



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

United States Coast Guard  
Sector Southeast Alaska  
PO Box 25517  
Juneau, AK 99802-5517

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Email: SectorSEAKPrevention@uscg.mil




## Undersea Cables and Pipelines: Protecting Southeast Alaska's Critical Infrastructure

**Purpose:** This MSIB aims to help waterway users better protect Southeast Alaska's submerged critical infrastructure, including telecommunications cables and pipelines.

**Background:** In recent months in Southeast Alaska, there have been multiple instances of vessels lowering their anchors or bottom fishing gear onto submerged telecommunications cables and causing damage that resulted in the loss or significant degradation of cell and internet communications for communities in Southeast Alaska. Even recreational halibut gear and fishing pots can cause damage.

**Information:** Mariners are urged to exercise caution when conducting operations that may disrupt the sea bed (anchoring, fishing, dredging) to prevent damage to submerged cables and pipelines, being mindful of the symbols on a chart or chart plotter. The cable symbols below, along with undersea pipeline symbols, are available on page 63 of U.S. Chart No. 1, here <https://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/publications/docs/us-chart-1/ChartNo1.pdf>. It is essential to thoroughly review chart information before deploying an anchor or bottom fishing gear to avoid damaging undersea infrastructure. Keep in mind that cables may shift position slightly over time; mariners should exercise a prudent margin of error in the vicinity of their charted positions.

No.	INT	Description	NOAA
30.1		Submarine cable	
30.2		Submarine cable area	
31.1		Submarine power cable	
31.2		Submarine power cable area	
32		Disused submarine cable	

NGA	Other NGA	ECDIS	
			Submarine cable
			Submarine cable area
			Status of disused is obtained by cursor pick

**Cable or pipeline damage caused by commercial vessels:** Commercial vessels that cause more than \$75,000 in damage to undersea infrastructure in U.S. navigable waters (i.e. within 12NM of shore) are required to report the incident to the Coast Guard as a reportable marine casualty. This includes damage caused by anchors or fishing gear. See 46 CFR 4.03-1 for the definition of “marine casualty or accident” and 46 CFR 4.05-1(a)(7) for the requirement that damage exceeding \$75,000 be reported to the Coast Guard. U.S. flagged commercial vessels are required to report such damage wherever they operate (not limited to U.S. navigable waters). If the damage exceeds \$500,000, it will be classified as a Major Marine Casualty and potentially be investigated by the Coast Guard in conjunction with the National Transportation Safety Board. While this reporting requirement does not apply to recreational vessels or public (i.e. government-owned) vessels, operators are encouraged to call the Coast Guard if they suspect an incident may have occurred.

**Negligence by commercial operators:** Commercial vessel operators, to include licensed and unlicensed mariners, are advised that anchoring on or otherwise damaging properly charted subsea cables, pipelines, or other infrastructure may result in charges of negligence under 46 CFR 5.29 or receipt of a monetary civil penalty in accordance with 33 CFR 1.07.

**Follow up:** While the reporting requirement does not apply to recreational vessels or public (i.e. government-owned) vessels, operators of any vessel are encouraged to call the Coast Guard if they suspect any incident involving undersea infrastructure in Southeast Alaska to the Coast Guard Sector Southeast Alaska Command Center on Channel 16 or by calling 907-463-2980, 206-815-6563, or 866-759-6061. Questions and concerns about incorrectly charted cables or pipelines may be directed to the Sector Southeast Alaska Command Center at the numbers above, or to [SectorSEAKPrevention@uscg.mil](mailto:SectorSEAKPrevention@uscg.mil).



S. P. FIELDS  
 Captain, U. S. Coast Guard  
 Captain of the Port, Southeast Alaska