

Watercraft and Vessel Safety

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

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From the Director

In this special issue of WAVES, we focus on boating education; in particular, bringing the safe boating message to the most vulnerable of boaters: children. When offering boater education to children, we need to be sure to engage their imaginations and look for any opportunity to make the experience fun and memorable. Remember the **Wear It!** message, easy for children to remember.

Tom & Virginia Rice of Flotilla 30-05 in Camdenton, Missouri, have assembled the exciting and detailed lesson plans for a wide range of elementary school-age children that you'll find in this issue. Each presentation can be done in about 25-35 minutes, with practice.

Curriculum Kit Materials (starred items for older students only)

- 1 Large tub on wheels (to hold other items)
- 1 life belt
- 7 life jackets – various sizes and types
- 1 throwable cushion
- 1 buoy
- 1 small (1-2 gal) bucket
- 1 bag with rope
- 1 small cooler
- 1 kick board
- 1 child-sized paddle
- 1 water noodle
- *Wad of fishing line
- *1 aluminum can
- *Styrofoam plate or cup
- *Plastic 6-pack holder
- *Pieces of 18"-24" line for knot-tying
- *Aquarium or large glass/clear plastic container
- *Vegetable oil
- *Dish soap

Although the courses the Auxiliary offers are excellent, we should not hesitate to customize them for specific audiences, enhancing them as appropriate with other, related resources. Here are some great places to start looking for those resources:

- The Coast Guard's Boating Safety Resource Center, <http://www.uscgboating.org/>
- AuxBWiki, <http://auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org>
- The Auxiliary's Education Department, <http://cgauxed.org>
- North American Safe Boating Campaign, <http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com>

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New Online Boating Safety RBS – News Service Launched!

The Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Affairs Department is pleased to announce a new boating safety alert service, called "RBS-News". It provides boating safety tips, best practice ideas, and important announcements about boating safety. To subscribe to RBS-News, simply click [HERE](#) and fill in the section labeled "Subscribing to RBS-News".

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

Water Safety Goes to School!

Lesson Plans for Children

- article, lesson plans, and all pictures by Tom & Virginia Rice, Flotilla 30-05

Somewhere around 10 or 12 years ago, when my husband, Tom, and I were fairly new members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, I was working at Dogwood Elementary School in Camdenton, MO. Camdenton is located on the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks. It is a really great place to live, with all the beauty and water sports right at our fingertips.

One of the kindergarten teachers I worked with wasn't enjoying the waterside location quite as much as she might have. She had lost a young student to drowning. You need to understand how attached teachers grow to their students. It was almost like losing a child of her own, and she was devastated. She wanted to do something to help prevent this from happening again! During a discussion, she wondered aloud if anyone knew of any water safety programs. I volunteered Flotilla 30-05 on the spot. Then I went back to my unit and asked what we should do.

As is the nature of the Auxiliary, everyone jumped on board. Our first attempt brought good results. We received many compliments and thanks from the teachers and staff. The children were very impressed with the uniforms and were eager participants in the action, especially when a life-sized panda bear wearing a life jacket walked into their classrooms!

We presented a hands-on program with each student having a part in the action, from getting a chance to answer a question, to taking part in a pretend boat ride, or going for a pretend fishing trip on Grampa's dock. Some students even got to play the part of the fish! Students got to try on life jackets and practice their life saving skills by knowing what to throw if someone were to fall into the water. Afterward, each student and teacher received a "goodie bag" containing pencils, kid-friendly activities, and information to get inside homes to reach parents.

We have been asked back each year since then. We continue trying to improve our skills and presentation, keeping our presentations age-appropriate and providing useful information.

Three years ago, I began teaching at Hawthorn Elementary, the third and fourth grade building just down the street. We immediately saw another need for water-related education among the older students. We again joined forces and came up with a program to suit these students' needs and interest levels. For the older students, we set up stations providing hands-on opportunities to learn about ecology, life jackets, life saving opportunities, and knot-tying. We even brought a brand new PWC to climb on and explore. During our presentation, a real live Missouri Water Patrol Officer joins us to talk to the students and answer their questions.

It took some practice, but we have become quite adept at moving 250 fourth-graders through the program smoothly, giving each student an opportunity to try everything and return to class after just 30-45 minutes. Believe me, THAT took some practice!

These days, it's not only the Missouri State Water Patrol who joins us for presentations, but the Lake of the Ozarks Water Safety Council as well, and even a local Marine Dealer who provides us with the PWC display. It is so amazing and gratifying to watch a community join forces and work together to provide an important service to our future – to our kids!

In our community, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary provides water safety training to kindergartners, then again in fourth grade. The Water Patrol follows up by going into the middle schools to reach 7th and 8th graders. Last spring we provided our services to four area elementary schools, reaching 800-1000 students, along with their families and extended families. We also present our program to other organizations on request. And, of course, we still provide *About Boating Safely* and *Boating Skills and Seamanship* courses to adults.

We don't know if we have saved any lives or not. We will never know. What we do know is that each year seems to bring another horror story of a life or lives lost on the water. Each new story renews our resolve to do what we can to make the Lake of the Ozarks a safe and truly enjoyable place to live, work, and raise our families.

Phase I Presentation: Grades K-2

After a short introduction about who the Coast Guard Auxiliary is, what we do, and why, begin the presentation by demonstrating a life jacket on yourself, showing how it fits properly. Ask questions: Why do I carry a whistle? Why is my life jacket such a bright orange color? ...and so forth. Bring a wide selection of different types, colors and sizes of life jackets to have on display.



For younger students, ask very simple questions and try life jackets on the students, showing proper and improper fit.

For older students, assemble chairs in the shape of a boat. Place various sizes of life jackets under seats. (Leave one inside a plastic bag). Have students volunteer to take a boat ride.

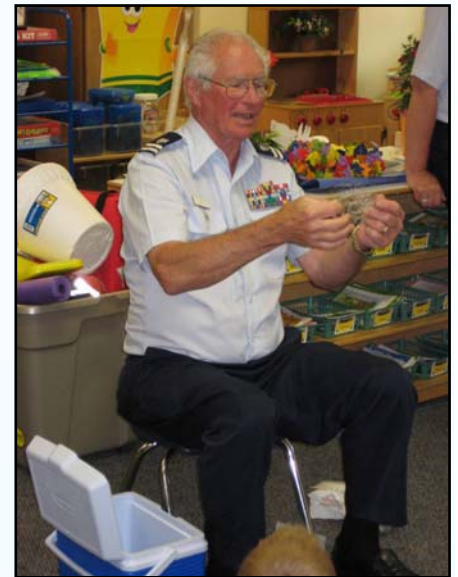


Tell the "boaters" something terrible just happened to their boat and they only have 30 seconds to put on their life jackets. Make sure a small child puts on a large life jacket; show why that won't work by lifting by the shoulders and dumping the student out. At least one of the jackets should be the correct child size to demonstrate again how it should be worn.



Have several water-related objects on hand that are familiar to children, such as a water noodle, extra life jacket, cooler, or paddle - things they might not think of to throw to someone who needs help. Pretend to fall in the water and ask someone to save you. (NEVER agree for anyone to jump in the water to help!) Ask frequent "what if?" questions. This is also a good time to talk about the rules at a swimming pool, and why we have those rules.

Environmental protection can be taught by having items on hand that will hurt aquatic life and the lake in general. A soda can, Styrofoam plate, plastic bottle, plastic holder from a six-pack of soda, and a wad of fishing line are good items. Have students tell you how each thing damages the environment. See if they know how long a Styrofoam plate will last, even if they can't see it any more. Have them tell you how to dispose of trash properly. Ask if it is OK to throw something into the lake if nobody sees you do it.



Afterward, provide each student with a "goodie" bag containing coloring books, pencils, and other handouts promoting water and boating safety. Several of these items should be directed at parents and include telephone numbers and websites for more information.

And finally, everyone loves PFD Panda!!

Phase II Presentation: Grades 3-5

Presented by the USCG Auxiliary, the Lake of the Ozarks Water Safety Council, and the Missouri State Water Patrol

Start by setting up several stations. Here, four stations are set up in one room, with enough room allowed between stations to reduce noise and enable students to focus. Stations should last no more than 10 minutes each. Limit group size to 6 - 8 students.

The stations may be visited in any order, although the students should go through the lifejacket station prior to the PWC.

We've found that State Water Patrol Officers in uniform have a very positive effect on the students!



LIFESAVING



Set up a static display of items often found on or around a boat dock.

Ask students how each item might save someone's life. Explain to students why they should NEVER jump in the water to save someone.

Objective: Students will understand how they can become lifesavers simply by keeping their cool and knowing what to do.

LIFE JACKETS

Tape off an area on the floor in the shape of a boat. Assemble chairs to represent a small, open-bow boat.

Under the chairs, place a variety of life jackets - adult, child, maybe even a dog jacket! Leave at least one or two in their plastic wrappers.



Tell the students: "On my boat, I like to keep things neat and tidy. I've carefully stowed lots of life jackets under the seats. The new ones are still in their plastic wrap so they won't get dirty or smelly. This makes sense, right?"

Tell the helmsman that he or she is responsible for the safety of each of his/her passengers and should make sure each of them has a lifejacket.

Tell the students: "We're having a great day on the water, but it rained last night, the water levels are high, and BANG! You just hit a log that was floating by underwater. The boat's sinking fast, and you only have 30 seconds to get your lifejacket on - GO!"

Time the students and "fit-test" a few afterward, to show that children will slide easily out of an adult-sized lifejacket. Demonstrate proper fit and adjustment on one of the children wearing the right size jacket.

Discuss with the students who would have "survived" in this scenario and why. What could the boat operator have done differently?

Objective: Students will learn why life jackets are only effective when they're worn, and that accessibility and proper fit are both critical.

ENVIRONMENT



Fill a small aquarium or clear plastic container with about 6-8" of water. Add a broken Styrofoam cup or plate, a plastic six-pack holder, a wad of fishing line, an aluminum can, and some oil (any type). You can add other marine trash, too.

Ask the students how each different type of trash hurts people, fish, and other marine life and damages the marine environment.

Pour some dish soap onto the oil to show how the "dispersant effect" only causes the oil to sink, not disappear - it keeps polluting.

Objective: Students will understand how trash hurts water and marine life along with an understanding that even if you can't see it, it is still there doing damage.

KNOTS

Bring a piece of line for each student (about 18-24"), for hands-on practice.

Demonstrate a variety of basic knots and assist the students as they attempt each one.

Objective: Students will learn simple but effective knots like the bowline and a proper square knot.



PWC OPERATION



Ask a local dealer to set up a PWC display for the students. Our local dealer got extensive free advertising, as his picture ended up on the front page of the local newspaper!

Allow each student to climb aboard and identify components of the PWC's operation, along with key safety features.

Our dealer asked the students questions; each student who answered correctly received a can "coozie" from him. This is a great opportunity to teach the students how to be safe and courteous when operating a PWC.

Objective: Students will gain familiarity with a PWC and learn rules of operation.

TIPS & TRICKS

Excellent videos are available to shorten wait time for students between stations.



PFD Panda is always a big hit for all ages!