



WAVES

Watercraft and Vessel Safety

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BOATING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION, REPORTING and ANALYSIS

Robert J. Auchinleck, BC-BNB

The Auxiliary plays a key role in America's recreational boating safety (RBS) program. We can think of this role as consisting of two major components, prevention and response. Of these two, the Auxiliary has ownership of the prevention component through our cornerstone missions of public education and vessel safety checks. We also support the Coast Guard response component through our operations cornerstone.

Many RBS initiatives and business plans obtain their focus from studies of recreational boating accidents. When we read in our newsletters and lesson planning guides that it is crucial to emphasize the importance of wearing personal flotation devices and the avoidance of alcohol consumption while underway, those messages result from analyses of boating accident information. Federal law requires boating accident reports. They are received by the states from both the boaters involved as well as from the marine law enforcement agencies that investigate these accidents. These reports are then forwarded by the states to the Coast Guard.

It follows that if the boating public is to benefit from the large amount of time and effort expended to collect and learn from these unfortunate experiences, some additional effort must be expended providing direction to the national boating accident reporting system. For a number of years, the Coast Guard has relied upon the states to lead in this area. The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) accomplishes much of its program leadership through various committees. One of these is the Boating Accident Investigation, Reporting and Analysis Committee (BAIRAC) of which I am a member. My office is BC-BNB, which indicates that I serve as a branch chief in the Department of Boating, NASBLA Division. The last B stands for BAIRAC. Along with eleven state BLAs, BAIRAC includes members from the USCG, the NTSB, Underwriters' Laboratories, representatives from the marine industry and the Auxiliary. The current chair is Tom Wakolbinger, Illinois BLA and Chief of the Illinois DNR Division of Law Enforcement. Most BAIRAC members, including myself, are experienced accident investigators and several have that experience coupled with engineering backgrounds.

BAIRAC had its first meeting of the new millennium in Louisville, KY. Some of the agenda items will give an idea of the important work that this committee is charged with. Among the key items addressed were:

1. Develop a standard for Boating Accident Investigation courses so that NASBLA approved ones can be created.
2. Review Subpart C of Section 173 of Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations – Casualty and Accident Reporting.
3. Identify areas that demonstrate the greatest need for accident intervention and prevention programs.
4. Continue oversight of the Boating Accident Report Database Intermediate (BARD-I) project and work with the USCG to ensure smooth introduction. Also, explore ways to ensure that all states and territories participate and use the new software.
5. Oversee the staged boat collision project.
6. Continue oversight of Accident Investigation Seminars.
7. Review Yorktown training course content as it relates to accident investigation.
8. Identify the minimum components that should be present in a state boating accident investigation program.
9. Develop and forward for NASBLA consideration a resolution calling on the Coast Guard to initiate a rule-making process to change the reporting threshold for RBS accidents from \$500 to \$2,000.

There were a total of twenty-one items on the committee's agenda.

In addition, COMO Warren McAdams, DC-B, asked me to fill in the committee members concerning the restructuring of the Auxiliary Vessel Safety Check program and to explore collecting data concerning the public education and VSC history of persons and vessels involved in RBS accidents. These tasks were all accomplished.

The Coast Guard Boating Accident Report (BAR) presently collects information concerning the extent of operators' boating education. Adding information concerning whether or not the vessel had a current VSC was considered a valuable addition and I was assured by the USCG representative that they will welcome an Auxiliary request to do so upon the next revision of the BAR form. I will prepare the necessary request for forwarding to the Office of Boating Safety.

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[BC-BNB continued]

Some states already ask this question on their BAR forms. I am making arrangements to obtain what data is currently available in BARD-I system and provide this to the Auxiliary RBS team. The USCG representative also asked NASBLA to request that all states and territories supply a copy of their BAR form for the next phase of the BARD program and since they now know of the Auxiliary's interest in this information, they will let me know which states currently collect it and in what manner.

Participation on BAIRAC by the Auxiliary is valuable to everyone. Although the work of the committee is facilitated when members also have relevant technical experience, I've observed that frequently an Auxiliarist can provide a "voice of the customer" input that can help to frame issues. Also, since most of the Coast Guard representatives are statisticians and program managers from headquarters, an Auxiliarist can often provide first hand experience concerning small boat station operations. For the Auxiliary, BAIRAC makes recommendations that shape the recreational boating accident data system, which is a key driver of Auxiliary RBS initiatives. Everyone benefits from this exchange of information, most of all, the boating public.

National Safe Boating Council

Bill Griswold, BC-BLN

It's time again to think about registering and attending the International Boating and Water Safety Summit, April 16-19, 2000 at the Alexis Park, Las Vegas, Nevada. This is a non-gaming hotel, however, it's a short walk to the strip. Of particular interest to Auxiliarists will be a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary panel presentation on the re-engineering study of the former CME program. Many other organizations will meet there as well: the NASBLA Education Committee, the National Water Safety Congress, the National Safe Boating Council, and United Safe Boating Institute. Seven foreign countries will be represented, and the Summit goes like this:

- Sunday, 4/16 – Evening Reception, Exhibition and Poster Viewing
- Monday, 4/17 – Opening General Session
 - Afternoon field trip to Lake Mead for a picnic and water activities
- Tuesday, 4/18 – General Session & Breakout Tracks (as many as 6 to choose from)
- Wednesday, 4/19 – Track Sessions and closing General Session.
 - Evening Mixer and Awards Banquet

Anyone interested is invited to visit the National Safe Boating Council web site at:

www.safeboatingcouncil.org. Click on the Summit icon and get more information about registration, scholarship applications, etc. It really is the premier Boating Safety event of the year.

The 2000 North American Safe Boating Campaign is also well underway. The action kits are being printed

and will be going to Flotillas in March. There will be a large kick-off event in Washington, DC in May, just prior to National Safe Boating Week, May 20-27, and it will be hooked or linked to the Canadian kick-off in Ottawa. Large events are being planned around the country, so I urge every flotilla to get their orders in early, plan a good event, and get involved. The kit will take you through the steps to have a successful campaign. Get going and have fun.

Both the Summit and the Campaign are brought to you through grants administered by the Coast Guard and funded by the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund. They are products and returns on your boat fuel taxes, so take advantage of them.

State Liaison Pacific Area

Betty Oakey, BC-BSP

On 16 February, the states of California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah will meet with the area Coast Guard representative, Greg Shaffer and the past San Francisco Commander, CAPT Hall, in Sacramento to discuss activities in their States. One of the important issues will be to solicit any new ideas as to how to get responses from the State Liaison Officers (SLOs).

Last year the concern from the States about the lack of complete accident statistics from the USCG to the States was resolved and made for much better communications. A future report will detail the accomplishments at this February meeting.

There was some discussion about how to fund SLOs to enable them to attend this meeting. So far, only Nevada seems to have resolved this issue. I would be interested to know if other States have been able to fund SLOs to District-wide meetings.

Selected Reference Material



Marine Studies

Title: Evaluation of U.S. Department of Transportation Efforts in the 1990s to Address Operator Fatigue **NTSB Report #:** SR--99-01,

adopted 5/11/0199 -

www.nts.gov/Publictn/1999/SR9901.pdf

Title: We Are All Safer **NTSB Report Number:** SR-98-01 -

www.nts.gov/Publictn/1998/SR9801.pdf

Title: Safety Study Personal Watercraft Safety **NTSB Report**

#: SS--98-01, adopted on 05/19/1998 -

www.nts.gov/Publictn/1998/SS9801.pdf

Marine Accident Reports

Title: Collision between Panamanian Container Ship Ever Grade and U.S.C.G. Buoy Tender Cowslip, Columbia River near Astoria, Oregon, May 14, 1997 **NTSB Report #:** MAB-99-01, adopted 12/30/1999 -

www.nts.gov/Publictn/1999/MAB9901.pdf

Title: Marine Accident Report: Sinking of the Recreational Sailing Vessel MORNING DEW at the Entrance to Harbor of Charleston, SC on 12/29/97 **NTSB Report #:** MAR-99-01, adopted 10/05/1999 -

www.nts.gov/Publictn/1999/MAR9901.pdf

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