

MARITIME ADMINISTRATION
U.S. Department of Transportation

Center of Excellence (CoE) for Domestic Workforce Training and Education

Northwest Maritime Center – Port Townsend, WA

The Secretary of Transportation designates the Northwest Maritime Center (NWMC) as a 2026 Center of Excellence to highlight its success in building clear, practical paths into maritime careers across the Pacific Northwest. Operating as a regional coordinator, NWMC runs on-the-water learning tracks designed to solve critical crewing shortages. By removing traditional barriers to entry, NWMC connects the local workforce to stable, family-wage jobs in the commercial shipping and shipyard sectors.

Operational Footprint & Assets

The center combines vessel training, simulators, and high school spaces to deliver hands-on technical experience.

- **State-Approved Vocational Training:** Offers 540-hour maritime courses that fulfill high school math and science credits through practical seamanship.
- **On-Water Classrooms:** Partners with Washington State Ferries for structured career-shadowing on working commercial vessels.
- **Dedicated Technical Labs:** Features woodshops, engine spaces, and simulators for tool safety, blueprint reading, advanced ship handling, and boat construction.

Workforce & Regional Impact

The program drives local employment, training workers to meet immediate commercial fleet demands.

- **100% Graduation Rate:** Maintains a perfect graduation rate across all technical preparatory tracks.
- **Immediate Credentialing:** Helps students secure the mandatory Transportation Worker Identification Card, first aid certifications, and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) documents needed to step straight onto vessels.
- **Industry Endorsed:** Validated by major employers like the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Port of Seattle, and Glosten Marine Engineering to ensure skills match real-world needs.

Strategic Outlook

The Center is scaling its local model into a national blueprint by expanding the Blue Schools Initiative nationwide, including a partnership with Maine Maritime Academy. A new lateral path also allows graduates to enlist directly into the USCG as junior petty officers. Additionally, as an official Emergency Operations Center, the Port Townsend facility can rapidly accelerate training during national crises by expanding simulator hours, running rolling admissions, and compressing blocks to get certified mariners on the water faster.