

Emergency closure of Chittenden Locks in Ballard June 27 will affect shipping

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SEATTLE -- The large lock at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks in Ballard will close to marine traffic starting at 9 a.m. Wednesday, June 27, for emergency maintenance, according to the Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the locks.

The large lock will be closed for an undetermined period to make emergency repairs to the salt-water barrier, which sustained damage from contact with a transiting vessel and will not operate as designed. The barrier minimizes saltwater intrusion into the Lake Washington Ship Canal and helps to ensure the lake's water quality standards are met. Repair crews will work to restore full navigation service as soon as possible.

"We could reopen as soon as Thursday, but we can't really know for certain until we begin work," said Locks Manager John Post.

The small lock will remain open for boat traffic throughout this period and boaters should be prepared to use the small lock with appropriate equipment and crew. The small lock is capable of handling vessels up to 25 feet wide and 100 feet long while the large lock can be configured to handle vessels as large as 760 feet long by 80 feet in the beam.

Both pleasure boaters and commercial maritime interests should expect delays due both to the closure and to the approaching Fourth of July holiday, traditionally a busy time of year for the Chittenden Locks.

The Chittenden Locks safely transit well over 60,000 vessels each year between Lake Washington and Salmon Bay in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood. For current information about activities at the Locks or "Locking Through," check the Corps of Engineers website at: <http://www.nws.usace.army.mil> and select "Dams and Locks" then "Lake Washington Ship Canal" from the left column.