



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

33 CFR Part 165

[Docket Number USCG-2024-0155]

RIN 1625-AA00

Safety Zone; Gulf of Mexico and South Bay, Boca Chica Beach, TX

AGENCY: Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

ACTION: Temporary final rule.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard is establishing two temporary safety zones to protect personnel, vessels, and the marine environment from potential hazards created by commercial spaceflight activities. One safety zone is in the navigable waters of South Bay, TX and the other is in the navigable waters of the Gulf of Mexico, within 12 nautical miles. Entry of vessels or persons into these zones are prohibited unless specifically authorized by the Captain of the Port, Sector Corpus Christi (COTP) or a designated representative.

DATES: This rule is effective from March 14, 2024 through March 26, 2024, and subject to enforcement between the hours of 6 a.m. to noon, each day.

ADDRESSES: To view documents mentioned in this preamble as being available in the docket, go to <https://www.regulations.gov>, type USCG-2024-0155 in the "SEARCH" box and click "SEARCH." Click on Open Docket Folder on the line associated with this rule.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about this rule, call or email Lieutenant Commander Anthony Garofalo, Sector Corpus Christi Waterways Management Division, U.S. Coast Guard; telephone 361-939-5130, e-mail Anthony.M.Garofalo@uscg.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Table of Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FR	<i>Federal Register</i>
NPRM	Notice of proposed rulemaking
§	Section
U.S.C.	United States Code

II. Background Information and Regulatory History

The Coast Guard is issuing this temporary rule without prior notice and opportunity to comment pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b). This provision authorizes an agency to issue a rule without prior notice and opportunity to comment when the agency for good cause finds that those procedures are “impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest.” Under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the Coast Guard finds that good cause exists for not publishing a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) with respect to this rule because it is impracticable. Space Exploration Technologies Corporation (SpaceX) will begin operation of its Starship/Super Heavy launch operations on March 14, 2024, through March 26, 2024, each day. There is insufficient time between now and then to provide notice of a proposal to create these safety zones, consider comments received, and publish a final rule.

In addition, the Coast Guard finds that good cause also exists under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) for making this rule effective less than 30 days after publication in the ***Federal Register*** because the safety zones must be in effect in fewer than 30 days to serve their purpose and it would be contrary to the public interest to delay their effective date until after the hazardous activities begin.

III. Legal Authority and Need for Rule

The Coast Guard is issuing this rule under authority in 46 U.S.C. 70034. The Captain of the Port, Sector Corpus Christi (COTP) has determined that hazards inherent in rocket launching activity necessitate provisions to protect personnel, vessels, and the marine environment while it is taking place. The hazards inherent in SpaceX’s rocket

launching activities include free falling debris and/or descending vehicles or vehicle components.

IV. Discussion of the Rule

This rule is subject to enforcement from 6 a.m. to noon. each day, from March 14, 2024, through March 26, 2024. No vessel or person will be permitted to enter the temporary safety zones during the period in which the rule is subject to enforcement without obtaining permission from the COTP or a designated representative, who may be contacted on Channel 16 VHF-FM (156.8 MHz) or by telephone at 361-939-0450. The Coast Guard will issue Broadcast Notices to Mariners, Local Notices to Mariners, and/or Safety Marine Information Broadcasts as appropriate.

V. Regulatory Analyses

We developed this rule after considering numerous statutes and Executive orders related to rulemaking. Below we summarize our analyses based on a number of these statutes and Executive orders, and we discuss First Amendment rights of protestors.

A. Regulatory Planning and Review

Executive Orders 12866 and 13563 direct agencies to assess the costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives and, if regulation is necessary, to select regulatory approaches that maximize net benefits. This rule has not been designated a “significant regulatory action,” under Executive Order 12866, as amended by Executive Order 14094 (Modernizing Regulatory Review). Accordingly, this rule has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

This regulatory action determination is based on the size, location, and duration of the safety zones. The safety zones cover approximately 4.5 square mile area of the South Bay and approximately 115 square mile area of the Gulf of Mexico offshore Boca Chica, Beach, TX. The temporary safety zones will be subject to enforcement for a period of 6 hours a day, from March 14, 2024, through March 26, 2024. The rule does not

completely prohibit vessel traffic within the waterway and it allows mariners to request permission to enter the zones.

B. Impact on Small Entities

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, 5 U.S.C. 601–612, as amended, requires Federal agencies to consider the potential impact of regulations on small entities during rulemaking. The term “small entities” comprises small businesses, not-for-profit organizations that are independently owned and operated and are not dominant in their fields, and governmental jurisdictions with populations of less than 50,000. The Coast Guard certifies under 5 U.S.C. 605(b) that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

While some owners or operators of vessels intending to transit the temporary safety zone may be small entities, for the reasons stated in section V.A above, this rule will not have a significant economic impact on any vessel owner or operator.

Under section 213(a) of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-121), we want to assist small entities in understanding this rule. If the rule would affect your small business, organization, or governmental jurisdiction and you have questions concerning its provisions or options for compliance, please contact the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

Small businesses may send comments on the actions of Federal employees who enforce, or otherwise determine compliance with, Federal regulations to the Small Business and Agriculture Regulatory Enforcement Ombudsman and the Regional Small Business Regulatory Fairness Boards. The Ombudsman evaluates these actions annually and rates each agency’s responsiveness to small business. If you wish to comment on actions by employees of the Coast Guard, call 1-888-REG-FAIR (1-888-734-3247). The Coast Guard will not retaliate against small entities that question or complain about this rule or any policy or action of the Coast Guard.

C. Collection of Information

This rule will not call for a new collection of information under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501-3520).

D. Federalism and Indian Tribal Governments

A rule has implications for federalism under Executive Order 13132, Federalism, if it has a substantial, direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. We have analyzed this rule under that order and have determined that it is consistent with the fundamental federalism principles and preemption requirements described in Executive Order 13132.

Also, this rule does not have tribal implications under Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, because it does not have a substantial direct effect on one or more Indian tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian tribes. If you believe this rule has implications for federalism or Indian tribes, please contact the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section above.

E. Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

The Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1531-1538) requires Federal agencies to assess the effects of their discretionary regulatory actions. In particular, the Act addresses actions that may result in the expenditure by a State, local, or tribal government, in the aggregate, or by the private sector of \$100,000,000 (adjusted for inflation) or more in any one year. Though this rule will not result in such an expenditure, we do discuss the effects of this rule elsewhere in this preamble.

F. Environment

We have analyzed this rule under Department of Homeland Security Directive

023-01 and Environmental Planning COMDTINST 5090.1 (series), which guide the Coast Guard in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4370f), and have determined that this action is one of a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. This rule involves establishment of two temporary safety zones for navigable waters in the Gulf of Mexico and South Bay. The safety zones are needed to protect personnel, vessels, and the marine environment from potential hazards created by rocket launching activity that may include free falling debris and/or descending vehicles or vehicle components under various means of control. It is categorically excluded from further review under paragraph L60(c), in Appendix A, Table 1 of DHS Instruction Manual 023-01-001-01, Rev. 1.

G. Protest Activities

The Coast Guard respects the First Amendment rights of protesters. Protesters are asked to contact the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section to coordinate protest activities so that your message can be received without jeopardizing the safety or security of people, places or vessels.

List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 165

Harbors, Marine safety, Navigation (water), Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Security measures, Waterways.

For the reasons discussed in the preamble, the Coast Guard amends 33 CFR part 165 as follows:

PART 165-REGULATED NAVIGATION AREAS AND LIMITED ACCESS AREAS

1. The authority citation for part 165 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 46 U.S.C. 70034, 70051, 70124; 33 CFR 1.05-1, 6.04-1, 6.04-6, and 160.5; Department of Homeland Security Delegation No. 00170.1, Revision No. 01.3.

2. Add § 165.T08-0155 to read as follows:

§ 165.T08-0155 Safety Zones; Gulf of Mexico and South Bay, Boca Chica Beach,

TX.

(a) *Location.* The following areas are safety zones: Safety Zone A consists of all navigable waters of the Gulf of Mexico, from the surface to bottom, encompassed by a line connecting the following points beginning at Point 1: 26°2'36" N 097°9'8"W, thence to Point 2: 26°3'0" N 097°7'0"W, thence to Point 3: 26°7'48" N 096°56'2.2"W, thence following the 12NM line to United States of America/Mexico Maritime Boundary Line, thence following the United States of America/Mexico Maritime Boundary Line to Point 4: 25°57'24.2" N 097°8'49"W, thence following the coast to Point 1. Safety Zone B consists of all navigable waters of South Bay, from the surface to bottom, encompassed by a line connecting the following points beginning at Point 5: 26°2'45" N 097°11'6.3"W, thence to Point 6: 26°2'45" N 097°10'53.4"W, thence following the coastline to Point 5. These coordinates are based on World Geodetic System (WGS) 84.

(b) *Enforcement period.* This section will be subject to enforcement from 6 a.m. to noon on each day, from March 14, 2024, through March 26, 2024.

(c) *Regulations.* (1) In accordance with the general regulations in § 165.23 of this part, entry into these temporary safety zones are prohibited unless authorized by the Captain of the Port Sector Corpus Christi (COTP) or a designated representative. They may be contacted on Channel 16 VHF-FM (156.8 MHz) or by telephone at 361-939-0450.

(2) If permission is granted, all persons and vessels shall comply with the instructions of the COTP or designated representative.

(d) *Information broadcasts.* The COTP or a designated representative will inform the public of the enforcement times and date for this safety zone through Broadcast Notices to Mariners, Local Notices to Mariners, and/or Safety Marine Information Broadcasts as appropriate.

Dated: March 6, 2024.

Jason Gunning,

Captain, U.S. Coast Guard,

Captain of the Port, Sector Corpus Christi.

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