

THE LIFE LINE

VOLUME 12
ISSUE 3

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
District 5 SR - Division 23
Flotilla 23-07 Herring Bay, Maryland

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SPRING 2025

MARYLAND 2024 BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT



The Maryland Natural Resources Police released their statistics on the 2024 boating season. Here are a few notable points:

- 163,969 registered vessels in Maryland with over 7,719 miles of shoreline
- 123 reported boating accidents with six fatal and 54 non-fatal boating injuries
- Approximate property damage: \$8,372,881.00
- Top causes for boating accidents: 27 wake, 16 other, 15 excessive speed, 13 hazardous waters, 10 no proper lookout
- Fatality causes/contributing factors: alcohol use, wake, hazardous waters, others
- Time of year for most accidents: May to October
- Day of the week for most accidents: Sunday with Saturday a close second
- Time of day for most accidents: twelve pm to eight pm

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Editor's note: While fatalities were lower than previous years and use of life jackets has improved somewhat, there is still a concern that boaters are not applying situational awareness when operating their boats on the water. Additionally, in 2022, as reported by BoatUS, 74% of boating fatalities nation-wide, involved vessels commanded by skippers with no known operating experience.

S-TRAIN RETURNS

After a hiatus of a number of years due to the impact of COVID-19, S-Train (Sector) returned to an in-person event here at the Sector Maryland National Capitol Region, U.S. Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, Maryland on March 1.



This year's workshops included an annual Team Coordination Training/Risk Management Refresher, Introduction to the Boat Crew Program, Operations Workshop, New Member Orientation, and an Introduction to Marine Safety to name just a few. In addition, a tour of the Sector Maryland National Capitol Region office was provided to members to see first-hand how the Coast Guard handles operations in the area. Additionally, members of the Coast Guard Reserve were in attendance to converse with Auxiliarists and answer questions on how best to integrate with their operations.

Previous S-Train events have taken place at South River High School in Edgewater, Maryland and Southern High School in Harwood, Maryland. This is the first time that Auxiliary members have had the chance to conduct this event with the active and reserve forces as an integral member of Team Coast Guard.

SCHOOL DAYS

Members of Flotilla 23-07 returned to Herrington Harbor North Marina in Tracys Landing, Maryland on February 15 to conduct a Cold-Water Immersion class to the marina boaters. Auxiliarists, Joe DiStefano, Paul Manicone and Frank Voltaggio presented course objectives on reviewing the principles of cold-water physiology and hypothermia, understanding cold-water survival principles, analyzing cold-water fatality cases, and viewing a video demonstration of cold-water submersion from the U.S. Coast Guard Cold-Water Boot Camp.

Again, on March 15, members of the flotilla returned to Herrington Harbor North Marina to give a class on the Key Elements of Safe Boating. Topics such as avoiding collisions, firefighting, use of safety equipment, man overboard situations, anchoring, and how to call for assistance were covered in the three-hour class. In addition to a classroom of 33 attendees, Brad Wells, an employee of the marina, set up a video conference connection to allow other marina slip owners to participate remotely. Herrington Harbor also video records all of their class events for personnel to access at a later date.



Joe DiStefano presenting man overboard procedures.

On April 5 and 12, the Edgewater Library in Edgewater, Maryland sponsored a Maryland State Boating Class which was presented by Flotilla 23-07. This marked the fourth year that the flotilla has given this course to the general public at the request of the Anne Arundel County Public Library System. Edgewater chief librarian, Elaine Saba, was on hand to greet the students and welcome them to this year's class. Members, Kimberle and Joe Sheehan, Joe DiStefano, and Frank Voltaggio participated on the first day to teach the topics on knowing your boat, before you get underway, operating your boat safely and legal requirements. The second session covered boating emergencies and enjoying water sports with your boat. Joe DiStefano and Frank Voltaggio instructed the class with John Wright contributing as an aide. All twelve students successfully passed the exam and were issued Maryland boating registration cards.

Flotilla 23-07 looks forward to continuing to present boating classes at the Edgewater library in the future.

GEOSPATIAL DAMAGE ASSESSMENT (GDA) PROJECT MISSION OPPORTUNITY

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is recruiting Coast Guard Auxiliary members to assist with remote geospatial damage assessments during natural disasters. FEMA will provide training and just needs members willing to learn how to do it and then execute it in response to an emergency.

Access to the Coast Guard Network is not required or necessary. Auxiliarists can use any computer for this mission, including their personal computers.

The duration of need depends on the natural disaster and its effects, and it is on an event-by-event basis. FEMA will request Auxiliary support for major disasters, usually category three or higher, such as hurricanes, significant wildfires, tornadoes, etc. Examples: Hurricane Milton, Helene, and the recent Los Angeles wildfires have strained the FEMA workforce to complete preliminary damage assessments promptly. These assessments inform senior leaders of the scale and scope of the disaster so they can make timely and appropriate resource decisions.

This is a voluntary mission, and the hours during it can be flexible/adaptable. FEMA prefers at least 2-3 hours of uninterrupted time a day spent conducting assessments. It is fully remote, and basic computer skills are necessary. FEMA will provide virtual training on using the Geographical Information System (GIS) program and conducting GIS damage assessments.

The point of contact for this project is Mr. Bill Hanlon, Director of the National Q-Directorate (Emergency Management & Disaster Response). Interested Auxiliary members should contact Mr. Hanlon directly at william.f.hanlon@cgauxnet.us with questions and to sign up for the mission. Members must be current in Core Training to participate.

Reprinted in part from the USCG Auxiliary Notification System, 15 March 2025

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SMS)

The foundational elements of any Safety Management System, sometimes called “the four pillars”, include Safety Policies, Risk Management, Safety Assurance and Safety Promotion.

We must have the right safety policies, rules, and guidance, in place. And we must apply appropriate risk management principals, assessing and mitigating risks as necessary.

We must know, with some degree of assurance, that our safety procedures are working and how we can improve, for there is always something to learn and always room for improvement.

And we must teach the safety lessons that we learn, and promote safety throughout the organization, in order for this to be effective.

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Every Auxiliarist must know this: It is OK to report and discuss mishaps and mistakes without concern for retribution, reprisal, penalty, or punishment. If you mess up, 'fess up. We all learn.

This is called a Just Culture, and it is the foundation, the bedrock of a solid safety culture. A Just Culture makes possible a Reporting Culture, where people are comfortable reporting mishaps, mistakes, and hazards. Such reporting informs us and allows us to learn and improve and grow and adapt as necessary.

The sum of all of this is a Safety Culture, where each of us embrace safety as a personal value. This Auxiliary-wide approach to thinking about safety, a true Safety Culture, is what we are trying to establish.

From USCGA website

NEW STAFF POSITION

The Auxiliary has been authorized to create Division Staff Officer (SO-RS), and Flotilla Staff Officer (FSO-RS) positions for Rescue & Survival Systems (RS) to oversee this activity for surface related operations. The goal is to provide focus to this program along with the training and support to ensure effective implementation. These officers will oversee personal protective equipment (PPE) assignment, maintenance, and inspection for Surface Operations, Paddlecraft, Vessel Examiners, and Marine Safety personnel. These officers will be appointed PPE Data Managers by the district DIRAUX to enter this information into AUXDATA II.

Auxiliarists engaged in operational and other missions that expose them to risk are required to wear appropriate PPE, specified in various manuals, guides, and handbooks. The Auxiliary is required to inspect and maintain issuance/inspection records for each piece of equipment.

The goal of this is to ensure that members are assigned the appropriate authorized PPE, that it meets the requirements for the mission, is up-to-date and properly inspected, and maintained in serviceable condition.

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All PPE assignments and inspection records are required to be recorded in AUXDATA II.

Air Operations has procedures in place to forecast, assign, and inspect PPE. There is variation across the districts and while they all maintain PPE assignment and inspection records, not all have been uploading this data in AUXDATA II. Aviation best practices will be standardized nationally.

Reprinted from the Chief Director's final action on National Board recommendations at N-train 2025.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 3 & 4 - Boating Safety Course, Parrish Creek Landing, Maryland, 0900

May 12 - Flotilla meeting, Shrift's House, Rose Haven, Maryland, 1900

May 31 - Yard Sale, Herrington Harbor North, Tracys Landing, Maryland, 0900

June 9 - Flotilla meeting, Cedarhurst Community Center, Shady Side, Maryland, 1900

June 28 - Suddenly In Command class, Herrington Harbor South, Rose Haven, Maryland, 1000

July 14 - Flotilla meeting, Cedarhurst Community Center, Shady Side, Maryland, 1900



Published by the USCG Auxiliary at no expense to the U.S. Government.

Photo by F. Voltaggio
