



Up Top In Operations

February 2005

Monthly Newsletter of the National Operations Department

Volume 02

Planning a Winning ATON Program

Frank Larkin, BC-ONI

The New England Patriots are Super Bowl champions again this year. Just another lucky fluke? Not a chance! Before the necessary teamwork on the field is brought to bear with each team member executing their job with great precision against an opponent, Coach Belichick and his staff spends hours preparing for each game. Each Patriot game plan contains four elements—study, planning, preparation and training plus execution. As I gloat on this great Patriot's win, it occurs to me that we could learn a great lesson from their management approach in the ATON/Chart Updating program.



Study

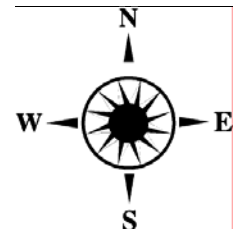
A firm understanding of the different ATON programs is essential for any effective ATON activity.

There are five core ATON programs to take advantage of that involve verifying Federal and Private Aids--PATONs, checking safety equipment on bridges, updating nautical charts and navigational documents, and small craft facility reporting. Each of these programs has their own verifying procedures and reporting forms. Federal and Private aid programs check for similar discrepancies but have different reporting methods. Participation in the PATON program requires special training and AV certification. Checking bridges includes a different list of safety equipment checks, forms and reporting procedures. Chart updating and small craft facility reporting uses a common reporting process but deals with different types of reportable items. Obviously a little study is needed to order to be able to become proficient with what to report as well as to whom to make your reports. Here are a few tips to overcome a potential knowledge gap and get your ATON Program jump-started:

- Stick with one program at a time until you get it down pat. Don't get overwhelmed trying to handle all five at once.
- Ask your ATON staff officers for the latest procedures and training materials.

- Schedule ATON training sessions in your division or flotilla to help with your study.
- Use a member who is skilled in a particular ATON program in order to run an efficient patrol or mission.
- If necessary, borrow a trained member from another flotilla or division until you can get the hang of your ATON program.

Your goal should be to get your ATON Program going, and underway training is the quickest way to get members involved and active.



Planning

Start your ATON planning by gathering the correct forms and equipment for your facility that is required for the ATON activity that you intent to carry out. Here are a few pieces of equipment you should have aboard:

[NOS Nautical Chart](#) – Always use the latest edition chart, updated to the latest LNM-local Notice to Mariners. When your Flotilla adopts a chart, NOAA supplies free charts. Ask your Flotilla Staff Officers about adopting a chart.

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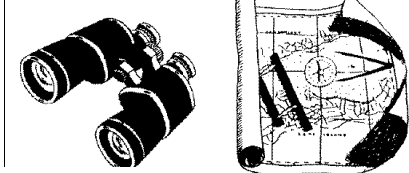
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[LNM-Local Notice to Mariners](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/) – at <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/> on line. Keep your nautical chart, Light List, and Coast Pilot up to date. Corrected documents are critical for high quality ATON/Chart Updating reporting.

[Light List](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pubs/LightLists/LightLists.htm) – at www.navcen.uscg.gov/pubs/LightLists/LightLists.htm on line. Only print out the pages that reference the AOR where you plan to operate your boat during the patrol.

[Coast Pilot](http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/cpdownload.htm) – at <http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/cpdownload.htm> on line. Only print out the pages that reference your AOR.

[GPS](#) – Inexpensive hand held GPS sets are available today that use WAAS-Wide Area Augmentation System and are accurate within 8 to 10 feet. Be sure that your set is calibrated correctly and that the appropriate datum and other units of measure are set. As part of your training, be sure that you understand how to monitor and report the quality read-outs from your GPS. WAAS positions usually show an EPE- Estimated Position Error. DGPS shows an HDOP- Horizontal Dissolution of Precision



[Navigational Equipment](#) – A simple plotter, dividers, mechanical pencil, and eraser are commonly all that is needed. Clipboards are useful. A plotting board is helpful for checking positions while underway.

[Binoculars](#) – A good pair will allow you to safely check buoys, bridges and other charted objects from a safe distance without putting yourself or your boat any jeopardy.

[Digital Camera](#) – Inexpensive digital cameras are available that take high quality pictures. Many USCG-Aid to Navigation Teams encourage photographs of Private aids in the Aid folders. Pictures of discrepancies on aids and bridges are highly desirable and add to the credibility and quality of your reports.



Another important aspect of planning is to decide in advance what type of ATON activity that you want to perform while on a patrol. If you plan to verify PATONs, you will need an AV certified member as part of your crew. In addition, you will need to acquire Private Aid Verification Forms for the private aids that you plan to verify. These forms are available from the Coast Guard ATONIS system. In some districts, a similar system is used for obtaining Bridge report forms. Federal Aids can be verified whenever you are underway and discrepancies are reported to the Coast Guard on a CG-5474 ATON Discrepancy Report form.

Preplan the best route for your ATON patrol that minimizes the amount of travel you will need to cover the aids and bridges that you plan to check. This procedure saves you time and makes your patrol more effective. It assumes that you have a detailed plan and sequence established for your planned activity, allowing you to get the proper forms in the correct order. This approach will eliminate much confusion while you are underway.

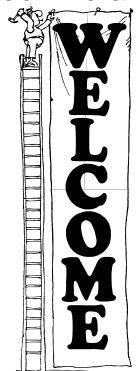
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Welcome New OPS Staff

The Department of Operations has selected Lindy Harrison as the Division Chief for Operations Projects and Educational Outreach. Lindy is a member of the 5th NR District and comes highly qualified. In addition to professional career as a professor of chemistry for over 20 years, Lindy has extensive background in the Auxiliary. She is an AUXOP member, qualified as a coxswain, instructor and a PWC QE. Lindy has also held a private pilot's license! She has served on the National Staff in the Education Department, most recently as the deputy chief, ending her term in 2002. We are very lucky to bring someone with this measure of talent to the Operations Projects and Educational Outreach Division.

In addition, Henry Demler joins the division as the editor of the newsletter (BC-OEE). Hank, as he is called, also hails from the 5th Northern District and is about as versatile as they come! Hank is an AUXOP member, qualified as a coxswain and QE. He also holds the designation of "master instructor" and vessel examiner. His background includes prior qualification as a PWC operator, ATON Verifier and Air Observer. In addition, Hank has a commercial FCC Radio telephone operator license and radio amateur technician license. Hank has been doing some desktop publishing for his division and will be using those skills to bring our message to a national audience.

Welcome aboard!



Auxiliary ATON / Chart Updating Class C School AUX -06

George Pendergast, DVC-ON

The annual ATON and Chart Updating C School is planned for May 19 through 22, with May 19 allowed for travel, at the Coast Guard Training Center in Yorktown, Virginia. This training will cover the five Auxiliary Aid to Navigation Programs—Federal Aids, Private Aids, Bridges, the NOAA Adopt-A-Chart Program and Small Craft Facility Updating. Special emphasis will be on the new Web-based Private Aids to Navigation System that is being introduced into the First District, Northern Region. New PowerPoint training aids for Bridges will also be introduced.

Attendees must not have attended in the past 5 years and be assigned Flotilla or Division Staff Officers.



Applicants must have an Internet e-mail address to benefit from most of the training and the e-mail address must be included on the Short Term Resident Training Request prior to approval. Send ATON "C" School training requests Form CG-5223 <http://216.167.73.185/~forms/archive/a7059f.pdf> to the Training Quota Center via your FC and DIRAUX, Please e-mail to DVC-ON Como George Pendergast comodone@charter.net for a confirmation you have applied. Attendees will be selected on a first come basis with an attempt to have a representative from each District.



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Another good practice is to develop waypoints and establish a route in your GPS for your planned track. Also, create a timeline for your trip and monitor its progress during the patrol. Use the time of travel between planned verifications to hone your crew's navigation skills and keep them focused and alert. Allow time for breaks and snacks in your plan. You will be amazed at the additional ATON / Chart Updating reportable observations and discrepancies that you will find while operating in this mode.

Preparation and Training

The more ATON Program training that is conducted within an area, the more ATON report productivity that is generated from the area. Insist on quality ATON and Chart Updating training programs from your ATON staff officers. Besides the necessary personal study, you could use the skills of an experienced member to help train the other members of your crew.

On-the-job training is a potent tool for developing a strong ATON program. Scheduling on-the-water ATON activity in conjunction with formal ATON training is an effective method for encouraging your newly trained members to become active and productive.

After you identify the aids, bridges and objects that you intend to verify while on your patrol, make crew assignments to assure not only that everyone participates and learns but also that you achieve high quality and complete observations. Here are some typical assignments that you may want to consider:

Observer(s) – responsible for performing the actual observation of the aid, bridge or object. Use your most experienced members for this task. It takes time to acquire all the background knowledge that is necessary to become a good observer. Use every opportunity while on an ATON patrol to discuss the items that must be checked on a bridge, aid or chart. Checklists will assist new observers.

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Recorder(s) – responsible for recording the observed data on the proper forms. You need someone who can write clearly and quickly, and is trained on the use of the ATON program's forms. It is very disappointing to complete an extensive ATON patrol and then find that you cannot read the data that was collected. If you have extra crewmembers, assign one to complete the final reports while underway and review them with the other crewmembers so they learn the process. This also saves time at the end of the patrol and may allow a chance to take corrected observations when errors are detected.

GPS reader – responsible for calibrating the GPS and reading the latitude and longitude of each position check that is performed. Another important aspect of this job is to insure that the GPS continues to operate at a high quality level. Monitoring and recording EPE or HDOP error levels are part of this assignment as well as assuring the crew that the GPS continuously operates in 3D mode. Report these quality readings with each position. It adds great credibility to your reports.

Depth reader – responsible for calibrating the Fathometer and reading the depths close aboard aids to navigation and within the navigable channels under bridges. Generally, it is not necessary to correct these readings for height of tide. However, it is important that the date and time is recorded when depths are taken. Correct every depth reading for the position of

the transducer on your boat.

Conformity checker – responsible for assuring that the observed aids conform to the IALA-B Aids to Navigation System—the system used in the waters of the United States or the Western Rivers System if you are operating on the major river systems. Using the Light List, this team member validates that the observed aid conforms to the entry for the aid in the Light List. This member also validates the aid's abbreviations and characteristics shown on the NOS Chart. When you have larger crews, this job can be split up between multiple members. The goal is to keep each crewmember involved, active and learning.



Navigator and boat operator – responsible for the safe operation of the OPFAC and for the maneuvering of the boat close aboard the aids. Never put your boat in jeopardy while on an ATON patrol. Always keep the OPFAC in the channel. Keep clear of fixed aids and any channel edges. If you are not sure of the channel depth, stay out of the channel. Do not forget the normal lookout assignments that must be maintained while you are underway. Always include the safety of the crew and boat in your plan.

Photographer – responsible for photographing private aids, aid and bridge discrepancies, and supporting pictures for chart updating reports.

Execution

Splitting the workload with the members of your crew while on an ATON patrol keeps everyone involved in the underway activity. Don't miss this opportunity for on-the-job training. Switch the crew duties around on long patrols so that everyone gets a chance to participate in the whole verification process. Stress the benefits of teamwork and the importance of each job's contribution to high quality ATON reporting. Encourage team support of each reporting crewmember. Correct all errors while on scene. Don't settle for half-hearted or shoddy reporting. Encourage each member to act as a quality check on each other's report. It is easy to miss a reading or an observation but good interaction among the team members won't let it happen.

Before you leave the dock, spend a few minutes to explain the assignments to your crew. Be sure that each participant has the right equipment and forms to effectively complete their assignment. Let everyone know how he or she is contributing to the final product—a high quality ATON report. Add your special ATON equipment to your OPFAC's pre-underway check off list so nothing is left behind that will be needed while underway. Explain the scope of your planned patrol. If you have established a route for the patrol on your GPS, be sure that it is plotted on your nautical chart. Invite crewmembers to assist in the navigation monitoring process while you are underway.

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Take the time to insure each observation is properly and accurately recorded. Quality reporting should be the only objective. Do not make your activity a race to see how fast your verifications can be made. Teamwork and training will provide all the speed and efficiency you will need. A trained team performs simultaneous observations faster than the best recorder can write down the data. Take the time to record the data clearly, completely and accurately.

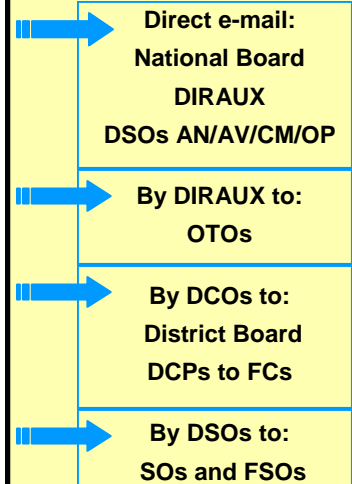
As your ATON team develops, encourage members to participate in the entire verification process. Train them to provide the most accurate data possible. After you return to the dock, assist the recorders with the final report preparation. It is a good practice to have different crew members double check the reports to insure that they are professionally prepared, complete, clear, and ready for presentation to the appropriate

Coast Guard agency or NOAA.

Finally, insure that the ANSC 7030 Activity Reports – Mission are prepared and forwarded to the “IS” department for entry into AUXDATA. Use a separate ANSC 7030 to report the patrol for the boat using activity code “03.” This report records the underway time for the coxswain and crew. Do not record any ATON activity on this report. Each person participating in the ATON activity while on the patrol must submit a separate ANSC 7030 Activity Report that reflects his or her portion of the ATON activity. When your ATON activity is performed while on an authorized patrol, limit your time for this activity to 15 minutes. The report for the boat covers the underway time.

Three activity codes are used and the numbers of aids verified and discrepant are reported. Use Code 30 to report Federal aid activity. Use Code 31 for Private aids and Code 32 for reporting Bridge activity. These statistics are important to the success of the Auxiliary Aid to Navigation program. Unfortunately, much of this data has not been reported in the past or is reported incorrectly. This is the data that is used to determine the annual Auxiliary Aid to Navigation Awards.

DISTRIBUTION:



Summary

Using a professional approach for ATON patrols provides a great on-the-water experience with the satisfaction that you and your crew are making an important contribution to the Coast Guard, the Auxiliary and your fellow boat operators in your area. Correct and accurate charts, private aids conforming to Coast Guard standards, correctly positioned and charted, and bridges with the correct lighting and safety equipment are the result. Not to mention the team development experienced by your crew and the feeling that they are making important contributions to Homeland Security. There is plenty of ATON / Chart Updating work to be done. Check with your ATON Staff Officer and get involved with this important Auxiliary program.

