

Watercraft and Vessel Safety

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY RBS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

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From the Director

As this issue of WAVES goes to press, the boating season is gearing up across much of the United States. Auxiliarists are teaching public education classes, scheduling vessel safety check days, and brushing up on their safety patrol skills for the busy spring and summer ahead. The RBS Affairs Department is here to help improve your success in all of those endeavors.

Next month, we commemorate National Safe Boating Week from May 22-28. Although NSBW showcases the best of our efforts for just one week in May, it's our job every day of the year as Auxiliarists to make boating safe and enjoyable for everyone. If your flotilla, division, or state hasn't yet planned to get out the safe boating message during NSBW, it's not too late! There are some great resources available on the web at www.safeboatingcampaign.com, auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org, and www.auxbdept.org.

Over the past year, we have continued adding important new boating safety partners to act as force multipliers for all your valuable efforts in the field. In this issue, we highlight a new partnership between the Auxiliary and the Boy Scouts of America (including the Sea Scout program). More information is available online at auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org/index.php/Boy_Scouts_of_America. We also urge you to seek out your local Sea Cadet unit. We at RBS Affairs are continuing to develop Sea Cadet program resources at [auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org/index.php/U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps](http://auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org/index.php/U.S._Naval_Sea_Cadet_Corps). Remember: America's future leaders – and our future safe boaters and Auxiliarists – will emerge from the young people we teach and mentor today.

RBS Affairs has been working very hard to update and enhance the training materials available to your State Liaison Officer (or SLO). Your SLO is an essential link in the chain of communication and leadership between the national and flotilla levels to help promote recreational boating safety in your state. Your DSO-PE, PA, VE, and PV should be working closely with their SLO to develop and promote RBS initiatives. Much more information is available online at www.auxbdept.org/documents.php#stateliasion and auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org/index.php/States.

We are working hard to make our websites more useful to you. The RBS Affairs website, www.auxbdept.org has been supplemented by the *AuxBWiki* at auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org. If you have an idea for promoting boating safety, we want to hear about it! If you have questions, we're the go to guys. Give us a shout!

I'm sorry to announce that after three years as RBS Affairs (and before that the "Boating") Department Director, John Potts has retired. John ably led the department through the development of many important new partnerships, and his dedicated, steady hand will be missed by all who know him. We wish him well in his new phase of Auxiliary involvement, and will do our best to build on John's impressive accomplishments.

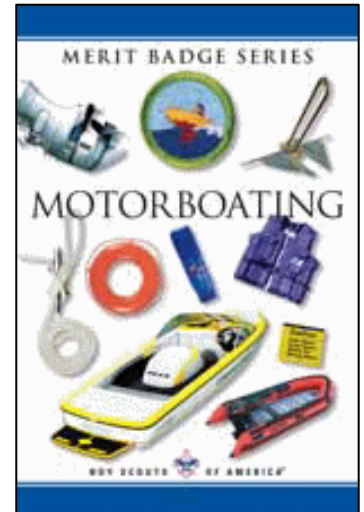
Please let us know how RBS Affairs can help you. My email address is dir-b@auxbdept.org. Keep up the good work!

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NEEDED: MERIT BADGE COUNSELORS

Recently, the Coast Guard Auxiliary entered into an agreement of mutual support with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). This exciting decision aims to help lead local Boy Scouts to your flotillas in order to earn their Motorboating and Small Boat Sailing Merit Badges; in exchange, you will be advertising the Auxiliary and its benefits to broad membership opportunities among Scouts, their parents, and their leaders. You are also introducing the Coast Guard to a whole generation of young people who may later choose to join the active duty or reserve forces.



There are more than a million Boy Scouts, Sea Scouts, and Venturers in the United States. This new agreement – complemented by BSA's Motorboating and Small-Boat Sailing Merit Badges – presents an incredible Auxiliary growth opportunity. According to BSA statistics, Scouts nationwide earn aquatics-related merit badges at higher rates than just about any other badge. Boy Scouts, Sea Scouts, and Venturers need our assistance to help them meet the requirements to earn Motorboating and Small Boat Sailing merit badges.

MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR AND AUXILIARY INSTRUCTOR?

Although not required, there are definite advantages to becoming both an Auxiliary Instructor and a Merit Badge Counselor:

- Auxiliary instructors who are also Merit Badge Counselors (and thus BSA members) can help support Scouts as they work through their Merit Badge activities. Becoming a Merit Badge Counselor can also provide positive public affairs and recruitment opportunities – such as having the flotilla meet in the same place where Scouts review their merit badge progress.
- As an Auxiliary Instructor, you already have the training and experience to teach others about safe boating; you may find you are already familiar with the Merit Badge boating topics.
- Most Auxiliarists boast a wealth of on-the-water experience and expertise – a tremendous resource for young Scouts looking to learn more about boating. Merit Badge Counselors play a key role in the Boy Scout advancement program. Whatever your specialty, your leadership as a Merit Badge Counselor is vital to Scout development.

IT'S EASY TO VOLUNTEER!

To become a Merit Badge Counselor, you'll need to register with the Boy Scouts of America. Contact your local council to obtain an Adult Application and Merit Badge Counselor Application. Each applicant is screened by the council.

You can locate your BSA local council by going to BSA's Local Council Locator at www.scouting.org and entering your ZIP code.

TO QUALIFY AS A MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR, YOU MUST...

- Be at least 18 years old

- Be proficient in the Merit Badge subject by vocation, avocation, or special training
- Be able to work with Scout-age boys
- Be registered as a Merit Badge Counselor with the Boy Scouts of America (a BSA Adult Application is used for the requirement)
- Renew your registration annually if you would like to continue as a Merit Badge Counselor for the following calendar year

AS A MERIT BADGE COUNSELOR, YOU AGREE TO...

- Follow the provisions of the latest BSA Merit Badge requirements
- Make no deletions or additions to the requirements, thus ensuring advancement standards are fair and uniform for all Scouts
- Counsel Scouts to
 - Keep appointments
 - Be in uniform
 - Bring a legibly filled out Merit Badge Application card (Blue Card) signed by the unit leader
 - Bring a buddy (friend or adult) to all instructional sessions as per BSA Youth Protection Guidelines

Approved volunteers need to complete BSA Youth Protection training through the BSA's Online Learning Center within 90 days of assuming a leadership position such as Merit Badge Counselor. The Boy Scouts of America seeks to create a safe environment in which both young people and adult leaders can enjoy the program and related activities; Youth Protection training helps preserve that environment.



As a Merit Badge Counselor, your mission is to marry fun and learning by teaching and mentoring Scouts as they “learn by doing”. Merit Badge Counselors must ensure that Scouts meet all the requirements for the merit badges they are coaching. While drawing on personal experiences to reinforce the subject matter, Merit Badge Counselors may not add new requirements or extra work. Finally, Merit Badge Counselors guide and instruct Scouts as they work toward their various requirements, but Scouts must accomplish all tasks themselves.

The Motorboating and Small-Boat Sailing Merit Badge requirements are located inside the merit badge pamphlets for each badge, which you can obtain at your local council's store or online at www.scoutstuff.org.



By becoming a Merit Badge Counselor, you can make it easier for Scouts to complete their aquatics merit badges, provide insight into boating safety, and give Scouts' parents and leaders a reason to consider membership in the Coast Guard Auxiliary. I encourage you to become a Motorboating or Small Boat Sailing Merit Badge Counselor with the Boy Scouts of America in order to capitalize on this new and exciting opportunity.

More information on this subject can found on the AuxBWiki at: auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org/index.php/Merit_Badge_Counseling .

Vessel Safety Checks

by Andrew Navalance

The 2010 recreational boating season will soon be underway! Boaters are already making trips to marinas admiring their prized possessions under the shrink wrap, longing for the season to break, calculating the tasks ahead, and anticipating launch day. Luckily, many boaters are also considering how to ensure their vessels are safe for all the maritime excitement ahead.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary offers boaters an on-site Free Vessel Safety Check each year. Vessel Safety Checks are conducted by qualified Auxiliary vessel examiners who educate boaters on safety equipment and ensure recreational vessels meet the most recent legal requirements before leaving the dock. This preventive outreach program encourages voluntary compliance: vessel examiners do not (and cannot) issue citations or “turn in” vessels not meeting all the requirements to a regulatory agency like the state marine police or active-duty US Coast Guard. Instead, the examiner’s single goal is prevention: ensuring vessel owners are safe and smart when they get underway, outfitted with all their required safety gear.

During the Vessel Safety Check (VSC), the examiner reviews

- Registration and documentation; proper number display
- Life jackets, fire extinguishers, visual distress signals
- Ventilation, battery covers, secured fuel containers
- Sound producing devices and navigation lights
- Overall condition of the vessel
- Local operating area hazards – knowledge and education

Upon completion of a satisfactory Vessel Safety Check, the vessel owner receives a decal valid for one calendar year. The decal reflects that the vessel met all safety requirements when it was inspected by an approved Vessel Examiner. While displaying the Safety Decal does not prevent the State Marine Police or the US Coast Guard from boarding a vessel, vessel owners should feel more comfortable, knowing their vessels have all required safety items on board. The VSC should not be just a one-time event; rather, it is part of a boater’s ongoing learning process. Boating education, a certificate, and the purchase of a boat are just the beginning; we need to ensure annual Vessel Safety Checks are also routine waypoints for boaters along their trackline to safe boating.





LIFE JACKETS FOR LIFE TOUR 2010

Welcome to Operation “Wear It Florida”, a joint effort between the United States Coast Guard, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and a variety of local partners, including the Coast Guard Auxiliary, US Power Squadrons, and local vendors specializing in marine safety products.

“Wear It Florida”, the Life Jackets for Life Tour 2010, is a tour of participating marine units down the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) in Florida. It highlights the importance of wearing life jackets and having other proper safety equipment aboard recreational vessels. “Wear It”, by design, will run concurrently with National Safe Boating Week.



“Wear It Florida” kicks off in Jacksonville on Sunday, May 23rd, and wraps up with a final event in Miami on Friday, May 28th. In between, there are a variety of media events and stops planned in Daytona Beach, USCG Station Ponce de Leon, Titusville, West Palm/Riviera Beach, and Pompano Beach. A “Wear It Florida” campaign jet boat will lead the procession of boats down the ICW. The Coast



Guard Auxiliary “BAT-PAK” trailer, advertising life jackets and other marine safety items, is scheduled to appear at each scheduled event along the way. During public safety events and media stops, boating safety equipment will be given away and local politicians will address the public to promote safe boating.

Help Set an Inflatable Life Jacket World Record!

- Virgil Chambers, Executive Director, NSBC

The [National Safe Boating Council](#) (NSBC) and [Canadian Safe Boating Council](#) (CSBC) are teaming up to set a world record! They are encouraging boaters, boating safety educators and anyone else who would like to join in the fun to participate in “[Inflatable Life Jacket World Record Day](#).” On Thursday, May 20, at 11:00 am EDT, participants from across North America will simultaneously inflate hundreds of life jackets.



World Record Day will help to usher in National Safe Boating Week, held this year from May 22 – 28. The goal of National Safe Boating Week is to educate and inform the boating public about boating safety, specifically life jackets. The push of inflatable life jackets has been the main focus of the campaign for the past few years.

To ensure this event is a success, the NSBC and CSBC are working with a variety of local sponsors and partners. If you’d like to participate or organize a local event of your own, please visit the newly created Web site at www.ReadySetInflate.com. We hope you can join us in this great opportunity to spread the word about life jacket safety to an international audience!



Distribution: All FCs & DCOs with email addresses in AUXDATA, plus NEXCOM, CG-542, CG-5422, and CG-54222 via direct email from Director for RBS Affairs (DIR-B). **Upon receipt, FCs are asked to forward the email or provide hard copies to flotilla members.**