



Up Top In Operations

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Bits and Pieces from the DVC-OS

Mark Simoni, DVC-OS

Operational Excellence

I have received some great feedback from the field on the Operational Excellence Program. People are fired up about the chance to earn this award, and from all reports, they are having fun training for it. Keep this program in mind if you are looking for a challenge. If you are a QE, you need to be up to speed on Operational Excellence, because you may be asked to proctor a TEAM.

ISAR

By now, all the ISAR 2004 teams have been selected. Congratulations to those of you that will be representing your District AND your country at Portsmouth on November 5th and 6th. For those of you who are NOT competing, why not plan on being in attendance to cheer your favorite team on? This year's games have been designed to be "fan friendly" so there will be a lot of fun and a lot to see. Check out the website at <http://www.internationalisar.com/>.

Underway Mishaps

It happens every year, and this year is no exception. Boats get banged up and sometimes people get injured. We need to keep in

mind the tenets of TCT that we have all studied and learned. None of us is expert enough to dispense with risk assessment at each stage of a mission. Stay focused when you are out there, do the right thing, communicate with your crew, and BE SAFE. If you are involved in a mishap, communicate what happened to the order issuing authority immediately, and take steps to stabilize the situation.

Underway Missions

In the time since 9-11, the nature of our underway missions has changed. With very few exceptions (SAR callout, regatta, disaster response, pollution monitoring etc.), ALL of our underway patrols are multi-mission patrols. At the same time, ALL of our patrols are MDA patrols. What is MDA? *Maritime Domain Awareness is the effective understanding of anything associated with the global maritime environment that could upset the security, safety, economy or environment of the United States.* What does this mean to you as a crew or coxswain? It means that you are always alert, keeping an eye on our waterways and shoreline. Remember, the bad guys only have to get lucky once. We need to be vigilant 100% of the time.

Kudos

It could be said that we as Auxiliarists do not get a lot of recognition for the things we do. Those of us that are involved in operations do not seek recognition as a rule; our reward comes from pulling a child out of the water, or helping a stranded family get home safely before the storm hits, or knowing we are helping keep our country safe by keeping an eye on the power plants and oil terminals. As of this writing, all of you have done the following so far this year:

- ♥ You have saved 158 lives.
- ♥ You have assisted over 4,700 people, and over \$22 million dollars worth of property.
- ♥ You have selflessly devoted over 70,000 hours doing safety patrols, and almost 44,000 hours in marine safety patrols, as well as over 17,000 hours in other patrols (Marine Environmental Protection, regatta, etc.).



The Operations Department is proud of you and all you do. The Coast Guard could not fulfil its functions without your help. Your country is thankful for your service.

Safety Stand Down

John Ruestow BC-OSP

If there has been any question as to the standing of the Auxiliary in the Coast Guard family, the recent message regarding the Safety Stand Down has clearly answered those questions. When it comes to operational safety, we're right there with all the others, standing tall and showing that we know what we're doing and that our equipment is capable of performing the job.

What is all of this about? As the messages note, there have been an unacceptable number of accidents involving small boats. Since all Auxiliary facilities are small boats, we are involved.



There isn't any finger pointing going on and the operations program managers are not trying to single out any group. They are, however, making a point that we need to step back and reevaluate the situation from the start. This is a Coast Guard-wide issue.

Recently there has been an increase in the number of incidents involving small boats. The details of these incidents may be discussed elsewhere but the incident reports that I've seen read like a series of TCT training exercises.

When we sit through TCT and when we participate in pre-underway briefings, we may be of the opinion that this is an exercise in "preaching to the choir". We know what we are supposed to do; we've been trained in the policies and procedures of a safe evolution. We hope the other person is listening because he/she is really the one who needs this training. I've been around the block once or twice with the Auxiliary and had a long and successful business

career. I've learned that when someone is of the opinion that what is being said really doesn't apply to him or her; they are generally the people who need the advice the most. So, if you think that you are current on your TCT and your on-the-water skills are right up there where they need to be, you might just be the one who needs this stand down the most.

When your operations officer/flotilla commander/training officer or coxswain gathers you together to discuss this stand down, focus on what is being said. Probably the two most important things that can be highlighted in these discussions are situational awareness and common sense.

Situational awareness is a difficult skill to master and common sense is truly a rare trait, but both are essential to safe operations.

Situational awareness can be thought of as a type of common sense. Everyone starts out aware of the situation around them. Problems can arise when an issue attracts the attention of a person in the crew. The tendency is to focus on that issue to the exclusion of everything else. As you might expect, the more important the issue or situation is, the greater the tunnel vision. You might forget to keep track of the wind direction or the set of the current. You might not notice an approaching vessel. You might not notice the fatigue in your crew. You might not keep track of water depth. There are a number of things that you might neglect



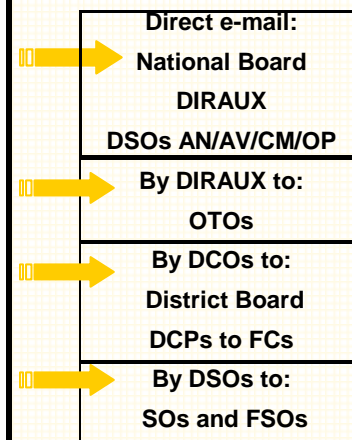
because your natural tendency is to pay attention to "important" things.

On the water, everything is important and a good coxswain or crewmember trains their brain to continuously take inventory of everything around them. Periodically, take that inventory and then filter out the important from the mundane. You might filter out the reading on the depth sounder fifteen times in a row but the sixteenth time, the reading might reach a "critical" number and then the depth sounder becomes "important". How do you train for this? You train and train and train some more.

Coxswains should set up scenarios for their crews to keep them alert. Stop during patrols and ask questions about what your crew has seen. Ask specific questions. What was the flag on that last tanker we passed? How many persons were aboard that Sea Ray? What is the direction of the wind? What was the number on the navigational aid we just passed? With questions like this your crew will learn to watch what is going on as well as watching for "important" things.

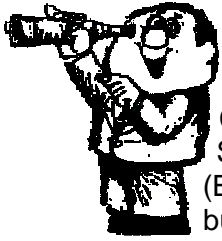
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DISTRIBUTION:



A Qualification Examiner's Guide – On the Horizon

Lew Wargo, BC-OSQ



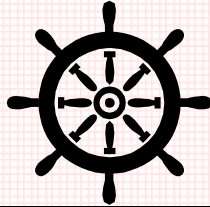
Being the new kid on staff as Branch Chief – Operations, Surface, Qualifications (BC-OSQ), I have been busy writing a QE Guide for use throughout the Auxiliary. The purpose of this manual is to establish guidelines within the Auxiliary for Qualification Examiners. A side benefit of this guide is that it can be used as a training tool.

Included in the QE Guide are seven enclosures:

The first is a series of questions and answers for a QE to use for the Crew Oral Exam before giving a Check Ride. The second is similar to the first except it is for Coxswain candidates. The third enclosure is a sample form that may be used for reporting Annual Currency. The fourth is another sample form for reporting Fifth Year Maintenance. Number five is a check list for performing a check ride; the sixth is a form for recommending new QE's. The seventh enclosure is a series of questions and answers based on the Operations Policy Manual (Note: at present this is not a part of the Boat Crew Program but the knowledge is essential for members in operations, especially coxswains and is therefore included for everyone's use).

It is my intent that anyone may use this guide as a training tool. In particular Enclosures 1, 2 and 7 contain a lot of information. I would be delighted if a member memorized everything in these enclosures as the purpose of the oral exam is to test the member's knowledge!

A DRAFT copy of the QE Guide is now undergoing a review process. Hopefully we will see this new manual in the field soon.



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Linda A. Nelson, DC-O
echopeep@ixpres.com

Safety Stand Down

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Common sense can be a fleeting thing. You may have patrolled in your facility for ten years: you know it inside and out. You are proud of her and when you get an important visitor, you may want to show her off. How many RPM will she turn at WOT? See how well she turns at speed? Watch how she handles this wake crossing. These seemingly innocuous things show a failing of your well-deserved reputation for common sense. You are confident in your abilities and the capabilities of your facility. Maybe you become a little too confident. The laws of physics will not be broken and the penalties for attempting to break them can be severe. That is what TCT is all about. Evaluate the risks every time. The risks on your patrol may be similar to the risks on your patrol last week but they will not be

exactly the same. The small difference this week may make the difference between a routine patrol and a disaster.

Pay attention

to your training officer during the stand down. Ask real questions. Next time you prepare for a patrol or prepare to go on vacation for that matter, review the things that you have learned in the Auxiliary and put those lessons to use so you can have a safe and effective patrol or a safe and enjoyable vacation. Remember the old saw about there being no stupid questions. The question that you ask might be the answer the other people may not think to ask. Remember, they are the ones who really need this review and you can help make sure they get the proper information.



National Operations Department

Program	Staff Member	E-mail Address
Department Chief	Linda A. Nelson	echopeep@ixpres.com
Deputy Department Chief	David A. Elliot	DC-Od @auxop.us
Aids to Navigation	COMO George Pendergast	comodone@charter.net
Aviation	Robert Shafer	DVC-OA@auxair.us
Communications	Edwin "Ned" Kroeker	ekroeker@seaqueue.com
Surface Operations	Mark Simoni	mark@simonisystems.com
Education		
G-OCX Operations Division Chief	LCDR Mike Staier, USCG	MStaier@comdt.uscg.mil
G-OCX Aviation Branch Chief	LT Justin Harper, USCG	JHarper@comdt.uscg.mil
G-OCX Surface Operations Branch Chief	MCPO Gary Jensen, USCG	GJensen@comdt.uscg.mil