



November 4, 2014

Admiral Paul Zukunft, Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
2100 2nd St. SW, STOP 700
Washington, DC 20593-7000

Dear Admiral Zukunft,

As a provider of health care services, our mission at Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital in Newport, Oregon, is to help people when they need it most and save lives in emergent situations. When paired with the U.S. Coast Guard's mission to save those in peril, it's obvious we are aligned.

Knowing that saving those in peril is at the core of what our organizations do, I plead with you today to abandon the plans to close down the Newport Air Facility. At a minimum postpone the closure for six months rather than a two-week extension to allow time for pulling together the appropriate leaders and agencies to fully evaluate the impact this closure would have on the safety of the Newport community and its visitors.

With this closure, anyone in the coastal waters near Newport will have to rely on air rescue services, which are at a minimum one-hour away and already covering large areas. Time is of the essence when responding to citizens in danger, especially those exposed to frigid waters, swift currents and extreme elements.

When looking back at various headlines of commendable rescues performed by the U.S. Coast Guard in Newport and surrounding areas, more often than not the rescues could not be performed using a sea vessel. Those stranded are often trapped on rocks with crashing waves. The only option is air rescue. A delayed rescue results in delayed medical care, where often life or death situations are calculated in minutes, not hours.

Please, for the community and our shared mission, do not close the Newport Air Facility. If you must still consider a closure, please allow us to join the conversation and help identify a plan that will serve our community in the best manner possible and not leave them stranded.

Sincerely,

David C. Bigelow, PharmD
CEO Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital

CC: Newport Fishermen's Wives Association