

Coast Guard Auxiliary Informational Exhibits

Prepared by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary National Marketing Group

Introduction: “We’ve always done it that way” may have worked in the past but effective methods of reaching target markets have changed with the times. So take a moment and ask yourself, what is the purpose of having the exhibit? We believe you will agree the reason is to communicate effectively with visitors in several key areas, not just one or two. So make good use of these tried and tested “out of the box” concepts that will make your *exhibit* a success.

Purpose: To make an *exhibit* displays say, “Come see me” so Auxiliarists can market core programs and current initiatives to the recreational boating public and recruit new members.

Method: To apply proven marketing techniques and use standard professionally prepared materials to effectively communicate all key messages, not just one or two.

Goal: Recruit new members and simultaneously reduce boating fatalities by encouraging boaters to wear life jackets, obtain a vessel safety check (VSC), take America’s Boating Course (ABC) and not boat under the influence and, reach groups of boaters most at risk for a fatality with these messages. Also enhance homeland security by promoting America’s Waterway Watch Program,

Core programs:

- Recreational Boating Safety: You’re In Command, wear life jackets, obtain a VSC, take America’s Boating Course (ABC) and not boat under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Auxiliary recruitment and retention.
- America’s Waterway Watch (homeland security)

Other initiatives depending on the geographical area or season:

- Danger of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning (all areas/all seasons).
- Hypothermia.
- Safe PWC operation.
- Zebra Mussel infestation.

Groups of boaters most at risk for a boating fatality:

- Operators of pen outboard motor boats 21’ and smaller/anglers and hunters
- Males, 20 – 50 years old
- Canoe/kayak paddlers
- Personnel Water Craft (PWC) operators

Exhibits:

According to *Guerrilla Trade Show Selling* (by Levinson, Smith and Wilson), it takes a visitor less than four seconds to walk the length of a ten foot exhibit space. And, you’re in competition with all the other event distractions for that short time. The reason they are *exhibits* and not *booths* is you are exhibiting what you sell. So think of it as your *exhibit*. This simple change in lingo helps focus on the real reason the flotilla is at the event – to get business.

The exhibit and those staffing it must tell the basic story and get a visitor's attention. In addition to planning the display, selecting the right Auxiliarists to operate it is equally important. The concept for a successful exhibit is for visitors to be able to relate to Auxiliarists as "affable" as opposed to "authority" figures. And the Auxiliarists must be physically and mentally able to perform all duties. Avoid problems by having those volunteering for duty read the Exhibit Operating Policy (enclosure 1) so they understand before hand what is expected of them.

The Exhibit Operating Policy covers procedures, personal appearance and hygiene, which are important considerations. For example, eating at the exhibit is not permitted and breath mints are a good idea. Attendants should stand or use backless stools (no chairs) to maintain eye contact, and not more than two in an exhibit. Socialize with family and other flotilla members away from the exhibit area so visitor access is not discouraged by a crowd.

The Undress Blue – Summer Alpha uniform (collar insignia) is recommended. Or, the Undress Blue – Winter uniform when/where appropriate. Hats are not worn inside. For outside events, the Undress Blue – Summer Bravo with dark shoes is suggested so baseball caps can be worn. Anglers and boaters in general relate better to baseball caps than garrison or combination caps which represent "authority". And, they are a key high at risk group that we want to reach with our recreational boating safety message. Anyone working the exhibit should wear an Auxiliary inflatable or mesh top PFD to show off the new style PFD's. Auxiliarists staffing the exhibit should understand how inflatable PFD's work so they can answer visitor's questions.



An open exhibit draws visitors into the space, enabling you to engage them more readily. So having a U shaped table arrangement with an open front encourages visitor access. Having a front table creates a barrier and is strongly discouraged. Use table cloths and table skirts. Paper products for both needs are available. Encouraging the boating public to wear "today's" life jackets is a primary objective, so a great-looking colorful life jacket display should be the first thing people see on the back table when they pass or enter your exhibit space.

Display new model "cool" PFD's in bright colors. Table top PFD display stands are easy to fabricate from Plexiglas, wood or cardboard. Each District Operation Boat Smart Coordinator received a PFD display. If it is not available, contact a local marine dealer or retailer and borrow the newest PFD's. Most are usually accommodating about letting you borrow a few choice designs, especially if they know you will tell visitors where they came from. Leave traditional orange "horse collar" PFD's at home. They do not attract people to your exhibit. Attach a 3 x 5 card to each PFD so those staffing the exhibit can answer questions about price and source. An attention getting "You're In Command" banner, available to divisions from the Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC# 3000), should be mounted above the back display table.

The Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC) has several posters available to promote the recruiting, VSC, ABC and homeland security messages. All can be easily mounted on inexpensive foam board (Wal-Mart \$1.95 a sheet). Board holders can be fabricated by taping another piece of foam board to the top making an inverted V, or simply using tape on the back to make a free standing display then angle one board for stability.



There are also a limited number of 24" x 18" columnar posters available from ANSC which show Vessel Safety Check required items, different boat types/sizes and items required for each size boat. This is an excellent visual aide when displayed with VSC items. It does not have an ANSC number, but write in "VSC Requirements Chart" and they will know what you want.



Visual clutter should be avoided by using literature racks. All literature should be displayed in literature racks and not piled or strewn on tables. Do not use outdated materials just to use it up. Decals can be neatly stacked on a table in front of related literature. A unique approach is to purchase several inexpensive plastic single brochure holders from an office supply store (Staples \$3.40 each). That permits placing related brochures in front of the corresponding poster such as America's Waterway Watch, VSC's or recruiting.

Post your flotillas boating course and VSC schedule and have sign-up forms for both available. Space permitting, a large screen VCR at an indoor exhibit is a crowd magnet. Play the "You're in Command" ABC/VSC loop video and America's Waterway Watch video.

Many owners of 26' or larger boats are not aware of the requirement for an oil pollution and garbage placard to be displayed on-board. So they particularly appreciate receiving ANSC #4064 Placard FWPIA Oil Pollution and #4067 Sticker Garbage Dumping Restrictions Offshore (or #4068 for the Great Lakes, or #4069 in Spanish or #4070 in Vietnamese). Providing these free decals is an excellent ice breaker and lead-in to scheduling the boat owner for a VSC.

There are also decals ANSC #4063 Reporting Marine Pollution and #3020 VHF - Emergency Radio Call Procedures, which are popular with off shore and Great Lakes boaters. And, it's a good idea to have some AIM literature available in case a request is received.

Exhibit security is always a concern and attendants should be alert for shop lifters. Items should be secured each night. That means extra work but it will also avoid problems, especially if you are displaying borrowed items. It is also a good idea to use empty CO2 cartridges for any inflatable PFD's on display, or unscrew the cartridge to preclude pranksters from inflating them.

Boat show exhibits offer an excellent opportunity to sell ABC and knot tying CD-ROMs, Davis cards, teaching GPS for Mariners Courses, pre-selling BS&S texts before the date of the next PE class, signing up students for classes, and demonstrating a VSC on a PWC or boat.

Another attraction is have the ABC CD-ROM installed on a lap top computer and have a contest to see how many questions a visitor can correctly answer in a minute or two. Give a prize to each day's winner and a grand prize of a PFD to the overall show winner.

Engage visitors as soon as they come into your space. You can then inquire about their interests, and guide them to materials they might like to have. The ANSC 3026 series America's Waterway Watch materials (pamphlet, wallet card, and sticker) appeal to patriotic instinct. If you have a boating enthusiast, the You're In Command Boat Responsibly brochure is excellent because it is encompassing. However, don't hand out literature to everyone. Even if the literature is potentially interesting, thrusting unwanted literature at visitors is offensive. *Guerrilla Trade Show Selling* recommends having a literature strategy. Your exhibit should not be a contest to see who can give away the most. Why, because it costs money and if a visitor is burdened with unwanted literature it winds up in the nearest trash can or worse.

Humans like to see symmetry and order. So displays work much better, and attract more people, if items are organized and if they all have a similar "feel" about them. That's where using the new "You're in Command" materials can really make the difference with literature displays using ANSC #9018 - Marine Dealer Pamphlet Display racks or commercially purchased stands. And that's what you want to do, draw visitors in so they'll listen to what you have to say.

Exhibit literature can be ordered by Materials Officers or Flotilla Commanders from the Auxiliary National Supply Center or several other sources. Order enough for the event and justify the larger amount on the form. These materials are free to your flotilla but cost money to produce and ship, so plan for the crowd but avoid waste.

Prior planning is always a good idea when ordering. Visit <http://users.monet.com/district8wr/members/index.htm> (Eighth Western Rivers member's page ANSC inventory report) to see what items may be out of stock before ordering. Here is the key literature/poster list:

ANSC literature and accompanying decals:

- 3002 Brochure You're In Command – Your Guide to Towing
- 3003 Brochure You're In Command - Boat Responsibly
- 3006 Pamphlet Federal Boating Regulations or State Boating Regulations
- 3026 Pamphlet America's Waterway Watch (Auxiliary version with the eagle #3024)
- 3026a Wallet Card America's Waterway Watch
- 3026b Decal America's Waterway Watch (Auxiliary version with the eagle #3024a)
- 3029 Pamphlet You're In Command – Paddle Safe! Have Fun!
- 3030 You're In Command – Fishing Tips from Bill Dance
- 3031 Pamphlet Safe Boating for Anglers and Hunters

ANSC Posters

- 3003b Poster You're In Command Take the ABC Course (8 ½" x 11")
- 3003c Poster You're In Command Get a VSC (8 ½" x 11")
- 3005a Poster Carbon Monoxide (8 ½" x 11")
- 3507 Poster Join the Auxiliary (16"x 20")
- 3026c Poster America's Waterway Watch (18" x 22")
- 3505 Poster You're In Command - Winners Always Wear Life Jackets (11" x 15")
- 3506 Poster You're In Command - Ten Ways To Paddle Safely (11" x 15")
- 3516. Poster Auxiliary Uniform Insignia (35"x16")

ANSC Videos to play in the VCR:

- 3003vi Video ABC/VSC Loop Video
- 3026d America's Waterway Watch Video

The large Boat Smart, Boat Safe posters which are part of the annual North American Safe Boating Campaign are also excellent items for colorful exhibit displays.

BoatUS Foundation has several good brochures on their web site which has an order form (<http://www.boatus.com/foundation/brochure/default.htm>). Their telephone number is (703) 823-9550 X3200. Up to 200 each of several brochures, to include bilingual materials can be ordered. Allow several weeks for shipment. Their materials include:

- FD009 Hey Kids, Lets Go Boating (w/stickers)
- FD010 Life Jackets (in English and Spanish)
- FD011 Alcohol and Boating (in English and Spanish)
- FD012 Weather
- FD015 Boat Handling Decal

Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) provides their "Riding Rules for Personal Watercraft" brochure. Phone: (202) 737-9768 or email info@pwia.org

If a large number of children are anticipated, invite a Coastie robotic boat to participate on the peak day. Scheduling Coastie should be done as far in advance as possible. Many Districts have a PFD Panda and Officer Snook costumes. These are also great attractions and often easier to schedule than Coastie. There is no reason why all cannot participate in a show.

Children love stickers and the message we want to send with them is wearing life jackets saves lives. The National Safe Boating Council (NSBC) will offer stickers with the 2005 Safe Boating Campaign materials.

ANSC children's materials:

- 4014 Officer Snook Coloring and Activity Book or #4013 Officer Snook for the Great Lakes
- 4062 Officer Snook Pull Off Stickers (one sheet accompanies one book).

Everyone likes to receive something for free. Sources of free boating promotional items are Coast Guard recruiters (pens, pencils, rulers, decals, refrigerator magnets), State Boating Law Administrators (floating key rings, whistles, PWC registration tubes), US Army Corps of Engineers (orange trash bags which double as a visual distress signal, coloring books, and whistles). Major brand beer distributors also have access to free boating safety materials designed to prevent alcohol abuse on the water. Although available from other services, only use Coast Guard recruiting materials.

A National Marketing Group Special Events Coordinator is available to assist flotillas with all exhibits. Contact Stu Soffer to discuss plans, seek advice, or ask for assistance, at (870) 247-1177 (CST) or soffers@sbcglobal.net.

Updated April, 2005

EXHIBIT OPERATING PROCEDURE
(Modify for local use)

1. Exhibit Goal: Recruit new members, promote recreational boating safety by encouraging boaters to wear life jackets, obtain a vessel safety check, take America's Boating Course and not boat under the influence. Simultaneously promote America's Waterway Watch Program.
2. Concept: The concept for a successful exhibit is for visitors to be able to relate to Auxiliarists as "affable" as opposed to "authority" figures. And the Auxiliarists must be knowledgeable, physically able to perform exhibit duties and wear the correct uniform smartly.
3. Setting Up:
Include specific set up, break down and night time security information here.
4. Operating the Exhibit:
 - a. The Undress Blue – Summer Alpha uniform (collar insignia) is designated and hats are not worn under cover. If a hat is worn, suggest it be the Auxiliary ball cap with a Bravo uniform. Tilley or garrison hats are not appropriate for this mission. No key rings, knives or other items should be worn on belts or belt loops and gold chains or other inappropriate jewelry worn.
 - b. Encouraging the boating public to wear "today's" life jackets is a primary objective, so a new style PFD should be the first thing people see when they enter our exhibit space. Those staffing the exhibit should wear one inflatable and one mesh top PFD to show off both styles.
 - c. Event access passes must be returned to the "Will Call" booth upon completion of each shift. They must be available for the shift subsequent to the one that relieved you.
 - d. Only two Auxiliarists should man the exhibit. Socialize with family and other Auxiliary members away from the exhibit area so visitor access is not discouraged by a crowd.

e. Engage visitors as soon as they come into your space, inquire about their boating interests, and guide them to materials they might like to have. The America's Waterway Watch pamphlet appeals to patriotic instinct. If you have a boating enthusiast, the "You're In Command" boat responsibly brochure is good because it is encompassing. Don't hand out literature to everyone. Even if the literature is potentially interesting, thrusting unwanted literature at visitors is offensive.

4. Exhibit Basics (from *How to get the most out of trade shows* by Steve Miller):

a. Don't Sit. If you sit, visitors get the impression you don't care to be bothered. Use the stools provided to rest because they permit eye contact to be maintained. No chairs please.

b. Don't Read. For every 10' of linear exhibit space, you have just four seconds to impress a visitor enough to get them to stop. It's not impressive to see someone reading a newspaper.

c. Don't Smoke. Not only is it impolite, it can offend a prospective visitor. If you really need that cigarette, schedule breaks to go somewhere else to smoke. Also, no tobacco chewing please.

d. Don't Chew Gum. No one wants to talk with someone who's chomping away on a piece of gum. Events are noisy and you need to be able to speak clearly and, sometimes, loudly.

e. Don't Eat. Take a break and eat away from the booth. Garlic, onions, stinky cheeses and tuna cause bad breath as does smoking. Carry small breath mints or other breath cleansers.

f. Don't Ignore Prospects. One of the rudest things you can do is ignore a visitor, even for a few seconds. Nobody likes to be ignored. If you're busy when someone approaches, either acknowledge them and try to include them in your conversation.

5. GOOD LUCK, relax, enjoy your self and have a great exhibit.