

Coast Guard, Navy Competition for Ship Availabilities to Increase: USCG Official



The Coast Guard Yard at Curtiss Bay, Maryland, is the service's main cutter maintenance facility. *U.S. COAST GUARD* ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard will be in “closer competition than we ever have before” with the U.S. Navy for dry dock and dockside availabilities for their ships, a Coast Guard official said during a panel on maintenance at the [Surface Navy Association Annual Symposium](#) on Jan. 12.

Bob Thomas, U.S. Coast Guard deputy assistant commandant for engineering and logistics (CG-4D), said that the Coast Guard is competing for resources with both the industry and the Navy as [retention and recruiting struggles](#). persist throughout the military. Along with maintenance areas that the Coast Guard hasn't historically dealt with, such as cyber, that creates an intensely competitive environment, he said.

The Coast Guard has seen many of the same recruiting and retention challenges as the other services, Thomas noted.

“The workforce has almost become a migrant workforce,” he said. “They'll shift to where the work is, [or] who's paying the most. [...] That drives the cost way up when people are competing for limited resources. You get to pay more for the same thing, or sometimes it's not available.”

Collaborating to Retain Workforce Numbers

However, he added that the Coast Guard is working closely with the Navy to help mitigate some of these issues, mentioning a

number of collaborative efforts that he thinks are “going to pay off huge for the Coast Guard.”

Navy Rear Adm. Scott Brown, deputy commander for logistics, maintenance, and industrial operations, also said that 2022 was “not a great year” in terms of staffing at the public shipyards, stating that they were short by 1,200 personnel, with 37,000 total working in those shipyards.

“A big focus of our efforts is to improve the recruiting and incentives for folks that come into the shipyards,” he said.

Brown said he believes that, in addition to the economy, the state of the shipyards and changing demographics are the primary reasons why the Navy continues to struggle with recruiting and retention.

To offset some of those challenges, the Navy is looking not only to boost pay, but to also offer career development opportunities to sailors. For example, the Navy has introduced a program to help mechanical expert tradespeople, a promotion that keeps them “turning wrenches” while still providing advancement opportunities.