



# Up Top in Operations

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## BRIDGE LIGHTING

Auxiliarists generally are familiar with the Aids To Navigation that are on our waterways to guide vessels safely as they make their passage. These aids include lighthouses, lighted and unlighted beacons, range lights, range markers lighted and unlighted buoys, and other structures to warn the navigator of danger or to provide direction. Whenever any of these aids are found to be damaged or not functioning properly, the knowledgeable Auxiliarist will report this to the Coast Guard. However there is one category of lighted navigation aids that is often ignored to some extent in some Districts. This category encompasses the lights placed on bridges over navigable waters specifically to aid safe navigation. Some Districts have active programs for monitoring bridge navigation lights on their waters and this is commendable. Those Districts, which do not have such programs, should make some effort to implement one. To that end it is probably worthwhile to review what sort of navigation lights are required for the various types of bridges. The requirements for bridge lighting are given in good detail in the BRIDGE ADMINISTRATION MANUAL, COMDTINST M 16590.5 A. Navigation lights for a specific bridge are specified by the Commander of the Coast Guard District where the bridge is located. There are eleven Bridge Administration Offices in the various Coast Guard Districts ranging from Boston, Massachusetts to Juneau, Alaska. The navigation lights for bridges are classed as private aids to navigation and must be installed and maintained at the cost of the owner of the bridge. A bridge may be owned by an agency of a State, a County, a Municipality, or a private company.

Whether on a scheduled patrol, a leisurely cruise, or just driving by, any Auxiliarist who sees a bridge light that is extinguished, malfunctioning, or damaged should report it. How and when to report such a discrepancy will often be a judgment call. A critical discrepancy would be one where failure to report it by the most expeditious means could result in loss of life and or damage to a vessel. An urgent discrepancy would be one where there is no danger of loss of life but it could contribute to the grounding or stranding of a vessel. A routine discrepancy is one that has little likelihood of contributing to a grounding or stranding of a vessel but does call for corrective maintenance. Discrepancies that are deemed to be critical or urgent should be reported to the nearest Coast Guard Station by radio or telephone. U.S. Mail is sufficient for routine discrepancies. All reports by radio or telephone must be followed - up with a written report. The written report should be made on form CG - 5474, AIDS TO NAVIGATION REPORT. The word BRIDGE should be typed or written above the title of form CG - 5474 to alert the recipient that the reported discrepancy involves a bridge. Since bridge navigation lights are considered to be private navigation aids, there should be no direct contact made by any member of the Auxiliary with the entity owning the bridge regarding any discrepancy with the lights.

Art Murray, BC - ONB

## **Chart Updating:**

Each DSO-AN has received a copy of an excellent video on Chart Updating that NOAA has produced. This is a twenty minute film that is to be shared with all our ATON people for training at meetings and workshops. As you probably know the operations workshop for 2000, although not mandatory contains material on Chart Updating. The one area of our responsibility that we are not competitive enough is the Chart Updating program. In my last article I mentioned that the U.S. Power Squadron does as much as ten times the number of Chart Updates as the Auxiliary. This is still true. As our patrol hours shift from actual assists to being a positive safety example and ATON work, we need to improve our efforts to keep NOAA informed of the needed changes to our charts.

Don't miss the boat !! Join us in Chart Updating ! Be sure to use the latest edition charts, and Local Notice to Mariners. Be alert to any changes that you see from the water that are not on the chart. Report those prominent objects such as water tanks, micro towers, spires etc. Report the wrecks, rocks, and shoaling and new piers that are being built in your AOR. A simple formula for determining if a pier is large enough to be charitable is to measure the length in feet, multiply by 12, and divide by the chart scale. If the answer is .03 or greater the pier is charitable . If less than .03, not charitable at this scale.. Example: 1:20,000 scale chart . 50 foot pier x 12 inches/foot = 600 inches divide by 20,000 = .03. This pier is charitable for this scale chart. The marinas in your AOR should be checked and turned in as a Small Craft Facility Update every year, even if there have been no changes. Some of the high rise buildings that are proliferating our waterfronts have very distinctive red lights on top that are sometimes seen farther out to sea than the ATON lights leading to a pass. These should be reported and charted. Remember the more information we can give NOAA in the form of photo's, blueprints, and engineers drawings, the more value they have to NOAA, the higher your score on the Chart Update.

The NOAA awards will be given out at NACON 2000 and we can receive recognition as Individuals, Flotilla's, Division's and District's for these efforts. DSO-AN's get those Flotilla chart orders in as soon as possible so that those Flotilla's who do Chart Updating can get their charts.

Jerry Fallis BC-ONC

## **New BCSM News**

The NEW BCSM is now available at ANSC.

Due to the cost to print each manual we can only issue one copy to each QE and two copies to each flotilla. Any requests for individual copies for members will not be filled at ANSC. Copies for the QE's will be distributed through their respective district. Flotilla copies must be ordered by the Flotilla FC or FSO-MA. Each flotilla will be need to ensure that the manual is maintained and available to their members.

As a reminder the BCSM is available on the Aux Web site.

We hope that additional funding may be obtained in the future so individual copies can be provided to all Boat Crew Program participants.

William Herman, DC-O

## **FOR BETTER BOATING SAFETY**

### **Ship Channels**

Ship channels are marked by the Coast Guard with various types of navigation aids and dredged by the Army Corp. of Engineers to a depth that will accommodate large vessels. These large vessels will include a variety of commercial vessels, passenger liners, tankers, bulk carriers, container ships, other types of cargo ships, and various types of military ships. Most of these ships will range in size from under 10,000 tons to over 60,000 tons. They are constrained by their draft to stay within the channels to make a safe passage through the water. Their speed through the water will range from under ten knots to more than twenty knots. Most large vessels traveling at these speeds will require more than a mile to come to a full stop. Many will require two miles or more to take all their way off. The average turning circle for these vessels with their rudders hard over will have a diameter of one mile. The small boat operator should be aware of the maneuvering limitations of large vessels whenever venturing into or close to a ship channel.

It should be obvious to any small boat operator that challenging a large vessel for use of the channel is courting disaster. No ship master or pilot in his right mind will risk running a multi-million dollar vessel aground to avoid a collision with a boat that at most is only worth a few thousand dollars. They are more likely to stay in the channel and take their chances in court. Often when a small boat gets close to a large vessel it cannot be seen from the bridge because of the configuration of the vessel or the cargo carried on its fore deck. This creates a very dangerous situation, and the navigator can do little more than stop the vessel's propeller and hope the small boat survives the encounter. Even if the boat does not come into contact with the hull of the large vessel, the wake may swamp or roll the boat over.

Sometimes a small boat may be unable to move out of the way of an approaching large vessel due to engine failure or in the case of a sailboat, being becalmed. At other times the channel may be very wide or not well defined and the small boat operator may not be able to determine if he is in the path of an approaching vessel. In situations like this the small boat operator should hail the approaching vessel on VHF channel 13 and describe his boat and location relative to the large vessel and his condition. Most large vessels monitor VHF channels 13 and 16 and will usually respond to such a call. Once communication is established appropriate action for a safe passage can be worked out. The navigator or pilot of the large vessel will appreciate such a call when there is any doubt whether or not there is risk of collision.

Art Murray, BC-ONB