



Captain Melanie A. Burnham **Commander, Sector New Orleans**



Captain Melanie A. Burnham assumed the duties as Commander, Sector New Orleans, LA in June 2026. In this capacity, she oversees over 1,000 active duty, reserve, civilian, and auxiliary Coast Guard personnel who serve over 300 miles of the Lower Mississippi River, 230 miles of the Intracoastal Waterway, and almost 4,000 miles of coastline in an area of responsibility totaling over 100,000 square nautical miles.

Captain Burnham's previous assignments include Deputy Commander, Sector New Orleans from 2024-2026. Commanding Officer of Gulf Strike Team in Mobile, Alabama from 2022-2024 where she was responsible for the oversight, management, and execution of response to oil discharges, hazardous substance releases, weapons of mass destruction events, natural disasters, and other emergencies throughout the southcentral and southeast regions of the United States and internationally in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. From 2018-2022 she

was the Coast Guard Pacific Area Section Chief of Incident Management and Boat Forces Section Supervisor for Shore Forces (PAC-3SF) in Alameda, California. There she oversaw Marine Environmental Response, Search and Rescue, and Emergency Management functions and policy, and managed 97 cutters, 87 DSF boats, and 153 Station/ATON assets. From 2016-2018 she was assigned to Sector Maryland – National Capital Region in Baltimore, Maryland where she served as the Emergency Management & Force Readiness Branch Chief. From 2012-2016 she served as a Requirements Duty Officer at Coast Guard Headquarters (CG-771) in Washington D.C.

From 2007-2010 she served as the Commanding Officer of Station Seattle, Washington executing Search and Rescue, Homeland Security, and Law Enforcement small boat operations and unit readiness. From 2004-2007 she served as Command Duty Officer at the District One Command Center in Boston, Massachusetts. From 2002-2004 she was the Assistant Operations Officer at Coast Guard Group Boston, Massachusetts, and proudly achieved the enlisted rank of Yeoman First Class having served in positions at Group Fort Macon, North Carolina, Integrated Support Command Honolulu, Hawaii, and Reserve Training Center Yorktown, Virginia between 1995-2002.

Captain Burnham graduated USCG Basic Training in 1995 and Officer Candidate School in 2002. She holds a B.A. in Applied Computing from University of Washington and a M.A. in Security Studies, Homeland Security and Defense from Naval Postgraduate School. She is certified as a Project Management Professional, has earned numerous National Incident Command System certifications such as Type I Incident Commander and Type I Planning Section Chief, and was selected as the International Association of Emergency Managers 2021 Military Uniformed Services Emergency Manager of the Year. She served as Incident Commander and Federal On-Scene Coordinator Representative for the Maui Wildfire (2023) and Hurricane Ian (2022) responses under ESF-10 operations. Captain Burnham is a Search and Rescue subject matter expert holding past SAR Mission Coordinator designation and current Active Search Suspension authorities.

Her personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal (four awards), Coast Guard Commendation Medal (six awards), Coast Guard Achievement Medal (three awards), Letter of Commendation (three awards), and Good Conduct Medal (two awards). She is married to Kurt Lautenschlager (ENG4, USCG Retired), and between them they have five children: Elissa, Kelsey, Lauren, Noelle, and Breandan (GM2, USCG).