

AQEC MEMORANDUM 2014-014

HELM COMMANDS



QUESTION:

“Why doesn’t the USCG Auxiliary have standard helm commands so we all know and use the same terminology?”

AQEC/SNC RESPONSE:

There is standard terminology for helm commands; however most of the commands are for larger vessels. The attached is designed to be used for USCG Auxiliary non-standard vessels considered to be small to medium size vessels.

The goal is for the boat crew to communicate effectively so everyone understands the terminology for the task.

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From Quotations with Character by W. David Edman

“Teaching mariners about risk assessment is to explain their actions may affect their life expectancy.”

STANDARD HELM COMMANDS FOR AUXILIARY SMALL BOATS

The following is a list of commonly used helm commands that have been tailored to USCG Auxiliary small boats. This is standard phraseology governing orders to the helmsman to ensure each command is understood and promptly executed unless there is an extenuating circumstance that dictates otherwise. When a command is given to the helmsman, the first part of the order indicates the direction (right or left) for the helmsman to turn the wheel. The second part of the command states the amount of angle. The helmsman shall repeat each command word-for-word and shall report when the ordered action is complete. The Coxswain shall acknowledge all helmsman's responses by indicating "Very Well."

COMMAND	ACTION
Come Right / Left <u>X</u> number Degrees	Turn the vessel in the direction indicated by the Coxswain by the number of degrees specified. This order may be followed by a new course for the helmsman to steer, such as "Steady on Course 256" or another command.
Come Right / Left to Heading <u>XXX</u>	Turn the vessel in the direction indicated by the Coxswain to a specified heading. This order may be followed by a new course to steer or another command.
Increase Rudder	Increase the angle of the turn when it is desired to turn the vessel more rapidly in the direction she is already turning.
Ease your rudder	Decrease the angle of the turn by half the amount currently applied or by the amount ordered. This order may be followed by a new course for the helmsman to steer or another command. If no course is specified the helmsman shall call out the heading at 10 degree increments until a new course is ordered.
Place Rudder Amidship	Place the rudder on the centerline or zero degrees.
Mark Your Head	A command to the helmsman to state the heading of the vessel at the moment the command is given.

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Command	The helmsman's response to the Coxswain if he/she did not hear a command, misunderstood a command, or believes a command is improper.
Steady as she goes, Steady on course <u>###</u>	Steer the course on which the vessel is currently headed or ordered course. If the vessel is turning and the command "Steady" or "Steady as she goes" is given, the helmsman notes the heading and brings the vessel back to the ordered heading. The helmsman should reply "Steady on Course <u>XXX</u> ."
Coming Up / Down / About	Provides sufficient time for Crew/Passengers to prepare for maneuver before executing the maneuver. Crew acknowledges.

USCGA / SNC

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