

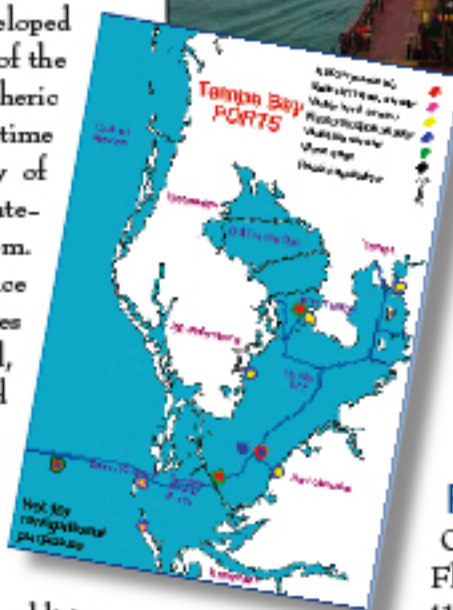
New observing system saves shipping industry thousands

A technology that gathers and disseminates information about the marine environment is helping improve safety in the massive shipping industry.

In the five years after the Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS) was installed in Tampa Bay (Florida), the number of ship groundings dropped 60 percent. A single grounding can cost shipping operators hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost revenue, ship operation costs, tug boat fees, hull damage and environmental damage—even more if the hull is breached and hazardous cargo is spilled.

Tampa Bay PORTS was developed by the National Ocean Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the local maritime community and the University of South Florida. It is part of the Integrated Ocean Observation System. In continuous operation since 1992, TB-PORTS integrates real-time current, water level, temperature, wave, visibility and wind measurements collected every six minutes at multiple locations in Tampa Bay.

Because the bay's currents are influenced strongly by forces such as winds and river flow in addition to tides, the information provided by the system is important to recreational boaters, commercial fishermen



and professional pilots navigating its waters. Agencies responsible for search and rescue operations and for responding to hazardous spills also benefit from the accurate predictions generated by TB-PORTS. Even law enforcement officials have called on the system to determine the point of origin of bodies found in the water.

For more information

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