



Coast Guard Auxiliary Informational Exhibits

Prepared by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary National Marketing Group

Introduction: “We’ve always done it that way” may have worked in the past but effective methods of reaching target markets have changed with the times. Take a moment and ask yourself, what is the purpose of having the *exhibit*? We believe you will agree the reason is to communicate effectively with visitors in several key areas, not just one or two. So make good use of these tried and tested “out of the box” concepts that will make your *exhibit* a success.

Purpose: To make an *exhibit* display say “Come see me” so Auxiliarists can market core programs and current initiatives to the recreational boating public and recruit new members.

Method: To apply proven marketing techniques to effectively communicate key messages.

Goal: Recruit members and reduce fatalities by reaching boaters most at risk for a fatality.

Core programs:

- Recreational Boating Safety: Wear life jackets, obtain a Vessel Safety Check (VSC), take the About Boating Safety Course (ABC), and never boat under the influence.
- Auxiliary recruitment and retention.
- America’s Waterway Watch (homeland security).

Other possible initiatives depending on the geographical area or season and space permitting:

- Danger of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning (all areas/all seasons).
- Safe paddling.
- Safe PWC operation.
- Hypothermia.
- Zebra Mussel infestation.

Groups of boaters most at risk for a boating fatality:

- Operators of open outboard motor boats 21’ and smaller, anglers and hunters
- Males 20 – 50 years old
- Canoe/kayak paddlers
- Personnel Water Craft (PWC) operators

Exhibits: The reason they are called *exhibits* (not *booths*) is you are exhibiting what you offer. *Booths* are for storing things. So call what you do an *exhibit* because your flotilla is at the event to sell memberships and boating safety! Any *exhibit* and those staffing it must be able to get a visitor’s attention. According to *Guerrilla Trade Show Selling* (by Levinson, Smith and Wilson), it takes a visitor less than four seconds to walk the length of a ten foot exhibit space. You’re in competition with all the other event distractions for that short time.

In addition to planning the display, selecting the right Auxiliarists to operate it is equally important. The concept for a successful *exhibit* is for visitors to be able to relate to Auxiliarists as “affable” rather than “authority” figures. Auxiliarists must be physically and mentally able to

perform the duties. Avoid problems by having those volunteering for duty read this guide and the Exhibit Operating Procedure (a format sample is below) so they know what is expected.

The Exhibit Operating Procedure covers procedures, appearance and hygiene, which are important considerations. Table tops are for display items and not a resting place for hats, jackets, reading materials or water bottles. Eating at the *exhibit* should not be permitted and breath mints are a good idea. Attendants should stand or use backless stools (**no chairs**) to maintain eye contact, and not more than two in an *exhibit* per shift. Socialize with family and other members away from the *exhibit* area so visitor access is not discouraged by a crowd. Those staffing an *exhibit* should be able to answer questions about life jackets on display. So reading the Auxiliary article Inflatable Life Jacket Basics is strongly encouraged.

The Undress Blue – Summer Alpha uniform (or Undress Blue – winter uniform when appropriate) is specified in the Auxiliary Manual for boating safety *exhibits*. Hats are not worn inside and ribbons are not worn with these uniforms. Visitors to the *exhibit* should be able to identify those staffing it as Auxiliarists. Wearing a life jacket covers up the uniform collar insignia and name tag, so only **ONE (not both)** Auxiliarist staffing *exhibits* should wear an inflatable life jacket to show off new style life jackets. Boaters also relate better to approachable figures. Recommend the Auxiliary member device rather than elected or staff office insignia be worn when staffing *exhibits*, like when we work side-by-side with the gold-side. This is because many visitors to an *exhibit* are former junior enlisted personnel who relate better to members rather than those they mistake for military officers because of elected or staff officer insignia.



An open **exhibit** draws visitors into the space, enabling you to engage them more readily. Having a U shaped table arrangement with an open front encourages visitor access. **Exhibits should not have a table across the front because it creates a barrier.** Use table cloths and table skirts. Paper products for both needs are available. Why do you think professionally designed industry exhibits are set up as shown in this photo? To SELL!!

Encouraging the boating public to wear "today's" life jackets is a primary objective so a colorful life jacket display should be the first thing people see when they pass or enter your exhibit space. Ensure life jackets are secured when the exhibit is not staffed to avoid theft. An inexpensive 1/8" steel cable with loops made on both ends can easily be fabricated with materials from a hardware store. Bicycle cables and locks also work.

Display new style life jackets in bright colors. A free standing wire life jacket display stand is easy to fabricate from "cow pen" wire available for about \$25 from most feed stores. It is 16' long by 4' wide made of galvanized rods with 1' squares that can be cut in half making two 4' x 8' tall sections to stand on end. Tape them together to make an 8' by 8' life jacket display stand with a small "V" to make it free standing. District

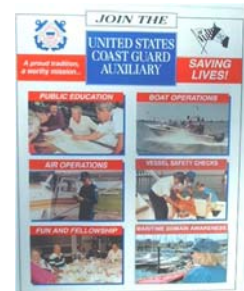


Operation Boat Smart Coordinators received a life jacket selection to display a few years back. If it is not available, contact a local retailer and borrow their newest models. Most are usually accommodating about letting you borrow a few choice designs, especially if they know you will tell visitors where they came from.

Display life jackets on the rack using coat hangers and invite visitors to try them on. Orally inflate an inflatable life jacket on a visitor to demonstrate how buoyant they are when worn. Do not display old style over the head life jackets unless it is to contrast one with the new style Type II inflatable. Attach a card to each life jacket so those staffing the exhibit can answer questions about type, price and source; and ensure they read the article “Inflatable Life Jacket Basics.” Use free Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC) and National Safe Boating Campaign literature to round out the exhibit.



ANSC posters advertise recruiting, VSC, ABC and America’s Waterway Watch. All can be taped to a foam board (\$3.00 a sheet). Tape boards together on the back-side to form a “V”. More lasting displays can be made using aluminum (surplus street signs, painted and hinged together). Laminating posters and printed pages is a good idea. Develop relationships with local officials and they will help you with these items to promote boating safety. Include a printed list in large type of VSC mandatory and recommended items for 16-21’ boats (most common). If you display an ABC book, secure it to the board. Update outdated titles like “Courtesy Marine Examination” with Vessel Safety Check and add a 6th block for “Maritime Domain Awareness” on the ANSC 3507 Join the Auxiliary poster (lower right).



Most people like to see symmetry and order. This is why displays work much better and attract more people if items are organized. Visual clutter is avoided by using literature racks or inexpensive plastic holders which can be purchased from an office supply store. Using individual holders also permits displaying brochures in front of related posters. Have Join the Auxiliary brochures in front of the recruiting poster, the How to Choose the Right Life Jacket brochures with the life jackets, etc. This also frees up space for materials in the ANSC #9018 – 5 slot RSVP Literature Display rack or the newer ANSC #9018a, a 6 slot version. Limited decals or oversize items should be neatly stacked on the table. For America’s Waterway Watch brochures and decals, order plastic holders from ANSC (#3026f). Do not use outdated materials.

Engage visitors as soon as they come into your space. You can then inquire about their interests, and guide them to materials they might like to have. The ANSC 3026 series America’s Waterway Watch materials (pamphlet and sticker) appeal to patriotic instinct. If you have a boating enthusiast, the You’re In Command Boat Responsibly brochure is excellent because it is encompassing. However, don’t hand out literature to everyone. Even if the literature is potentially interesting, thrusting unwanted literature at visitors is offensive. Your exhibit should not be a contest to see who can give away the most. Why, because it costs money and if a visitor is burdened with unwanted literature it winds up in the nearest trash can or worse.

Post your flotilla's boating course and VSC schedule; and have sign-up forms for both available. If you use a video player, ensure the screen is very large or it will be ignored. Boat show exhibits offer an excellent opportunity to sell ABC and knot tying CD-ROMs, Davis cards, teaching GPS for Mariners Courses, pre-selling BS&S texts before the date of the next PE class, signing up students for classes, and demonstrating a VSC on a PWC or boat.

Some owners of 26' or larger boats are not aware of the requirement for an oil pollution and garbage placard to be displayed on-board. They particularly appreciate receiving ANSC #4064 Placard FWPIA Oil Pollution and #4067 Sticker Garbage Dumping Restrictions Offshore (or #4068 for the Great Lakes, or #4069 in Spanish or #4070 in Vietnamese). Providing these free decals is an excellent ice breaker and lead-in to scheduling the boat owner for a VSC.

There are also decals ANSC #4063 Reporting Marine Pollution and #3020 VHF - Emergency Radio Call Procedures, which are popular with off shore and Great Lakes boaters. And, it's a good idea to have some CG recruiting literature available at the exhibit.

Exhibit security is always a concern and attendants should be alert for shop lifters. Items should be secured at night. That means extra work but it will also avoid problems, especially if you are displaying borrowed items. Use empty CO2 cartridges for any inflatable life jackets displayed or worn, or remove the cartridge to preclude pranksters from inflating them.

Maintaining a Watch Log provides a record of who staffed the exhibit for reporting, what was sold for accountability, inquiries received so they can be responded to, or even the number of meaningful contacts for an after action report. It also provides information so subsequent watch standers know what occurred on previous shifts. A correctly maintained log would show where items stored for security the night prior can be found or where additional literature is stored. Moreover regardless of all the advance planning and best intentions, there may still be some who arrive to stand watch in the incorrect uniform or not understanding the NEW operating ground rules. The log book would be a good place to have this guide and Exhibit Operating Procedure available for them to read. Also, include contact information and numbers.

Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC) items are ordered by the FSO-MA from ANSC by snail mailing or faxing an order form to them. These order forms can be found in the back of the ANSC catalog. There is a series of pre completed order forms where the requestor only has to enter quantity but there is one blank order form as well. What frequently occurs is a new item will be announced via e-mail or on the Auxiliary Member's What's New Page but it will not yet be listed on one of the order forms. All the FSO-MA needs to do is write in the item on the bottom of one of the forms, use the blank form, or even attach a piece of paper to a form.

Brochures and pamphlets have maximum ordering quantity limits. When more than the maximum is needed, include a short justification. For example: "Needed for the Jones Boat Show, estimated attendance 5,000; or needed to stock 10 marine dealers in the Spring. When ordering, keep in mind one event Marketing handled for the past four years averaged 30-35,000

visitors over three days but we gave away less than 300 of the most popular item (#3006 Federal Boating Regulations), and usually 100 or less of the other items. Order enough for the event and justify the larger amount on the form. These materials are free to your flotilla but cost the Coast Guard money to produce and ship. Plan for the anticipated crowd but avoid waste.

Visit http://www.cgaux.info/g_pcx/publications/misc/DCAT.pdf for the ANSC catalog. **Prior planning is always a good idea because some items can be out of stock**, especially at the end/beginning of a new fiscal year. Here is the key literature/poster list:

ANSC literature (** indicates should always be used at events):

- 3002 Brochure Your Guide to Towing (YIC) (6" wide)
- **3003 Pamphlet You're In Command (YIC) - Boat Responsibly
- 3004a Pamphlet (State Farm provided) Keep Your Boat Afloat.
- 3006 Pamphlet Federal Boating Regulations (YIC) or State Boating Regulations
- 3009 Pamphlet Global Maritime Distress & Safety System (GMDSS)
- **3023 Pamphlet Join the Auxiliary
- **3026 Pamphlet America's Waterway Watch
- **3026a Decal America's Waterway Watch
- 3031 Pamphlet Safe Boating for Anglers and Hunters (6" wide)
- **3032 Pamphlet How to Choose the Right Life Jacket (YIC)
- 3033 Pamphlet Beware of Boat Propellers (YIC)

ANSC Posters

- 3003b Poster Take the ABC Course (8 ½" x 11")
- 3003c Poster Get a VSC (8 ½" x 11")
- 3005a Poster Carbon Monoxide (8 ½" x 11")
- 3507 Poster Join the Auxiliary (16" x 20")
- 3026c Poster America's Waterway Watch - large
- 3026c1 Poster America's Waterway Watch (14" x 12") – laminated.
- **3505 Poster Which Life Jacket For You? Laminated, free standing – excellent item.
- 3506 Poster Ten Ways to Paddle Safely (11" x 15")

ANSC Videos to play in the VCR:

- 3003vi Video ABC/VSC Loop Video
- 3024b America's Waterway Watch Video

ANSC children's materials:

- 4014 Officer Snook Coloring and Activity Book or #4013 Officer Snook for the Great Lakes
- 4062 Officer Snook pull off stickers (one sheet accompanies one book).

BoatUS Foundation has several good brochures on their web site which has an order form (<http://www.boatus.com/foundation/brochure/default.htm>). Their telephone number is (703) 823-9550 X3200. Up to 200 each of several brochures, to include bilingual materials can be ordered. Allow several weeks for shipment. Their materials include:

- FD009 Hey Kids, Lets Go Boating (w/stickers)
- FD010 Life Jackets (in English and Spanish)
- FD011 Alcohol and Boating (in English and Spanish)
- FD015 Boat Handling Decal

Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) provides their “Riding Rules for Personal Watercraft” brochure. Phone: (202) 737-9768 or email info@pwia.org

If a large number of children are anticipated, invite a Coastie robotic boat to participate on the peak day. Scheduling Coastie should be done as far in advance as possible. Many Districts have a PFD Panda and Officer Snook costumes. These are also great attractions and often easier to schedule than Coastie. There is no reason why all cannot participate at a show.

Everyone likes to receive something for free. Sources of free boating promotional items are Coast Guard recruiters (pens, pencils, rulers, decals, refrigerator magnets), State Boating Law Administrators (floating key rings, whistles, PWC registration tubes), US Army Corps of Engineers (orange trash bags which double as a visual distress signal, coloring books, and whistles). Although available from other services, only use Coast Guard recruiting materials.

A National Marketing Group Coordinator is available to assist flotillas with exhibits. Contact Stu Soffer for assistance, at (870) 247-1177 after 0900 CST, or cgaugstu@yahoo.com.
Guide updated January 13, 2008

Sample EXHIBIT OPERATING PROCEDURE
(Modify for local use)

1. Exhibit Goal: Recruit new members, promote recreational boating safety by encouraging boaters to wear life jackets, obtain a vessel safety check, take America’s Boating Course and not boat under the influence. Simultaneously promote America’s Waterway Watch Program.
2. Concept: The concept for a successful exhibit is for visitors to be able to relate to Auxiliarists as “affable” as opposed to “authority” figures. And the Auxiliarists must be knowledgeable, physically able to perform exhibit duties and wear the correct uniform smartly.
3. Setting Up:
Include specific set up, break down and night time security information here. Remember, free exhibit space sometimes does not include a carpet. Many venues rent them. If your exhibit space is carpeted, or you bring your own carpet, it has to be cleaned daily so think about a vacuum cleaner or broom.
4. Operating the Exhibit:
 - a. Only two Auxiliarists should staff the exhibit at one time. Socialize with family and other Auxiliary members away from the exhibit area so visitor access is not blocked or discouraged.
 - b. The Undress Blue – Summer Alpha uniform (collar insignia) is designated and hats are not worn under cover. Tilley or garrison hats are not appropriate for this mission. Key rings, knives or other non-uniform items should not be worn on belts or hooked to belt loops. Gold chains or other inappropriate jewelry should not be worn in view. It’s always a good idea to review the Auxiliary Manual on uniform and accessory wear policies before meeting the public.

c. Encouraging the boating public to wear "today's" life jackets is a primary objective, so a new style life jacket should be the first thing people see when they enter our exhibit space. One of those staffing the exhibit should wear an inflatable life jacket to show off both styles. The life jacket pouch is an ideal place for cell telephones and car keys, pen and pad, sun glasses, etc.

d. Event access passes must be returned to the "Will Call" booth upon completion of each shift. They must be available for the shift subsequent to the one that relieves you.

e. Engage visitors as soon as they come into your space, inquire about their boating interests, and guide them to materials they might like to have. The America's Waterway Watch pamphlet appeals to patriotic instinct. If you have a boating enthusiast, the "You're In Command" boat responsibly brochure is good because it is encompassing. Do not tell "sea stories".

f. Don't hand literature to everyone. Even if the literature is potentially interesting, thrusting unwanted literature at visitors is offensive. Do not pre-bag literature for visitors. This is a waste of literature. Let visitors select or ask for what they want or you can suggest items.

g. Ensure all are wearing the uniform of the day correctly before taking photographs. This is especially important if a photo is going to be published in a newspaper, magazine or on a web site. One frequently overlooked item is wearing an incorrect hat or prohibited items on belts.

h. Watch standers are required to log in and out in the Watch Stander's Log. Record the location of any items secured for the night, literature out of stock, contacts to be followed up on, estimated number of meaningful contacts for each shift and any other pertinent information.

4. Be Professional and Effective:

a. Don't Sit. If you sit, visitors get the impression you don't care to be bothered. Use the stools provided to rest because they permit eye contact to be maintained. No chairs please.

b. Neatness. Table tops should be kept neat and orderly. Do not place hats, jackets, water bottles and other personal items on them. Store all items not in use out of sight.

c. Don't Read. For every 10' of linear exhibit space, you have just four seconds to impress a visitor enough to get them to stop. It's not impressive to see someone reading a newspaper.

d. Don't Chew Gum. No one wants to talk with someone who's chewing.

e. Don't Eat or Smoke: Take a break. Remember, garlic, onions, and some foods cause unpleasant breath as does tobacco. Carry breath mints or other breath cleansers. Some mouth wash products contain alcohol and can give the false impression the user consumed alcohol.

f. Don't Ignore Prospects. One of the rudest things you can do is ignore a visitor, even for a few seconds. Nobody likes to be ignored. If you're busy when someone approaches at least acknowledge them and subsequently try to include them in the conversation.