COAST GUARD

Actions Needed to Better Manage Shore Infrastructure

What GAO Found

In 2019, GAO found that almost half of the Coast Guard’s shore infrastructure was past its service life and the extent of costs to address its maintenance and recapitalization (major renovations) project backlogs may be understated. GAO also found that Coast Guard data showed at least $2.6 billion in costs to address its backlogs for its $18 billion portfolio of shore infrastructure.

The Coast Guard has taken initial steps toward improving how it manages its infrastructure. For example, in 2019 GAO found weaknesses in how the Coast Guard prioritized shore infrastructure investments. GAO recommended that it incorporate resilience—the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, and recover from, or successfully adapt to adverse events—into its risk management. In 2021, the Coast Guard revised how it prioritizes infrastructure investments, including incorporating resilience into planning by, for example, identifying the infrastructure most critical to mission operations.

The Coast Guard continues to face challenges in ensuring that its infrastructure investments meet mission and user needs. For example, in 2019 GAO found that the Coast Guard has not provided accurate information to Congress about its requirements-based budget targets for shore infrastructure in its budget requests and its project backlogs. Specifically, Coast Guard recapitalization targets for shore assets were at least $290 million annually, but its budget requests for fiscal years 2012 through 2021 ranged from about $5 million to about $99 million annually (see figure). GAO previously recommended that the Coast Guard include supporting details about competing project alternatives and report trade-offs in congressional budget requests and related reports. The Coast Guard agreed with GAO’s recommendation. GAO continues to follow up on the status of the Coast Guard’s actions in response to this and other prior GAO recommendations aimed at improving the Coast Guard’s management of its infrastructure.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made recommendations in prior reports to improve the Coast Guard’s asset management efforts, including reporting shore infrastructure needs more completely and accurately. DHS concurred with most of these recommendations and, in some cases, has taken steps toward addressing them.