



# THE RESPONDER

Newsletter of the National Response Directorate

Volume 3

July 2019

## OPEX and OPTREX

*The Gold Standards of Operational Readiness*

By David Larkin, DVC-RS

In the sea services, the terms OPEX (Operations Exercise) and OPTREX (Operational Training Exercise) are often heard. These two terms are frequently used interchangeably but are different in their fundamental purpose. An OPEX is used to evaluate and refresh skills for those members who are already qualified in their positions. By contrast an OPTREX is used to develop new skills for members in order to gain a new qualification. In the Auxiliary, these two events are frequently combined into one larger operation. We highly encourage this approach. We also recommend that if you combine those that you remember to drill the qualified members and train the new members. Most currently qualified members will actually learn more by practicing the skills themselves, than by being taught the same skills again.

Planning such an event can be daunting. To help units plan a member in D11NR, Dean La Chapelle of the Elk Grove Flotilla (113-03-10) drafted an outstanding planning guide that is available here: <http://ops.d11nuscgaux.info/docs/OPEXandOPTREXrev2.pdf>. Dean has graciously allowed us to publish the link and welcomes anyone to make use of the guide. It was written for members of D11NR so there are a few D11 specific items in it but it should be easily adaptable to your area.



July 2019

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When planning an OPTREX you should keep the events straightforward. The target audience members need to obtain the knowledge and motor skills to become

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## OPEX and OPTREX (continued)

qualified. For the OPEX members, do not be afraid to toss them a curveball. Qualified and experienced members already have the basic skills, so now we need to foster problem solving and adaptability, two things that become crucial when underway. Examples might be a sudden SAR event in the middle of anchoring, a simulated engine failure while towing, etc. Working through unanticipated problems improves teamwork and increases the members' confidence in their ability meet evolving mission requirements in dynamic situations.

Many districts already have an aggressive OPEX/OPTREX schedule. As of May 15th D11NR has already qualified two new surface operations members and recertified eleven more. If your area does not have an OPEX/OPTREX scheduled perhaps you want to look into hosting one. You can plan the event to simulate a real upcoming event such as Fleet Week, Tall Ships, or SeaFair. Working our active duty/reserve partners into the plan helps strengthen the Team Coast Guard concept.

OPEX/OPTREX evolutions are at the core of surface operations training and readiness and can be a lot of fun. We on the National Staff are here to assist you if need any assistance in planning your events.



## Dehydration and Risk Management

By COMO David Starr  
National Division Chief-Aviation (DVC-RA)

It is July in Oklahoma and while we have had an unusually moderate spring and summer so far things are beginning to change for the worse...heat wise.

Last week I had been doing some work with a tractor, in heat and humidity that felt more like Houston than Tulsa. I had been on and off the tractor for a few hours and had to remind myself to try to drink more water than normal.

For those of you who know me I do not drink coffee but do drink a lot of iced tea...winter or summer. I do know that tea contains caffeine and is a diuretic (all diuretics increase the excretion of water from bodies) and I tend to make my fair share of "comfort" stops.

At a recent CRM Class (Aux 17) the instructors, Jenny Stack and Judy Redlawsk, covered dehydration and suggested sipping water to get the required intake rather than my normal guzzling down a 12 oz bottle.

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## Dehydration (continued)

They said by sipping we could even out the loss of water from our body and extend the time until we need relief...which would necessitate landing the aircraft.

The National Aviation staff happens to be working on our 2020 Aviation Workshop so I contacted Dr. Mark Perni, BC-RAA, our Flight Surgeon, and told him about my day on the tractor. I asked him if he thought dehydration was something we might want to put more emphasis on in the medical presentation portion of the workshop.

His response was "Absolutely". (Below are some edited comments...notice he is much too nice to say I am old, he just talks about "aging")

"Dehydration is an excellent subject to expand upon for our workshops. Many reasons why aging contributes to dehydration include a general loss of muscle mass and proteins compounded by age related, deteriorating renal function. A common factor between aging members of both sexes is the reluctance to drink adequate volumes of water.

Benign Prostate Hypertrophy (BPH) begins in males around 50 years of age. and causes an increase in urinary frequency. With females, age-related weakening of the pelvic floor muscles can result in urinary incontinence and bladder leakage.

Add to this the side effects of many of the medications people are taking and the use of supplements including excess use of multiple vitamins and high caloric diets rich in carbs such as sugars. This causes the kidneys to work harder to

excrete all these excess compounds we ingest. When cleared by the kidneys, the molecules pull more water with them out of our body and into the urine.

Dehydration can also be brought on by an acute illness or other event. Vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and infection are all problems that can cause people to lose a lot of fluid and become dehydrated...."

(note: Dr Perni and I did not discuss in depth electrolyte loss which certain sport drinks and supplements are touted to replace...Gatorade and the like. We will ask the good Doctor to offer his thoughts on that later.)

Now think about our missions. They are usually conducted at low levels and can last for hours. Our Nomex flight suits, with survival vest and life jacket on top, the "atrium effect" of our cockpits, and for some of us our age, we have a recipe for dehydration which has many adverse effects.

While there are many things we cannot prevent, dehydration is preventable. We can make environment adjustments. These can include limiting our activity to conducting flight ops to earlier or later in the day, or gaining altitude to search for cooler air.

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## Dehydration (continued)

Also make a conscious effort to be aware of our personal wellness, decrease or limit intakes of caffeine, alcohol, tea (diuretics) and increase and maintain our water intake (sipping), etc. If we do these simple things we can eliminate or greatly reduce the risk of dehydration from our flight ops.

## Awareness and Prevention of Dehydration

- Drink cool (40 F) water
- Measure daily water intake
- Don't rely on the thirst sensation as an alarm
- Limit your daily intake of caffeine
- Remember acclimation to a major change in weather can take one to two weeks
- Risk management - Monitor your activity; if you feel light-headed or dizzy, call it a day



## The Auxiliary and the Global Marine Distress and Safety System

By Don Wellons BC-RTI and David Elliot DVC-RT

The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) is an international system of protocols and equipment that makes use of advanced communications (digital) technology. Development of GMDSS was initiated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the system represents a significant improvement in maritime communications. GMDSS is designed to (among other things) enhance ship to shore communications and provide rapid, automated distress alerting, with positional information available. While compliance is mandatory for large cargo and passenger ships on international voyages or in the open sea, it is voluntary for recreational boaters, but it is recommended that recreational boater become familiar with its features.

As technology evolves, it brings changes to the various communication missions that the Auxiliary performs. Change has been

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## Global MDS (continued)

exemplified by two key points from ALCOAST 263/13 COMDTNOTE 2000:

“Effective 01 August 2013 the Coast Guard (CG) terminated the radio guard for the international distress and safety frequency 2182 kHz and the international Digital Select Calling (DSC) distress and safety frequency 2187.5 kHz. This closure also terminates the marine information and weather broadcasts transmitted on 2670 kHz.”

“Communications Stations (COMMSTA) and Communication Area Master Stations (CAMS) shall continue to monitor and respond to voice calls for assistance on 4125 kHz, 6215 kHz, 8291 kHz and 12290 kHz and to DSC calls on 4207.5 kHz, 6312 kHz, 8414.5 kHz, 12577 kHz, and 16804.5 kHz. Sectors shall continue to monitor and respond to VHF voice calls on 156.8 MHz, Channel 16 and DSC on 156.525 MHz Channel 70.”

Digital Select Calling (DSC) is a key feature of GMDSS and all new VHF marine radios (other than handheld) are required to have DSC capability. DSC radios are readily identifiable by the distinctive, dedicated red button marked “DISTRESS”, many with a protective lid or cover. All DSC equipped vessels are normally assigned a unique identity number, known as a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MSSI) number. However, for recreational vessels, the implementation is up to the boat owner / operator. It is strongly recommended that

all vessels with DSC radios obtain an MMSI number and have it programmed into the radio. Recreational boaters that purchase

DSC radios are required to do this before using the DSC function of these radios.

**Note:** the MMSI number is required to activate the automated distress function (red button) of the DSC radio. MMSI numbers may be obtained from Sea Tow, Boat U.S. West Marine, and other boating organizations, at no cost. They may also be obtained as part of an FCC license for a vessel.



Given the Coast Guard’s Distress watch keeping responsibilities, outlined above, the Auxiliary has been active in working towards continued growth of our Auxiliary communication capabilities in support of the active duty Coast Guard. Our Auxiliary Monitoring Program (AUXMON) has grown

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## Up Coming Events

### Global MDS (continued)

through increased recruitment, training, and more efficient processes. Our storm/event augmentation capabilities, which focus on the frequencies outlined above, have grown significantly as we added to our digital capabilities, and provide targeted mission related training to our operators, as witnessed in recent support missions for Hurricanes Florence, Harvey and Maria, among others.

All Auxiliary Telecommunications Operators (TCO) are invited to join us as active participants in the missions outlined above. More information about these missions and their equipment/software requirements may be obtained from the author or any member of the National Response Communications Staff.



**NACON 2019 is Aug. 16-26 at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida.**

Enjoy this great venue and experience the warm fellowship with other attendees. Learn the latest information on Coast Guard Auxiliary programs, take advantage of very informative workshops, and celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Auxiliary.

Response Directorate activities at NACON

Workshop “How to get maximum benefit from AUXAIR for your Sector”

Saturday 17 Aug 0800 - 0900 and 1410 - 1510

Aviation Roundtable (open to all)  
Thursday 15 Aug 1630 – 1730

Aviation Social Dinner  
Thursday evening 15 Aug



**Happy 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday to the US Coast Guard Auxiliary**



**We are Semper Paratus**





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## What's New

### Auxiliary Facilitators for Annual TCT Refresher

There is a new policy for Auxiliary Facilitators to qualify to teach the new Annual TCT Refresher. However, it is always a great idea to take this class with the Active Duty if possible. If not, this

ALCOAST provides information for past TCT Facilitators to become qualified for the new Annual TCT Refresher.

For additional information

[http://wow.uscgaux.info/Uploads\\_wow/IT-DEPT/ALCOAST\\_COMMANDANT\\_NOTICE.pdf](http://wow.uscgaux.info/Uploads_wow/IT-DEPT/ALCOAST_COMMANDANT_NOTICE.pdf)

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