of sub-permits was relocated. (Quest #643313)

- **Lost Tender:**

A tender lost from a permittee's vessel en route to a Ship Shape stop was retrieved and returned. (Quest #643396)

- **SUP Vending Machine:**

An unusual stand-up paddleboard vending machine was found in a carport near the ferry and referred to zoning experts in the Community Development Department. (Quest #645780)

- **Electric Vessel Charging Station:**

Installation of the Marina Park public EV charging station began. This project, first initiated in 2018, is now moving forward.

- **Public Access:**

Lobster traps waiting to be loaded onto a vessel were being stored on the Rhine Wharf sidewalk. The requirement for a permit and the requirement not to block public access were communicated to the lobsterman responsible. (Quest #646511)

Odds and Ends

Significant efforts were expended to address harbor-related matters other than cleanliness, safety, and enjoyment. Highlights included:

- **Mooring Advertisement:**

Staff addressed a mooring permittee advertising for sub-permits online. (Quest #645070)

- **Late-Night Marina Park Docking:**

A vessel without registration or insurance made fast at Marina Park at 0330 hours. HSOs contacted the operator, explained requirements, and inspected the vessel for operability and sanitation compliance. (Quest #643850)

- **Unusual Call for Service:**

Individuals suspended aerial silks from the Lido Bridge to rehearse a performance. Responding officers addressed trespass, hazard, and navigation risks. (Quest #642058)

- **Patrol Vessel Upgrades:**

- Major upgrades were initiated on the Department's oldest patrol vessel (2007), with partial funding provided by the Newport Harbor Foundation.
- Significant fuel system repairs were conducted on another patrol vessel.

- **Permits:**

A summary of actions taken on permit applications not resulting in issuance is included with the statistics for the month

Conclusion

The Harbor Department's September 2025 activities reflect ongoing efforts to maintain Newport Harbor as a **Clean, Safe, and Well-Enjoyed** resource. Staff will continue to prioritize compliance, education, and collaboration with our community partners to achieve these goals.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Harbor Department Statistics Infographic
Attachment B – Harbor Department Statistics by Month, Current Year
Attachment C – Harbor Department Statistics, Year over Year Comparison
Attachment D – Harbor Department Definitions