



# WAVES

Watercraft and Vessel Safety

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF BOATING

VOLUME 7

03-01

Department Chief: Jesse L. Harrup, Jr., DC-B, 1201 Canterbury Lane, Colonial Heights, VA 23834-2709  
Newsletter Editor: John Sikes, BC-BRN, 141 Southwold Circle, Goose Creek, SC 29445 [jsikes@dycon.com](mailto:jsikes@dycon.com)

## From The Chief

Jesse L. Harrup, Jr., DC-B

Continuing our mission of updating members on the Global Marine Distress Satellite System (GMDSS), the GMDSS Task Force met in Washington DC on January 6, 2003.

I will only report on issues as they may reasonably affect either the recreational boating public or the USCGAUX, but you may gain access to the full report as posted on the Task Force portion of the Coast Guard web site at

[www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/)

1. There is new Coast Guard interest in Maritime Domain Awareness growing out of security concerns expressed in the Transportation Security Act. More specifically, the Coast Guard is tasked with tracking vessels enroute to ports in the U.S. and has been given broad authority to specify AIS requirements for domestic non-SOLAS vessels. The initial version of AIS using VHF-DSC is for local use but high seas tracking is also envisioned. COMSAR 7 confirmed that initial applications of long range tracking would depend on Inmarsat C which has a tracking capability and which is already fitted on most SOLAS vessels as part of the GMDSS suite.

2. An update to an earlier report on efforts at ITU to tighten the Radar emission "standards to conserve spectrum" was made. Actions already taken have rendered shore based operation of vessel radars technically in violation. Future proposals to tighten emission standards for radars on vessels could have a significant impact if adopted but there is a great deal of opposition from administrations with large numbers of small vessels and as a result, adoption of such a change for vessel radars is not likely in the near future.

3. It was noted that the Pacific Northwest Marine Radio Council had petitioned the FCC to take action to eliminate the requirement for small vessels 'licensed by rule' to apply for and pay for a station license because they make international voyages between the U.S. and Canada. It appears that neither country enforces the rule and neither sees a practical need for the license. The FCC

position is based on the international rules that were intended for large ships on more significant voyages. The Task Force has endorsed some solution to this problem and also indicated that short voyages to the Bahamas from Florida should be addressed. The FCC expects to put the Petition out for public comment at which time Task Force members can make their views known.

4. The briefing on planned coastal use of VHF-DSC by government agencies was deferred due to incomplete planning criteria and will be scheduled at a later meeting. In a related matter, we have a report from a Coast Guard Auxiliary flotilla in the San Diego area to the effect that VHF-DSC has been used successfully to coordinate patrol activities among several Auxiliary vessels and the shore base station. Interested parties can review the report on line at:

[www.cgaux.org/cgauxweb/operations/comms015.htm](http://www.cgaux.org/cgauxweb/operations/comms015.htm).

5. BoatU.S. reported for the Recreational Vessel Group:

a. The Coast Guard requested survey of BOATU.S. customers who have applied for MMSI numbers is now complete. About 8,200 MMSI numbers have been issued to date and all were queried during the survey. 2634 responses indicated that 96% have DSC, 97% have GPS and 75.5% have connected the GPS to the VHF-DSC. Many who have not made the connection plan to do so by the time the Coast Guard is able to watch channel 70.

b. The new GMDSS brochure is being packaged with all GMDSS equipment shipped by BOAT US and the Coast Guard has offered to provide bulk copies to other Manufacturers, Service Agents, and Boat Show sponsors. Readers of this summary record may obtain copies by applying to Joseph Carro of the Boating Safety staff at Coast Guard headquarters (phone: 202-267-1263, email: [jcarro@comdt.uscg.mil](mailto:jcarro@comdt.uscg.mil)).

c. The BOAT U.S. Foundation plans to apply for a grant to develop an online DSC radio tutorial for recreational boaters, one of the training aids

for which the Task Force has expressed a strong need. Applications must be received by 15 January 2003.

6. Walport Corporation briefed the committee on developing video training aids for the basic elements of GMDSS. The tentative plans are to produce two versions, one aimed at recreational vessel and another aimed at small commercial vessels. The videos would be available for sale at a price yet to be determined. The project was well received by the Task Force that has stated a need for GMDSS video training products. Bob welcomed input from the group which should be directed to him at 732-818-9883 or email: bob@walportusa.com.

7. There was a briefing to the group on the characteristics of the new Inmarsat Fleet 33 and Fleet 55 terminals. The briefing had been requested since these terminals designed for smaller vessels are not intended to be GMDSS compliant. The Task Force expressed a concern that these new terminals appeared to offer good prospects for meeting the safety needs of smaller vessels many of which are likely to be mandated to carry radio systems for safety and security purposes. These new Inmarsat terminals could more readily be specified through regulation if they had minimal distress features such as a distress button.

That's the latest on GMDSS for the small boater; until the next issue-"keep 'er 'tween the bouys"

### **The Other 20 Percent -- When Wearing a Life Jacket Is Not Enough**

CDR Kim Pickens, US Coast Guard Reserve,  
Operation BoatSmart Project Officer

The new regulations requiring PFD wear by certain children brings up the whole issue of educating ALL boaters on the importance of wearing life jackets. After all, the slogan: "Boat smart from the start – wear your life jacket!" isn't just – or even MOSTLY – for kids!

Along with explaining how the regulation applies – or does NOT apply in their state\*, this new rule means we now have a new opportunity to talk to parents and grandparents especially about their obligations as elders to ensure their children are safe – no matter what regulation applies in their state. It is also an opportunity to show them that part of their obligation as responsible caregivers is to make sure that:

I. They don't place their young charges in a position where the children have to try to rescue their elders, because the ones "in charge" aren't wearing a life jacket, and

II. They "model" the behavior they want their children and grandchildren to follow by wearing life jackets themselves anytime they take their kids out on the water. That way, kids learn to accept that life jackets are for everybody, not just the very young or "sissies."

But why the emphasis on wearing life jackets instead of keeping them "handy" or "readily accessible"? Boating accident statistics show that drowning is the single biggest cause of death in recreational boating accidents, accounting for more than 70% of boating deaths. The great majority of these drownings (again, over 70%) were precipitated by unexpected entry into the water, which means the victim had no time to grab a life jacket before entering the water. (THAT's why keeping them "handy" does little good!) Our data also show that over 80% of drowning victims were NOT wearing life jackets when found. We know from other data that most of those victims could have been saved had they been wearing a life jacket when they first entered the water.

"OK, I understand all that," you say. "But, what happened to the other 20%, the ones who were wearing life jackets, but drowned anyway? How come they drowned when they were wearing this thing that was supposed to protect them? And how do WE respond to boaters who ask us the same thing?" Those are good questions, and they deserve honest answers.

There are actually several reasons why persons wearing life jackets occasionally drown. A significant number of these drowning victims were paddlers, such as canoeists and kayakers. Now canoeists and, even more so, kayakers, actually have a pretty good PFD wear rate, at least compared with most other boating populations.

However, paddlers also have a few things that work against them if they should have a mishap. Paddlers tend to boat in remote areas, far from rescue resources or help from passersby. They frequently paddle alone or with only one other person, and the vessels they use are by design relatively unstable and prone to frequent capsizing. And paddlers are particularly at risk for a dangerous situation called entrapment.

Entrapment occurs when the vessel or the boater becomes snagged on rocks or debris at some hazardous point, then goes under due to the severe hydraulics of the water, and the boater is either unable to escape the craft or unable to escape the hydraulic pressures on him or her. The boater is unable to escape the forces on him/her no matter what kind of PFD the boater has on, and the resulting cause of death would be drowning.

Other causes of drowning while wearing life jackets generally involve some sort of injury or impairment that, by itself, doesn't kill the boater, but is severe enough to prevent him or her to do those things necessary to keep the boater's face out of the water or prevent what we call "mouth immersions" from restricting the victim's airway over time.

A person who gets hit in the head by some object on land may fall to the ground unconscious. When that person wakes up, he or she can then seek medical attention with no other harm done. If that same person gets hit the same way and lands in the water instead, it's a very different story.

Wearing a PFD that turns the unconscious victim face up is one way to avoid that problem, and, unfortunately, most of the more comfortable PFDs – those labeled as Type III or Type V PFDs – will not turn an unconscious victim face up, at least not consistently. What most of these PFDs will do is bring the person, whether unconscious or not, back up to the surface, enabling those nearby to quickly bring the victim to safety. (A big exception here would be manually activated inflatables, which in such cases would be the same as having no life jacket at all.) Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that no one is nearby to help the unconscious victim, with or without a life jacket on, and the end result is drowning.

I mentioned mouth immersions earlier. Once a boater is in the water, waves can continuously splash over the victim's mouth, causing a small amount of water to be ingested, some of which may enter the lungs. The more forcefully and completely the waves cover the mouth and nose, the more water is ingested. These are called mouth immersions. There may be injuries or circumstances that make it difficult for a boater, especially over time, to prevent mouth immersions even while wearing a PFD. Eventually those mouth immersions do the same thing as having the boater's face in the water: they eventually cause the boater to drown. It is an awful and terribly protracted way to die, but it does happen occasionally.

Those are the primary reasons boaters wearing life jackets sometimes drown. Either the boater is unable to free himself or herself from some type of entrapment, is unconscious, or otherwise unable to keep his/her face out of the water, or eventually drowns from numerous mouth immersions over a prolonged period of time.

Can we always prevent people who wear PFDs from drowning? No, and I hope the explanations given here can help you answer this perfectly legitimate question. Having said that, however, we know that the greatest cause of death among boaters is drowning due to unexpected entry into the water. And since boaters

don't know when that entry might happen, the time to have their life jackets on is before they ever get on the boat!

But we also know that boaters in general HATE wearing life jackets, because they know how hot and uncomfortable those big old orange PFDs are! Maybe you feel the same way, too. That's why a big part of Operation BoatSmart is educating ourselves and the boating public about what we like to call "today's" life jackets. We think THAT is where the big sticking point is for most boaters: they just don't know they have an affordable, *comfortable* choice.

We know the many advantages (and the few disadvantages) of inflatables. But those aren't the only new kids on the block! Three-fourths of the PFDs we showcase in a new PowerPoint called, "Let's Talk Life Jackets!" are *inherently buoyant* PFDs. (You can download the PowerPoint from the Auxiliary Education Department's website. Go to "PE Media Library" and scroll down to "Instructor Aids.") At this point in time, boaters may have to go to specialty stores or shop online to find what they want, but they are available, many at prices that are quite reasonable.

THAT's why we continue to say, "Boat smart from the start – WEAR your life jacket!"



\*The new Federal PFD regulation for children applies only in those States that have NO regulation or law requiring children to wear life jackets. States with no current requirement for children to wear life jackets include Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, the Northern Marianas Islands, New Mexico, North Carolina, Virgin Islands, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The Federal regulations do not apply in sole State waters.

In all other States, the federal regulation adopts the current State law or regulation with any requirement for any children to wear life jackets under any circumstances. The Coast Guard will enforce a violation of those State laws or regulations adopted as Federal law, where the Coast Guard exercises jurisdiction on the waters within those States.

In all States where the Coast Guard enforces the Federal or the State requirements, penalties for a boat operator who fails to have all children under the age of 13 wear a life jacket, or is found in violation of a State requirement, are similar to those for failing to have life jackets on board. Penalties may be assessed up to a maximum of \$1,100 for each violation. For more specific information about State requirements, you should contact your State Boating Law Administrator.

## INTRODUCTION to DVC-BR (Select) and Division Goals for 2003 and Beyond

Ed Sweeney, DVC-BR (Select)

Hello. My name is Ed Sweeney, and I recently accepted the position as Division Chief for Boating Resources. I am excited about coming on board the "B" Department, and look forward to continuing to make this division a valuable resource for the USCGAUX.

I've been a member of the Auxiliary since late 2000, and have been involved in many different programs, including PE, VE, MV, Operations (as crew and coxswain), and have been especially active in Public Affairs. I LOVE THE AUXILIARY and especially want to make a difference in the area of recreational boating safety. In the Boating Resources Division, I am so far blessed by the quality and devotion to duty expressed by John Sikes, BC-BRN, and Gordon Martin, BC-BRI. At this point we are still looking for another member of the team – someone to serve as Branch Chief-Grants (BC-BRG). Ideally this person should have some experience in grant writing, and should possess excellent writing skills. The ideal candidate should also be a "detail" person, and enjoy working with a variety of people, and be able to manage a number of projects simultaneously.

I also feel blessed to have such a knowledgeable and supportive Department Chief – Jesse Harrup, Jr.

My goals for the Boating Resources Division for 2003 include the following:

- To fill the Branch Chief – Grants position, hopefully by 15 March 03.
  - To increase the membership's awareness of the grant opportunities presently available, which include the BoatU.S. Grassroots Grant Program, the BoatU.S. Clean Water Grants Program, and the Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Grants available from the National Safe Boating Council. While all of these grant program deadlines have passed to receive monies in 2003, I will be publishing an article in a future issue depicting the timeline and chain of events necessary for you to take part in these grant programs.
  - To continue to ensure that **WAVES** is published on a timely basis, and that it provides the membership with news and information on a variety of topics effecting recreational boating safety.
  - To continue to improve the resources on the Boating Department's web page, and to continue to improve the Directory of Services for 2003 and beyond.
- Beyond 2003, I would like to eventually explore more grant opportunities, and first on the list will be the

possibility of exploring grants from the International Water Safety Congress (IWSC).

If you have any questions about the Boating Resources Division, please contact me at 916-284-8507 or via email at [esweeney-uscgau@attbi.com](mailto:esweeney-uscgau@attbi.com).

## WELCOME THE NEW YEAR

Bill Griswold, BC-BLN

2003 dawns with challenges, and the Auxiliary is faced with many. While our focus is perhaps on the Coast Guard's transition to a new Department and increasing security missions, the Auxiliary must concentrate on a fundamental mission which reaches more Americans than anything else the Coast Guard does. That mission is **Recreational Boating Safety**.

Some fear that our collective interest in the boaters of America will ebb, but I'm confident that we'll do our normal outstanding job. Boating accidents and fatalities have dropped over the decades, due to your efforts in part and to a continuing commitment to boating safety.

To energize your zeal for your prime mission, the International Boating and Water Safety Summit will collect hundreds of boating professional in April, where – Las Vegas. This annual forum examines a variety of topics near and dear to boating. If you're interested, go to the National Safe Boating Council's website at [www.safeboatingcouncil.org](http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org) and click on the Summit logo. Registration forms, information and even scholarship forms are there for your use.

The Safe Boating Campaign is also fast approaching. Every flotilla should get a kit by early March, but you can get ahead of the game by checking the above website, and clicking on the Campaign. There is downloadable material, information, and best of all, a site to register your own event for the world to see. Please check it out. You PA officers should be really familiar with this site; it contains a wealth of materials ready for your use.

I know most of you are under winter's cold and boating is sometime in the future. Check out the resources of the Council to help you put on a great campaign to help your friends and neighbors. A Belated Happy New Year, and hope to see you on the water.

**Distribution: Via direct email from BC-BRN to: NEXCOM, N-H, G-OPB-2, G-OCX-1, GOCX-2. Upon receipt, DCOs are encouraged to copy and/or provide the widest possible dissemination to DCPs; DCPs are further requested to provide the widest possible dissemination to FCs. Upon receipt, FCs are asked to copy and provide copies to Flotilla members.**