

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*



Press Release

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### San Antonio Flotilla Training with the Community Emergency Response Team

BEXAR COUNTY – The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary’s San Antonio Flotilla took the first step toward expanding its role locally as a certified emergency response team. Already part of the Incident Command Structure (ICS) construct, the San Antonio Flotilla joined forces with the local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in April, 2017 and completed the basic training including basic disaster response, fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. The final test pushed their teamwork skills by working in a very well-crafted simulated environment that included live actor casualties while working alongside civilian volunteers with vastly different backgrounds including military veterans, medical field professionals, career parents, and other career experienced civilians. Communication, endurance, resolve, and fortitude were tested and tried, and the experience built knowledge and comradery amongst the unit and the class.

Gaining and testing the skillsets CERT has to offer is a logical first step to strengthen the integration of the Coast Guard Auxiliary into the National Incident Response Plan. The next step is to continue the flotilla’s training and experience. The final step will be answering the call to respond to local incidents while retaining the Federal liability coverage afforded to the Coast Guard Auxiliary. This will require establishing credibility within the county and state while resolving the legal gap with a letter of agreement that permits the unit to serve under the local Incident Commander during an emergency response.



Jason Kardos, USCG Auxiliary, assess a simulated collapsed structure as scene leader to decide best cribbing sequence to use to free the dummy victim.



Jaime Marmentini practices basic first aid with a CERT instructor.

The training requirements for CERT and all ICS stem from the Federal Emergency Management Agency who is the overarching authority that baselines Federal and local government instructions and is tethered to the military by agreements and liaisons between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Defense (DOD). The Coast Guard is a branch of the military that falls under the DHS. They maintain the skills, qualifications, and practice to work alongside DOD for wartime operations as well as Incident Command. Another powerful link the Coast Guard has is through its Auxiliary force; volunteers that have diverse background skills and civilian experiences, qualify and practice in accordance with Coast Guard and DHS regulations, and pass through the same background check requirements as active duty and reserves. The members of the Auxiliary are embedded in their communities and can be mobilized immediately for any incident and maintain readiness through training, qualifications, and material management. The San Antonio Flotilla recognizes this and is taking the initiative that could set a precedence for the division and the district if not nationally for the entire US Coast Guard Auxiliary.

## National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System

According to the FEMA website, the National Response Plan (NRP) specifies how the resources of the Federal Government will work in concert with State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector to respond to Incidents of National Significance. The NRP is predicated on the National Incident Management System (NIMS); a systematic approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents involving all threats and hazards in order to reduce loss of life, property and harm to the environment. Together the NRP and the NIMS provide a nationwide template for working together to prevent or respond to threats and incidents regardless of cause, size, or complexity.



## United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



The Auxiliary (established in 1939) is the uniformed volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard. Members are primarily responsible for recreational boating safety, and supporting the Active Duty Coast Guard in operations not requiring law enforcement actions. The Thirty thousand men and women of the Coast Guard Auxiliary annually spend millions of volunteer hours assisting the Coast Guard carry out its missions. Auxiliary members train to the same exacting standards as their active-duty counterparts. The four cornerstones of the USCG Auxiliary are: Member Services, Recreational Boating Safety, Operations and Marine Safety, and Fellowship. The purpose of the Auxiliary is to assist the Coast Guard to promote safety and to effect search and

rescues on and over the high seas and on navigable waters, to promote efficiency in the operation of motorboats and yachts, to foster a wider knowledge of, and better compliance with, the laws, rules, and regulations governing the operation of motorboats and yachts through safe boating classes, and to facilitate other operations of the Coast Guard.

The requirements to join the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary are minimum of 17 years of age (no upper age limit), cannot have been convicted of a felony, and no physical requirements other than you must be physically and mentally capable of doing the jobs you choose.

Please contact your local USCG Flotilla for more information at the recruiting website <http://join.cgaux.org/index.php> or entering your zip code on the website <http://cgaux.org/units.php>.

If you are interested in Community Emergency Response Team training and membership go the CERT website at <https://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>.

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