

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 22, 2020

Admiral Karl Schultz
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue S.E.
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Admiral Schultz:

We write to request information about the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) readiness amid the COVID-19 outbreak. USCG missions require members to serve on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response on shore and at sea- facilitating the safe flow of commerce into our ports, conducting law enforcement activities, and performing search and rescue operations. The COVID-19 response compounds daily challenges USCG faces in fulfilling its mission and requires proactive planning to address evolving risks.

We find ourselves in an unprecedented time. Like essential workers across the country, the mission essential operations of USCG do not inherently lend themselves to social distancing or rescheduling. As warmer weather marks the start of recreational boating season across the country and enhanced counter-narcotics and drug interdiction efforts continue, the demand for a ready and healthy USCG workforce persists. Conditions for members deployed aboard cutters are particularly challenging, where medical care and testing is limited. As we learned from the unfortunate levels of infection on the U.S. Navy's USS Theodore Roosevelt, cases on vessels at sea can spread widely. Resources must be available to protect the health and safety of members and prevent the spread of COVID-19 while conducting operations at sea.

As the nation continues to combat the COVID-19 outbreak, federal response agencies must also stand ready for the approaching hurricane season. Hurricane response requires coordination across all levels of government and response challenges will be exacerbated by COVID-19. Disaster response resources and personnel are already stretched thin and this hurricane season is projected to be above average. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies like USCG, must take a lead role in developing plans for hurricane response during this pandemic.

To better understand the current readiness of the USCG, including the ability to respond to the threat of COVID-19 and the 2020 hurricane response, please respond to the following questions:

1. How has COVID-19 impacted USCG readiness, particularly for emergency response?
2. How is USCG preparing members for deployment aboard cutters and what measures are you implementing to ensure COVID-19 is not brought onboard?

3. Are rapid COVID-19 tests available aboard USCG cutters? If not, are there plans to make them available and what are current procedures for isolating and treating suspected cases?
4. Does USCG have sufficient PPE to ensure the safety of all members at sea?
5. Has USCG adjusted procedures for the boarding of non-USCG vessels and the screening of individuals being brought aboard USCG cutters?
6. Has the USCG made plans for needed staffing adjustments due to potential shortfalls stemming from COVID-19 infections or required self-isolation measures?
7. How is USCG preparing for hurricane response during the COVID-19 outbreak?
 - a. Do you anticipate COVID-19 to impact the ability of USCG to move and/or reposition assets for hurricane response?
8. Has federal interagency planning for the 2020 hurricane season addressed COVID-19 specific challenges?
 - a. Has any PPE for USCG members been dedicated to disaster response efforts outside of COVID-19?
 - b. Will testing kits be available for hurricane response efforts?

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress