

# **The Recreational Boater And Homeland Security**

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As homeland security plans are developed, a completely new field of terminology has emerged. Some of the terms are used in what I want to discuss here but I am sure we will be exposed to many more.

As the Coast Guard works to integrate expanded homeland security issues into its domain, the missions for active duty, reserves and Auxiliary must be flexed to accommodate some new or intensified missions. As one might expect, there is an enormous impact on the Operations and Marine Safety programs. All existing missions must be examined and modified to accommodate the pervasive security issues that are part of today's realities.

However, what about Recreational Boating Safety missions? What, if any impact is there on our other traditional mission areas? The answer, in part, is that there is a huge need for involvement from the public sector, which includes the recreational boaters that we serve.

The task to upgrade the capabilities of all elements of the Coast Guard family is formidable; but we must also find ways to receive help and support from members of the general public.

The good news is we have 13 million recreational boats and over seventy million boaters on our waterways that can lend a helping hand.

All we have to do is motivate and train recreational boaters, and they can make a valuable contribution to maritime homeland security. For most boaters the motivations are already there they just want to know how they can help. This is where the Auxiliary plays a vital role. We have the programs and the means to reach out and carry the message to the public sector.

In addition to promoting recreational boating safety, our programs now must include ways to enhance maritime domain awareness.

The boating public, with its knowledge of normal local conditions, has the eyes and ears to observe and identify peculiar activities on and around the nation's waterways. Just as residents in many neighborhoods are trained to participate in neighborhood watch programs, we have an opportunity to create the same kind of awareness skills among recreational boaters.

Through our Public Education, Vessel Examination and Marine Dealer Visitor programs, we can use multiple avenues to get the word out on how to become involved in homeland security efforts.

For some time the Education Department has offered a short teaching module that covers the basics of maritime homeland security. As Auxiliary Maritime Homeland Security plans evolve, this awareness module will be refined and expanded. If, as anticipated, more direct public involvement such as waterways watch programs are developed, additional teaching modules will be created. It should be noted that the existing awareness module is acceptable for boating safety classes and general public forums. As future modules are developed, more refined presentations for both safety classes and general forums will be available.

The Vessel Examination program also got involved at an early stage. With the advent of Naval Vessel Protection Zones, Vessel Examiners were asked to discuss general and local restrictions around naval vessels, commercial vessels and commercial port facilities. Not only did this passing of information perform a valuable public service, this helpful advice increased the credibility of our Examiners.

The Marine Dealer program provides a unique opportunity to put the information out-there-where the public may access it. Boaters, and any other members of the public that peruse a literature display placed by MDV, may pick up valuable tips on homeland security. In addition, brochures developed for MDV should be popular items at boat shows and PA booths.

None of this diminishes the importance of boating safety education, vessel equipment safety or marine dealer contacts. The subjects of Maritime Domain Awareness and Maritime Homeland Security add necessary additional chapters or scope to our recreational boating safety missions. We have pushed the theme that safe boaters can have more fun.

Now, we can also give them information on how to contribute to local and national security.

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