



WAVES

Watercraft and Vessel Safety

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

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 4

AUGUST 2004

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FROM THE CHIEF – GMDSS UPDATE

Jesse L. Harrup, Jr., DC-B

The GMDSS Task Force met in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida on 20 May 2004. Some of the recreational boating safety related items discussed, included a new video, "Taking the Search Out of Search & Rescue," which is now available for sale to recreational boaters in both VHS and DVD formats. For more information they may visit the web site at www.shipboardvideoexpress.com or call 800-438-9872.

With regard to Boating Safety Grants, it was learned that the *BoatU.S. Foundation* proposal to develop an interactive internet tutorial on the use of VHF-DSC has been organizationally approved. In similar fashion, The United Safe Boating Institute (USBI) received a grant to update and reprint their brochure, "GMDSS FOR RECREATIONAL BOATERS."

The status of an initiative under consideration by the National Search and Rescue Committee to recommend that coastal states emulate the new Hawaiian Law that requires vessels going more than one mile offshore be equipped with a VHF radio or an EPIRB was provided. To wit: the Coast Guard is gathering data and will explore the issue with representatives of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) before making a firm recommendation to the National SAR Committee. The Task Force had previously noted the new Hawaiian Law and agreed that adoption by other coastal states would be good for boating safety generally but has deferred to the National SAR Committee whose recommendations could be more persuasive.

A representative from *Sea Tow* briefed the group on the scope of their organization's vessel assistance program. *Sea Tow's* 110 franchisees handle 80,000 to 90,000 assistance cases a year. Many of the *Sea Tow* vessels are equipped with VHF-DSC and Automatic Direction Finders and several High Sites ashore maintain continuous watch on the distress channels. All *Sea Tow*

franchisees will soon be added to the GMDSS Task Force distribution list.

It was reported and discussed that problems with "do-it-yourself" interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC radios are still being reported. The GMDSS Task Force will try to summarize the problems in a GMDSS Information Bulletin, Press Release, or other notice for distribution in recreational boating circles. The Coast Guard is also reviewing the problem and may decide to issue a safety alert.

A representative from the *Equipped to Survive Foundation* briefed the group on the results of EPIRB trials conducted to assess the performance of the GPS position reporting in those versions with connected or integral GPS input.

The trials, which were funded and conducted in partnership with the *BoatU.S. Foundation*, were scheduled because of failure to get reliable position in a series of earlier tests. The results confirmed earlier indications that the GPS position is not being reliably transmitted with the EPIRB alert in some models of the equipment that were tested. A summary of the results can be viewed on the Foundation's website at www.equipped.org.

A representative from the *U.S. Power Squadrons*, (in discussing their GMDSS Learning Guide), indicated that it has been updated and is ready for publication; it will be offered for sale outside the USPS membership.

A new issue was discussed involving renewal of station licenses for recreational vessels. Many of these vessels obtained their station licenses before the FCC authorized "Licensing by Rule" which exempted recreational vessels from the requirement to hold Radio Station Licenses if they had only VHF, EPIRBs, and Radar. This new issue arose since it is expected that many of these recreational use vessels would elect not to renew their Station Licenses but would want to retain the MMSI number issued by the FCC on the expiring Station License.

HURRICANE PREPARATION STARTS WITH THE RIGHT LOCATION

from BoatU.S.

With NOAA forecasting above average tropical storm activity this year, the July issue of the BoatU.S. damage avoidance newsletter *Seaworthy* took a look at the lessons learned from last fall's devastating Hurricane Isabel. What the newsletter found could help boaters better prepare for this hurricane season.

The *Seaworthy* story reviewed the experiences of three Chesapeake Bay area marinas in Isabel's path - Hartge Yacht Yard, MD; Herrington Harbor North, MD; and Jordan Point Yacht Haven, VA. All were well run marinas, well respected and popular with local boaters.

Beginning three days before the storm hit, all 297 boat owners at Hartge's were reminded that hurricane preparations were their responsibility. Boaters took the news seriously, coming down to prep their boats in droves – decreasing windage, adding extra lines and chafe protection. Several boats were moved to hurricane holes. Yard employees prepared buildings and grounds then went home, leaving a handful of volunteer staff.

At Herrington Harbor North - one of the largest marinas in the Chesapeake Bay with 1,300 boats, elaborate plans were made while Isabel was still well off the Georgia coast. Everyone was notified and dock walkers made notes of potential problems, giving some owners a second call. Anything on the grounds that could float or fly was secured, windows battened, and as the storm moved ashore power at the docks was finally cut off.

Jordan Point boaters were also contacted and heeded the call, but the message was different. Boats had to be moved to a hurricane hole or they would be hauled and stored ashore. No one could remain in the slip at this low-lying marina whose fixed docks were vulnerable to a southern storm track. Several boats had sunk when Hurricane Fran skirted the area in 1996.

By late Wednesday – in the nick of time – 80 boats had been neatly blocked ashore in two neat rows. After the grounds were secured, nothing could be done except go home and wait.

Hurricane Isabel struck with its full force on Thursday evening, September 18.

Early Friday morning dawned bright and sunny, with the Chesapeake Bay watershed a salad bowl

The solution arrived at after the meeting was to permit recreational vessels to keep the existing MMSI number provided that they register with BoatU.S. or Sea Tow. The re-registration is desirable since the FCC did not collect the full suite of vessel descriptive and contact information until recently. In registering with BoatU.S. or Sea Tow, the applicant would enter the existing MMSI number to be retained. The FCC plans to remind holders of expiring Station Licenses of the option and procedures to retain the MMSI number, and finally Captain Rick Hartman provided an update on the Coast Guard program to complete the coastal network guard on MF-DSC so as to enable declaration of Sea Area A2.

Unfortunately, the progress on rehabilitating antennas and ground planes that has been found necessary to enable effective operation of the new MF-DSC hardware, has been slow and a completion date cannot be predicted at this time. When better projections can be made, there could be a decision to work toward phased implementation dates for the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific coasts so that recreational boaters might begin to utilize their DSC VHF radio capabilities.

The Task Force agreed to meet next in Washington DC on Thursday 19 August 2004. Rooms 3200-3204 in the Department of Transportation Headquarters in SW Washington have been reserved. Individuals or organizations desiring to present briefings during the August meeting should contact Jack Fuechsel.

DIRECTORY OF SERVICES AVAILABLE

Jesse L. Harrup, Jr., DC-B

The new 2004 Directory of Services is now available. The information in this document is an invaluable resource for Auxiliarists, as well as for sharing with the boating public and any others who want a brief understanding of what the Coast Guard Auxiliary "is about" without also having to read the AUXMAN.

The directory is available on the Department of Boating's national web site at <http://www.uscgaux.org/~boating/main.htm>

A big **Bravo Zulu** is in order for the work of the B Department Resources Division staff and the DCs who helped us revise statistics for getting this 2004 version out this year!!!

of littered yards, downed power lines, damaged houses, sunk boats, and thousands of downed trees. At Hartge's – whose sheltered location at the end of a narrow inlet kept it protected – the combined storm surge and rain flooded several equipment buildings, but the boats only had minor damage, thanks to the volunteers who had stayed up the night first lengthening, then shortening lines as they rode the cresting surge. While its ultimate success lies in the marina's sheltered location, the volunteer staff effort was also commendable. However, at the exposed Herrington Harbor or Jordan Point, walking the docks would have been deadly.

A seawall at Herrington was breached by the surge, destroying large sections of docks that were exposed to the waves. Eight boats were sunk and many were damaged. The worst damage came to Jordan Point, where despite the many precautions, the eight-foot surge and six-foot breaking waves destroyed the vacant docks then proceeded to sweep the low-lying storage area, lifting all 80 boats off their stands and pinning them against a hill. All of the boats were damaged and about a quarter were a total loss.

So what is there to gain from this experience? "Location and preparation are key," says Bob Adriance, BoatU.S., Marine Insurance Technical Director and author of the story. "Try to select your marina with hurricane protection in mind. Their exposures to predominant storm tracks, elevation and protection from headlands are key factors. Sometimes a hurricane hole is a better option," he said.

Adriance also acknowledges that it's impossible for all marinas to offer the protection such as Hartge's location, "So look at your storm preparations now. Have you reviewed your marina's hurricane policy, and your own preparations? Are you ready if a hurricane strikes your boat in the next 72 hours?"

As Isabel becomes a faint memory for some, Herrington Harbor is rebuilding 250 slips, adding a higher sea wall and another new seawall that offers southerly protection. Jordan Point is replacing its devastated fixed docks with floating ones, adding taller pilings to ride the next hurricane surge and adding a breakwater.

Boaters can get their own free hurricane preparation help with the Seaworthy brochure, Hurricane Warning: A Guide to Preparing Boats and Marinas for Hurricanes, which includes a free Hurricane Planning Worksheet that takes boaters

step-by-step through the storm preparation procedures. For both of these free valuable tools and for other information on hurricanes, visit <http://www.BoatUS.com> or call 800-283-2883.

BOATING PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR NAMED

Bob Sterzenbach, BC-BSP

At the Western States Boating Administrators' Association conference held at Friday Harbor, Washington last May; Bonnie and Keith Harding received the **Boating Professional of the Year** award from the State of Washington.

Auxiliarists Bonita (Bonnie) and Keith Harding have been outstanding supporters of boating safety education in Washington State and have continuously for many years worked in close liaison with WA State Parks to improve communication between State Parks and the Auxiliary at every level.

Bonnie is the Auxiliary State Liaison Officer (SLO) to WA State Parks and has held this post since 1995 while Keith is the Coast Guard Auxiliary District 13 Education Officer (DSO-PE).

Several years ago Bonnie and Keith initiated the concept that WA State Parks support local Auxiliarists with their public education classes by providing the basic supplies, materials, and equipment. WA State Parks responded by supplying all 28 flotillas and ultimately the 15 U.S. Power Squadrons with all their material and equipment needs as well as committing to re-supply as needed.

As former public school teachers, both Bonnie and Keith take it upon themselves to work with Auxiliarists to help them improve their public education skills. They developed the "Have Class – Will Travel" concept over the past three years by going to people's homes to conduct boating safety classes when someone can get 2 to 5 people to take the class.

They have worked diligently over the past 5 years to assist the Auxiliary and WA State Parks enter into an agreement to conduct a Life Jacket Loaner Program.

Both have been instrumental in getting the Auxiliary to participate in vessel exams and education at launch ramps the opening day of fishing season.

Bonnie and Keith have attended the annual Marine Law Enforcement Conference for many years as a way to better understand boating safety

issues from law enforcement officers' perspective and to provide the Auxiliary's perspective as well as provide training sessions at the conferences from time to time.

Bonnie and Keith have demonstrated interest in expanding boating safety messages directly to diverse audiences. In 2003 with their help, Auxiliarists worked at a boating safety exhibit booth in a cultural events fair and they also taught a boating safety course to a Chinese group.

In 2003, both attended monthly meetings of the Washington Alliance for Mandatory Boater Education and 4 day long meetings of the WA State Parks Boating Safety Advisory Council, culminating in a report to the legislature recommending mandatory boat operator education.

Congratulations to Bonnie and Keith for earning this award and for their hard and continuing work in working with the CG Auxiliary and state of Washington to promote recreational boating safety!

STUDY COULD HELP EFFORTS TO INCREASE LIFE JACKET USAGE

from BoatU.S.

Two hunter and angler focus groups commissioned by the BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water reveal the top three reasons sportsmen don't wear life jackets while boating - and why some choose to.

"The number one reason for not wearing a life jacket was lack of comfort," said Chris Edmonston, Director of Boating Safety Programs at the BoatU.S. Foundation. "Hunters and anglers believe that life jackets are too hot, too uncomfortable, and too bulky. What is surprising, however, is their low awareness of the new class of lightweight, comfortable inflatable life jackets that have been on the market for several years now. Unfortunately, many sportsmen still see life jackets as those boxy orange foam ones they wore as kids," he continued.

Inflatable life jackets, which weigh as little as 13 ounces, come in camouflage and nautical colors, yet provide more buoyancy when inflated than a traditional foam-filled jacket. "Manufacturers see sportsmen as a viable market," said Edmonston. "And they've succeeded in creating styles that don't interfere with shooting or casting."

The second most common reason for not wearing a jacket was that this group rarely sees professionals on TV wearing their life jackets. "We

believe that the media should lead by example," said Edmonston. "Unfortunately, hunting and fishing shows don't treat life jackets the same as, for example, home improvement shows which routinely depict eye or ear protection."

The third most common reason for not wearing a life jacket was that sportsmen feel comfortable with their swimming ability, "A dangerous mistake which has led to many deaths," said Edmonston.

So why do some hunters and anglers choose to wear a jacket? A close call on the water by a friend or family member was the number one reason given in the study. "Sometimes it takes a truly frightening event for a boater to understand the importance of wearing a life jacket," said Edmonston. "It's like wearing a seat belt. It isn't going to help you after tragedy strikes."

The second reason to wear a life jacket was to present a positive role model for children or grandchildren. The third reason given was that it's simply a common sense precaution.

The focus groups were commissioned by the Sportsman's Forum, a coalition of sporting organizations like the North American Fishing Club, B.A.S.S., Cabelas, and the BoatU.S. Foundation. Additionally, the Forum has released the results of a second national telephone survey on boating and the media. This study looked at the media's role in presenting boating information and messages, and its impact on viewers. The full reports of both studies, along with practical boating tips for hunters and anglers, are available as a free CD by e-mailing your name and mailing address to BoatingSafety@BoatUS.com

The studies and subsequent analysis were conducted in Spring 2004 by the research and polling organization Responsive Management. The Sportsman's Forum performs research and education campaigns on safe boating through a U.S. Coast Guard grant, funded by the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund.

\$\$\$ GRANT SEASON IS ALMOST HERE! \$\$\$

Keep an eye on the What's New page for details, or contact Ed Sweeney, DVC-BR at esweeney-uscguaq@comcast.net

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