

Coast Guard attends keel authentication ceremony for next generation heavy weather surf boats



A preliminary blueprint of the second-generation special-purpose craft – heavy weather (SPC-HWX II) boat sits on display during a keel laying authentication, July 8, 2026, in Mount Vernon, Washington. Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard | Petty Officer 2nd Class Briana Carter.

SEATTLE – The U.S. Coast Guard and Rozema Boat Works authenticated the keel for the first special purpose craft – heavy weather (SPC-HWX II) during a ceremony July 8 in Mount Vernon, Washington, marking a significant construction milestone on a vessel that will enhance the Coast Guard's ability to operate in extreme weather and surf conditions in the Pacific Northwest.

A keel authentication is a time-honored maritime tradition marking the formal start of a vessel's construction. Rear Adm. Jon Hickey, deputy commandant for systems, component acquisition executive and chief acquisition officer for the Coast Guard attended the event with Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Wash.; and other distinguished guests.

During the ceremony, Larsen and Chief Warrant Officer Beth Slade, commanding officer of the National Motor Lifeboat School, welded their initials into the keel, signifying the keel is "well and truly laid."

"This platform is going to bring significantly enhanced capabilities to the Coast Guard in the Pacific Northwest. Most importantly, it's going to save lives," Slade said. "The communities we serve depend on the ocean for their livelihood and this platform will enable us to support them in the extreme weather conditions we experience here in the Northwest. It has been an honor to work alongside my fellow surfmen, Coast Guard acquisitions, and Rozema Boatworks to help bring this vessel into service."

The Coast Guard plans to acquire up to six SPC-HWX II vessels to replace the 52-foot heavy weather boats, which entered service in the 1950s and 1960s and retired in 2021.

Like their predecessors, the SPC-HWX II will be homeported in the Pacific Northwest and designed to perform Coast Guard missions in extreme weather and challenging surf conditions beyond the capabilities of other boats.

The SPC-HWX II will support search and rescue, disabled vessel towing, law enforcement, ports, waterways and coastal security, as well as other Coast Guard missions.

Measuring 64 feet in length, the SPC-HWX II design features self-righting capability and can operate in 35-foot seas, 25-foot surf and winds up to 60 knots. Powered by twin 1,200-horsepower diesel engines, it will reach speeds of 20 knots,

tow up to 300 tons, and operate up to 150 miles offshore.

With accommodation for a relief crew, the SPC-HWX II will have an endurance of up to 48 hours, a critical feature for long-range heavy-weather missions.

Delivery of the first SPC-HWX II is scheduled for 2027.