

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Time-Honored tradition of *National Maritime Day* and *Blessing of the Fleet* ceremony returns to Navy Pier in Chicago on Friday, May 19 at 11 AM

Celebration to be followed by the kick-off to U.S. Coast Guard's National Safe Boating Week

CHICAGO — Chicago's Marine community, U.S. Coast Guard; Chicago Police Marine Unit; Chicago Fire Department Marine Unit and Illinois Department of Natural Resources will join the International Shipmasters Association Lodge #3 in the time-honored tradition and celebration of National Maritime Day and Blessing of the Fleet on Friday, May 19 at 11 a.m. at Navy Pier, one of the top nonprofit cultural destinations in the Midwest.

National Maritime Day is to honor all Seafarers who "Went Down to the Sea in Ships," particularly Merchant Mariners who died in battle. During World War II, more than 6,600 merchant mariners and 700 ships were lost. A joint congressional resolution was passed on May 20, 1933 declaring May 22 as National Maritime Day, commemorating the first successful transoceanic voyage of the SS SAVANNAH under steam propulsion, thus making a material contribution to the advancement of ocean transportation. Since that time, the US Armed forces, Merchant Marine and American shipyards have proudly been instrumental in the safety and security of our country and the growth of the maritime industry.

A wreath in honor of the seafarers will be blessed and laid upon the waters adjacent to Navy Pier from aboard the Shoreline Sightseeing vessel, M/V CAP STREETER. Following the wreath laying, all attending vessels will pass by the M/V CAP STREETER to participate in the Blessing of the Fleet.

The public is invited to view this free and colorful ceremony, commencing at 11 a.m. at Navy Pier's Wave Wall on the South Dock. The honorary wreath laying and playing of "Taps" can be seen from Navy Pier on the dock or on the water.

This day of maritime observance also includes the kick-off to the U.S. Coast Guard's 2017 National Safe Boating Week Campaign. Representatives from the Chicago Police and Fire Department, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Coast Guard are partnering to educate boaters on safe boating practices.

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National Safe Boating Week is an annual observance sponsored by the National Safe Boating Council, endorsed by the U.S. Coast Guard and promoted by multiple state and local agencies in the United States. Ride along opportunities aboard agency assets will be available for the media.

There will also be media availabilities and one-on-one interviews with subject matter experts from Chicago Police Department; Chicago Fire Department; Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Sequence of Events:

- 10:45 AM National Maritime Day participants gather at Navy Pier's Wave Wall to get ready for the ceremony. Recreational boats are invited to form a line and hold at Dime Pier. Boats to monitor VHF Ch. 68 for future communications.
- 11:00 AM National Maritime Ceremony near Navy Pier's Wave Wall, located on the South Dock below Pier Park
 Ceremony line-up:
 National Anthem
 Opening and Introduction given by Captain Nels Lund, President Chicago lodge # 3 of the International Ship Masters Association
 Invocation given by Chaplain Father David Dillon O.C.
 Presidential Proclamation read by Floyd Miras, US Maritime Administration
 Commentary by CDR, Zeita Merchant U.S.C.G., CO MSU, Chicago
 Closing comments by Captain Nels Lund, Chicago Lodge President
 Blessing of The Wreath in Honor of Fallen Seafarers given by Chaplain Father David Dillon, O.C.
- 11:20 AM Shoreline Sightseeing's vessel "Cap Streeter", escorted by participating US Coast Guard; Chicago Police & Fire Marine Units plus IL Department of NR proceed to Inner Basin.
- 11:30 AM Wreath laying by "Cap Streeter", followed by "taps" to honor all the sailors and mariners who have "Gone Down To the Sea in Ships"
 An order will be given for a simultaneous single long sounding of whistles, horns and sirens from all vessels as a salute via VHF Ch. 68
- 11:35 AM After the sounding salutes end, all vessels in the queue will be lead by the USCG; Chicago Police & Fire Marine Unit Patrol Boats and IL Dept. NR to pass on the Port Side of the SV Cap Streeter when coming up from astern of it to receive the blessing and are dismissed
 Blessing to be conducted by Father David Dillon O.C.
- 11:45 AM "Cap Streeter" returns to its berth at Navy Pier
- Following The U.S. Coast Guard will kick-off Safe Boating Week from the southwest wall of Navy Pier

For more information about Chicago Maritime Day or the International Shipmasters Association, Chicago Lodge #3, visit: www.chicagoshipmasters.com or contact Joe O'Connor at (708) 366-5532 or joeconnor7321@sbcglobal.net.

About International Shipmasters Association Lodge #3

As part of the International Shipmasters Association, Chicago Lodge #3's mission is to give back to their fellow mariners, and to use their resources to help others as well. Key projects supported by Chicago Lodge #3 include the International Seaman's Center at Burns Harbor. It was established in 1972 as a holistic chaplaincy for men and women who crew the ships of the waters of the Great Lakes. Their efforts now encompass crews visiting ports around northern Indiana and southern Wisconsin.

Additionally, Chicago Lodge #3 hosts Chicago's Christmas Ship, the USCG Cutter *Mackinaw* every December when she comes to Navy Pier to distribute Christmas trees to needy families.

In conjunction with the US Coast Guard and Marine Safety Unit Chicago, Chicago Lodge #3 produces Chicago Maritime Industry Day annually. The purpose of the conference is to share maritime discussions and expertise by the local marine community.

Navy Pier Mission Statement

Navy Pier is the People's Pier, Chicago's lakefront treasure, welcoming all and offering dynamic and eclectic experiences through partnerships and programs that inspire discovery and wonder.

About Navy Pier

Located on Lake Michigan, Navy Pier one of the top-attended leisure destinations in the Midwest, stretching more than six city blocks and welcoming more than nine million guests annually. Originally opened in 1916 as a shipping and recreation facility, this Chicago landmark showcases more than 50 acres of parks, restaurants, attractions, retail shops, sightseeing and dining cruise boats, exposition facilities and more. In 2017, Navy Pier continues to celebrate its centennial with a series of special events and programming, year-round rides on the *Centennial Wheel* and ongoing pier-wide redevelopment efforts as part of the Centennial Vision. Navy Pier, as a non-profit organization, maintains and manages the 50-acre pier that is being redeveloped as a contemporary, environmentally responsible urban space. More information is available at www.navy pier.com.

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