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U.S. Seaway Corporation Announces New Vessel Safety Technology

The U.S. Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC) today announced the availability of an innovative new technology that will enhance safety on the St. Lawrence Seaway by giving mariners real time information on current and projected distances between a vessel's keel and river bottoms. Known as the Draft Information System (DIS), the new on-board technology will reduce the potential for groundings and allow ships to carry more cargo by better taking advantage of the available water levels.

"This is an important improvement in maritime safety," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "This new technology will increase the safety of vessels traveling through the Saint Lawrence Seaway while increasing their productivity."

Given the cutting-edge nature of the technology, use of the DIS is an optional requirement. However, ships with DIS can travel the Seaway more safely with more cargo, at a draft of up to three inches more than the published maximum. Depending on the commodity carried, an additional three inches of draft could mean transporting as much as 360 additional metric tons per voyage. This new technology will benefit Seaway users and the Seaway corporations by improving the Seaway's productivity and competitiveness.

The Seaway has long required a minimum safety margin between the ship's keel and river bottom, or "under-keel clearance," that vessels must maintain while transiting the waterway. The new DIS technology provides a more precise way of measuring that clearance by giving mariners real-time operational and navigational information while the vessel is in transit. The DIS provides vessel operators with accurate data on river bottom contours and water levels along with the vessel's speed and heading. As a result, mariners will have a greater ability to implement effective course changes or other required reactions in transit.

"The new system is a milestone for the Seaway and an example of how the Canadian and U.S. Seaway Corporations can innovate with stakeholders to improve the safety and efficiency of the Seaway transit experience," said SLSDC Acting Administrator Craig Middlebrook.

An economic impact [study](#) of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System released last October showed that the entire waterway supports 227,000 jobs resulting in \$14.1 billion in annual personal income, and generates annual business revenue of \$34 billion and \$4.6 billion in federal, state and local taxes.

The *Federal Register* notice can be accessed clicking <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-07-11/pdf/2012-16859.pdf>

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