

MARITIME ADMINISTRATION
U.S. Department of Transportation

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

Western Pacific Maritime Academy – Guam and Saipan, MP (Northern Mariana Islands)

The Secretary of Transportation designates the Western Pacific Maritime Academy (WPMA) as a 2026 Center of Excellence for its safety and navigation training sustaining Mariana Islands supply chains. Operating from Saipan and Guam, WPMA partners with port authorities and cargo networks to train Pacific watchkeepers. Through simulation, firefighting, and survival courses, the academy provides residents with a direct pathway into high-wage mariner careers.

Operational Footprint & Assets

WPMA pairs two physical campuses with e-learning tools and industrial survival fields.

- **Dual-Site Instruction Grid:** Coordinates continuous, U.S. Coast Guard-approved mariner courses through staffed centers in Saipan and Agat, Guam.
- **Kongsberg Simulation Suites:** Equips classrooms with K-SIM navigation simulators to train crews in blind plotting, radar operations, and wheelhouse resource management.
- **Survival & Fire Fields:** Utilizes dedicated survival craft launching setups and approved shoreside fire fields to run realistic, high-pressure emergency response drills.
- **Tugboat Testing:** Features advanced towing simulators to deliver verified steersman of towing vessel certifications for regional harbor tug pilots.

Workforce & Regional Impact

The program serves as a primary employment funnel, transitioning local residents into critical shipping and logistics positions.

- **High-Density Completion:** Successfully processed 375 local mariners since 2022, securing an overall program completion index of 95.6 percent.
 - **Cargo Placements:** Supports local supply chain resilience, with 81 percent of tracked graduates entering roles aboard inter-island pocket cargo lines, harbor tugs, and port terminals.
 - **Regional Retention:** Keeps talent within the local maritime economy, placing 31 percent of tracked graduates aboard regional tugboats and barges.

Strategic Outlook

WPMA pairs simulation with regional emergency preparedness to secure Western Pacific waterways. Updating simulator maps for typhoon transits and reef approaches keeps local crews at the forefront of navigation safety. Under emergency demands, WPMA can scale throughput by 200 percent within 30 days by running 24/7 simulation shifts and deploying mobile training teams onto active military or commercial hulls, keeping vital Pacific shipping links open.