



The Public Affairs UPDATE

April 1998

Como. Ted Neale Jr., DC-A

VOL V No. 4

Otis W. Littleton, BC-ANN

214 Beaver Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-2501 Tel: 717-761-7858 ; FAX: 717-761-2428 ; email: mariemcnbg@juno.com

NACO TUCKER BEFORE CONGRESS

Appearing before the House of Representatives subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on March 4, 1998, Commodore Tucker informed the House of Representative that the Auxiliary "has moved aggressively to support the Coast Guard's goal of eliminating environmental damage and natural resource degradation associated with maritime transportation, fishing and recreational boating."

NACO Tucker recounted how the Auxiliary reflects the core values of the Coast Guard, Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty, in moving to implement the Auxiliary's vision being a valued component of *TEAM COAST GUARD* and taking the lead in enhancing and promoting recreational boating safety.

To this end, NACO Tucker told the Committee of the contributions made by the Auxiliary volunteers that included 5,921 operational vessels, 114 aircraft and 2,336 radio stations in support of various Coast Guard Missions as well as support of other federal agency and state requested missions.

More than 60 Auxiliarists from the Eighth Coast Guard District were called out to support emergency flood response operations along the Ohio River and as many as 90 Auxiliarists from 4 divisions were called out to support flood relief operations along the Red River in North Dakota in both surface and air operations.

NACO Tucker told the Committee, "The ability of the Auxiliary to provide trained personnel during contingency periods is a key mission for the Auxiliary which ensures the availability of active duty Coast Guard resources to

meet other mission requirements."

In support of the Coast Guard Goal to eliminate deaths, injuries and property damage associated with maritime transportation, fishing and recreational boating, Como. Tucker told the members of Congress, " We provided a trained force of 10,626 instructors to teach boating safety courses to more than 250,000 students." The Auxiliary was also credited with providing 8,434 vessel examiners who performed voluntary safety examinations on more than 175,000 recreational vessels including more than 9,000 personal watercraft.

The 15,910 Auxiliarists who made up the boat crews and coxswains contributed more than 187,000 man hours in achieving more than 34,200 operational support missions, and more than 460,000 hours patrolling the nations waterways in 28,800 safety, regatta and aids to navigation patrols resulting in the saving of 481 lives and otherwise assisting 11,352 persons in distress and the saving of more than \$500,000 worth of property in maritime assists.

Auxiliarists also supported the Coast Guard with approximately 1600 air patrols throughout the nation furnishing operational and logistical support.

Commodore Tucker also recognized the heroic actions of Auxiliarist Frank Mauro who, while on patrol from Station Fort Lauderdale with the Coast Guard participated in the dramatic rescue of eleven persons when their boat was swamped and the occupants were thrown into the swift river currents. Mr. Mauro and the Coast Guard Crew were awarded the Gold Life Saving medal.

NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK

The National Safe Boating Council has distributed the campaign kits for 1998. This year, there can be no excuses that the material was not distributed in a timely fashion. To make the observance of National Safe Boating Week a recognizable success in your area, you should seek to provide unique and original programs to promote public awareness.

It is OK to depart from the kits that were distributed. The purpose of the kit is to ensure uniformity of the theme for NSBW, not the adoption of a singular program.

National Safe Boating Week is a major public affairs activity. Some Districts have assigned the NSBW responsibilities to an SPO or Special Projects Officer. Whichever approach works for you is the correct one. We have an expert on the National Public Affairs Staff. That expert is Harriet Howard. DVC-AL. She is the Chief for Liaison/NSBW Division. Feel free to contact her for assistance. Her address is: 15323 Hayford Street, La Mirada, CA 90638. Her Telephone number is 714-739-2422. Her Fax is 714-522-8338.

It is anticipated that every unit will seek to document its NSBW activities and report that documentation to Mrs. Howard to facilitate her report to the EXCOM and The National Safe Boating Council for review and evaluation purposes. The documentation may be submitted in a narrative form, supplemented by photographs or other useful information. Not only will you contribute to making Harriet's task easier, you will enable her to make a much more comprehensive and significant report to the national leadership and the Council.

SAFETY IS THE ISSUE

Accidents will and do happen. Our responsibility as Auxiliaries is to think about what we are doing before we do it. We often do things in a manner that may be inherently unsafe and which may be accidents waiting to happen. We have a slogan we often use in promoting our PE classes. It is "Know before You Go". As members of the world's premier safe boating organization, we have a duty and responsibility to conduct our activities in the safest possible manner. Not only should you follow Auxiliary manuals and procedures to the letter, you should become intimate with your own facilities and make use of them in the manner and fashion intended. Do not exceed their capabilities.

Injuries and fatalities are not the kind of public affairs activity we want to achieve. If it happens make sure it can't be reported that it was the consequence of a thoughtless or careless act. Conduct your activities with safety in mind.

Just as our PA-UPDATE is distributed to the various units and PA personnel, our VE, OPS and PE departments also issue monthly or other periodic publications that often contain essential safety tips and information. Read them and stay informed.

SAFE BOATING RELEASES

The Internet can be an invaluable aid to the Public Affairs Staff Officer. In addition to Auxiliary publications and activities, there are links to many boating interest web sites.

Much of the information available can be used by Auxiliary Public Affairs Officers as taken from the site. For example, The Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety has published a great paper entitled, "The Dangers of Boating Under the Influence of Alcohol" the information is found under the title, "New Nationwide Safe Boating Campaign". This information could be used as is or rewritten to meet the needs of the local press. It is well done and appropriately includes necessary statistical back-up.

In addition, The National Safe

Boating Council also has great material that is also available for use.

This information can be modified to meet the writing specifications of your local printed media and can also be used to provide great audio public service announcements for radio stations. Visit your local media representatives and find out the format they prefer and their deadlines for submission. That way, you make the task of the media representative easier.

If you are planning to do some original work rather than using material developed by the Coast Guard or the National Safe Boating Council, please consult the Public Affairs Officers Guide, COMDTINST M5728.3A in order to make certain your efforts conform to official policy.

Make sure the information you are providing is accurate and not in violation of any legal or security considerations. Our job is to keep the public informed about the Coast Guard Auxiliary, our needs and operations in order for us to operate effectively in support of the Coast Guard.

AUXMIS REPORT VALUABLE PA INFORMATION

Every now and then a media representative may inquire, "Just what has the Auxiliary done in our area to promote safe boating?" You may find the response in the Auxmis report on Auxiliary Activity by State for the period 1 January 1997 through 31 December 1997.

This report contains detailed information on a statewide basis for each state. It shows the number of Auxiliary members and facilities within each state and the number of patrols on sole state waters and the number of hours on patrol.

In addition, it shows the number of Public Education enrollees by type of course, information on the number of Auxiliary assists, the number of persons saved, the number of persons assisted and the value of property saved and assisted, and the number of CME and PWC examinations conducted.

This is great information for public consumption. In fact, you might want to anticipate that the local media would want this information and not wait until they asked for it.

You could really put a local spin on the story if you developed similar information applicable to your District, Division or Flotilla in addition. That is just the kind of data for which the local media may be searching. It is certainly the kind of information that tells the public about our missions.

You may even want to use the information to make a pitch for new members. After all, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary has been an active volunteer organization for nearly sixty years, dedicated to saving lives and supporting the active duty Coast Guard in its life saving missions.

As an example of what we do, you may want to document a typical day on patrol or at work on a CME station or a typical safe boating course. You may even want to arrange for an interested reporter to go on a safety patrol, observe a CME Station or sit in on a PE class. The advantage is that the reporter can get a first hand experience.

If you are going to ask a reporter to go along on a safety patrol or other type of patrol, you should first make the arrangements by getting the approval of the local Coast Guard Operations Officer via your unit operation officer. Make certain the facility for which you are seeking approval is large enough to accommodate the extra person, make certain that he/she is furnished a PFD and will wear it. Also, that they are briefed on the purpose and objective of the mission and the need for them to take direction from the Coxswain or operator and not to get in the way of essential activities. Let them know ahead that the activity could be boring or it could provide great excitement. Encourage them to take photographs. A photo essay is a great media story. Also make certain they have some understanding of the training and education required to conduct such an activity. We would like to hear from the PA Officers about their experiences on this kind of activity.

DISTRIBUTION: National EXCOM; all District EXCOMs, DCPS, FCS, DSOs-PA, DSOs-PB and all SOs-PA and SOs-PB via District DIRAUX and all FSOs-PA and FSOs-PB via FCS. For information, call our Editor at 717-761-7858 or FAX comments to 717-761-2428. E-mail: mariemcnbg@juno.com.