



NEWS

Boat 54 where are you?

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Science meets the sea in another University of New Hampshire research venture, this time to bolster public safety and Homeland Security in Portsmouth Harbor.

PHOTO GALLERY

The New Hampshire Marine Patrol will soon equip its Seacoast vessels with voice-activated data and communications technology from UNH's Project 54.

Project 54, with its voice-activation commands, has allowed police officers across the state to work lights and sirens, radar, video, GPS, and radios. UNH launched the program in 1999 with \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Justice and continued support from U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H. It takes its name from the 1960s television comedy, "Car 54, Where are you?"

CLASSIFIEDS

Now the state is looking for Boat 54.

"It's the first application of our system in a marine environment," said William Lenharth, co-director of Project 54.

A patrol boat presents a unique test, starting with salt water being highly corrosive to electronics. The UNH team welcomes the challenges, seeing a successful demonstration as a way to persuade the U.S. Coast Guard to use it.

In the next week or two, UNH technicians plan to install the technology into one of three Marine Patrol vessels docked at Coast Guard Station Portsmouth Harbor.

"The first one is going to be a big learning curve," said Capt. Mark K. Gallagher of the New Hampshire Marine Patrol.

He welcomes the latest technology as a benefit to crews in rough seas or inclement weather, when it can be difficult to navigate or communicate between officers. He said enhanced communication translates into a safer boat,

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- **Stacey Cole** especially during a rescue or an assist call.
- **Dick Pinney** Gallagher is confident the equipment will get a thorough sea trial. Some questions remain.

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"There's a lot of background noise on a boat and we're not sure how that's going to work out," said Gallagher.

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Lenharth said they would solve the noise interference with the use of a headset, which would also help officers talk to one another. To ward off that corrosive salt water, the UNH team has already secured a special hardened tablet to protect the Project 54 hardware. The GPS will be integrated into existing marine navigation, which will eliminate the need for some manual calculation of readings, Lenharth said.

LISTINGS

- **Places to visit**
- **Things to do**
- **Personals**

UNH has put its engineering research-and-development teams to work along the coast in the past, including construction of an aquaculture pilot south of the Isles of Shoals. Lenharth and his faculty-student team, which works in collaboration with the state Department of Safety, has already studied patrol boats and interviewed officers to plan for the latest use of Project 54.

Marine Patrol, a unit of the Department of Safety, has law enforcement authority on all bodies of water that are 10 acres or greater, as well as rivers and tidal waters. The bureau investigates all boating accidents and drownings, participates in inspection for commercial vessels, and provides Seacoast security.

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Police cruisers account for most of the vehicles equipped with Project 54. UNH has equipped about 1,000 law enforcement vehicles in New Hampshire, and another 200 or so out-of-state vehicles.

Lenharth notes the Project 54 team has installed the technology onto all-terrain vehicles and police motorcycles, meeting the challenge of background noise and the elements.

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