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**United States
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News Release

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Coast Guard provides update on ice conditions in St. Mary's River

SAULT SAINTE MARIE, MI- The Coast Guard Cutter Katmai Bay is currently in the St. Mary's River and has flushed ice away from the Sugar Island ferry crossing, taking advantage of the warmer temperatures which are favorable for flushing operations; ice breakers will periodically visit the various crossings to minimize the impact of ferry services. Vessel Traffic Service St. Mary's River also curtailed commercial activity through the river to assist in the effort to establish open water at the ferry crossing.

The current rise in temperature will transition to a blast of sub-zero arctic air later this week. Last weekend a similar blast of frigid air fueled the development of ice in the Sault's lower harbor and the lower St. Mary's River. The forecasted temperature variance, occasional movements of commercial vessels carrying safety of life related cargoes, and logistical stops for fuel and supplies by ice breakers, elevates the risk of ice moving from the harbor to the Sugar Island Ferry crossing.

The Coast Guard is working to avert impact to scheduled ferry service, as we are cognizant of the hardship affecting island residents' daily schedules caused by ferry service disruptions. Unfortunately, in extreme weather it is possible for conditions or unforeseen circumstances to impact the ability for vessels to transit the waterway.

As a precaution, during this period of ice instability and wildly fluctuating temperatures, it is recommended that all island residents in the Northern Great Lakes region prepare for the possibility that ferry schedules may be reduced or possibly interrupted in the coming days and weeks. Recommended preparations include packing for overnight contingencies, stocking pantries, topping off propane and fuel oil for heating, preparing for medical needs and the inability to transport children to and from islands to attend school. Please prepare contingency plans on the mainland in the event school children cannot get back to the island after the beginning of the school day. For up-to-date information on ferry operations call the Eastern Upper Peninsula Transportation Authority (EUPTA) delays, cancellations, and updates hotline at (906) 632-1516, check the local ferry Facebook pages, or the EUPTA website at EUPTA.net.

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