



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

U.S. Coast Guard
Sector Charleston
Waterways Management Division
1050 Register Street
North Charleston, SC 29405
E-Mail: charlestonwaterways@uscg.mil

MSIB Number: 09-26
Date: May 27, 2026

SECTOR CHARLESTON UPCOMING 2026 ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON

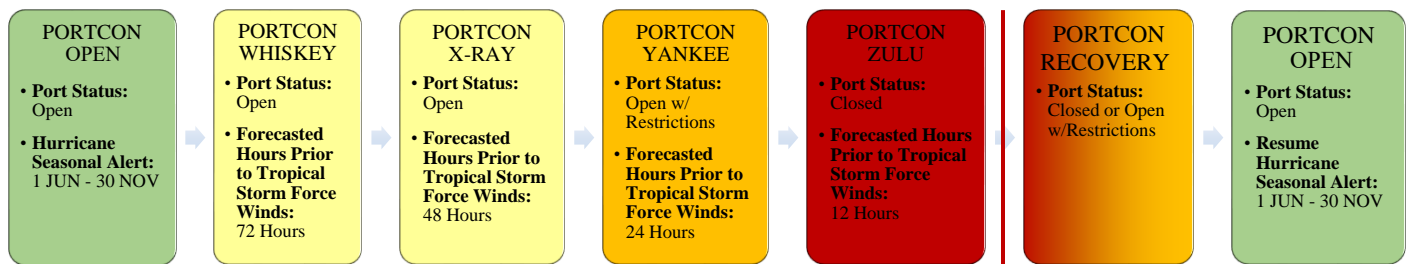
The Atlantic Hurricane Season will begin June 1, 2026, and run through November 30, 2026. During this timeframe, the threat of severe weather is increased, and the assigned Port Condition (PORTCON) will remain PORTCON OPEN. Port Status will remain OPEN for all ports and waterways within the Sector Charleston Captain of the Port (COTP) Zone. These waters are identified in 33 CFR 3.35-15 and lie between the intersection of the North Carolina – South Carolina border and the northern bank of the Savannah River.

In the event of forecasted tropical storm force winds (sustained winds of 34 kts/39 mph or greater) from a tropical cyclone, the Sector Charleston COTP will coordinate with the Heavy Weather Advisory Group (HWAG) to evaluate port preparation and changes in PORTCON.

The HWAG consists of marine transportation system (MTS) professionals local to the Sector Charleston COTP Zone, providing input on local operations and coordination for overall port well-being in response to severe weather events.

The COTP will announce changes to PORTCONs via a Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) and a Broadcast Notice to Mariners when forecasted tropical storm force winds (sustained winds of 34 kts/39 mph or greater) from a tropical cyclone threaten South Carolina. In the event of forecasted severe weather, the below PORTCON timeline will be utilized.

Port Condition (PORTCON) Timeline in Preparation and Recovery from Tropical Storm Force Winds



Landfall

PORTCON WHISKEY through ZULU represent preparatory phases prior to tropical storm force winds. These PORTCONs may be used in a tiered approach without utilizing all four, and stipulate safety measures suitable for the storm's severity.

PORTCON RECOVERY is utilized following the departure of any storm driven threats and may follow any of the preparatory phased PORTCONs.

2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season – Charleston COTP Zone

To provide greater flexibility in assessing PORTCONs for the entire geographic region of the Charleston COTP Zone, the Area of Response (AOR) has been divided into the following areas:

Northern AOR – McClellanville, Georgetown, Myrtle Beach, and Little River

Charleston AOR – Charleston Harbor

Southern AOR – Port Royal, Hilton Head, and Beaufort

Pending storm severity and as appropriate, the following safety measures will be implemented:

PORTCON WHISKEY: Port Status is OPEN. All vessel and port facilities shall exercise due diligence in preparation for potential storm impacts. All oceangoing commercial vessels and oceangoing barges greater than 500 gross tons are to review plans for departing the port 24 hours prior to the storm's arrival. Vessels unable to depart within this timeframe must immediately contact Coast Guard Sector Charleston and submit a written safe mooring plan with proof of facility owner/operator approval to charlestonwaterways@uscg.mil for review by the COTP. Submittal does not guarantee COTP acceptance.

Vessels bound for this port, which are unable to depart 24 hours prior to threatening winds making landfall, are advised to seek an alternate destination.

Slow-moving vessels may be ordered to depart to ensure safe avoidance of the incoming storm upon the anticipation of setting PORTCON X-Ray. The Heavy Weather Advisory Group (HWAG) will make recommendations to the COTP to identify vessels that may need to be diverted to ensure port safety.

Pleasure craft are advised to seek safe harbor. Commercial vessel operators authorized by the COTP to remain inside the Charleston COTP Zone, and recreational boat owners, should ensure their vessels are secure at berth and will not pose a hazard to surrounding vessels, the navigable channel, or the environment.

Mariners are reminded that drawbridges may not operate when sustained wind speeds reach 25 mph or when an evacuation is in progress.

Facilities are advised to review their heavy weather plan and take all necessary precautions to adequately prepare for the forecasted conditions. Ports and waterfront facilities shall consider removing all debris and securing potential flying hazards. Container stacking plans should be implemented. Waterfront facilities that are unable to reduce container stacking height to no more than 4 high must submit a container stacking protocol to the COTP.

PORTCON X-RAY: Port status is OPEN. In addition to safety measures outlined in PORTCON Whiskey, all oceangoing commercial vessels and oceangoing barges greater than 500 gross tons are to finalize plans for departing the port prior to the storm's arrival. These vessels shall depart immediately upon the setting of PORTCON Yankee. During PORTCON X-Ray, slow-moving vessels may be ordered to depart to ensure safe avoidance of the incoming storm. A COTP Order will be issued to vessels required to depart early. COTP orders requiring vessel departure will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Vessels unable to depart within this timeframe must immediately contact Coast Guard Sector Charleston and submit a written safe mooring plan with proof of facility owner/operator approval to charlestonwaterways@uscg.mil for review by the COTP. Submittal does not guarantee COTP acceptance.

Vessels with the COTP's permission to remain in port must implement their pre-approved mooring arrangement.

All vessels and port facilities shall consider ensuring potential flying debris is removed or secured. Hazardous

materials/pollution hazards should be secured in a safe manner and away from waterfront areas. Facilities should continue to implement container stacking protocols. Containers should not exceed 4 tiers, unless previously approved by the COTP. Containers carrying hazardous materials may not be stacked above 2 tiers. Terminal operators should prepare to terminate all cargo operations.

The COTP may require additional precautions to ensure the safety of the ports and waterways.

Coast Guard Port Assessment Teams may deploy to validate implementation of PORTCON X-Ray.

PORTCON Yankee: Port Status is OPEN w/RESTRICTIONS. The coastal South Carolina ports of Little River, Myrtle Beach, Georgetown, McClellanville, Charleston, Beaufort, Hilton Head, and/or Port Royal are open to outbound vessel traffic only. Commercial inbound vessels are restricted from entering the port, and are advised to seek an alternate destination unless expressly authorized by the COTP Charleston or a designated representative.

In addition to safety measures outlined in PORTCON X-Ray, all oceangoing commercial vessels and oceangoing barges greater than 500 gross tons currently in port are to prepare to get underway at this time. Vessels authorized by the COTP to remain in port shall, in accordance with their safe mooring plan, take appropriate precautionary measures to secure their vessels.

Facilities are to follow their heavy weather plans and consider taking all necessary precautions to adequately prepare for forecasted conditions. Such precautions include: appropriate container stacking protocols, moving cargo within or off the port for securing purposes, crane and other port/facility equipment preparations, and/or termination of cargo operations not associated with storm preparations. All facilities shall continue to operate in accordance with approved Facility Security Plans and comply with the requirements of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA).

Coast Guard Port Assessment Teams may conduct PORTCON Yankee validation.

PORTCON Zulu: Port Status is CLOSED. All port waterfront operations and vessel movements are suspended except final preparations previously approved by the COTP in which are necessary to ensure the safety of the port and facilities.

Commercial vessel operators and owners of recreational boats remaining in port are responsible for ensuring their vessels are secured at berth and will not pose a hazard to surrounding vessels, the navigable channel, or the environment.

Coast Guard Port Assessment Teams may conduct final port assessments.

PORTCON Recovery: Port Status is CLOSED or OPEN w/RESTRICTIONS. Threatening winds (34 kts/39 mph) are no longer a threat to the area; however, damage may have occurred, and response/recovery operations are in progress.

If damage has occurred and has compromised the safe navigation of vessel movements, the Port Status is CLOSED. All port waterfront operations and vessel movements are suspended to ensure the safety of the port and facilities.

PORTCON OPEN: All related restrictions are lifted.

Due to potential effects throughout coastal South Carolina, mariners are urged to transit with caution considering the possibility of Aids to Navigation discrepancies or other hazards to navigation. If discovered, please report any of these issues to the United States Coast Guard Sector Charleston's Command Center.

****To better facilitate storm preparedness, oceangoing vessels over 500 gross tons that anticipate remaining in port for the duration of hurricane season are urged to submit their safe mooring plans to charlestonwaterways@uscg.mil by June 5, 2026.****

For questions or concerns regarding this MSIB, please contact the Sector Charleston 24-hour Command Center at (833) 453-1261.