

New marine forecast system launched

February 2 2006

A state-of-the-art marine weather forecast system has started providing mariners with "nowcasts" and five-day forecasts for most of the Atlantic Ocean.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says its Real-Time Ocean Forecast System can also support such marine operations as search and rescue missions, containment of toxic spills, and recreation activities.

"Nowcasts" are short-term weather forecasts for conditions expected during the next few hours.

"Expanded ocean forecasting for areas from Europe to the U.S. East Coast and from the Caribbean to Canada represents a major step in NOAA's commitment to forecasting the Earth system," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher Jr., NOAA's administrator.

The new system produces "nowcasts" and five-day forecasts for the Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Maine and Gulf of St. Lawrence. The system replaces the regional Ocean Forecast System, which covered a limited part of the U.S. East Coast.

Officials said similar systems for the Pacific Ocean, Earth's largest body of water, are under development.

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