



# FLOT Lines

Flotilla 74, Brandon

Southeast District

USCG Auxiliary

Issue 3 2025



Summer Sun & Fun  
Help Keep Paddlers Safe





# FLOT Lines

Newsletter Flotilla 74, Brandon  
Matthew Stephen, Flotilla Commander  
Christopher Hunt, Flotilla Vice Commander  
Meeting: Second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.  
3006 South Kings Ave., Brandon, Florida

## Flotilla Staff Officers

**Tanner Piliego**  
Information Systems

**Vishrut Amin**  
Communication Services  
RBS Program Visits

**Earl Abbott**  
Finance

**Christopher Hunt**  
Communications

**Toshiya Arciaga**  
Member Training

**August Miller**  
Navigation Systems  
Materials

**Brett Skaggs**  
Secretary of Records  
Human Resources

**Dorothy Riley**  
Publications (Editor)

**Matt Stephen**  
Vessel Examinations  
Public Affairs



Background photo: Earl Abbott, Tanner Piliego and Matthew Stephens conducting Vessel Examinations at Williams Park. USCG Auxiliary photo by Tanner Piliego





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[www.cgaux74.org](http://www.cgaux74.org)



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Flotilla74/>

*We're on the web!*

Cover photo: Kayaks stacked waiting for Vessel Examinations to be conducted. USCG Auxiliary photo by Matthew Stephen

A dolphin surfaces near a channel marker in Tampa Bay. USCG Auxiliary photo by George Papabeis



# From the Helm



**Matthew Stephen**  
Flotilla Commander

So far this year, we have had some ups and downs. Our turnout for National Safe Boating Week was not as good as we had hoped. To build camaraderie and help another flotilla, we joined forces with Flotilla 79, Tampa, to conduct vessel safety checks. Flotilla 74 Vessel Examiners 74 conducted 10 Vessel Safety Checks between two examiners. Earl Abbott and Matthew Stephen contributed a combined total of 9 hours during the blitz. Dorothy Riley put in over 35 hours for the lead up to National Safe Boating Week, as well as coming to the blitz at Flotilla 79.

On a more positive note, two members, Vishrut Amin and Tosh Arciaga, achieved Operational Auxiliarist (AUXOP) designation. Your Flotilla Commander attained the Recreational Boating Safety device and qualified as boat crew.

Another high note was the substantial increase in social media traffic leading up to NSBW. Thanks go out to Vishrut Amin and Dorothy Riley for their hard work. Member Tanner Pilego also spent time mentoring Vishrut Amin about what and how to post on our Facebook page. Additionally,

Amin spent considerable time revamping our webpage to make it more user-friendly and adding links to get members directly to the site they are looking for.

With all the hours that members put in, please remember to record your hours. It is very important.

Thank you for all that you do!

*Matthew Stephen*

Matthew Stephen,  
Flotilla Commander

Matthew Stephen photographed Dean Hoskin While training with Coast Guard Station Sand Key crew July 24, 2025. Stephen assists frequently with Coast Guard boat crew training and volunteers one day a week at Air Station Clearwater. USCG Auxiliary photo by Matt Stephen.





# ~~From the Helm~~

## Dottie's Scrapbox

I am taking advantage of this blank page to deliver a personalized message.

As many of you know, I just survived a Humpty Dumpty fall that landed me for four days in the ICU, and another month in the VA rehabilitation unit. My recovery is progressing well, and I will be seeing everyone soon.

Close calls often subject people to critical self-examination and to probing into their commitments and relationships. After 23 years as a member, I can safely count the Auxiliary as a commitment and a relationship. Like all relationships, it has its ups and downs, and the COVID pandemic kicked the Auxiliary as hard as my recent fall set me back.

We were a more active Auxiliary pre-COVID, and I cannot ascribe the entire decline in activity to the pandemic. We did, however, have much stronger participation in Vessel Safety Check, Public Affairs, and social events. Many more members participated in the Independence Day parade, National Safe Boating Week, and activities that brought Auxiliary members and their families together. We had wonderful winter holiday gatherings at local restaurants and cookouts at our building. We toured museums, had picnics, attended a baseball game, and even had a raft-up.

What made the difference? We knew each other and enjoyed working together. There is a good reason 'fellowship' is one of the four

cornerstones of the Auxiliary.

How do we change this? Let us start by planning FELLOWSHIP events for our flotilla members and their families, and events to which we can invite the members and families of other flotillas. We need your suggestions for this to work. Suggestions already made include a tour of Air Station Clearwater and a cookout. What are your ideas?

We live in Tampa Bay, one of Florida's top tourist destinations, so it should not be too difficult to come up with fun suggestions.

Yes, our primary mission is Recreational Boating Safety education, but we will not succeed until we become a functioning team.

By the way- this is not a one-off article. I will talk and write about this at every opportunity until we rekindle this flotilla's enthusiasm.

Anyone interested in becoming Fellowship chair? Ω

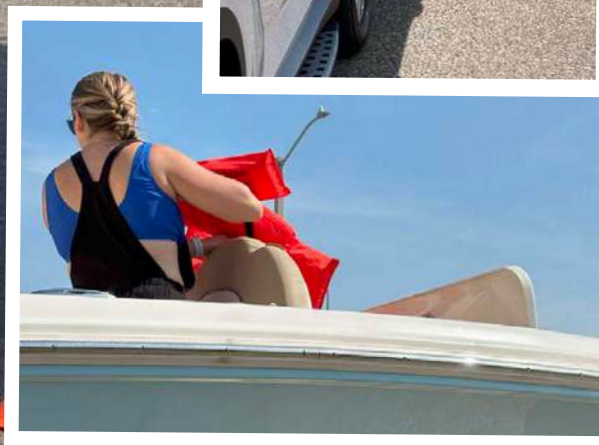




**Flotillas 74, Brandon, and 79,  
Tampa, Collaborate To  
Support National Safe  
Boating Week 2025.**

(Article beginning on page 8)







# Articles of Interest

## National Safe Boating Week 2025: A Wave of Success

By Dorothy J. Riley



Flotilla 74, Brandon, and Flotilla 79, Tampa, joined forces to deliver an impactful celebration of National Safe Boating Week, held from May 17 to 23, 2025. The event was a shining example of dedication, creativity, and community engagement.

Matthew Stephen, Earl Abbott, Vessel Examiners, and Dorothy Riley represented Flotilla 74. Timothy Teahan, Pete Morell, and Corey Berardicurti, Vessel Examiners represented Flotilla 79. George Bartuska grilled hot dogs and provided cold drinks for Auxiliary members and the public.

Dorothy Riley brought her artistic talents to life by designing vibrant posters promoting the Vessel Safety Check blitz at the Salty Sol (Gandy) boat ramp on May 17, setting the tone for a week of heightened awareness. Adding to the momentum, the *Osprey Observer* published a compelling news release spotlighting the importance of safe boating practices.

The celebrations received official recognition as the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners presented a Proclamation for National Safe Boating Week, complemented by an inspiring proclamation from Mayor Jane Castor specifically honoring Flotilla 79 in Tampa. These endorsements underscored the significance of the event and its impact on the community.

In the weeks leading up to National Safe Boating Week, Flotilla 74 harnessed the power of social media, deliv-

ering daily posts packed with vital tips and engaging content from the National Safe Boating Council. Their relentless digital campaign paid off, elevating their social media presence to a remarkable 6,642 views and reaching 2,681 individuals — a testament to the flotillas' unwavering commitment to promoting safe boating practices.

With creativity, collaboration, and outreach at its core, National Safe Boating Week 2025 was not just a celebration; it was a movement that resonated with the community and strengthened the message of safety on the water. Ω



A photo of Raymond Langley from Flotilla 75, Apollo Beach from a previous National Safe Boating Week poster advertising this year's Vessel Safety Check blitz at the Salty Sol boat ramp. USCG Auxiliary photo and poster by Dorothy Riley

Photos on previous page: Background: Corey Berardicurti, Vessel Examiner from Flotilla 79, Tampa, examines a vessel on Saturday, May 17 at the Salty Sol boat ramp in front of Flotilla 79, Tampa.

Photos on right edge, from the top down: Earl Abbott conducts a Vessel Examination.

Matthew Stephen shares Vessel Examination forms and decals with Timothy Teahan.

Matthew Stephen and Earl Abbott conduct a Vessel Examination as a team.

A boater produces life jackets for inspection during a vessel Examination. USCG Auxiliary photographs by Matthew Stephen and Dorothy Riley





# Articles of Interest



Left: The Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners presented Flotilla 74, Brandon a Proclamation for National Safe Boating Week signed by all seven of the county commissioners.

Right: The Osprey Observer published an article promoting National Safe Boating Week. USCG Auxiliary photos



Above: Earl Abbott conducts a Vessel Examination in the parking lot by Flotilla 79, Tampa, and the Salty Sol boat ramp.

Right: George Bartuska grills hot dogs for participating Auxiliary members and the public on May 17, the opening of National Safe Boating Week. USCG Auxiliary photos by Dorothy Riley and Matthew Stephen





# Articles of Interest

## Let's Talk about Boat Crew Training ... and congratulations for our newest Boat Crew member.

By Dorothy Riley

Matthew Stephen earned the Boat Crew qualification on May 10. While Flotilla 74, Brandon lost its facility and a boat crew member when Steve Williams transferred south, with Matthew's qualification, we have three crew members in our flotilla: Matthew, Chris Hunt, Tanner Piliego, and more flotilla members are interested in surface operations. We hope to soon have an Auxiliary facility as Earl Abbott is in the process of getting his boat qualified. We congratulate Matthew on completing the training.

Becoming a qualified crew is a process that requires months of effort, a strong sense of motivation, and a willingness to invest a considerable amount of time. Training is thorough, conducted in both classroom and on-water settings. Examples of topics covered include:

- Crew efficiency factors, risk factors, and team coordination.
- Physical fitness, survival training, and First Aid.
- Marlinespike seamanship, boat nomenclature, nautical terminology, and basic stability
- Identifying the different parts of a line and the hitches used in line handling.
- Marine communications.
- Navigation, including identifying different types of aids to navigation.
- Computing time, speed, and distance.
- Mission-oriented operations, such as man over-board drills and towing exercises.

Are you interested in becoming boat crew qualified? Speak to Matthew or Tanner Piliego, who is qualified crew. If you decide this is for you, Toshiya Arciaga, our Flotilla Staff Officer for Member Training, can guide you through the prerequisites and help you enroll in the next crew-training cycle. Ω

*Photos on facing page:*

*Top left: Matthew Stephen assists in tying the vessel off while docking at Salty Sol Fleishman boat ramp.*

*Mid-page left: Matthew Stephen, while a trainee on Dean Hoskin's Auxiliary facility on January 25. Cold-weather boating requires warm clothing and float coats provide additional weather protection.*

*Bottom left: Matthew Stephen, a trainee on Dean Hoskin's Auxiliary facility takes this photo. Valerie Fernandes assists as a mentor.*

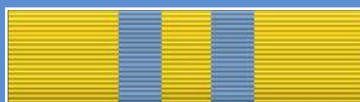
*Top right: Learning how to endure while immersed in water is part of the survival training. Trainees are taught self-rescue as well as how to pull another person who may be incapacitated to safety.*

*Mid-page right: Matthew Stephen, trainee, on Feb. 25, 2025.*

*Bottom right: More cold-water boating with members of Flotilla 75, Apollo Beach January 2025.*

*Center: Matthew Stephen portrait.*

*USCG Auxiliary photographs provided by Matthew Stephen.*





# Articles of Interest





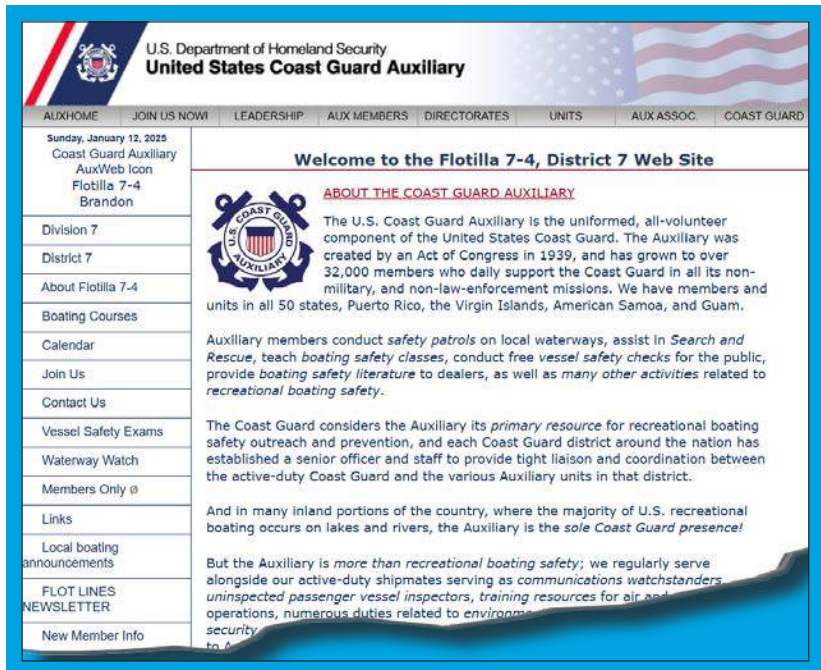
# Articles of Interest

## Staff Officer Reports

### Vishrut Amin, Flotilla Staff Officer-Communication Systems

Vishrut revamped the Flotilla 74, Brandon web page. Our page can be found at: <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04>.

- The Flotilla 74 website was updated and simplified.
- New tabs can be found on the website for ease of new members and non-members looking to join the CG Auxiliary and vessel safety checks.
- New tabs can be seen on the Website as follows.
  - **What's New** – <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=whats-new> Features current and/or upcoming events
  - **Recognition** – <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=recognition> – Features past and recent recognitions of Flotilla 74
  - **Send Us A Message** – <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=send-us-a-message> Created for non-members to reach out directly with ease without worrying about reaching the right person.
  - **Newsletters** – <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=custom> – Features flotilla newsletters for insights of Flotilla 74
  - **Follow Us** – <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=follow-us> – Features Links to Flotilla 74 social media pages i.e. Facebook and Instagram.
  - **Free Vessel Safety Check** – <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=free-vessel-safety-checks> – Updated the old page with a new page with information for the general public about free vessel examinations.
  - **Boating Recalls** - <https://uscgboating.org/content/recalls.php> - linked to the page to help



boaters be aware of any recalls on their boat. This also ensures safe operations.

- **Member Training** - <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=TRAINING> – This page features training materials and information to help current and new members achieve success. More tabs can be added depending on what challenges our members may face in the future.
- Flotilla 74 has been featured in the local newspaper *Osprey Observer* for efforts in promoting life jacket awareness during National Safe Boating Week. The article, published on April 26, 2025, highlights our commitment to educating the community on the importance of wearing life jackets and practicing safe boating habits. Recognition can be seen on the Recognition tab on the Flotilla 74 website.
- The Flotilla 74 Google website has received 5-star ratings and reviews. - [https://www.google.com/search?q=flotilla+74+brandon&rlz=1C1CHBFenUS892US892&oq=&gs\\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqC-QgAECMYJxjqAjlJCAAQlXgnGOoCMgklARAJG-CcY6glyCQgCECMYJxjqAjlJCAMQlXgnGOoCM-](https://www.google.com/search?q=flotilla+74+brandon&rlz=1C1CHBFenUS892US892&oq=&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqC-QgAECMYJxjqAjlJCAAQlXgnGOoCMgklARAJG-CcY6glyCQgCECMYJxjqAjlJCAMQlXgnGOoCM-)





# Articles of Interest

## Staff Officer Reports

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### Tosh Arciaga, Flotilla Staff Officer-Member Training

As members of the Auxiliary, one of our core missions is to promote recreational boating safety (RBS). This is a mission that directly saves lives and strengthens our communities. I want to encourage each of you to take the next step by becoming fully qualified in one or more RBS programs, such as Vessel Examiner (VE), Program Visitor (PV), or Public Education (PE).

Bravo Zulu to members Vishrut Amin and Tosh Arciaga, who achieved Operational Auxiliarist (AUXOP) designation.

When you achieve qualifications and meet activity requirements, you become eligible to wear the RBS device. Please refer to the attached image for additional information on qualification requirements. Please let me know if you have any questions or need assistance.

Member Matthew Stephen qualified as a crew member in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program.

Although we do not see Tanner face-to-face often, he remains active behind the scenes. The FSO-IS is responsible for collecting and disseminating member activity data and statistics, Auxiliary data entry, performance reports, statistical analysis, qualification and currency reports, resource links, and the AUXDATA Users Guide.

### Dorothy Riley- Flotilla Staff Officer-Public Affairs

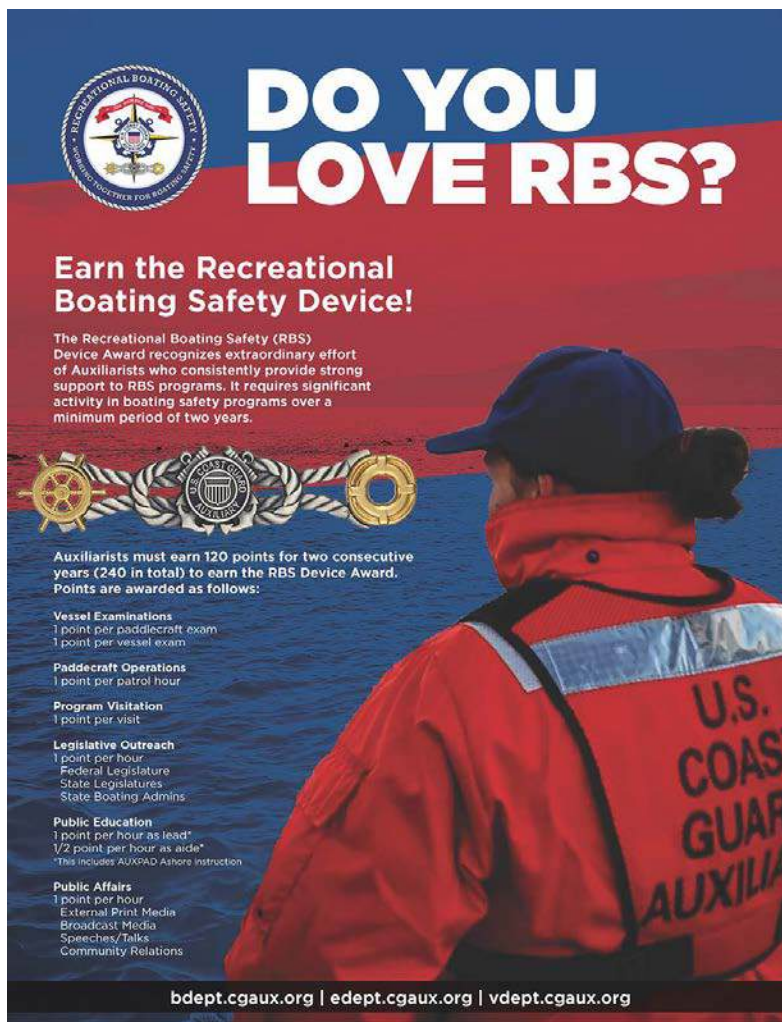
We posted daily to the Flotilla 74, Brandon Facebook page about boating safety, the importance of wearing a life jacket, and National Safe Boating Week. We achieved 6,642 views by May 18, and the "Osprey Observer" published our news release, which supported National Safe Boating Week and promoted the importance of wearing life jackets.

We created posters advertising the Vessel Safety Check blitz at the Gandy boat ramp.

The Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners presented a National Safe Boating Week proclamation to the flotilla.

### Dorothy Riley- Flotilla Staff Officer-Publications

We are on schedule to publish six issues this year. Please continuously send photographs, articles, and



### Tanner Piliego, Flotilla Staff Officer- Information Services





# Articles of Interest

## Staff Officer Reports

staff officer reports for publication. This is YOUR publication. Take ownership by contributing content.

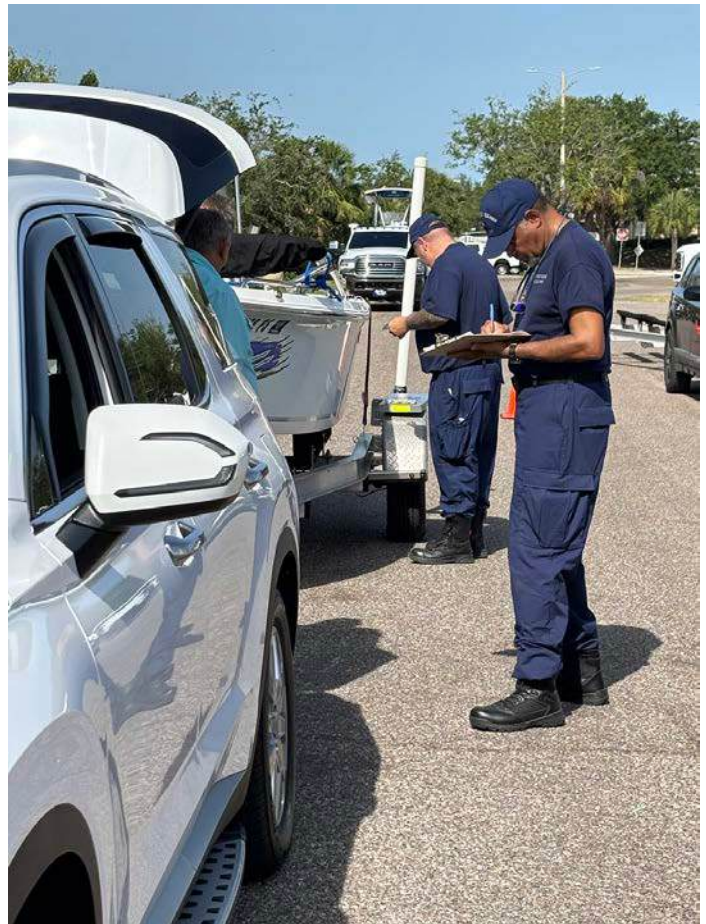
### **Brett Skaggs- Flotilla Staff Officer-Secretary of Records**

Brett Skaggs writes and submits our meeting minutes every month and contributes in many other ways to the flotilla and the safe boating message. Brett brought the boating safety message to <https://jetboaters.net/threads/national-safe-boating-week.46093/#post-706637>, where he posted a link to Southeast District's "National Safe Boating Week SAFETY FIRST" publication: [https://uscga-district-7.org/pdf/2025/National\\_Safe\\_Boating\\_Week\\_Publication\\_2025.pdf](https://uscga-district-7.org/pdf/2025/National_Safe_Boating_Week_Publication_2025.pdf)

### **Matthew Stephen, Flotilla Staff Officer-Vessel Examinations**

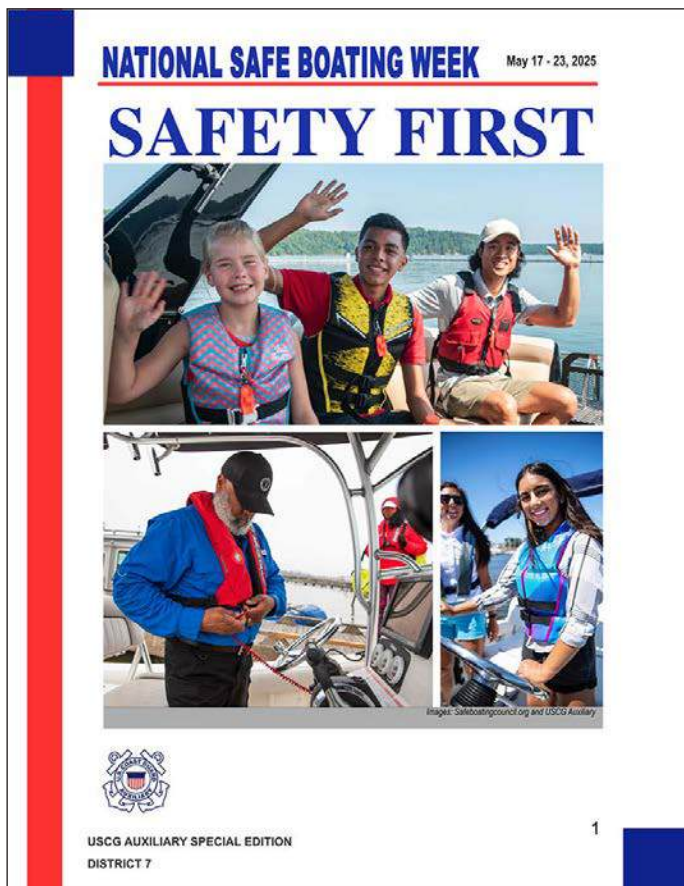
Matthew and Earl Abbott conducted ten Vessel Safety

Checks at the Vessel Examiner blitz on May 17.



Above: Matthew Stephen and Earl Abbott conduct a Vessel Safety Check (VSC) on May 17 at the Gandy (Salty Sol) boat ramp. Flotilla 74, Brandon collaborated with Flotilla 79, Tampa for a VSC blitz at the opening of National Safe Boating Week. USCG Auxiliary photo by Dorothy Riley

Left: We encourage all members to follow the link to the "National Safe Boating Week- SAFETY FIRST" publication. It serves as an invaluable resource for planning NSBW activities in the future.





# Articles of Interest

## Meeting News

### *Honoring a Most Valuable Member:* **William Sage** Awarded the Auxiliary Com- mandant's Letter of Commenda- tion

By Dorothy Riley



***Dorothy Riley presents Bill Sage the Auxiliary Commandant's Letter of Commendation at the May Meeting of Flotilla 74, Brandon. Seated at the table from left are Matthew Stephen, Flotilla Commander; Chris Hunt, Flotilla Vice Commander; George Humphrey, and August Miller. USCG Auxiliary photograph .***

William Sage joined the Auxiliary in 2017. He is a reserved and modest individual with extensive experience and leadership qualities. Notably, he is a dedicated team player.

During the pandemic, Bill played a vital role in maintaining the activities of Flotilla 74, Brandon. He recruited six members between 2020 and 2022 and added eleven members in 2023 and 2024. Among these members, five presently serve as Flotilla staff officers, and four (or more) are qualified Operational Auxiliarists.

Bill served as both Flotilla Vice Commander and Flotilla Commander from 2020 to 2023. When the Flotilla Commander became incapacitated due to illness, Sage assumed all responsibilities of both roles, including Flotilla Staff Officer - Human Resources.

Following the resignation of the elected Flotilla Vice Commander in 2022, Bill took on those duties alongside his role as Flotilla Commander, guid-

ing the flotilla through the pandemic and the subsequent reopening. He managed the flotilla during a building flood, and all elected leaders since 2022 have relied on his guidance. Beyond his Auxiliary duties, Bill became a trusted friend and confidant to many.

Last month, Bill resigned from the Auxiliary due to health reasons. In the last few years, he persevered despite several back, knee, and foot surgeries. The members of Flotilla 74, Brandon will sincerely miss his presence and sincerely thank him. Ω



*"A hero is someone who understands the responsibility that comes with his freedom."*

*—Bob Dylan*





# Articles of Interest



## Summer time is for paddlesport fun: *Learn About Paddlesport Safety And Avoid Becoming Another Statistic!*

By Dorothy Riley

Paddlesports have seen a significant increase in participation from 2020 to 2025. The COVID-19 pandemic played a major role in this surge, as many people turned to outdoor activities. For instance, kayak sales increased by 51% in February 2021 compared to February 2020. This trend continued, with the paddlesports industry experiencing unprecedented growth during the pandemic.

The U.S. Coast Guard compiles annual statistics on reported recreational boating accidents. The latest data shows record numbers of paddlesports accidents during the pandemic, with over 37 million participants engaging in activities like kayaking, canoeing, and stand-up paddleboarding. The detailed statistics for each year can be found in the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Statistics publications.

### **The U.S. Coast Guard reports:**

Kayaks are listed as the vessel type with the second highest fatalities (15 percent), behind open motorboats (44 percent). Where the cause of death was known, 81 percent of fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those victims with reported life jacket usage, 83 percent were not wearing a life jacket.

Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal recreational boating accidents; where the primary cause was known, it was listed as the leading factor in 16 percent of deaths.

The exact accident numbers for paddlesports each year from 2020 to 2024:

- 2020: There were 4,168 reported accidents, with 86 fatalities.
- 2021: The number increased to 4,515 accidents, with 96 fatalities.
- 2022: There were 4,789 accidents, with 98 fatalities.

- 2023: The number rose to 5,102 accidents. The number rose to 104 fatalities.
- 2024: There were 5,389 accidents with 110 fatalities.

These statistics reflect the growing popularity of paddlesports and the corresponding increase in accidents.

[https://uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.php](https://uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.php)

The main causes of paddlesport accidents from 2020 to 2024 include several factors:

- **Hazardous Water Conditions:** This was the leading cause of accidents, as paddlesport craft are more susceptible to rough waters and sudden changes in weather.
- **Operator Inexperience:** Many accidents were attributed to the lack of experience among paddlers, particularly during the pandemic when many new paddlers took to the water.
- **Alcohol Use:** Alcohol consumption while paddling also contributed significantly to the number of accidents.
- **Lack of Safety Training:** A considerable number of accidents occurred due to a lack of safety training and inadequate knowledge of proper paddling techniques and safety measures.
- **Not Wearing Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs):** Many paddlers failed to wear PFDs, which increased the risk of drowning in the event of an accident.

These factors underscore the importance of proper training, preparation, and adherence to safety guidelines in reducing the risk of accidents in paddlesports.

*(Continued on page 17)*





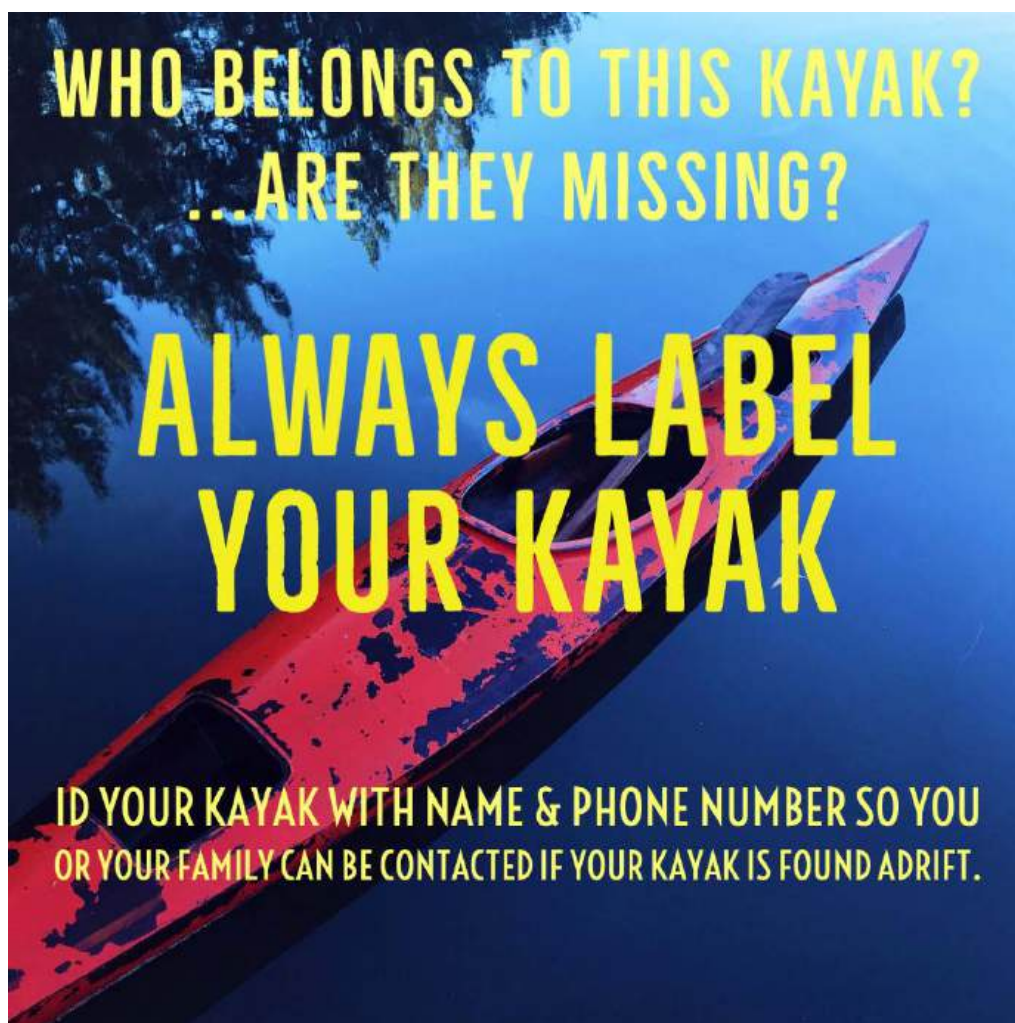
# Articles of Interest

*(Continued from page 16)*

Reducing fatalities in paddlesports involves implementing several key safety measures:

- **Wearing Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs):** Ensuring that all paddlers wear PFDs can significantly reduce the risk of drowning in case of an accident.
- **Safety Training and Education:** Providing comprehensive safety training and education on proper paddling techniques, water safety, and emergency procedures can help paddlers be better prepared.
- **Avoiding Alcohol:** Discouraging the consumption of alcohol while paddling can reduce the risk of accidents caused by impaired judgment and coordination.
- **Monitoring Weather Conditions:** Paddlers should always check weather forecasts and water conditions before heading out to avoid hazardous situations.
- **Using Proper Equipment:** Ensuring that all equipment is in good condition and suitable for the specific paddlesport activity can prevent accidents caused by equipment failure.
- **Staying Within Skill Level:** Paddlers should choose activities and water conditions that match their skill level and experience to avoid getting into dangerous situations.

By following these safety measures, paddlers can enjoy their activities while minimizing the risk of accidents and fatalities. Be sure to share these tips with recreational boaters. [Ω](#)

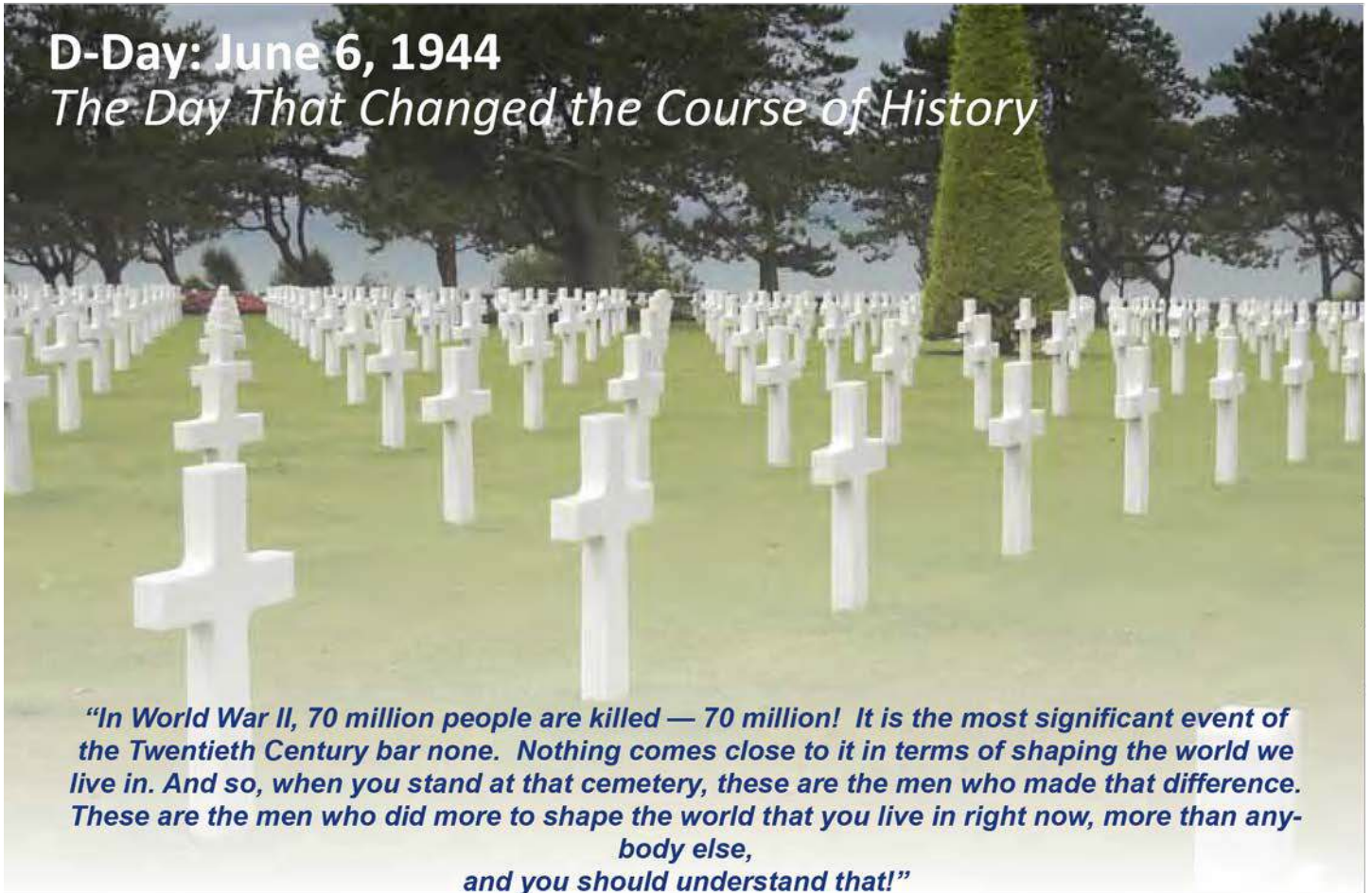




# Articles of Interest

## D-Day: June 6, 1944

### *The Day That Changed the Course of History*



***"In World War II, 70 million people are killed — 70 million! It is the most significant event of the Twentieth Century bar none. Nothing comes close to it in terms of shaping the world we live in. And so, when you stand at that cemetery, these are the men who made that difference. These are the men who did more to shape the world that you live in right now, more than anybody else, and you should understand that!"***

*Nova, American Experience: D-Day; Voice-over for scene of the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial by Adrian Lewis, PhD, military historian and author.*

On June 6, 1944, Allied forces began the largest amphibious invasion of all time on the coast of France at Normandy. D-Day saw 160,000 troops land at Omaha Beach thanks to nearly 200,000 naval and merchant marine personnel on approximately 5,000 ships. Among those ships were 60 Coast Guard cutters providing search and rescue operations for the invasion force. Coast Guard personnel also operated ships delivering soldiers.

The Coast Guard pays tribute to the heroism and sacrifice of the Coast Guard members who took part in D-Day operations, particularly those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Read more at <https://www.history.uscg.mil/Browse-by-Topic/Notable-People/Award-Recipients/Coast-Guard-Heroes-at-Normandy/>





# Articles of Interest

*"My eyes were glued to the boat coming in next to ours, and on the water in between, boiling with bullets from hidden shore emplacements, like a mud puddle in a hailstorm. It seemed impossible that we could make it in without being riddled."*

A Coast Guard coxswain describes the waters off Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944.

*Photo credit: The Jaws of Death. A photo by CPHOM (Chief Photographer's Mate, US Navy) Robert F. Sargent, USCG.*



Happy Anniversary  
Coast Guard Auxiliary  
June 23



*(Photo composite by Dorothy Riley)*





# Hurricane Season is Here

*Yes, Virginia, there really is a hurricane season!*

By Dorothy Riley

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) outlook for the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season, which goes from June 1 to November 30, predicts a 30% chance of a near-normal season, a 60% chance of an above-normal season, and a 10% chance of a below-normal season.

The agency is forecasting a range of 13 to 19 total named storms, characterized by winds of 39 mph or higher. Of those, 6-10 are predicted to become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including three to five major hurricanes (category 3, 4, or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA is 70% confident in these ranges.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced its forecast for the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season on Thursday, May 22. It predicts an above-average season with 13 to 19 named storms and six to 10 hurricanes.

Ahead of the 2025 hurricane season, Donald Trump made several significant changes to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Weather Service (NWS), primarily characterized by proposed budget cuts and staffing reductions. The Trump administration aimed to shift more responsibility for disaster response and recovery onto states and local governments.

There are reports of delayed or denied disaster

assistance requests from several states, resulting in frustration among communities waiting for federal help. Executive orders establishing the FEMA Review Council and related notices repeated claims of "political bias in FEMA," particularly in the context of the agency's response to Hurricane

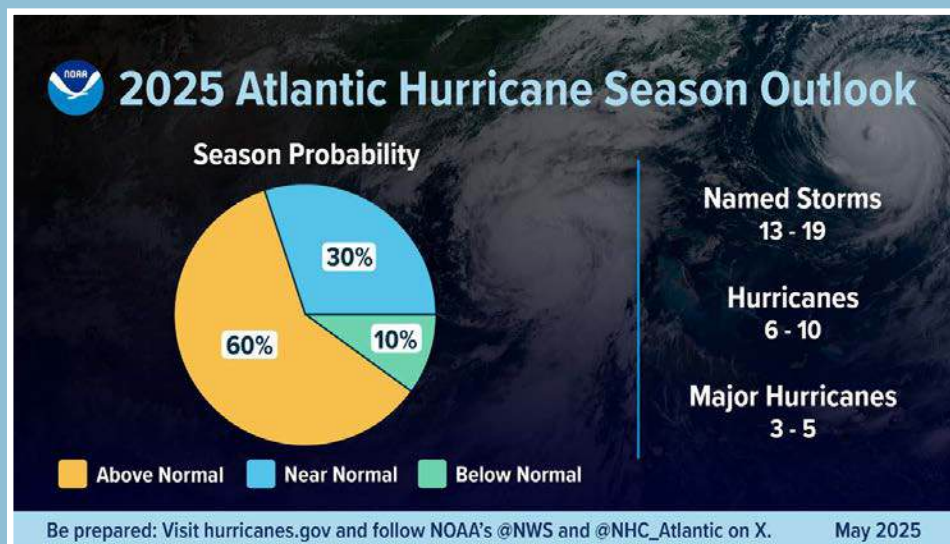
Helene in North Carolina. FEMA has twice denied Gov. Josh Stein's request for an extension of 100% of the federal cost share for debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct federal

assistance for an additional 180 days.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) faces significant budget cuts: The Trump administration has proposed substantial budget cuts to NOAA, including a reduction of over \$1.5 billion (approximately 25%) below previous levels. These cuts aimed to terminate various climate-related research, data, and grant programs, as well as implement significant staff reductions, including experienced meteorologists and researchers.

The proposed cuts affected NOAA's core functions, including ocean monitoring, regional and coastal planning, climate research, and weather forecasting. Staffing cuts reportedly led to the curtailment of daily weather balloon launches and, in some cases, left NOAA offices without forecasters on-site overnight, potentially reducing the accuracy

*(Continued on page 21)*





cy and granularity of forecasts.

The National Weather Service (NWS) faces significant staffing deficits, resulting in many local weather forecast offices being shorthanded. Staff

shortages led to some NWS offices temporarily operating with reduced 24/7 staffing, resulting in fewer updates, social media posts, or other services. Some offices also temporarily halted or reduced the frequency of twice-daily weather balloon launches.

Meteorologists and experts raised concerns that staffing and funding cuts could degrade the quality and timeliness of forecasts and warnings, potentially leading to increased damage and loss of life during severe weather events. The NWS and its union reportedly collaborated to realign staff and fill gaps through inter-office assistance to maintain

critical services. In short, we face the 2025 hurricane season with significant staffing and funding cuts that could compromise the agencies' ability to respond effectively to natural disasters and provide critical weather and climate information.

Be prepared! While the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts a higher-than-average storm season with fewer resources to recover, it is up to each of us to be better prepared. With so many storms expected to become hurricanes, keep in mind that it only takes one to upend our lives.

The first named tropical storm of the 2025 season was Andrea.  $\Omega$

## Preparing for a hurricane:

<https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes#:~:text=Sign%20up%20for%20community%20alerts,to%20emergency%20information%20and%20alerts.> Ω





# Marine Safety Administrative and Management (MSAM) Course and the Marine Safety Training Ribbon

Submitted by Tosh Arciaga

Shipmates,

I would like to encourage all of you to consider enrolling in the **Marine Safety Administrative and Management (MSAM)** course available through the Auxiliary's online classroom.

This course is designed to equip Auxiliarists with the knowledge and skills needed to support the Coast Guard's Marine Safety and Environmental Protection missions. It provides a comprehensive overview of marine safety regulations, policies, and procedures, preparing Auxiliarists for roles in Marine Safety staff positions or participation in Marine Safety missions.

You can access the course at your own pace and on your own schedule, making it easy to fit into your other Auxiliary or personal commitments.

Hope you will consider enrolling. Any questions, feel free to reach out.

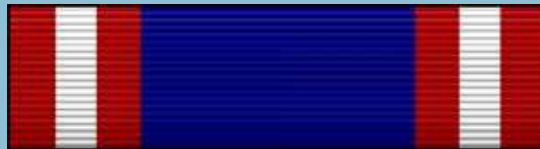
V/r

**Tosh Arciaga**

USCG Auxiliary Flotilla Staff Officer-Member Training, Flotilla 74 - Brandon, Fla.

<https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=P-DEPT&category=ms-courses>

The **Marine Safety Training ribbon** was created in recognition of the considerable and long-term, sustained effort that Auxiliarists must put forward in order to earn the Auxiliary Marine Safety M-Pro Pin. The ribbon recognizes achievement in the marine safety, security, and environmental protection mission area as a precursor to achievement of the Auxiliary Marine Safety M-Pro Pin. Auxiliarists who successfully complete the following tasks are entitled to wear this ribbon (there is no time limit in which these tasks must be completed):



(1) Introduction to Marine Safety and Environmental Protection (IMSEP) course. If completed prior to 01 Oct 2010 must also complete IIMS. (IIMS was an active duty course which has since been discontinued. If IIMS has not been completed and IMSEP was earned prior to 01 Oct 2010, the new version of IMSEP must be completed.)

(2) Good Mate course.

(3) Incident Command System (ICS) courses 100 / 200 / 700 / 800.

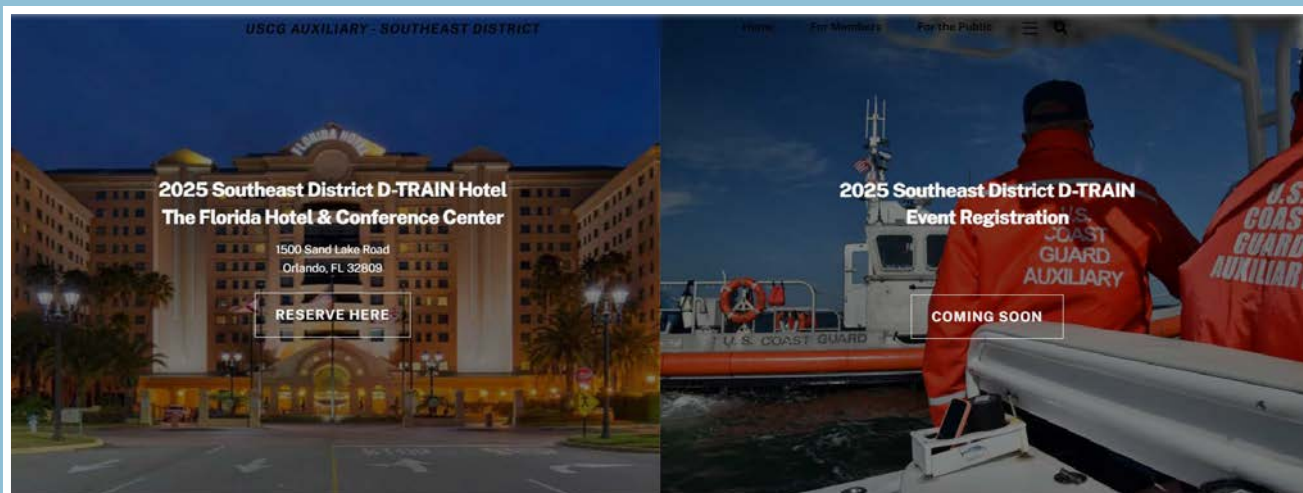
(4) ICS course 210.

(5) At least one Auxiliary marine safety program PQS.

(See MS PQS page for acceptable PQSs.)

Successful completion of subsequent program PQSs shall be denoted by adding 3/16-inch bronze stars. After earning the Auxiliary Marine Safety M-Pro Pin, Auxiliarists shall remove this ribbon from wear.





Courses TBA. Check the link below frequently to see course offerings and when D-TRAIN registrations and hotel reservations open.

<https://cgauxsoutheast.org/wp/d-train-2025/>





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FLOT is a military acronym meaning "forward line of own troops." FLOT line or "forward edge of battle area" (FEBA) are technical terms used by all branches of the U.S. armed services to designate the forward most friendly maritime or land forces on the battlefield at a given point in time during an armed conflict.

We are not a military force engaged in armed conflict. We are, however, the front-line of the struggle to save the lives of recreational boaters, and we face this great endeavor armed with Vessel Safety Checks, Public Education classes and all the other Recreational Boating Safety programs in our arsenal. Our newsletter banner serves as a reminder of this mission.

*FLOT Lines* is a publication of Flotilla 74, Brandon, District 7 United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, located at 3006 S. Kings Ave., Brandon. The Auxiliary an organization of dues-paying unpaid, civilian volunteers whose mission is to assist the U.S. Coast Guard in promoting boating safety. Articles may be reprinted with the express consent of the author or photographer with proper credit given to same. For permissions or for more information, please contact the editor, Dorothy Riley, SO-PB, Email address: [dottieriley@gmail.com](mailto:dottieriley@gmail.com)

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**Be sure to attend flotilla meetings**

***When: 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m.***

***Where: Flotilla 74, Brandon***

***3006 S. Kings Ave., Brandon, FL***

***Why: Membership is more rewarding  
when you participate-  
and bring a friend!***