

C.G. AUXILIARY COMMUNICATIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By Van R. Field, ADSO-CM (tech) 01S

Auxiliary Communications are an offshoot of the Coast Guard Communications system. CG Communications started back with the Revenue Cutter Service before 1915. The cutters were equipped with wireless gear and they received orders via the US Navy stations. Prohibition enforcement resulted in the rapid expansion of CG Communications facilities. Rumrunners also used radios to signal from ship to shore to arrange landings and Coast Guard Radiomen were listening. The rapidly expanding Coast Guard fleet needed direction by radio. High power radiotelegraph stations were established along the coasts. These primary radio stations served the Coast Guard and the maritime service into the 1970s when they were phased out because of availability of satellite communications. This left just a few primary radio stations for air to ground and backup surface communications.

By 1946, most of the Temporary Reserve operations

were over and the Coast Guard organized the Auxiliary into Sea, Air and Communications categories at a conference in Nantucket during August 1945. It was at this conference that the National Board was formed. The National Board decided to include owners of private aircraft as well as amateur radio operators and their stations in the established program. District organizations were to carry out this program by creating the offices of Communications Officer and Assistant Communications Officer. There was also to be one Communications officer for each Flotilla.

The Coast Guard and the Auxiliary continued to build on this communications force in the ensuing years. Regular CW (code) training schedules were held between AUXRADSTAs and the primary RADSTAs on MF(2-3 MHz) Coast Guard frequencies.

In Florida, Auxiliary Land Radio Stations maintained radiotelephone contact with CG vessels patrolling the St. Johns River system. The regular CG RADSTAs were not able to maintain communications through the jungle-like environs of the St. Johns River. A network of Auxiliary Radio Stations

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through central Florida did the job on a regularly scheduled basis.

On Jan 1, 1977 the FCC required the 2-3 MHz AM marine radios to cease operation and be replaced with the VHF FM, much as we have today. The Coast Guard had been equipped for direction finding on the low frequencies but weren't prepared for VHF direction finding.

In many areas Auxiliary communicators came up with VHF direction finding techniques and installed stations in busy pleasure boating areas. Eastern Long Island Auxiliary communicators designed and built VHF direction finding equipment as well as developing a construction and operating manual that was distributed to all districts by the National Staff.

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The necessity for finding EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons) became a priority among the Auxiliary communicators. This continues today. Satellites were able to indicate an area to search, usually with a 20-mile radius. The newer 406 MHz EPIRBs are attached to the ship's GPS or carry their own GPS, but in spite of carrying their own GPS, these EPIRBs still carry a 121.5 MHz transmitter for homing in. An Auxiliary unit, Direction Finding (DF) capable, can respond instantly to an overboard crew member with a Personal Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (PEPIRB) without waiting for position notification through the satellite and RCC.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Auxiliary had two classes of Inspector-Examiners for Auxiliary radio stations. These were Radiotelephone Communications Inspector Examiner (RTIE) and General Communications Inspector Examiner (GCIE), the latter having a code requirement. At that time all AUXCOM course

tests were administered by a Coast Guard Officer and corrected at the Coast Guard Institute in Oklahoma City, OK. These Examiners were to inspect fixed land and land mobile stations as well as radios aboard vessels. General Communications Inspector-Examiners were required to hold either a General Class Amateur Class license or above or a commercial radiotelephone or radiotelegraph license. They normally inspected radiotelegraph as well as radiotelephone stations.

On September 1, 1951 Auxiliary Communications in the New York area were pressed into service when the Fishing Vessel Pelican II out of Montauk capsized with 64 people aboard. The Coast Guard pressed Cutters and Motor Lifeboats from the area into service. To maintain communications with units ashore, civil units and Coast Guard units as well as the Auxiliary Communications truck T11067 and Auxiliary Land mobile units NM3SK and NA3CC arrived and remained to render much needed communications assistance. This disaster resulted in the strengthening of laws governing small vessels carrying passengers for hire.

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Auxiliary Communications are still an underutilized entity. An aggressive program to promote the Auxiliary Communications program would be a recruiting tool that could be used to encourage radio amateurs to join. Most radio amateurs are already dedicated to some form of public service and many such members would continue into other Auxiliary programs.

AUXLO FOR CAMSLANT

By Jack Painter, DSO-CM 5S

USCG Communications Area Master Station (CAMSLANT) CHESAPEAKE is a major station in Coast Guard Communications and when one of its critical missions was in need of quality-assurance monitoring, the station turned to the Coast Guard Auxiliary for assistance. The idea for the Auxiliary Monitoring Program (AUXMON) was born when the Coast Guard realized that it had no internal method

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to ensure weather-product transmissions were maintaining the required standards for accuracy, timeliness and readability.

Mariners who rely on the 24-hour schedule of high seas forecasts, Marine Information Broadcasts and other National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) products such as Weather-Fax cannot communicate with CAMSLANT when the product isn't readable. In addition, they often have no other source of such information.

The USCG provides these weather products as a condition of United Nations treaties within the 200-mile territorial limits of our coastal areas. CAMSPAC PT REYES and COMSTA KODIAK have similar requirements, and this program is also approved for their use.

What can the Auxiliary do that these powerhouses of communication cannot? Simply put, the Auxiliary can have qualified USCG Auxiliary Communication Stations in dozens of areas where the USCG has no presence to

monitor the quality of transmitted services to the maritime community. "Vessels at sea who rely on current weather products are our customers, and we have a responsibility to maintain their satisfaction" says CDR Godfrey, Commanding Officer of CAMSLANT. CDR Godfrey was the driving force behind this program, although it was conceived by a former Commanding Officer(CO), CAPT Ritter, now CO of CG-62) and Terry Kammerer, Chief Warrant Officer (CWO), Ret.

AUXMON, in part, requires the ability to receive MF frequency 518 KHz USB, and capture this signal transmitted in a special teletype-over-radio format called NAVTEX. Either hardware specifically made to decode NAVTEX, or any of several marine-based software packages made for this purpose, can then print or record its data on a computer. Auxiliary Facilities engaged in the AUXMON missions watch these transmissions, and report any discrepancies directly to the CAMSLANT Watch-Officer. Instantly, the USCG can then act to correct problems that they would otherwise not be aware of.

AUXMON is a national program and members with inspected radio facilities who

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are interested in participating are urged to contact their District Communications Officer. DSO-CMs should then forward the information to Joe Cirone, BC-OUT, at jpcirone@warwick.net, who will register the application in a national listing and provide full details of reporting methods and all other aspects of the program.

THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM AND IS COURSES

By Aline Harrison DVC-OE

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a highly developed system of authority (now about 20 years old) used for large scale incidents of natural, terrorist or planned

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nature, especially where several agencies are involved.

Training in different aspects of it has been captured in a series of courses offered from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) web site:

<http://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslist.asp>

Boat crew and air crew qualified individuals are required to completed IS 100 and IS 700. In addition to these courses, coxswains, team leaders, pilots and others in elected leadership roles at division level or higher must take IS 200 and IS 800.

The courses are most easily taken online by visiting the site address above, clicking on the desired course and downloading the summary of material and final exam. After learning the material, it may be used in "open book" fashion to complete the final exam. Answers are written on to a downloaded copy. One then makes a second trip to the course at the web site and fills in the answers on the computer and submits that

exam. In order to make this online submission one must either include one's social security number or, in advance of completing the online exam, must obtain a special "student number" issued by FEMA.

FEMA says "If you want this office to assign your account an alternate student ID number, fax your request and a photocopy of your voter registration card, U.S. passport or birth certificate to: (301) 447-1201, or mail your request to: EMI - Independent Study Program; 16825 South Seton Avenue; Emmitsburg, MD

21727-8998. You must wait to receive your student ID number before you submit your exam".

Within 24 hours of exam submission, individuals who also submitted an email address will receive notification of pass or fail. The exam may be retaken as needed.

Although deadlines have been set for IS 100 and IS 700 as June 30, 2006 and for IS 200 and IS 800 for September 30, 2006, members will be in REYR for lack of completion only after December 30, 2007.

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