



### REVISIONS TO THE COAST GUARD AUXILIARY BOAT CREW PROGRAM

The CG Auxiliary Surface Standardization Team (Surface STAN Team) was commissioned in 2004 and consists of the DC-O, a District Commodore, a QE/QE-PWC, a Chief QE, an Operations Training Officer, and the Chief DIRAUX Surface Operations Chief. The first order of business was to determine the STAN Teams agenda. Critical to the decision making was the need for data on Auxiliary mishaps. Surprisingly, very few had been filed in the CG Mishap system. The largest percentage of mishaps involved falls, but the committee felt that there was substantial under reporting for both incidents and near misses. The team, using input from the District Staff Officers and CG Operations Training Officers, determined that the Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Program should be reviewed and revised as needed. The team reached consensus on the following points.

- ♥ The guiding principle of the group was to assure our customer (Coast Guard units) that our boat crews met the minimum standards for which they were originally qualified. At the same time, it was felt that members should not be asked to perform to a standard higher than was necessary to be a member of an Auxiliary Boat Crew during this process. The Operational Excellence program sets a standard higher than initial qualification and members are encouraged to participate in that program.
- ♥ The success of the training, qualification and certification processes was challenged. Field level input suggested that there are many certified members who can no longer perform the skills tested during their initial qualification process. This skill deterioration was felt to substantially undermine the confidence that the CG has in the Auxiliary program.
- ♥ An examination of the stringency and standardization of the qualification process, including the training and management of the Qualification Examiner (QE) force, prompted an overhaul of the procedures and practices governing the QEs.

With this in mind, an extensive review was undertaken, first of the ABCTM and then each of the Qualification Guides.

## Major Changes

1. Incorporate the QE Guide into the ABCTM as Chapter 6.
  - a. A structure was provided that a district could use for administering the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program. The chapter describes and defines the roles of the CG Operations Training Officer (OTO), the Qualification Examiner (QE), the QE Coordinators. In addition, a QE Review Board is described, which is responsible for reviewing existing QEs, interviewing new QEs and for insuring that the QE candidate has an appropriate training program as prescribed in this chapter. The board consists of the OTO (chair), Chief QE Coordinator, and the DCO or his or her designee. Other members may be appointed as desired by the DCO and the OTO.
  - b. Area QE Coordinators would be used to schedule QE checks as required to evenly distribute the workload. Provisions are made for each district to make modifications to this structure as necessary.
  - c. Each QE is to be evaluated by completing a check ride with the OTO (or the Chief QEC if the OTO isn't available) every three years.
  - d. A QE training and check off procedure for qualifying new QEs is outlined. This includes working with another QE and being observed by the OTO as they do a verbal review and a check ride.
  - e. Job aides were created to help QEs who are administering the Pre-Check Ride Oral exams and the Operations Policy Exams. A check-off sheet for QEs to use when doing a check ride was also developed.
  - f. All QEs will need to become proctors for "On-Line" testing. This is necessary for members to take proctored Navigation/Rules of the Road exam "On-Line."
  
2. The processes for initial qualification were reviewed. The following changes are included.
  - a. The lack of knowledge about the policy that provides the underpinnings of the program was an area that required attention. Therefore, a requirement for all new coxswain candidates to pass a closed book, multiple choice exam on the Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual and on the General Salvage and Firefighting Policy Manual as outlined in Chapter 3 of the CG Addendum to the National SAR Manual was added. An exam with answers was designed and written as a study aide for members preparing to take this exam. This study aide includes all the material on the closed book exam. Currently qualified coxswain will not be required to take this exam.
  - b. Eliminate the provisions for "optional tasks". If the task is needed to be "mission ready" as a coxswain/crewman, then it is not optional. Conversely, if the task is not needed for mission readiness, it should be eliminated. However a minimal list of tasks that are "waiverable" by DIRAUX (if recommended by the OTO) was identified. An example of a "waiverable" task could be the **locks**

- and dams* task in District 17 where the geography does not support task completion.
- c. A series of training templates were designed to help mentors train new boat crew candidates as crew, coxswain and/or PWC operators.
3. Several changes are proposed for currency maintenance. There is concern about the erosion of specific skills over time. The STAN Team also questioned the requirement for position specific (i.e. coxswain) underway hours. Since there is a lack of oversight during years 1-4 of the current program, it is difficult to make assumptions about the member demonstrating leadership skills while in the position of coxswain. The following provisions are changed.
- a. All annual tasks, except for underway hours, are eliminated. The hours were increased from 8 to 12 but all underway hours, regardless of crew capacity, count toward currency maintenance. This means that a coxswain may count crew hours for his/her coxswain currency.
  - b. The required QE review for all certified members was changed from 5 years to 3 years. The concerns for skill erosion can be attenuated with a shorter interval between evaluations. A check ride was approved that included plotting and running a search pattern commonly used in the AOR, long and side tows, docking, man overboard drill, pre-underway check of facility, and basic marlinspike.
  - c. An annual Team Coordination Training (TCT) review, designed by the Department of Operations, is required. This training is intended to reinforce the skills of risk management in lieu of the two year TCT requirement of active duty and reserve forces.

## **Current State**

The Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual, Volume 1 Crewman, Volume II Coxswain and Volume III, PWC Operator have been completed. The clearance phases of the document are underway at CG Headquarters. It is anticipated that the entire project will be ready for release by December 2006 and these requirements will be phased in, starting in January 2007.

## ***The Coast Guard Auxiliary Surface Standardization Team***