

USCG Heavy Icebreaker Departs Seattle for Months-Long Deployment to Antarctica



USCGC Polar Star (WAGB 10) is seen moored ahead of deploying for Operation Deep Freeze 2026, Seattle, Nov. 20, 2025. Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, inter-agency support operation for the National Science Foundation, which manages the United States Antarctic Program. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Christopher Bokum)

[Release From U.S. Coast Guard Northwest District](#)

SEATTLE – The USCGC Polar Star (WAGB 10) departed Seattle on Thursday commencing its 29th deployment to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze.

Operation Deep Freeze is an annual joint military mission to

resupply the United States Antarctic stations in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program. Historic investment in the Big Beautiful Bill of nearly 25 billion, \$9 billion of which is specifically for icebreakers and infrastructure in the high latitudes. This massive investment in icebreakers will secure U.S. access, security, and leadership in the polar regions.

As the U.S. Coast Guard prepares to revitalize its icebreaking fleet, the Polar Star remains the only U.S. vessel capable of breaking a navigable channel through the ice to reach McMurdo Station, the largest Antarctic station and the logistics hub of the U.S. Antarctic Program.

Each year, the cutter serves a vital role in ensuring surface access for fuel and supply ships through the Ross Sea to resupply the U.S. Antarctic bases. Polar Star's mission directly protects the security, freedom, and prosperity for the U.S., our allies and partners.

"Polar Star's crew does remarkable work maintaining and operating this ship," said Capt. Jeff Rasnake, commanding officer of Polar Star. "Each year brings unique challenges, and I'm proud to say this crew has risen to meet them all. The way we've come together over the course of maintenance, and our logistical preparations is exciting as we enter the operational phase of our annual deployment cycle."

Commissioned in 1976, Polar Star is 399 feet, weighing 13,500 tons with a 34-foot draft. Despite reaching nearly 50 years of age, Polar Star remains the world's most powerful non-nuclear icebreaker with the ability to produce up to 75,000 shaft horsepower.

The continuous effort Polar Star's crew commits to maintaining the aging cutter ensures the nation's access to the continent and the economic, environmental, and national security interests in the high latitudes. Polar Star

will continue to support Operation Deep Freeze until new Polar and Arctic Security Cutters enter service in the coming decade.

Since 1955, Active, Reserve, and Guard members of the U.S. Coast Guard, Air Force, Navy, and Army have proudly supported the USAP by the air and sea lift of supplies to McMurdo Station.