



Up Top In Operations

March 2005

Monthly Newsletter of the National Operations Department

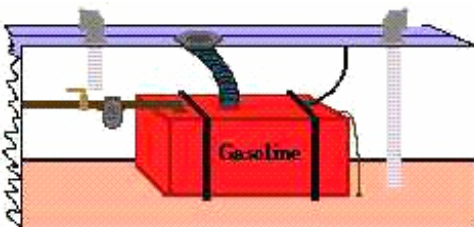
Volume 03

Good News - Bad News John Ruestow – BC-OSP

The good news is that boating season is here.
The bad news is that boating season is here.

For those areas where the water gets hard or where the weather gets too bad for boating, spring brings out the boats and the boaters. For the areas where the water never gets hard and where the weather never really gets too bad, the weather is warming up and that brings the casual boaters from their winter's slumber. This is a particularly trying time and we need to be prepared for those things that inevitably happen.

First, we need to have our equipment ready. We have done the inspections and offers-for-use so, in theory, our facilities are ready. Theory is a great thing but practice is better. Springtime is the time when all of those gremlins that you thought were in hibernation raise their ugly heads.



The batteries that carried you through last season just might have one or two good cranking sessions left. Maybe not. The fuel that was working fine at the end of the season past isn't the same fuel that it was then. The octane rating has probably dropped off drastically and you might have a good case of condensation working in your tank. Your lines that were so carefully stowed just might have reached the end of their effective life. They might look fine but may fail when you need them the most. The season's first patrol is often the most difficult because of all the accumulated bugs that have may pop up. Once you get your first patrol out of the way, you probably are in pretty good shape mechanically. Your electrical system has been exercised, your fuel system has been through its paces and the cooling system has been thoroughly tested. If you can get these tests out of the way before your first patrol, you will be well ahead of the game. It might be a good idea to have several of your Auxiliarist friends have a "coming out" party. Get all of your facilities on the water at the same time. Make a test run of all of your systems.

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Visual Basics-Steering the Perfect Search Pattern Mark Simoni DVC-OS

Aren't GPS plotters great? The newer ones can do everything but change your engine oil, and I think the manufacturers are working on that.

One neat thing you can do with a chart plotter is to "eyeball" the accuracy of your search patterns. If you have ever looked at your plotter after having run a search pattern, you may have been dismayed to see that the turns were not crisp and accurate.

As you know, the GPS plotter will show absolute, not relative location information; plots are shown "over the ground" as opposed to "through the water". We will assume for this discussion that we don't need to be overly concerned by the effects of current. We will also assume that everyone is interested in running SS (Expanding Square) and VS (Sector Search) patterns more efficiently. (Those of you in the Brown Water Auxiliary.....please write to me and tell me what search tips work best for you, so they can be included in a future Up Top in Operations!).

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Visual Basics-Steering the Perfect Search Pattern

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One of the biggest problems our helmsmen have when they are running search patterns is the time it takes to steady up on a new course. This is really critical when running PIW searches that have small track spacing. By the time the boat is steady on its new course, it is almost time for the next heading.

Why do people have trouble with this? Maybe we can blame some of this on compasses that are over damped or under damped. Maybe the helmsman is not aware of how quickly the compass reacts during a turn. In these cases, the helmsman comes out of the turn either too soon or too late, then spends valuable time "chasing the compass" until it settles down and they can steady up on the new course. How do I know this? Been there, done that, but didn't get the tee-shirt.

I am chagrined to say that it was the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary that came to my rescue. During an OPEX we put on at STA SAGINAW RIVER, we invited a couple of Canadian Auxiliarists to attend. One of them, Butch Dompierre, introduced me to a great technique.

Most of us find it quite a bit easier to steer a straight line if we point the boat toward some visual reference rather than steering a compass course. We can take advantage of this fact if we follow these steps when running SS and VS patterns. For SS patterns:

When the navigator is counting you down towards you turn, say with 5 seconds or so to go, hold out your right arm so that it is pointing

straight out the starboard beam, bearing 090 relative. As you recall, when running an SS, all turns are 90 degrees to the right, see Figure 1. Sight down your right arm. Find something, a point on land, a portion of a cloud, or even the relative direction of the waves, and lock on to it.

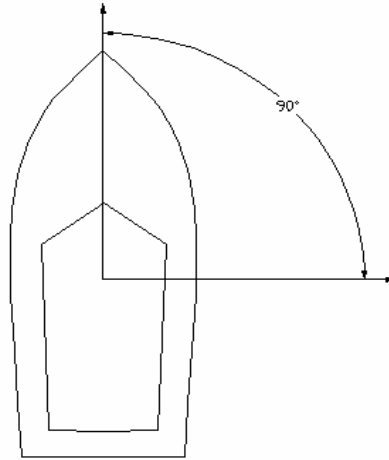


Fig 1.

SS (Expanding Square) Turn

Hold your right arm straight out to starboard (090 relative bearing). Sight down your arm and find an object to steer toward as you make your turn.

When it is time to make the turn, steer the boat towards the object you have sighted. Steady up the boat on this object, you should be able to do this very quickly. THEN take a look at the compass. You will find that you are within 5 or 10 degrees of the heading you are supposed to be on, and you can easily make a minor adjustment with the helm. With this method, you will find that you are no longer chasing the compass, weaving back and forth after making a turn.

For VS patterns, follow the same procedure, except for one thing. When running a VS all turns are 120 degrees to the right, instead of 90 degrees. To get a 120 degree

angle with your arm, face the front of the boat, and put your right arm out, and as far back as is comfortable. For most people, this is about 120 degrees (see Figure 2). Sight down your arm, find a reference point, then when you make your turn, steer towards this point. As noted above, this will get you fairly close, and you can quickly dial in the exact course you need by checking your compass and steering accordingly.

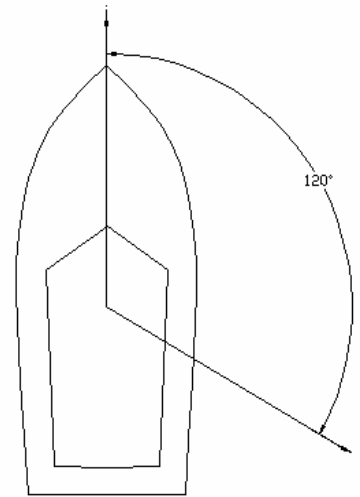


Fig 2.

VS (Sector Search) Turn

Hold your right arm as far back as is comfortable (120 relative bearing). Sight down your arm and find an object to steer toward as you make your turn.

If you practice these tips when running search patterns, you will find that the corners on your patterns will be much sharper and more accurate. We have been teaching this technique for the past few years with great success. Give it a try, you might even be tempted to take a picture of the plotter screen to show your friends!



Good News - Bad News

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Your electrical system has been exercised, your fuel system has been through its paces and the cooling system has been thoroughly tested. If you can get these tests out of the way before your first patrol, you will be well ahead of the game. It might be a good idea to have several of your Auxiliarist friends have a "coming out" party. Get all of your facilities on the water at the same time. That way, if there are problems, you will have assistance. Make a test run of all of your systems. Whether you are under orders or not, your first expedition onto the water will be the one that has the most potential for mechanical problems.

A few common sense precautions can make the difference between a smooth start to the boating season and an embarrassing incident. Have your batteries checked, filled and charged before you go out the first time. Most of you are capable of doing that work yourselves but if you aren't sure, run to your nearest service center and have your batteries serviced. Always check your fuel for contamination. Drain condensation from your fuel system or have it done. Fresh fuel may be the difference between an easy start and an extended cranking session. Obviously, you will have problems if your batteries are weak and your fuel is questionable. If one or the other is in top shape, it might get you started to the point where you can "run out" the kinks. If both your batteries and your fuel are marginal, you might wind up putting your facility back on the trailer. That is embarrassing particularly with the Auxiliary sticker and insignia on your boat. If we aren't prepared, how prepared will the general boating public be?



That brings up the other bad news situation. The gremlins that have been working on your well-maintained and well-prepared vessel have also been working on your neighbor's boat that was put away with the key in the ignition, the life jackets still wet and probably the radio still running. They may have fuel and may not. Their batteries may not work or worse, may work once. Their life jackets may be mildewed or rotted. These are the people you will have to assist and there will be plenty of them.

To avoid a case of "the blind leading the blind" we need to be extra vigilant during our de-winterization process and we need to ensure that the vessel examination process is thorough and not just a pencil whipping exercise. Check out the belts and hoses carefully this year. Just how old are they? Maybe your lines are o.k. but not great. Put new lines on your "to do" list. Let your spouse know that deck lines would be a thoughtful gift for father's or mother's day or your birthday

(assuming you still have birthdays). Maybe it is time to put your batteries on an alternating replacement schedule. Buy one new battery this year and plan to buy another next year or maybe the year after. Usually, after three or four years of use, your marine battery is working on borrowed time. Many of us have been at this long enough to take advantage of the holiday sales and winter catalogues to stock up on necessities for spring but if you haven't done that, you might make a list of those things that aren't absolutely necessary this year but you will need by next year. Let your kids and relatives know what you need. Marine "stuff" makes great gifts and most of it isn't too expensive when purchased a little at a time. Make sure that the person giving the gift knows exactly what you need. Correct line sizes may seem obvious to you but don't assume that others know the difference.

Use your head and what little time you have left to thoroughly evaluate your facility and its equipment. Is it ready? Are you ready?

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QE Guidelines Debut at N-Train!

COMO Lew Wargo, BC-OSQ

At N-Train the Surface Operations Department made its initial distribution of the Auxiliary Qualification Examiner's Guide. It was very well received by all the DSO-OPs in attendance. Additional copies are available in an electronic format from your DSO-OP. The DSO-OPs should be forwarding copies of this guide to their QEs and may also make this available to members for information and training.

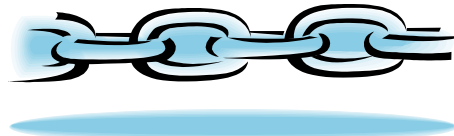
The QE Guide does not supersede or modify any Coast Guard Publication or Commandant Instruction. The guide is intended to give QEs numerous job aides under one cover, and to provide assistance to districts in administering their QE programs.

It is hoped that it will also help to ensure a standardized method and process for QEs in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program. It is the QE that ensures the integrity and continuity of the program and guarantees that only Auxiliarists who perform each

part of every task without assistance, with confidence and with little or no hesitation are qualified in the program. This is the only way we can ensure the safety of our internal and external customers.

There are several enclosures to the QE Guide, which make excellent training tools.

Enclosures #1 and #2 gives the QE a list of questions and answers for the pre-check ride oral exam. Enclosure #7 is a list of questions and answers on the Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual and Chapter 3 of the Coast Guard Addendum to the National SAR Manual. The questions and answers from Enclosure #7 are not specifically part of the qualification tasks, but they cover topics that everyone involved in the Boat Crew Program should know.



Is Your PEPIRB Good to Go? Mark Simoni, DVC-OS

The following configuration change and recommendations have been made for the McMurdo personal EPIRBs (PEPIRBs) that have been distributed throughout the Auxiliary operations community.

Make the following configuration change to all in-service and in-stock PEPIRBs and new PEPIRBs received from the manufacturer:

Attach a 2-inch by 2-inch piece of Velcro hook tape to the PEPIRB battery. Do not cover the battery expiration date. Self-adhesive Velcro hook tape is available from numerous sources including Burch Fabrics, 4200 Brockton Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49572, telephone (800) 543-0441.

Update the maintenance card for the unit. The maintenance card can be downloaded at:

http://www.cgaux.info/g_ocx/cginfo/pepirb.pdf

Water intrusion into the antenna storage well may lead to signal degradation under certain conditions. In order to mitigate this, after activation, boat crew members shall make every effort to keep the PEPIRB out of the water, the antenna and antenna storage well as dry as possible, and the PEPIRB oriented so that the antenna has an unobstructed view of the sky. This is achieved by attaching the PEPIRB to the helmet, hood or survival vest/PFD and routinely checking to ensure water has not collected in the antenna well. Most of us do not typically wear a helmet or hood when patrolling, so make sure you PFD and/or survival vest is rigged to allow attachment of the PEPIRB.



Figure 6-9
Boat Crew Survival Vest

Correct PEPIRB registration with NOAA is critical. PEPIRB registration can now be done on line at:

<http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov/>

Additional information can be found on the Chief Director's website in a posting dated 14 March, 2005.

http://www.cgaux.info/g_ocx/

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