

## BEST PRACTICES

*By Linda A. Nelson DC-O*

You know, believe it or not, we KNOW that we don't have all the answers. Yes, "national" admits what we all know as truth...we aren't clairvoyant. That means that you sometimes have a better answer than we do. We need your help.

All of the operations programs are soliciting your successes. Did you find a better way to build a mousetrap? Do you have a process that works better than the one that everyone else uses? Please write it up and share it with the rest of the country.

This is what "best practices" is all about. From training to operations, there are methods that you know work. You could help someone else who is struggling to get that job done.

So how does the process work? We ask you to send your suggestions to the program DVC (see the back page for a list of the DVCs and their e-mail addresses). The DVC will review the submission for its conformance with CG Auxiliary policy, feasibility and clarity. The program DVC may have some questions for you

that will help to clear up areas of concern. If we agree that this submission can really benefit others in the field, then we will publish it on the web and YOU and YOUR district will be acknowledged as the source. Your suggestion...you get the credit.

So look for "Best Practices" on each program page on the Operations Dept. Website (<http://www.auxodept.org>). You can also contribute to "Best Practices" in Contingency Planning at the NADCO-OMS site (<http://oms.auxodept.org>). Please send us your very best thoughts, ideas and processes. Contribute to the success of our programs from a national perspective by sharing your best practice!

## OPSEC AND COMSEC

*By Bob Fratangelo, BC-OAH*

Operational Security and Communication Security (OPSEC/COMSEC) are subjects we should be concerned with while performing U.S. Coast Guard missions. US Coast Guard Auxiliary Aviation (AUXAIR) squadrons are associated with active duty air stations. All squadrons receive their orders from an active duty order issuing authority (OIA). Each OIA will have an OPSEC/COMSEC

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training program tailored to the respective unit. Each District's AUXAIR leadership should get an OPSEC/COMSEC brief from the active duty unit security officer. The security officer of that unit could then assist the AUXAIR leadership with an OPSEC/COMSEC brief tailored to the respective AUXAIR squadron's operation.

Active duty units must perform these briefs with their respective crews on an annual basis and review their procedures with respect to COMDTINST M5510.23. As Auxiliary aviation works more closely with active duty units to augment their capacity, we must hold ourselves at the same standard for security.

Former military members should know OPSEC/COMSEC, but this will be new territory for others. Like the active duty, continued vigilance depends on recurrent training.

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## UP TOP IN OPERATIONS

### OPSEC AND COMSEC

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We routinely perform many homeland security related functions during our missions. Even during our routine missions, we need to practice good OPSEC/COMSEC. Auxiliary aviators must understand the importance of carefully guarding the information we have the privilege of handling and our responsibility to treat it properly.

**OPSEC:** We must be careful not to reveal to anyone outside of our USCG circle specific information. This includes such things as our schedules, frequency of missions, routine of mission execution, what we are looking for, what we are observing, targets of interest, training (other than vague references to safety training), who we work with in support of our missions, and other like information.

Any written material we may be given must be treated appropriately, so that it remains within our control. This includes notes from flights, handouts for mission execution, etc. When it's time to discard these, we must be certain to shred them and not

just toss them into a nearby office waste basket or a hangar trash receptacle.

When was the last time that you thought about what you do with all of those materials used, how you store them, or who has access to them? We must be careful what we review at open meetings and in newsletters. We must be especially careful with e-mails because we tend to think of them as confidential, but they are not! Although others may have an interest in what we are doing, it is no one's business except those who have a need to know.

**COMSEC:** During the execution of the mission, carefully follow instructions for a clear coded method if provided with one. If we make an error, we should use common sense when correcting that error. An error should never be explained over an open frequency.

COMSEC is important in public as well. Take care not to discuss a mission or its details where the conversation can be overheard. We must be especially careful when at a Fixed Base Operator (FBO) area. Simple questions like "so where are you off to today?" "Have you been out over the lake today?" "What are you doing today?" are all examples

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of the sort of simple inquiries that, if answered, can reveal a lot about a mission. When asked, be polite but vague. This includes the break or lunch conversations. We might be tempted to brag about the success of a mission but that may jeopardize personnel and other missions. Ask yourself the key question, "Does this person have a need to know about what we are doing?"

Although we want to "sell ourselves" and show that we support the U. S. Coast Guard, we must do so without compromising COMSEC or OPSEC. Even the information presented in monthly activity reports, in newsletters or at meetings must be kept vague enough that it would not provide sensitive details if it fell into unfriendly hands.

Indeed, the Coast Guard Air Stations and the Director of Auxiliary may well be promoting the AUXAIR program to other active duty "customers". Our efforts to build the program must be based on our track record of mission accomplishment and integrity.

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## OPSEC AND COMSEC

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Should the potential active duty "customers" note weakness in the Auxiliary OPSEC/COMSEC, they are unlikely to entrust us with sensitive missions.

The media is yet one more environment where Auxiliary members need to exercise some caution. We need specific guidance from the active duty and Auxiliary public relations (PR) officers when we speak about missions. It's best to refer any media inquiries to the PR experts.

All Auxiliary members need to have OPSEC/COMSEC training. Knowing the "when, where, what and why" when we dealing with sensitive information is one of the ways that we support national security.

### PWOIT? WHAT'S THAT?

*That's Personal Watercraft Operator in Training, of course!*

**By Lindy Harrison,  
PWC QE 5NR**

A national survey taken a little over a year ago asked how orders were given to

individuals who wished to become Personnel Watercraft (PWC) Operators and how PWC schools were conducted. There was no simple answer to the problem of giving orders to PWC Operators in training (PWOIT). Prior to Patrol Order Management System (POMS), there was no problem because the OIA simply used vested authority to give a set of training orders to the trainee for the training period. The POMS order system would not give orders for a PWC patrol to someone who was not qualified as a PWC Operator (PWO) and a person could not get qualified as a PWO without having a set of orders covering the period of the training. No other qualification shares this situation because all others have more than one person aboard a facility during training.

Collaboration between the PWO leadership, G-PCX, AUXDATA, POMS and interested members worked to solve this problem. Thus, the status "PWOIT" was created and placed in AUXDATA to be read by POMS, enabling orders to be issued.



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The system is:

1. A member who wishes to become a PWO offers their PWC for use as a facility, just as any qualified operator would do. The PWC is then accepted by the Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX). However, to avoid some system problems, it is wise for those people to indicate if one or more qualified members could receive orders for use with the facility. (For example, any qualified member in my District may receive orders on my PWC).
2. The name and employee number (EMPLID) of the member(s) wanting to train as a PWO are sent to DIRAUX, where the PWOIT qualification is entered in AUXDATA.

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**PWOIT?  
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3. POMS reads the "PWOIT Qualification" in AUXDATA and permits the orders to be written, just as it would for a qualified coxswain on a qualified facility.

Remember, the "PWOIT" status must be removed from the member's record after the training period and the PWC Operator credential must be entered.

The PWC program is one of the most challenging areas of operations. PWCs can go where other surface facilities cannot and can reach the RBS audiences where other mechanisms fail. Consider that whole generation fascinated by extreme sports on our waters in their PWCs... Our PWOs can make a difference! Try the PWC program... you start out as a PWOIT!

**SINKING**

*By Charles Ford BC-OES*

A recent article on the subject in a boating magazine reported a large number of boats that sank while underway. The operator was apparently not aware that the

boat was taking on water while cruising along. One incident was caused by sea water entering the hull through engine room vents. This sank the boat with loss of two lives.

The sources of leaks are numerous and they are often small at the start. A leaking stuffing box, a loose clamp on a seawater hose, a leak at a seacock, or a splash through an open port light in the engine room have all been credited as the source of disasters.

A simple device called a

bilge water alarm could have prevented all or most of these accidents. To be effective, the bilge water alarm switch must be carefully located where water accumulates when *underway at cruising speed*. The alarm must be loud enough to hear over engine noise and other underway sounds. Failure to observe the bilge pump light while navigating or operating in rough water can also cause a sinking disaster. We should keep a "heads up" for this on our facilities and remember to emphasize this point on the ramp or in the classroom.

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