

**USCG Auxiliary District 11 North
 Surface Operations Update
 September 2020**



Virginia Luchetti – DSO

2020 D11N OPTREX Calendar

Date	Division	Location	Contact	Deadline for candidate names to be submitted to DSO-OP
November 6-7	10	San Joaquin	TBD	September 26

Surface Operations have been canceled until further notice

Please advise all coxswains and facility owners to refrain from requesting orders. However, coxswains should conduct a beta test order request to make sure the coxswain understands how to request orders in AuxData II and to verify that their facility meets AuxData II requirements. If there are any problems in requesting orders, please contact our Operational Training Officer, BOSN 2 Dustin Finkleson.

Risk Management and Operations Workshops

In the 1 May ALAUX Communication, we learned that webinar format for the Risk Management Workshop has been approved. It will take some time to organize and schedule online training sessions. As soon as trainers are ready with the new format, we will send out notices to Division Commanders. **The REYR date for Risk Management is 30 September. The deadline for attending the 2020 Operations Workshop is also 30 September.** Please encourage members to attend online webinar Risk Management and Operations Workshop.

Boat Crew and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Information from our District PPE Manager, Michael Brown

No new updates.

During our operational shutdown, please refrain from testing your PLB until we have that restriction lifted. Not only does this preserve the battery but also keeps any accidental activation from occurring. Please continue to conduct virtual inspections on your gear. Review your crew manual and practice your knots frequently. Lookout for each other and safety first!

Paul's Tips

Navigation and Safety Reminders from Qualification Examiner Paul Verveniotis

Coast Guard Auxiliary boat crews receive excellent training and must pass their initial and requalification check rides to demonstrate competency. While the vast majority of patrols are executed safely, there are those where mishaps occur and it's no surprise that the worst of them occur at night. Many factors are at play – the skillsets of the coxswain and crewmembers, weather, fatigue, and more. But the combination of your skills and the diligence to apply them are the most critical to keeping safe.



Night ops can be very rewarding and I personally enjoy them due to the additional challenges needed to both be safe and to accomplish the mission. There is no point to pushing out into the darkness if you can't do the job – you definitely need to be “on your game”. You might even be forced into the night as a result of a mechanical issue or other factor that unintentionally stretches out your patrol duration.

To qualify as a crewmember or coxswain, you must complete a night patrol per the Boat Crew Qualification Guides. But there is currently no requirement to conduct any night patrols to maintain your currency so it's entirely possible that you only do one night patrol (two for coxswains) in your entire Aux career. It's pretty easy to see the potential risk when folks are not on their game at night.

MISHAPS

What are some of the causes of night mishaps? Here's a list which is by no means complete:

- Incomplete risk assessment
- Excessive speed
- Poor lookout
- Low situational awareness
- Physical (vision) color blindness
- Lack of proper navigation
- Electronics unfamiliarity
- Helm unfamiliarity

- Fatigue from long day
- Get-home-itis
- Unfamiliarity with the Navrules (lights, stand on/give way)
- Unfamiliarity with the region
- Flotsam

Some of these items require a high degree of diligence in order to be safe. They require you to “follow the rules” and be squared away. Sometimes boat crews relax and get casual on things like line handling commands or proper radio prowords, but all of these things are important to be safe and effective. At night they are critical. When I talk to boat crews I regularly hear comments like “that’s not how we do it”.

There are two opposing ways to look at how folks consider key knowledge and skills:

Opinion 1 – “All that policy stuff is not really necessary”

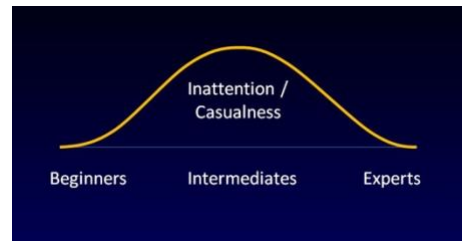
Opinion 2 – “That’s the policy but also the lore of the craft so excel in it”

Do experienced operators really do these things? YES! Cutting corners does not make you more “cool”.

BE SQUARED AWAY

This is a bell curve I came up with that illustrates the population and their focus on being squared away (or not...).

We’ve all seen this in all areas of our lives. Novices in any endeavor tend to follow the rules and be very careful. As they get more experience they begin to “know it all” and relax on important practices. Then there are the true experts, who know the importance of following the rules (perhaps as a result of bad experiences) and are again very attentive. A similar concept exists with airplane pilots – the most dangerous pilot in the sky is the one with 200 flight hours.



I used to give a lot of sailboat instruction and I saw the same sort of bell curve related to the volume of the skipper. Low time students were pretty quiet, the intermediate skippers were the screaming Capt. Bligh’s, and the highly experienced sailors were quiet and effective.

Cutterman's Corner

Helpful Tips from Gary Kaplan

Coast Guard Auxiliary Cutterman
Boat Crew Academy Instructor
District 11 NR Assistant Staff Officer - Operations (Training)



Smoothing Rough Water: A Technique from the Gold Side

My first time out on a Station San Francisco RB-S II, a 29-foot response boat, was an eye opener. I saw the coxswain do something that I'd never seen before. He played the throttle continuously the entire time we were out.

It was a breezy day with lumpy water, and as soon as we got beyond the seawall at YBI, the boat started bucking. As we approached the first wave, the coxswain pulled back on the throttles. As soon as the wave passed under the bow, he pushed the throttles forward. It was throttles up and throttles down the entire time we were out.

While it didn't make the ride feel like we were on a lake, this maneuver smoothed it out considerably. We did not hit the waves hard at all. As soon as the bow began to go up, he pulled back on the throttles, and as soon as the bow began to go down, he pushed them forward. The more frequent the waves, the more frequently this must be done.

I am not advocating that Auxiliary coxswains adopt this. The coxswains that I have mentioned this to all had pretty much the same concerns, engines and transmissions. Active duty coxswains have spare boats, spare parts and a contingent of MKs available 24/7. Auxiliary coxswains do not. Any damage incurred would most likely be non-reimbursable. Slowing down in rough water is a more practical choice. It is a good idea, however, to keep this procedure filed away in case it is ever needed. Should it ever become necessary to move quickly over rough water, in the event of a medical emergency for example, this technique could save some time.

I would like to hear what the station SF coxswains have to say about any damage to their boats from using this technique, and plan to find out as soon as our shutdown is over. I will pass along what they say.

News from the Field

From ADSO-OP and SO-OP Division 3 John Hardin:

Competence, confidence, and complacency

We build competence and confidence thru our RM2 and OPS Workshops and our constant on the water training. Unfortunately, competence and confidence can easily lead us into complacency or the false feeling we have everything “under control”. And complacency is a major factor in many, if not all, mishaps.

The \$64,000 question is “have you tested **positive** for complacency”? Are you making mistakes and not owning up to them? Are you ignoring accepted protocols thinking they’re not that important. When studying the Hillsboro Incident, did you rapidly conclude that you could never make such foolish mistakes?

Be honest now, you’ve never exceeded a safe speed, your lookouts are always observing 360 degrees and reporting properly? You’ve never been off course or lost? Your crewmembers have always been in tip top shape? Did all on board have full knowledge of ATONS and sufficient local knowledge? Are you and your crew always ready to easily ace a QE?

Fortunately, complacency can be easily treated just by recognizing that you can catch it. Remember “It is better to be careful a hundred times than to be killed once.”

(Mark Twain or was it Evel Knievel?)

Reminders from our Operational Training Officer

Let’s take full advantage of our time away from the water.

- Take an online Navigation test
- If you’re not already AUXOP, this is a perfect time to complete many of the requirements
- Practice knots
- Practice knots
- Study and practice line handling commands
- Learn more about weather
- Go back through your qualification book and pretend that a QE is asking you some of the questions
 - First aid
 - Sound signals
 - Alongside tow procedures
 - Stern tow procedures

End of Report