

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy Departs Seattle for Arctic Deployment



The Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) begins its departure from Coast Guard Base Seattle for their annual Arctic deployment, June 12, 2024. The Healy will conduct high latitude science and research missions in the Arctic. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Annika Hirschler)
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SEATTLE – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) departed Seattle Wednesday, beginning their months-long Arctic deployment.

The crew will support scientists conducting three distinct science missions during Healy's 2024 Arctic deployment.

The first mission is supporting the Arctic Observing Network,

funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF). During this mission, the cutter will service subsurface moorings in the Beaufort Sea, north of Alaska, and conduct a broad-scale survey of the boundary current system from the Bering Strait to the western Canadian Arctic. This program has been ongoing for more than two decades to improve understanding of the Pacific Arctic ecosystem in a changing climate. Ancillary programs include measurements of harmful algae blooms and a variety of biogeochemical parameters.

For the second mission, Healy will embark 20 early career polar scientists and their mentors on a Polar Chief Scientist Training Cruise sponsored by the NSF and University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System to conduct multidisciplinary research. During a transit of the Northwest Passage, these early career scientists will conduct mapping to fill critical bathymetric gaps and scientific sampling across various disciplines, in addition to developing skills in shipboard leadership, coordination, and execution.

The final mission of the deployment will support the Global Ocean Ship-Based Hydrographic Investigations Program (GO-SHIP), where they aim to make the first ever single ship, single season, high-resolution transect of hydrographic observations across the Arctic basin. This global effort builds on data from as far back as the 1990s to collect repeat oceanographic data from a series of ocean basin transects around the world. The high-resolution surface-to-bottom multidisciplinary observations the team collects during this mission will be compared to earlier partial datasets to better understand the Arctic environment.

“We are excited to support three significant missions in the northern high latitudes,” said Healy’s Commanding Officer Capt. Michele Schallip. “Two of these missions are part of long-standing data collection projects, aimed at enhancing our understanding of a changing Arctic. The third mission is

dedicated to inspiring future principal investigators who will continue this important work. At a time when scientific interest in the Arctic Ocean Basin is intensifying, Healy substantially enhances the American Arctic research capability. Healy's crew have been unwavering in their efforts during our in-port maintenance period, ensuring the cutter is ready to meet the demands of these missions."

Healy is the United States' largest and most technologically advanced polar icebreaker and the Coast Guard's only icebreaker designed and equipped with scientific instrumentation by the NSF to support Arctic research. The platform is ideally specialized for scientific missions, providing access to the most remote reaches of the Arctic Ocean. Healy is designed to break 4.5 feet of ice continuously at three knots and can operate in temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit.