



City of South Haven

# PRESS RELEASE

## City of South Haven

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Local Media

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## **TENDING THE DYCKMAN AVENUE BASCULE BRIDGE NOT AN EASY TASK**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – (South Haven, Michigan) Warm temperatures spur the arrival of additional boaters, vehicles, and pedestrians to the City of South Haven - all of which impact operations of the Dyckman Avenue Bascule Bridge and the importance of the bridge tender's job.

The operators of the bascule bridge are referred to as "bridge tenders". Considering the bridge tender must deal with boat traffic, vehicular traffic, and pedestrians when operating the bridge, their job is no simple task. Safety is the utmost goal.

The bridge tenders are instructed to open the bridge on the hour and half-hour when boats are going out and coming in. Prior to opening the bridge to boat traffic, the bridge tenders must first make sure that all pedestrians and vehicles are behind the gates. Bridge tenders are instructed to keep the bridge open until ALL boats in visual sight have cleared the bridge. In other words, if the tender sees a boat making its way toward the bridge, he must hold the bridge open until the boat clears the bridge. Once the bridge tender determines that the boat traffic has cleared, then the bridge will return to the downright position. Sometimes the bridge may be up for 15 minutes before the cycle is completed.

The bridge tenders have huge responsibilities in making sure that the public is safe, including pedestrians are behind the gates before the bridge opens; vehicles are stopped behind the gates; and boats navigate the bridge safely. Bridge tenders are often forced to make judgement calls and absolutely cannot hurry in their decisions.

Over the course of the four days leading up to and including Memorial Day weekend, the tenders opened the bridge 114 times, clearing nearly 1000 boats. The current high water levels make their jobs even more challenging as more boats than normal must wait for the bridge to open.

Motorists are reminded it is unlawful to proceed through the stoplight when it is red.

Contact: Department of Public Works Director, Bill Hunter; [bhunter@south-haven.com](mailto:bhunter@south-haven.com) or 637-0737.

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