



## Chain of Leadership

Sometime during your Auxiliary career you will have a question, concern or issue that your Flotilla leaders will not address to your satisfaction. What do you do?

Since so many of our members have been former members of the military community, the term Chain of Command is often familiar, and a term sometimes inappropriately used within the Auxiliary. Since we are not a military organization, there is no command. The proper term for the system of communication and responsibility throughout the levels of the Auxiliary is Chain of Leadership and Management, frequently abbreviated COL. There is another term frequently used in connection with COL and that is parallel staffing. This, in effect, gives us two “chains” of leadership depending on whether the question/problem/issue involves elected or appointed staff.

↓ National Commodore (NACO)	↔(VNACO)↔	↓ Directorate Director (DIR)
↑↓ District Commodore (DCO)	↔(DCOS)↔	↑↓ District Staff Officer (DSO)
↑↓ Division Commander (DCDR)	↔(VCDR)↔	↑↓ Division Staff Officer (SO)
↑ Flotilla Commander (FC)	↔(VFC)↔	↑ Flotilla Staff Officer (FSO)

Elected officers move up the left side of the table, from Flotilla Commander to Division Commander to District Commodore to National Commodore, while the Staff Officers go up the right side. The Flotilla Vice Commander, Division Vice Commander, *etc.* act as Chief of Staff for the appointed officers at that level, and communicate with the Flotilla Commander, Division Commander, *etc.* so that both sides know and are aware of what is happening. A Flotilla Staff Officer does not need “permission” to communicate with a Staff Officer in the same area at the Division level; the Division Staff Officer does not need “permission” to communicate with the District Staff Officer in the same area. It is not acceptable to skip a level on either side.

Communication should move freely up and down both sides, with communication also moving freely from left to right, and from right to left as well.

All members have a right to expect answers to their questions, and resolution of problems/issues. Since a paper trail is always smart, it is wise to place your questions in writing, on paper or electronically via E-mail. Some guidelines for doing this:

- Research the answer to your question on your own. Check the Auxiliary Manual; check your District web site, the National web site, the web site of the Chief Director of Auxiliary.
- If you cannot find what you need, address your question to one individual. Do not “broadcast” the request to multiple individuals or levels.

- Address it to the person at the lowest level appropriate (generally to your Flotilla Commander or a Flotilla Staff Officer in your Flotilla).
- State the question clearly and succinctly. Provide necessary facts only. Do not editorialize.
- Give the person adequate time to respond (generally 2 weeks should be sufficient unless you know there is an extenuating circumstance).
- If you do not receive a response, try again. There may have been a postal or electronic glitch.
- If there is still no response after a reasonable time, you may send it to the next level up with a copy to the original recipient. Again, state facts and do not embellish.
- Remember, unfortunately, sometimes the correct answer is not the one desired. Do not “shoot” the messenger. They could be a good friend now or in the future. Accept the answer and make the best of the situation.
- The Office of DIRAUX and staff there serve the entire Auxiliary community in the District. They are very busy with their multiple duties and responsibilities. They cannot answer questions from individual members. Do not contact them unless they have contacted you first and requested a response.
- Keep Auxiliary business within the Auxiliary – do not contact active duty Coast Guard, Reservists, or your State Representative or Senator. They will not be able to assist you. If it is a rare matter that legitimately needs to go to Congress, people far above the local Auxiliarists will handle the matter for you. If they need your assistance, THEY will ask for it.

The Auxiliary is made up of friendly people who share the same interests you have. They are eager to help you in any way they can. They are eager to share their knowledge and experience with you. If occasional differences of opinion occur, seek input from a neutral third party within your unit. Try to resolve differences at the lowest level possible; don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Diversity is an asset and helps to make the Auxiliary the strong organization it is. Diversity assures that there will be more than one right answer to many questions. Embrace diversity and don't be threatened by a new point of view.