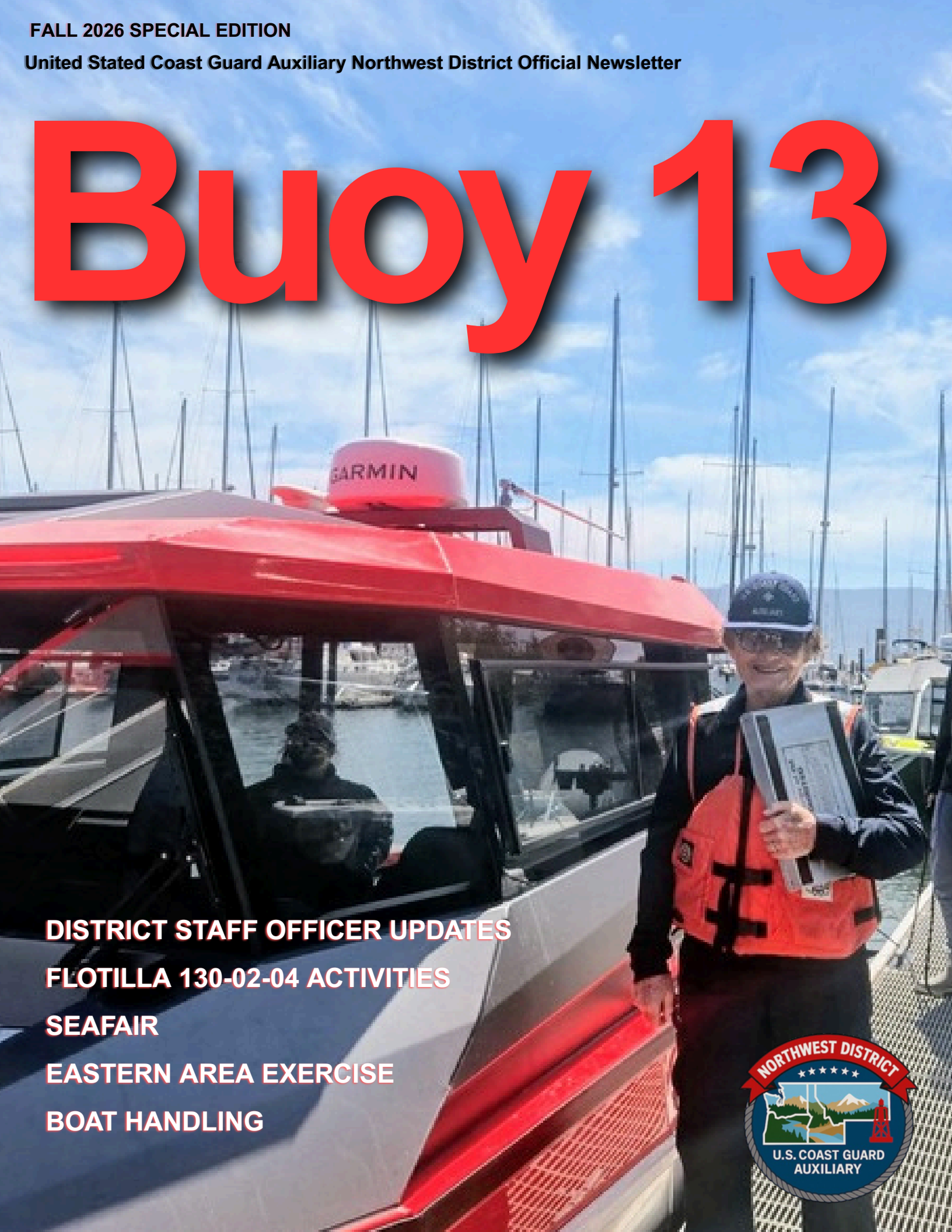
FALL 2026 SPECIAL EDITION

United Stated Coast Guard Auxiliary Northwest District Official Newsletter

Buoy 13



DISTRICT STAFF OFFICER UPDATES

FLOTILLA 130-02-04 ACTIVITIES

SEAFAIR

EASTERN AREA EXERCISE

BOAT HANDLING

NORTHWEST DISTRICT

U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

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Bridge

- DCO - Klaas Nijhuis
- DCOS - Mark Hannibal

District Captains

- DCAPT-N Anthony Merola
- DCAPT-S Daren Lewis
- DCAPT-E David Hansen

Publications

- Camile S. Hickman - DSO-PB
- Steven White - ADOS-PB



Crews working together on a side tow during the Eastern Area Exercise.

Editor's Note: Welcome to the Fall Special Edition of Buoy 13. It features District Staff Officer (DSO) positions in the Northwest District. We invite readers to explore the opportunities, issues and activities presented and identify roles that might align with your experience, aspirations, professional goals and spark an interest. Planning for succession in these roles is integral to the mission of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and support of the US Coast Guard. We hope this edition serves as a resource for that purpose. BUOY 13—A U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Northwest. The publication may not meet all of the U.S. Coast Guard & Auxiliary PB publication requirements.

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MARK HANNIBAL
NORTHWEST COMMODORE ELECT



Mark Hannibal, DCO-e

It has been a busy spring and early summer filled with activities supporting our number one mission of promoting recreational boating safety and supporting our active-duty shipmates. Because of a number of reasons, many are involved with actively training with the active duty on the water including helo operations and opening up new opportunities to our membership to assist them.

We have had good response from our participation in boat shows and sportsman shows and now we are moving toward advancing those interested into membership and activities.

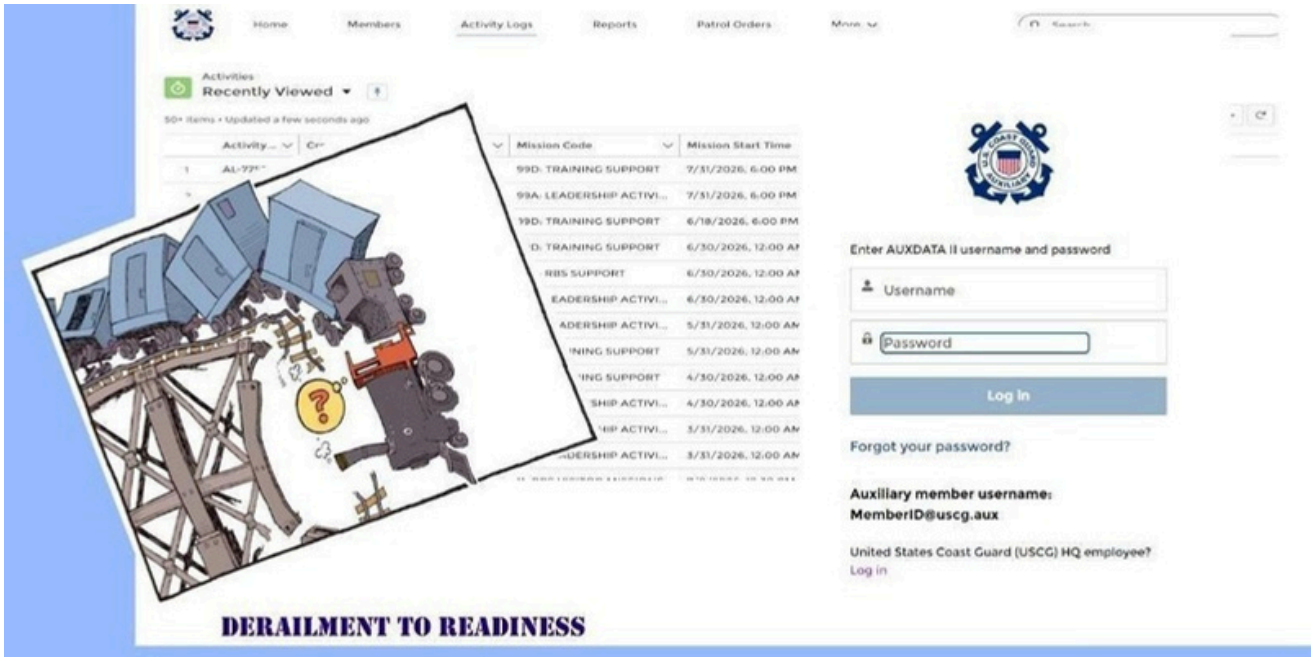
With the promotion of the Net 3 program, an established formal method of integrating those interested in joining the Auxiliary exists. We are seeing some success with this program and following through with the leads generated from the national AAMS system. However, we continue to need that personal membership touch to welcome them into our organization.

As we continue to work on accomplishing our annual maintenance requirements and promoting boating safety, let's keep a keen eye out to help our boating neighbors be safe and take the opportunity to help them be better boaters. While the fatality and injury statistics continue to decrease, we need to continue our concerted effort to educate. Together we can and will make a difference.

Look out for your shipmate, be safe and have fun. Do what you love and love what you do.

WRITTEN BY MARK HANNIBAL, DCOS

DSO-IS INFORMATION SERVICES



The year started with what could only be described as a “train derailment.” Automated processes began catching discrepancies with completion date of December 31, and suddenly, REYR status was everywhere.

The consequences were significant. Members who were not current on required competencies could no longer be certified for those competencies and could not hold certain staff positions. What initially looked like a series of individual problems quickly became a larger organizational issue.

The good news was that the detailed reports provided a path forward. By digging into the information, we were able to identify the “fix” and, more importantly, recognize the need to refocus our efforts on readiness—not just getting the job done, but getting it documented.

A Call for Help

As the year progressed, another need became increasingly clear: we did not have enough IS staff to adequately support our district members.

A plea went out through the Chain of Leadership and Management to highlight the staffing needs with in the IS area and emphasize the role leadership, and management has to play in helping fill those gaps. Supporting our members requires more than identifying deficiencies after the fact. It requires having the people, training, and communication in place to prevent those deficiencies from becoming barriers to readiness.

That realization also shaped our approach to training during this year.

Back to Personal Interaction

Training through personal interaction and national seminars took priority. The goal was to get members connected, learning, and prepared—not simply to check a box, but to build the knowledge and confidence needed to perform when the busy season arrived.

DSO-IS INFORMATION SERVICES

At the same time, a REYR “clean-up” became a necessity.
With the busy summer season approaching, members needed to review their competency status and address outstanding requirements. The process itself is important to understand: going into REYR status is automated, but getting out of REYR and becoming recertified is each member’s responsibility and requires action from member, staff officers, IS staff, And DIRAUX.
The system can identify the problem. The member must take the steps to correct it.

Looking Toward Fall
Now, as we move toward fall, the focus shifts once again—from cleanup to prevention.
The next priority is the completion and capture of annual tasks. Doing the work is only part of the requirement. Ensuring that the work is properly documented and captured is what allows readiness to be demonstrated when it matters.
The lessons of this year have been clear. Automated systems will continue to identify discrepancies. Reports will continue to highlight gaps. But readiness ultimately depends on people taking responsibility for their competencies, completing required tasks, and making sure those accomplishments are documented.
What began as a “train derailment” has become an opportunity to strengthen the system.
The message going into fall is straightforward: Stay ready. Complete the work. Capture the work. Keep your competencies current.
And just as importantly, ask for help—and make sure we have the people available to provide it.

DSO-MT - MEMBER TRAINING



DSO-MT Jeff Keegan

In June 2026, I took over District Member Training from our longtime DSO-MT, Henry Phillips. Following someone who dedicated more than a decade to this important responsibility is both an honor and a challenge—one I am eager to take on.

The Northwest District Auxiliary has many missions and a wide range of training, courses, and qualifications that members earn and keep. We joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary to serve, and everything we do involves training. Quality training helps us perform our duties safely, professionally, knowledgeably, and effectively.

Member Training tracks those requirements, but training is much more than checking boxes. I encourage every member to know their own annual currency requirements and to ask their local MT for help when needed.

My goal is simple: When a member completes training, they should understand what is expected, know how to perform the task, and feel confident while they enjoy doing it. Local MTs should have the tools and resources they need to support members, and experienced members and mentors should be available to provide practical guidance. Our goal should be useful skills and confidence— tasks you enjoy and feel satisfaction — not simply another qualification on a record.

I came to the Auxiliary after a career in public safety, where continuing education and regular training were a daily part of the job. I was also selected by a California state training agency to teach advanced in-service programs through the state university system. That experience taught me that effective training is not just about the material. It is also about how the material is presented, how well it applies to the job, and whether the student feels prepared to put it into practice. The Coast Guard provides the framework; our challenge is to make that training meaningful and useful to our members.

We have a dedicated MT team, and I encourage you to become part of it. The future of our programs depends on members sharing their experience, ideas, and enthusiasm for our missions. I want to hear from members, instructors, mentors, qualification holders, flotilla leaders, and MT staff. What is working? Where are the challenges? What added training would make your job easier or help you become more effective? I look forward to working with all of you to strengthen training, make it more accessible, focused, and results-driven as we accomplish our missions and serve the Coast Guard and the communities in our area of responsibility.

WRITTEN BY JEFF KEEGAN DSO-MT

DSO-NS Navigation System



Corrected Private Aid structures, observed by Pam CK

Properly functioning federal and private Aids to Navigation, and Bridge lighting and protections systems are very important to the safety of navigation of our waterways. USCG Auxiliarists contribute to this through our authorized annual verification assignments (plus ongoing observations of other discrepancies).

The approach of our Aids to Navigation program is on accuracy, credibility, professionalism and service to the Coast Guard. We have guidelines and procedures to support our taking adequate fixes and depths and other observations. We utilize enhanced GPS, corrected depths, photographs, and use other Aid to Navigation tools as described in our training materials and Aid Verifier-Performance Qualification System (AV-PQS).

Although many assignments are best conducted from on-water, there are assignments that can be conducted from ashore.

Besides the Private Aids and Bridges that are annually assigned, the USCG encourages all members to check all Aids and Bridges at any time. Any member can submit reports on observed discrepancies. For example, the first example shown below was observed by a member who is not an Aid Verifier. The second example was observed by an Aid Verifier as part of his assignments. The third and fourth examples include unpermitted markers (Aids), thence the permitted/corrected Private Aid structures.

Every year we are assigned hundreds of Private Aid and Bridge assignments (for Divisions 1 through 8). We usually report about 10-15% as discrepant. The USCG District Waterways Branch then follows up with the owner/operators to make them compliant. This activity significantly contributes to keeping our waterways safe. However, we are challenged to complete all of the assignments. If you are interested in contributing to this important direct support USCG mission, talk to your NS staff and/or DSO Pamela Chelgren-Koterba (pamck.cgaux@gmail.com)

DSO-NS Navigation System



Faded dayboard on Private Aid, observed in 2025 by Lyle Schrag, F11



Previous unpermitted Markers, observed by Pam CK



Degraded piling on light structure (Pt White Light), observed by Rod Rooen, F12



Previous unpermitted Markers, observed by Pam CK

DSO-PV PROGRAM VISITOR

The District Northwest Program Visitors continued their activities within the AOR delivering important boating safety information to our marine partners at marinas, and sporting goods stores. Division 11 was especially busy with providing partners with locally produced paddle craft safety kits, which appears to be their signature product. These kits continue to be an item which remains in demand. It is hoped that more divisions will create related products for delivery to paddle craft owners, but also to the boating public in general.

Two recent visits to the Bass Pro-Shop/Cabela's Sporting goods chain in the Division Three locale indicated that those stores no longer permit the display of CGAUX boating safety information from our literature racks on their counters. Store staff explained that their management has elected to go in a different direction in how they deal with the public. The store will instead respond to an organization's invitation to attend an event which they plan to put on, whether the Coast Guard Auxiliary, America's Boating, a local law enforcement/fire department agency, etc. Bass Pro Shop would then arrange to bring their own tent/booth display with their materials to the venue to be shared with the public. Booth fees would likely be negotiated at the time of acceptance. A future relationship with this group may have to be recalibrated somehow.

District Northwest Program Visitors will continue to conduct outreach with marine partners as they have done in the past. Flotillas will continue new and existing members to consider striking for the Program Visitor qualification as an excellent introduction to the Coast Guards RBS Mission.







(Left Photo) Scott Prestel and Don Hudson at Lake Lowell, Nampa, ID, (Middle Photo) Display Table, (Right Photo) Scott Prestel and Don Hudson at Lucky Peak Viewpoint Cleanup. Photo by Scott Prestel, AUXPA3

DSO-PV PROGRAM VISITOR

Division 11 Auxiliarists have been incredibly active with their RBS outreach efforts.
Boise members staffed an RBS Table at the Boise Whitewater Park to promote Paddle Craft Safety. A total of seventy-four water enthusiast contacts were made, and fifty-five Paddle Craft Safety Kits were handed out during the event. Photo by Scott Prestel, AUXPA3

It was a PA Event handing out the Paddle Safety Kits. This was coordinated with Boise Parks and Recreation. Kinds of PA/PV staffing event with RBS table.



Dave Breithaupt and Don Hudson, D 10 PV's. Photo by Scott Prestel, AUXPA3



Don Hudson at Idaho Marine Open House. Photo by Scott Prestel, AUXPA3



Division 11 Auxiliarists have been incredibly active with their RBS outreach efforts. Boise members staffed an RBS Table at the Boise Whitewater Park to promote Paddle Craft Safety. A total of seventy-four water enthusiast contacts were made, and fifty-five Paddle Craft Safety Kits were handed out during the event. Photo by Jenny Shea

DSO-SR SECRETARY OF RECORDS

Secretary / Records at all levels are custodians of decisions made and actions taken. We emphasize accurateness, thoroughness and completeness. This allows Flotillas, Divisions and Districts to track their goals and preserve knowledge. It also ensures a level of accountability around motions and elections.

The District Staff Officer (DSO) - Secretary of Records (SR) is responsible for providing administrative leadership and support to the District's 43+ SR officers via the Chain of Leadership and Management (COLM). We facilitate the exchange of best practices for meeting minutes between Divisions and Flotillas. The team also provides support to users of the Meeting Minutes Form 7000 to ensure they feel confident using the document. The Document Management System (DMS) is being implemented at the National level to store meeting minutes for all units, ensuring compliance with retention, safety, and security policies for these legal documents.



DSO-VE VESSEL EXAMINERS







TOP PHOTO - F1104: Flotilla 130-11-04 doing exams at Lake Lowell in Nampa,ID

TOP RIGHT PHOTO - Penny Jensen working at the John Wayne Marina, Sequim

LEFT PHOTO - VE2026: My check Station at the Westport boat ramp next to CG Station Grays Harbor. I liked the backdrop.

Another busy year for the Northwest District Vessel Examiners. Going into the middle of August we have completed 2217 exams.

Our examiners endure hot and cold weather, rain and sun at the boat ramps. The examiners attend PA events, safety fairs and other public venues to get the safety word out to recreational boaters. Ocean, Puget Sound, lakes and inland waterways from the smallest recreational boats up to 65 feet in length, their efforts are making a safety difference and saving lives.

Vessel examiners complete yearly workshops and stay current on safety and equipment updates. Did you know that in order to pass the safety exam fire extinguishers on vessels cannot be more than 12 years old and must be in serviceable condition? Life jackets must be Coast Guard approved and in serviceable condition. That means no rips or tears in the material. Vessel numbers must be contrasting. Flares must be current. The list goes on. Vessels of different lengths have different requirements.

I highly encourage anyone interested in being a Vessel Examiner to contact your FSO-VE. They can get you started on your journey to becoming a qualified examiner. It is one of the most rewarding qualifications in the Coast Guard Auxiliary.
Bob Gorski
DSO-VE

DSO-EM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The District Northwest Emergency Management team has successfully launched the new Sector Columbia River AEMAP (Auxiliary Emergency Management Augmentation Program). The Sector Columbia River AEMAP program is a developing effort to directly support and Augment the Sector's Emergency Management activities. The vision of the program is to establish a leading cadre of trained Auxiliary volunteers who can effectively augment and support USCG Sector Columbia River during emergency management planning, exercises, and real-world incidents.
If any Auxiliary member is interested in participating in this program, they can contact any District EM officer (DSO-EM or any ADSO-EM) to get an overview of the program and the initial application to indicate their interest in participating. In addition, an AEMAP information session is scheduled for the upcoming Northwest District DTRAIN conference September 11-13. The session will provide an overview of the program phases, the process steps for members to indicate an interest and enroll in the program, and a Q&A session.

In addition, in 2026, the Northwest District USCG Auxiliary Emergency Management ICS training team conducted ICS 300 training courses at both Sectors Puget Sound and Columbia River, with a mix of members from Active Duty, Reserves and Auxiliary. I few photos of the training sessions are included below:



A second team conducting an Operations Briefing as part of the ICS 300 course.



ICS300 course participants team conducting a Tactics meeting

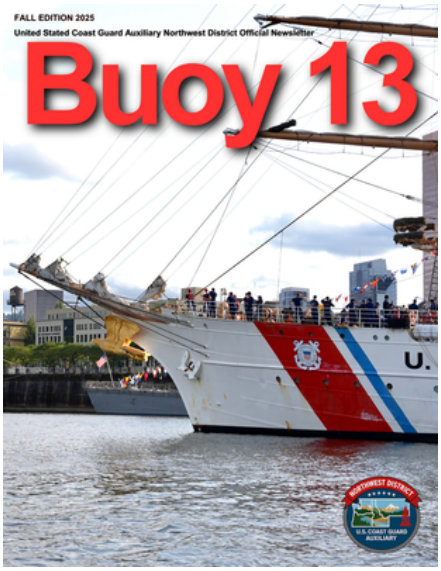
DLO - DISTRICT LEGAL OFFICER

You may remember the long-running ad campaign with the tagline, “If you have a phone, you have a lawyer.” Phone or not, as an auxiliarist, you have access to legal counsel. The Northwest District legal officers are ready to help. Efren Kirsher (Flotilla 24) serves as our District Legal Officer, assisted by ADLO Mark Monson (Flotilla 712) and ALO Brian Wasankari (Flotilla 33). These shipmates are licensed attorneys appointed by the DCO to provide legal advice on Auxiliary matters when needed.

The Northwest District legal team brings more than 100 years of combined experience across nearly every area of law, so when a question arises, simply call. You must contact us before signing any contract or amending your standing rules. You should also call if you plan to accept a donation, have a question about the Auxiliary Manual, or want to ensure your election complies with the rules. Remember, shipmates: you have a lawyer.



DSO-PB PUBLICATION





I have a proclivity of 'raising my hand'. It has been a lifelong habit (sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes very rewarding). One of those rewarding instances was when I joined the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Division 6, Station Tillamook Bay, Flotilla 63. That was March 22, 2007.

During the past 19 years, I've worn many 'hats' and filled many FSO and SO staff positions. Along the way, attaining the requisite competencies for each of the positions. In addition to the administrative positions, I focused on Auxiliary's RBS mission; Vessel Examiner, Instructor, Crew and Coxswain qualifications, especially opportunities to work with the active-duty personnel. Accepting the request to wear the DSO-PB 'hat' has been a challenge.

The position description lists several 'Additional Requirements':
- Collector
- Editor
- Reporter
- Designer
- Distributer

In my experience, the skill set most often employed is the ability to effectively communicate with leaders, SO-PA's and FSO-PA's throughout the Northwest District and encourage them to share the activities, accomplishments and impacts their Flotillas and Divisions are having on the boating public in their areas. I would like to see someone fill the DSO-PA position for the Northwest District. It would be very helpful in collecting articles for publication.

I've been assisted in these tasks by ADSO- Steven White, whose contributions fall under the task of 'Designer'.

Flotilla 130-02-04 Activities

Patrols, Boat Shows, AUXPAD Paddlecraft

Flotilla 130-02-04, Seattle-Elliott Bay Auxiliarists have recently been busy with patrols, training and public affairs events. Bill Cotter and his facility the Nomad, recently patrolled the Seattle Waterfront for the FIFA World Cup watch parties. Bill's boat is a beautiful boat comparable and even exceeding the capabilities of similar looking Seattle Police Harbor Patrol Boats and the active-duty U.S. Coast Guard small craft. Bill and his facility represent the Auxiliary very well during these patrols and we will patrol the upcoming SeaFair events. Many thanks to the Operations qualified Auxiliarists who joined Bill on these patrols.



Photo courtesy of Flotilla 130-02-04 member Bill Cotter on patrol on Elliott Bay for the FIFA World Cup.

Paula Hagen recently undertook a weeklong AUXPAD training course in South Carolina. She is now qualified to conduct AUXPAD patrols and perform paddle craft evaluations. It was a lot of hard and often wet work, but we now have an AUXPAD program in the Division.



Photo by AUXPAD qualified Flotilla 130-02-04 member Paula Hagen on patrol with David Monteith on Lake Union.

Some of the other things people can do in the Auxiliary involve activities other than being on the water. There are positions available for certified instructors, teaching members of the public about boating safety or manning information booths at boat shows or marine dealers. This past November, Division 2 members including Flotilla 02-05 in Renton participated in the Veteran's Day Parade. In late January and early February, Flotilla 02-04, Seattle-Elliott Bay along with members throughout the District, supported the Seattle Boat Show.



Flotilla 02-04 Member speaks with a member of the public at the Seattle Boat Show – Photo by Jon Dootson

Color Guard, Academy Admissions Partners

The Northwest District is standing up a Washington-based Auxiliary Color Guard Contingent to compliment the very active Oregon-based Auxiliary Color Guard. Information sessions are being held in July and August. There are many requests for Auxiliary Color Guard, more than just one unit can handle, so standing up a Washington contingent will help.

Photo by PQS qualified Color Guard Oregon-based team led by BG Norm Hoffman (US Army - Ret.) (Right Photo)



Photo by PQS qualified Color Guard and Flotilla 130-02-04 member Jon Dootson, volunteering with a Color Guard event in the Southwest District. (Far Right Photo)



Other activities Flotilla 02-04 Auxiliarists participate in are supporting the U.S. Coast Guard Academy as Academy Admissions Partners. Every year the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut holds 3 one-week Academy Introduction Mission (known as AIM) in-residence experience for high school students who will be entering their senior year in high school. The purpose of this experience is to introduce prospect Academy Cadets to the Coast Guard Academy lifestyle. There is memorization of Coast Guard Core Values and Missions, lots of physical fitness training and a fair amount of shouted “encouragement”.





Students at the one week AIM program at the Coast Guard Academy at New London, CT. Group photo of Academy Admissions Partners made up of Auxiliarist, parents of students and graduates of the Academy, Academy alumni and supports of the Academy – Photo by Jon Dootson

This prepares the students should they be accepted to the Coast Guard Academy, to know what the 7-week “Swab Summer” entails. The culmination of Swab Summer is a one-week cruise on the U.S. Coast Guard tall sailing ship the U.S. Coast Guard barque Eagle. It’s an experience of a lifetime. During the year, Academy Admissions Partners attend college fairs and help answer questions about the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Three Days of Seafair

Common sense says that no two patrols are identical. At Seafair 2026 as a boat crew trainee, I saw three different Seafairs in as many days.
jmyggh'[bhgblkikiku78t6t7ylol
Thursday, I sailed with COMO Nijhuis on Christine. We had a late start due to mechanical issues but then patrolled north of the I-90 bridge, maintaining the exclusion zone and cautioning boaters about swimming too far away from their vessels. The end of the day went longer than planned: after carefully motoring under the 520 bridge at the Eastern high rise, we had to wait almost two hours for a Montlake bridge lift to moor at Seattle Yacht Club.

Friday I was in Olympia working, and unable to attend.

Saturday, I patrolled with Joe Giammona and the Andiamo's Oregon crew. After arriving in Andrews Bay, we monitored one anchored boat with no captain aboard that was having difficulty exiting the bay's exclusion zone, when the log boom broke. Suddenly, the bay went from exclusion zone to "temporary" mooring area and we were inundated by boats expecting a close-up show from the boom now displaced a mile south. These boaters were understandably disappointed, even more so when the Blue Angels were unable to fly. While Saturday had the most support from event organizer boats, confusing rules updates combined with alcohol prompted some challenging interactions. One bright spot is that we were able to proactively offer a ride to a paddleboarder who was being blown off course, preventing a possible SAR case before it began.

Sunday, Bill Cotter hosted several trainees on board the Nomad. Patrolling the south line, we arrived before closure and talked with each boat moored near the line, cautioning them about dragging anchor if the wind picked up. The boats in the area included many families, and we handed out coloring books to several children and some young-at-heart adults. We were joined by two AUXPAD operators, who circulated among the boats gathered off the Mercer Island shore, and practiced heaving lines to Winnie, to the cheers of nearby boaters, while we waited for the show to start.
During the Blue Angels' show, Nomad was sent up the Western shore of Mercer Island, cautioning paddle craft: many were father than the allowed 10' from shore, and a couple encroached on the flight box, risking outright cancellation of the show by placing themselves in the danger zone. As the day's festivities wound down, we towed one disabled boat from Seattle Yacht Club to her moorings in Lake Union.



Blue Angels in Formation

Three Days of Seafair

My first Auxiliary Seafair experience was both rewarding and diverse. I sought out three boats to learn from the different coxswains and crew but ended up experiencing three unique types of public interaction as well. Despite my preparations, my medical skills were unneeded, but the experience shepherding the safe boating experiences of hundreds of boaters made the classroom time spent on crew qualification worthwhile. To those Auxiliarists on the fence about participating in boat crew training, I offer my wholehearted endorsement: while each mission is worthwhile, on the water is where our skills and public service shine most brightly.



Auxpad Swimmer



DCO Nijhuis



Dockside Briefing



Blue Angels in Formation

WRITTEN BY JONATHAN CLEMENS, SO-MT

Boat Handling Skill Development Tips & Passenger Safety

Over the past 30 years I have taught boating safety education and enforcement courses under many hats; as a USCG Auxiliarist, teaching everyone from the Girl Scouts to the U.S. Marines, as a P.O.S.T. (Peace Officers Standards and Training) Instructor for the state of California for all the new boat cops (Basic Boating Safety & Enforcement), and as Skipper of Explorer Ship # 84 for my agency. I realized that of all the topics offered in the many classes available, there is little or no information available to help develop the skills necessary to become a proficient operator. Way back in the 80's, while working with the Explorer Scouts (young whippersnappers!), I came up with several exercises that helped the Scouts become better boat handlers of the patrol vessels they got to operate.

Anyone can operate a boat in open water. In my classes, I like to say that "Even a monkey can drive a Corvette in the middle of the Bonneville Salt Flats and have no problems", because there are no other vehicles or hazards in the area. Close quarters maneuvering is where the skills come into play; docking, retrieving a person in the water or coming alongside another vessel. These exercises will help you to become intimately familiar with the throttle, the helm and the boat's handling characteristics, such as the turning radius, stopping distance and backing with various operator input.

The first thing we teach is that "Slow is Pro", meaning that during any approach, the slower one goes, usually the better. Of course, when there is wind or current involved, one must use more "authority", i.e., speed to compensate for the added influence of nature. When first attempting these exercises, one should practice in calm waters with no wind or traffic. As one's skills develop, then you can practice with the wind, adding a whole new element which will greatly increase your skills.

Below are several reminders and exercises that will help you to become a better, safer and more confident Skipper.

- Rule #1 – The Owner/Operator/Captain/Skipper/Master/Commander of the vessel is responsible for the safety of his passengers and crew.

- The Operator is responsible to know and to follow the Navigation Rules and local laws. You must maintain a safe speed and proper lookout at all times. Know when you are the Stand-on vessel and the Give-way vessel and what to do in each case.

- Assist passengers while boarding and de-boarding the vessel ~ many accidents and injuries happen during this time.

- Provide a safety briefing covering location and use of PFD's, fire extinguishers, first aid kit, safety while underway and docking, etc. Encourage everyone to wear a PFD.

- On boats that may be affected, ensure the vessel is properly trimmed by taking control of the seating arrangements.

- Many passengers will want to sit in the bowrider seats if available, so you must ensure that your visibility is not impaired. Also, your choice of speed must depend on sea conditions which affect the ride they get. Boats pivot vertically from the stern as they navigate through waves and wakes, and you must ensure that is not going to injure them by being thrown around.

- Boats don't have seat belts so the passengers on board should sit still and be advised in advance of any course or speed changes.

- The Operator is responsible for any damage caused by his wake. On glassy days, big wakes can be a big event and a surprise to other boaters. Avoid being in plowing mode because it makes the biggest wake and is the least efficient for fuel consumption.

- The Operator is responsible to ensure that the vessel is seaworthy and properly equipped according to law – at a minimum. There are many items you should carry that are not required by the law, such as an anchor, which is good insurance if you lose power and are drifting into the jetty. Everyone should get a Vessel Safety Check from the USCG Auxiliary to check for what is required and to provide a list of the many additional items a boat should be outfitted with. Enroll in a class, which is vastly superior to just completing an on-line course.

- Boats are affected by many forces; load & trim, wind, waves, current, tidal flows, water surface conditions, etc. and by throttle and helm input.

- Boats do not have brakes. We use Reverse to arrest forward motion at slow speeds.

- Boats will continue to move after the gear is disengaged – inertia & momentum are part of maneuvering. Proficient Skippers know from experience what to expect and how to use to their advantage.

- Steering input becomes more effective as speed increases and less effective as speed decreases.

- Engage throttle only after turning helm to intended direction of desired turn.

- At lower speeds, boats will pivot at about 1/3 of the length back from the bow.

- Propeller Torque – Left handed vs Right Handed screws (propellers). Each backs better to one side. Right handed propellers (the most common) will want to back to the left, so use clockwise pivot turns for efficiency so as to not fight the natural tendency to back one way.

- Helm – Determine how many turns of the wheel it takes to go from full left to full right rudder? Halfway between the two is dead ahead. On outboard powered boats, you just have to look at the engine to tell which way the thrust will be directed, but for inboards and sterndrives, prior to engaging the gear, turn the wheel fully from one side to the other to determine where you want to go. The King spoke is the indicator on large ships' wheels indicating dead ahead.

- Use of Trim – Full down is best for hole shot and acceleration. Advise passengers of intentions. Look/Scan 360 degrees prior to engaging to avoid collision. Smoothly go to full throttle to decrease time in plowing mode. Once up on plane, trim up until either the boat begins to porpoise or the RPM goes up, then trim back down a bit to eliminate the porpoising or higher RPM. Adjust trim and throttle to desired speed for best ride and best fuel economy. You may want a bit more down trim in choppy seas. Adjust as needed.

- Deceleration/Stopping Distance – Use a landmark, either a buoy or a floating object, such as a PFD. From a distance that will allow you to get up to speed at full throttle, get up to full speed, than shift into Neutral at what you think is the proper time and distance to stop at the buoy or object. The propeller will continue to rotate while you are decelerating as water passes by the blades. Only use Reverse to stop your forward motion after the boat has settled off plane into displacement mode and the stern wave passes to avoid gear damage. With practice, you will be able to come to a complete stop at the object every time.

- Pivot Turns – This exercise will help you become intimately familiar with your throttle and helm, and can get you out of trouble in a narrow fairway. The task is to attempt to turn in circles within your boat's length. Again, as mentioned earlier, with a right handed propeller, your turns work best to clockwise due to the torque. From a dead stop, turn the wheel hard to starboard, engage the forward gear just enough to get the boat to start pivoting. Go to neutral as you turn hard to port, engaging reverse just as you get the wheel to the end of its' travel. Give just enough thrust/power to continue the rotation in reverse. Got to neutral, hard to starboard, forward, rotate and repeat over and over again until your movements are fast, smooth and delicate on the gears with as little rpm's as necessary and mostly just pivoting instead of fore and aft travel. This takes practice!

- Docking in a Slip – Make your major course corrections well in advance so that you are going straight in. This way your course corrections will be minor within the last 2-3 boat lengths distance from the slip. Remember Slow is Pro!

- Cleat to Cleat – I always took pride when I docked my boat and made sure that when I came to a stop, the boat's cleat was adjacent to the dock's cleat for ease of securing.

- Transverse Advance – Just like when an airplane has to "crab" into a crosswind landing, boats need a bit more "authority" (speed) to overcome the same conditions. This takes practice to know when to straighten the boat as she enters the slip at the right moment cleanly.

- Backing into a Slip – This is a challenging exercise for when you gain more confidence. Find a dock with good protection to avoid damage as you learn.

Any Skipper who takes the time to master these skills is far ahead of most other boat owners. Have fun and don't forget to train a backup operator in case you become unavailable. Don't be like the guy who retired, bought an ocean cruiser, took all the classes including celestial navigation, outfitted his boat with every conceivable safety item, then had a heart attack onboard, and his wife didn't even know how to use the radio to call for help!

EASTERN AREA EXERCISE



Eastern Area Unity Training Crew Photo: Left to right: Craig Hartman, Mark Hannibal, Doug Harris, Kyle Boyce, Mike Meline, Mark Poster, Tim Splinter, Beverly Hannibal, Aurora Meline, Eldora Gatchell, and Lesha Spencer, trainee. Photo by Chandra Splinter.

From August 6th through August 9th, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Northwest District, Lake Pend Oreille Flotilla 130-08-07, and members of flotillas from Washington, Idaho, and Montana camped together at the Clark Fork Drift Yard near Clark Fork, Idaho for a full weekend of patrols and training that left members better prepared, better connected, and, by every measure, better equipped to serve our communities. None of it comes together without a lot of behind-the-scenes work. Thank you to Eldora Gatchell for managing logistics and handling the initial camp set-up, and to Mark Hannibal for putting together the operational plan and leading the training. Their preparation is what made a full weekend of patrols and training possible.

We also stood up a shoreside radio station for the weekend, keeping our crews connected on and off the water. Thank you to Shannon Mossman and Eldora Gatchell for making that happen.
Amid all of it, members also received NARCAN training, a small but important part of the weekend. Several members were trained on the recognition and treatment of suspected opioid overdose, and thanks to the generosity of the great people at Panhandle Health, every trained member left with a Narcan kit of their own. A special thank-you goes to Lisa Sandborg, whose support made this life-saving training possible. On the water, a delayed response to an overdose can be the difference between life and death; this training puts that response in the hands of our crews.

The weekend's training also covered Operations and the Operations Plan, grounding the lessons in real scenarios our crews could actually face. Two simulations drove the discussion:
In the first, a recreational vessel strikes a partially submerged log, puncturing its fuel tank. A visible sheen spreads across the water; the vessel is taking on water, and the engine is still idling amid fuel vapors, with nearby boaters gathering to watch. Members talked through the hazards, our capabilities and authorities, and how to keep everyone safe while the situation is contained.

In the second, a young child radios for help: "My dad won't wake up." Crews find an unresponsive adult at the helm: slow, shallow breathing, pinpoint pupils, and paraphernalia in plain view, while the boat idles as a hazard to surrounding traffic. Members discussed the signs of a suspected opioid overdose, the decision to administer Naloxone, and the legal and ethical considerations that come with it.

Beyond the training, crews were out on the water conducting patrols throughout the entire weekend, putting the plans and lessons to immediate use. The event was also a fantastic opportunity for fellowship, bringing together members from three states along with representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Idaho Fish and Game. Thank you to Shane McKinley and Aaron Switalski for the time and expertise they shared with us.

By every account, this was a huge success: a weekend of real preparation, real patrols, and real connection. Thank you to everyone who took part, and to our partners who made it possible.









In side-tow exercise. Identifiable members on white vessel: Mike Meline at stern, Kyle Boyce forward. Photo by Mark Poster. (Top Left Photo)

Left to right: Beverly Hannibal, Jenny Shea, and Craig Hartman. Photo by Eldora Gatchell. (Bottom Right Photo)

The Clark Fork Driftyard location. Photo by Eldora Gatchell. (Bottom Left Photo)

Mark Hannibal conducts TCT Training at campsite. Beginning with instructor counterclockwise: Mark Hannibal, Instructor, Kyle Boyce, Mike Meline, Beverly Hannibal, Aurora Meline, Doug Harris, Craig Hartman, and Jenny Shea. Photo by Eldora Gatchell.(Left Top Photo)

Panhandle Health representative Lisa Sandborgh conducts a thorough NARCAN training and supplied every member with an emergency NARCAN kit. Beginning with instructor counterclockwise: Lisa Sandborgh, Mark Poster, Lesha Spencer, and Mike Meline. Photo by Eldora Gatchell. (Left Lower Photo)

