

# INTERCOM

Newsletter of Division 7 Tampa Bay, Southeast District USCG Auxiliary Issue 2, 2025





## CONTENTS

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From the Helm: Anthony Hooper, DCDR; Charles Lambeth, VCDR 4

Training with the Coast Guard:  
When the Going Gets Tough, the  
Tough Keep Going! 6

Cautions When Using an Engine  
Cut-Off Switch. 7

What boaters can do without  
NOAA and NWS services. 8

Flotilla Collaborates With Part-  
ner Agencies to Offer Safe Boat-  
ing Program to Veterans of the  
Wounded Warrior Project. 10

Sun 'n Fun Aero Space Expo 12

National Safe Boating Week 2025 14

Division 7 Tampa Bay Members  
Response and Recovery Efforts  
Post-Hurricanes. 18

Coast Guard Awards Hoskin, Bell,  
and Marquez the Auxiliary Achieve-  
ment Medal. 21

Division 7 Members Say Farewell  
to Dean Bell. 22

Membership Trends Analysis 24

Anthony Hooper Presented  
Auxiliary Commendation Medal 25

CGMA 26



# INTERCOM

Newsletter for Division 7 Tampa Bay, Southeast District, USCG Auxiliary  
Summer 2025

## Division 7 Elected Officers 2025

Div 7 Division Commander	Anthony Hooper, CMDR
Div 7 Division Vice Commander	Charles Lambeth, VCDR
Div 7 Immed. Past Division Commander	Dean Hoskin, IPDCDR
FL-72 Flotilla Commander	Cathy Campbell Heroux, FC
Flotilla Vice Commander	Martin Jordan, VFC
FL-74 Flotilla Commander	Matthew Stephen, FC
Flotilla Vice Commander	Christopher Hunt, VFC
FL-75 Flotilla Commander	Mark Babcock, FC
Flotilla Vice Commander	Ariel Rodriguez, VFC
FL-77 Flotilla Commander	Ronald Ramos, FC
Flotilla Vice Commander	Todd Thuma, VFC
FL-78 Flotilla Commander	Wally Behrendt, FC
Flotilla Vice Commander	Raul Lopez, VFC
FL-79 Flotilla Commander	Corey Berardicurti, VFC
Flotilla Vice Commander	
FL-7-16 Flotilla Commander	Howard Bush, FC
Flotilla Vice Commander	Martin Richardson, VFC



*We're on the web!*  
<http://A07007.www.uscgaux.info>

## Division 7 Appointed Staff 2025

Culinary Assistant	Patrick McAlvey, SO-FS
Communications	Howard Bush, SO-CM
Communication Services	Vishrut Amin, SO-CS
Finance	Jack Lee, SO-FN
Information Services	Brenda Burger, SO-IS
Human Resources	Gilbert Thomas, SO-HR
Materials	Paul Ruckert, SO-MA
Marine Safety	John Laurent, SO-MS
Member Training	Rollin Shouse III, SO-MT
Navigation Systems	Anthony Hooper, SO-NS
Operations	Valerie Fernandes, SO-OP
Public Affairs	Dionne Delsignore, SO-PA
Publications	Dorothy J. Riley, SO-PB
Public Education	Thomas Perry, SO-PE
Partner Visits	Ariel Rodriguez, SO-PV
RS	Anthony Hooper, SO-RS
Secretary	Brett Skaggs, SO-SR
Vessel Examinations	Raymond Langley, SO-VE

Intercom is a publication of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, Division Seven, Southeast District.

The cost of publication is provided by dues-paying members of the Auxiliary, an organization of unpaid, civilian volunteers whose mission is to assist the U.S. Coast Guard in promoting boating safety. Articles may be reprinted only 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)

Cover: Matthew Stephen and Earl Abbott, members of Flotilla 74, Brandon conduct Vessel Safety Checks in the parking lot by the Salty Sol boat ramp located behind Flotilla 79, Tampa. The two flotillas combined efforts and resources on May 17 for National Safe Boating Week. USCG Auxiliary photo by Dorothy Riley.

## From the Helm

### Division 7, Tampa Bay Leadership Team



Anthony Hooper  
Division Commander

- Facing headwinds in the Auxiliary is nothing new. This year, however, presents unfamiliar challenges.
- Too many of our members are still affected by last year's hurricanes. They lost possessions, often including Auxiliary uniforms. They struggle with insurance, permits, and contractors to rebuild their homes. Others have moved or been displaced.
- The storms have equally disrupted the public we serve. This has affected attendance at Public Education classes, a significant part of our outreach and recruiting, and a critical source of income. Add to this the loss of the Boating Skills and Seamanship course, our mainstay.
- Every flotilla meeting place except Polk County suffered damage in the hurricanes. The Gulfport building is damaged beyond repair and will be torn down and not replaced. In Madeira Beach, repairing the structure and docks is daunting. The Coast Guard is restoring the St. Petersburg location, but our access may be more constrained than before. The 2024 financial reports showed that specific units struggle to afford utilities and maintenance, putting long-term viability in question.
- These disruptions and the

loss of other members due to the changes in government policy have worsened our perennial problem of staffing the flotilla and division officer positions.

- Several flotillas struggle with financial reporting.
- We urgently need a division officer for boat force personal protective equipment (PPE).

How are we dealing with this? Here is what we have achieved so far this year.

- Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg, celebrated the 85th anniversary of its charter. It is the fifth or sixth oldest unit in the country.
- Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach's resolute Auxiliary paddlecraft team, is expanding its program and supporting its extension to other flotillas.
- Three division officers have taken on the key roles of Human Resources, Finance, and Information Services to assist Flotilla 79, Tampa.
- Staff Officer-Information Services has worked diligently to remove members from required yearly not met (REYR) in flotillas whose record keeping lapsed.
- Public Education officers have made progress adapting to the new course and testing requirements.

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- The Vessel Safety Check program is active.
- Outreach activities by Flotilla 7-16, Gulfport, and Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach, are notable. Flotilla 7-16 is in its fourth year attending the Gulfport Tuesday Market.
- Division 7 actively participated in S-Train with a large attendance and strong representation among the presenters.

We have opportunities to progress:

- Flotilla 72 is working to establish a Sea Scout unit.
- In April, we debuted a comprehensive, standardized report of key metrics generated by the division covering all units and functions.
- To help address the storage problem faced by all but one flotilla, we will centralize the storage of PPE inventory and uniforms.
- Moving toward collaborative efforts and division-wide teams shows promise, but it is a cultural change requiring time and sustained reinforcement.
- As the number of surface facilities shrinks, we hope that the fresh class of crew candi-

dates will be the cornerstone of our future boat force.

- Flotilla 78 hopes to have the original contractor restore their docks at no charge. They are still working on repairs to the building.
- We can and should be less enamored of and dependent on having our own buildings. In the Auxiliary, having a dedicated building instead of shared space is the exception, not the rule. Let us find lower-cost, more flexible options and adapt to them. Yes, storage and radio facilities are a challenge, but hundreds of flotillas operate out of shared space.
- Our division will work with flotillas to improve financial management and reporting using standardized procedures.
- More training in the revised procedures for new member intake will, hopefully, get this process on track.
- Filling officer positions depends on bringing in new members with skills to be put to work. That needs to be a key focus.

Working as one team across the district, we can recover from the hurricanes' setbacks and move forward together. Ω



Charles Lambeth  
Division Vice Commander





## Training with the Coast Guard:

# When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Keep Going!

By Tony Hooper



The crew of "Duty Calls" trained with a Coast Guard 45-foot response boat medium (RBM) like the one pictured above. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Patrick Kelley, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters

On Tuesday, March 4, 2025, the facility "Duty Calls" undertook a two-boat training mission with a Coast Guard 45-foot response boat medium (RBM) at Station St Petersburg. Dean Hoskin was the coxswain, with crew members Joe Primosch, Dennis Smith, and Tony Hooper.

The transit from Gulfport to the Station was uneventful. By traveling along the inshore route in Tampa Bay towards Bayboro Harbor, we avoided

the rougher waters of the open bay. However, the winds had built with gusts to 25 knots by the time the training started. The sea state was approaching the facility's limit, at four feet or more. "Duty Calls" was rocking and rolling, and even the much larger Coast Guard 45 rolled continuously.

The Auxiliary crew took the waves in stride, enabling the trainees from Station to perform several long and short tows. Passing and retrieving the gear was challenging in that sea state, with both boats very lively even when "stationary."

In sum, it was a great day on the water, a good learning experience, and it helped build a closer relationship with our active-duty partners.

My boots took two days to dry on the boot dryer. Ω

Dean Hoskin, a member of Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg, sits at the bow of "Duty Calls" in front of Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach (formerly Flotilla 11-3, Madeira Beach). USCG Auxiliary photograph



# Cautions When Using an Engine Cut-Off Switch.

*A version of this article by Jim Fogel was published in Harbor Light 2024, the newsletter for Flotilla 98, Charlotte Harbor, Virginia Bryant, editor.*



The lanyard can be looped around the operator's wrist or clipped to a life jacket or clothing. Jim Fogle cautions boaters about possible hazards when the 'kill switch' is attached to the wrist, life jacket or clothing. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard

An engine cut-off switch is one of the most essential safety devices for boating. Also known as a "safety lanyard" or "engine kill switch," it is designed to turn off a boat's engine if the operator is thrown from the helm.

As of April 1, 2021, a federal law requires the use of these devices on all personal watercraft (PWCs) and most powerboats that are less than 26 feet long. This law addresses the ongoing issue of runaway boats and propeller strikes, which account for approximately four percent of boating accidents and injuries in the United States each year.

"Every year, Americans are injured or killed in boating accidents that could easily be prevented by using a simple engine cut-off switch. This new rule aims to make these life-saving devices second nature for boaters, similar to how seat belt laws have become standard for motorists," stated Verne Gifford, Chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Division.

However, images showing the lanyard attachment may present potential issues.

The lanyard can slip off the wrist, defeating its purpose. Additionally, showing the lanyard attached to the wrist, a personal flotation device (PFD), or the belt of a powerboat operator with a steering knob can be hazardous. Suppose the vessel's wheel is in motion and the lanyard is positioned at or above the waist of the operator. In that case, it can easily become entangled, leading to difficulties in steering or causing the cut-off to stop the engine.

Such entanglement or engine stoppage during critical maneuvers, like docking or evading collisions, can result in accidents. Novice boaters who experience entanglement or engine stoppage may become frustrated or fearful, leading them to abandon the use of the lanyard altogether.

Moreover, advising boaters to keep a spare lanyard in their console or another area near the helm may be beneficial. If the captain goes overboard and kills the engine, having a backup lanyard readily available would be crucial. Without it, most crew members or boaters may not know how to restart the boat to rescue the captain. Ω





# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service Budget and Staff Cuts:

## What boaters can do without NOAA and NWS services.

By Dorothy Riley

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicted a 2025 Atlantic hurricane season with a 60% chance of being above normal. The forecast includes 13 to 19 named storms and six to ten hurricanes, including three to five major hurricanes.

Significant budget cuts proposed by the Trump administration threaten NOAA's capabilities. Over \$1.5 billion in reductions impact climate research and staffing levels.

The National Weather Service (NWS) is experiencing staffing shortages, resulting in reduced operational capabilities that impact the accuracy of weather forecasts and warnings.

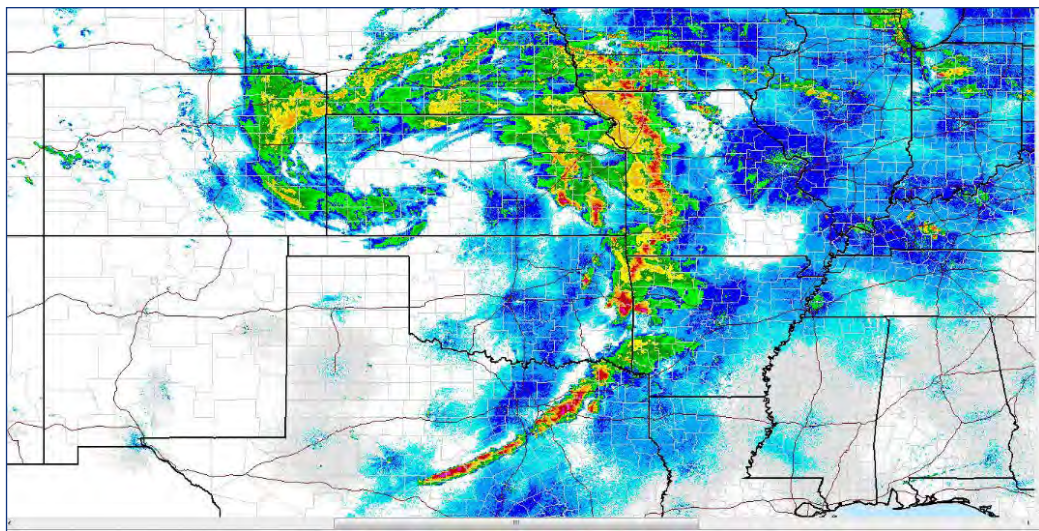
In the midst of the 2025 hurricane season, communities are encouraged to prepare for potential storms, especially given the predicted increase in hurricane activity amidst reduced federal resources.

### What boaters can do without NOAA and NWS services

#### Use alternative data sources:

Boaters would have to piece together information from a variety of less comprehensive sources and private companies.

- Private weather services: Commercial weather companies like AccuWeather and The Weather Channel may still offer services, but their accuracy for marine-specific forecasts could suffer without NOAA's data feed.



A near-perfect comma-shaped storm impacts the center of the United States. This system spawned the devastating Joplin, Missouri, tornado. Image: NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) Collection

- Satellite imagery: Boaters with access to satellite receivers could view current satellite photos for real-time cloud and storm patterns. This is not a substitute for predictive modeling, but can provide immediate insight.
- Local observation data: Boaters can look for privately maintained or university-operated buoy data. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional associations may operate their own limited networks.
- Onboard instrumentation: Tracking changes in atmospheric pressure with a barometer remains a reliable method for anticipating changes in local weather. Other onboard instruments can measure wind speed and water temperature.
- Prioritize safety and vigilance.
- With less reliable predictive information, boaters must adopt a more cautious and conservative approach.
- Increase safety margins: Boaters should avoid

(Continued on Page 9)





(Continued from page 8)

taking risks and stay in port during periods of potentially hazardous weather. With uncertain forecasts, it is best to err on the side of caution.

- Adopt old-school navigation: If charts are out-dated, relying on tools like a lead line to sound for depth and maintaining a sharp lookout for obstructions becomes more critical.
- Connect with local mariners: The experience and local knowledge of seasoned commercial and recreational mariners can be a critical resource for understanding local conditions and hazards.
- Invest in new technology: Private firms might develop commercial solutions to fill the void, such as subscription-based services for marine forecasting and chart updates. Boaters can expect to pay for services that were previously free.
- Support private and non-profit initiatives.
- Many non-profit organizations already work to supplement or support NOAA's mission.
- BoatUS: The Boat Owners Association of the United States has already been vocal about the dangers of NOAA and NWS budget cuts. They also work with the NOAA Marine Debris Program on abandoned vessel removal and may be a conduit for private marine information.
- Oceanographic NGOs: Organizations like The Ocean Foundation and university marine programs might increase their research and data collection, though their funding is not guaranteed.
- Coastal citizen science: Boaters could contribute to citizen science projects that collect and share data on water quality, marine debris, and other coastal observations. Ω

**Share these tips with the recreational boaters attending your boating safely programs.**

## NOAA and the Coast Guard Work Together to Assure Accurate Marine Navigation.



BM2 Gregory A. Bruzik, a Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) team member, checks the light emitting diode (LED) lantern on top of a buoy in Tampa Bay, Fla. Photo by PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen.

NOAA maps buoy locations by collecting positional data using various instruments and transmitting it to satellites where it's then sent to processing systems for quality control and dissemination. This information is displayed on digital nautical charts like the NOAA Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs) and the NOAA Station locator maps, which can be viewed by the public online. The location data is crucial for creating and updating navigational charts and providing real-time data on ocean conditions. The Coast Guard repairs broken or malfunctioning Buoys and verifies their GPS position.



## National Safe Boating Week Initiative:

# Flotilla Collaborates With Partner Agencies to Offer Safe Boating Program to Veterans of the Wounded Warrior Project.

By Jim Fogle



Lt. Andrew Grady, USCG Chief of the Enforcement Division, greets the students and expresses his support for the Wounded Warriors, National Safe Boating Week, and the Auxiliary. USCG Auxiliary photo by Jim Jordan.

Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg, held an enhanced Boat America (BA) program on May 17 for local Wounded Warriors. Gordon Hornby, Flotilla Staff Officer-Public Education, Jim Fogle, Instructor, and Staff Sgt. Walter Brown (Ret.), Wounded Warrior Coordinator, organized the program. Instructors included Gordon Hornby, Jim Fogle, David Rockwell, and Tony Hooper. Brian Rewinkel, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Boating Outreach Coordinator, furnished books and materials, while Tracy Adkins, Flotilla Staff Officer-Materials, provided administrative support.

Lt. Andrew Grady, USCG Chief of the Enforcement Division, greeted the students and expressed his support for the Wounded Warriors, National Safe Boating Week, and the Auxiliary.

Flotilla 72 members Jack Lee and Lewis Evans assisted with setting up and greeting students. Classes kicked off at 8:30 AM in the St. Petersburg Maritime and Defense Hub. The Bayou Market and Café in St. Petersburg catered lunch.

This was the second BA program that Flotilla 72 conducted for groups of the Wounded Warrior Program, and 27 veterans graduated. Ω



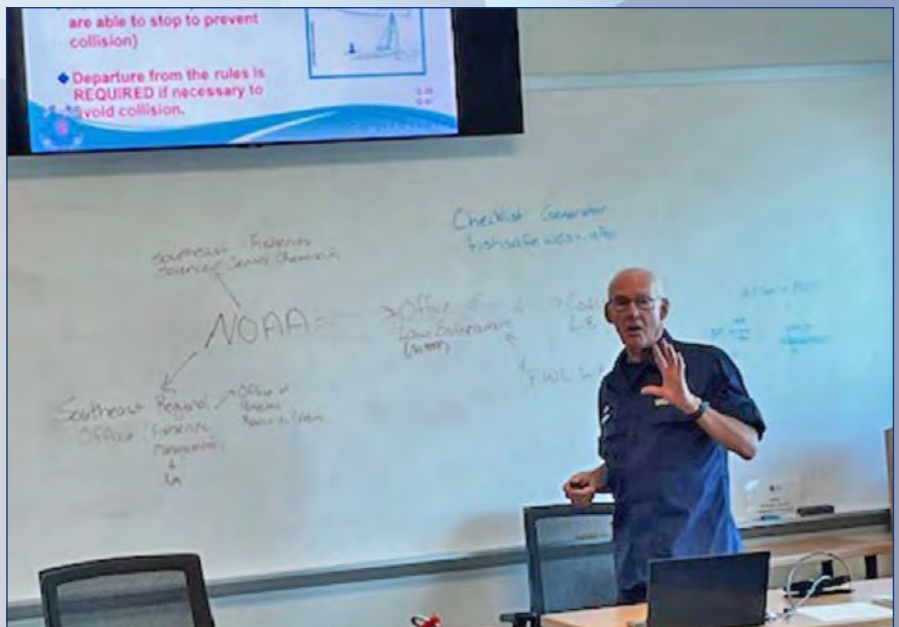


Instructor Jim Fogle demonstrates the contents of his ditch bag to the Wounded Warriors. USCG Auxiliary photograph by Jim Jordan..



Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg members Lewis Evans, Jack Lee, Gordon Hornby, Jim Fogle, and David Rockwell, flanked by members of the Wounded Warrior Project for the "Boat America" course presented on May 17 at the St. Petersburg Maritime and Defense Hub. USCG Auxiliary photo by Jim Jordan

Instructor Anthony Hooper presents the segment on Navigation to the Wounded Warrior group. USCG Auxiliary photo by Jim Jordan



# Auxiliary Staffs Information Booth at the 2025



By Dorothy Riley

The Sun-N-Fun Aerospace Expo Fly-In occurred from April 1 to April 6, 2025. This event is not solely focused on aviation and aircraft, but attracts many attendees who own boats. The expo provided an excellent opportunity for the United States Coast Guard and its Auxiliary to showcase their work and share information with the public.

The Sun-N-Fun Aerospace Expo, held at Lakeland Linder Airport in Lakeland, Florida, ran from April 3 to April 14, 2025. It is the second-largest air show in the country, drawing 150,000 to 200,000 visitors annually.

In 2025, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 77, Polk County, represented the Coast Guard at the event. They sought to display various assets, including a 27-foot patrol boat, aircraft from the USCG Air Stations in Clearwater and Miami, a USCG Auxiliary Radio Communications Trailer, and USCG Recruiters and Auxiliary Recruiters.

Parking and admission were free for watchstanders who used designated parking areas. Military volunteers provided all meals and water for these watchstanders. They greeted guests and explained the missions of the USCG and its Auxiliary at the units displayed. The watch schedule ran from April 3 to April 6, 2025, with two daily shifts. Once their shifts ended, members were free to enjoy the Sun-N-Fun Air Show.

This year, the Navy's Blue Angels headlined the air show, performing aerial flying displays on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Gilbert F. Thomas, Commander of Flotilla 77, Polk County, coordinated the Auxiliary's participation, which included members from four divisions. Ω







Left: Watchstanders at the 2025 Sun-n-Fun Airshow included Gordon Thomas, Flotilla 11-10, Dunedin; Todd Thuma, Flotilla 77, Polk County; Murray Price, (District Chief of Staff), Flotilla 84, Sarasota; Anthony Wong, Flotilla 17-10, Osceola; and Ronald Ramos, Flotilla 77, Polk County. USCG Auxiliary photos by Gilbert Thomas. Ω



Mid page: The Blue Angels in formation. USCG Auxiliary photo by Gilbert Thomas.

Above: Gilbert Thomas and Sherwood Davis stand watch at the Auxiliary information table.

Left: The expo attendees waited in long lines to catch a glimpse of the interior of a Coast Guard Hercules. USCG Auxiliary photos.







## National Safe Boating Week 2025

### Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg

Lewis Evans, Flotilla Staff Officer-Vessel Examiner received the National Safe Boating Week Proclamation from the mayor's office.

Members posted twelve entries across eight days using National Safe Boating Week materials on our flotilla's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/USCG-AUX72>

Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg, held an enhanced Boat America (BA) program on May 17 for local Wounded Warriors. (See the article on page 10 of this issue.)

Flotilla members posted "Wear It" Signs at six local boat ramps.

Flotilla 72 members contributed 73 hours to National Safe Boating Week activities:

Gordon Hornby, 15; Tracy Adkins, 5; Jack Lee, 9; Dave Rockwell, 8; Lewis Evans, 9; Jim Fogle, 25; Cathy Campbell-Heroux, 2. Ω



Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg members posted "Wear It" signs reminding boaters to wear life jackets at six local boat ramps. USCG Auxiliary photos

### Flotilla 74, Brandon

Flotilla 74, Brandon, collaborated with Flotilla 79, Tampa, in planning and executing National Safe Boating Week activities. Dorothy Riley wrote to the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners requesting a National Safe Boating Week proclamation and received the framed document once it was ready. Additionally, she wrote a news release printed in the "Osprey Observer."

Daily National Safe Boating Week and boating safety posts on the flotilla's Facebook page received over 6000 views and interactions. Additionally, both flotillas posted posters advertising the Vessel Safety Check blitz at the Salty Sol boat ramp, and members of both flotillas participated in the Vessel Examinations. Flotilla 74, Brandon, participating members included Dorothy Riley, Matt Stephen, and Earl Abbott. Ω

Earl Abbott, a member of Flotilla 74, Brandon, conducts a Vessel Safety Check in the Salty Sol boat ramp parking lot. USCG Auxiliary photo by Dorothy Riley







## National Safe Boating Week 2025

### Flotilla 75, Apollo Beach

Flotilla 75, Apollo Beach, logged over 116 hours of activities for National Safe Boating Week. Twelve members from Flotilla 75 participated in various events, including Dennis Smith from Flotilla 77 in Polk County, who served as an instructor for the Boat America class held at the Tampa Sailing Squadron.

Auxiliarist Don Lawrence "Larry" Binder and Ariel Rodriguez hosted a podcast on YouTube for "Florida West Coast Fishing." Additionally, members set up an information table at West Marine in Apollo Beach, and other members conducted Vessel Safety Checks at E.G. Simmons Park. Ω



Ariel Rodriguez and Lawrence "Larry" Binder participate in a live podcast for "Florida West Coast Fishing." Image: YouTube screen grab.



Above: Instructors Patricia Stone, Ariel Rodriguez, Gary Mull, Patrick McAlvey, Frank Goyco, Dennis Smith (77) and Don Lawrence "Larry" Binder conduct a "Boat America" class at the Tampa Sailing Squadron in Apollo Beach. USCG Auxiliary photo.

Right: Sally Barclay and Hector Romero set up an information table at West Marine in Apollo Beach. USCG Auxiliary photo.







## National Safe Boating Week 2025

### Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach

Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach members participated in many activities, including "Wear Your Life Jacket at Work Day," a Public Affairs event at West Marine, Vessel Safety Check blitzes at the American Legion Post 273, Madeira Beach Marina, and a 'Boat America' course, Recreational Boating Safety Partner Visits, and social media posts. Additionally, three members conducted a beach clean-up and four conducted a safety patrol on May 17 (hours not included in the published total).

Flotilla 78 was "out and about" providing public interaction and Vessel Exams for National Safe Boating Week at the American Legion Post 273, Madeira Beach Marina, and the West Marine store in St. Petersburg. Several members of Flotilla 78



May 16, 2025 - Auxiliary Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach members Samy Hannah, Roxanne Loomis, and Joe Primosch show off their life jackets on "Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day" at the American Legion Post 273 with the American Legion Patrons! USCG Auxiliary photo (from Flotilla 78 Facebook page).

spent the first day of National Safe Boating Week training as Auxiliary Boat Crew members!

Many thanks to our members Wally Behrendt (7.5 hours), Joe Primosh (3), Raul Lopez (12.5), Samy Hanna (11.5), Roxanne Loomis (2), Brenda Burger (3), Mark Meyers (11.5), Charles Lambeth (8.5), Tom Perry (2), Jane Gonzales (2), Jim Garrity (2), Don Rimel (4), Val Fernandez (2), and Terry Hershman (6) for their efforts as we kicked off the National Safe Boating Week's activities! Ω

Brenda Burger conducts a Vessel Safety Check at the Madeira Beach Marina. USCG Auxiliary photo (from Flotilla 78 Facebook page).







## National Safe Boating Week 2025

### Flotilla 7-16, Gulfport

A proclamation signed by Mayor Karen Love was presented to Howard Bush, Flotilla Commander, Flotilla 78, Gulfport, on May 6 at the Gulfport City Council. The proclamation was received on the same date as the Tuesday market.

The flotilla set up a Public Affairs booth at the Gulfport marina in the mornings and afternoons of May 17, 18, 24, and 25 while conducting vessel examinations.

Members completed only 15 Vessel Examinations and learned that many boaters are confused by the new Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Boater Safety decal, recently signed into law by the governor. We discussed Recreational Boating Safety with boaters while conducting National Safe Boating Week activities with positive responses.

We thank our members for the hours they contributed to National Safe Boating Week activities: Howard Bush (20 hours), Walter Melnychenko (16), Martin Richardson (16), Laurie Cooper (16), Eric Denne (16), and Thomas Steiger, two hours taking photos for our newsletter and social media page. Ω

Top: Karen Love, Mayor of Gulfport, presents a National Safe Boating Week Proclamation to Howard Bush. USCG Auxiliary photo by Thomas Steiger.

Below: Chris Anderson wears his life jacket to work. Oops! It is a float coat which keeps him warm in the cold hospital environment. USCG Auxiliary photograph.





# Resilience and Commitment: Division 7 Tampa Bay Members Response and Recovery Efforts Post-Hurricanes. By Anthony Hooper, DCDR

Division 7 Tampa Bay serves much of Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Polk Counties, from the Gulf barrier islands across Tampa Bay and eastward to the inland lakes. Our area of responsibility was struck by two hurricanes last year: Helene on the night of September 26 and Milton on October 9, 2024.

Helene brought eight feet of storm surge plus inland flooding, affecting many members, especially in the coastal flotillas. We lost several flotilla buildings between Helene's inundation and Milton's wind. The structure housing Flotilla 7-16, Gulfport was destroyed beyond repair.



Flotilla 7-16, Gulfport Hurricane damage. The interior was destroyed beyond repair. USCG Auxiliary photo by Tom Steiger.

The building and docks of Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach, were severely damaged. The site has been back in use since July, but extensive repairs still must be completed.

The Coast Guard facility that housed Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg, remains unusable a year after the storm. Flotilla 75 in Apollo Beach was displaced for months while the Tampa Sailing Squadron location they use was rebuilt. Flotilla 74, Brandon is occupying their site, but external damage remains.

Faced with these challenges, the members of Division 7 stepped up:

- Conducting vital missions to verify aids to navigation to allow the prompt reopening of shipping

channels.

- Checking the status of boat ramps so that stations and aids to navigation teams can launch missions.
- Bringing up radio facilities to maintain service despite losing almost all fixed stations.
- Assisting in the restoration of Coast Guard facilities.
- Helping neighbors clean out damaged homes and salvage property.
- Housing displaced friends and neighbors.
- Salvaging and storing materials from flotilla buildings.
- Arranging temporary locations for meetings and training.
- Twenty-six members received the Auxiliary **Humanitarian Service Award** for post-hurricane response.



Flotilla 7-16, Gulfport received the Meritorious Team Commendation for their accomplishments in cleaning their destroyed building, salvaging the contents, and restoring operations.

Regrettably, a few members who lost their homes have been unable to continue in the Auxiliary.

Flotilla 7-16 proved the value of its close relationship with and visible presence in the City of Gulfport. To replace their destroyed building, the city will provide the flotilla space in the Municipal Marina for meetings, public education classes, and a radio facility with an antenna.

Division 7's support for the Coast Guard since 2022, resulted in the award of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Meritorious Team Commendation, for services enumerated in this extract from the citation:

*"Division Seven surface facility crews fulfilled search and rescue assistance roles, directly saving eight lives while assisting Station St. Petersburg.*

(Continued on page 19)





(Continued from page 19)

Augmenting routine maritime events, they served alongside partner and Active-Duty surface assets in the execution of four Gasparilla Maritime Invasion Parade safety zones, protecting over 5,000 "mosquito fleet" civilian vessels and 250,000 spectators. Highlighting their flexibility, Division Seven served as the primary safety vessels for the annual Frogman Swim across Tampa Bay and over a dozen Super Boat Races within Tampa Bay. Adding to their flexibility and selfless service, Division Seven actively participated in the annual USCGC Blackthorn Memorial Service and Propeller Club Salute to the Coast Guard, professionally representing the service and paying tribute to fallen members. Division Seven personnel augmented the Sector St. Petersburg and CGC Vise's galleys, and served as Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examiners, enhancing a critical service to the Coast Guard and the fishing community. Lastly, Division Seven boat crews completed more than 100 underway sorties in direct support of Air Station Clearwater's fixed-wing air drop training program, saving the Air Station \$240,000 in contracted boat funding and directly bolstering the region's search and rescue aerial support programs."

For all the following data, bear in mind there are lags in reporting.

From September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025, Division 7 recorded 24,603 hours. The average membership during that time was 292, of whom 154 (53 percent) contributed hours.

During this period, despite having at most two active facilities, Division 7 conducted 62 missions:

- Six regatta safety zone missions to support the Gasparilla Invasion and the St. Pete Grand Prix.
- Seven air-vessel intercept missions to support

#### Air Station Clearwater.

- Four government support missions for Special Operations Forces Week in Tampa.
- Twelve missions to support two-boat training at Stations St. Petersburg and Sand Key.
- One search and rescue (SAR) prosecution incident.
- Three SAR standby missions to support Station St. Petersburg.
- Thirty operations training missions.
- Recorded 1,249 underway hours.

During this period, the operations team, led by Dean Hoskin and Dean Bell, increased the boat force from



Dean Hoskin watches from the helm as Auxiliary crew members take on the tow line tossed to them by the USCG crew during a training mission. USCG Auxiliary photo.

14 to 20. In addition, we now have two highly active Auxiliary Paddlecraft Operators in Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach.

Division 7 assisted Station St. Petersburg by conducting weekly active-duty personal protective equipment inspections.

In an outstanding effort, Division 7 Communications, led by Howard Bush, set up improvised radio facilities enabling us to conduct 29 missions with a total of 194 hours on air, providing vital coverage for operations and direct support to the Coast Guard.

The division's eight active Culinary Assistants support-

(Continued on page 20)



(Continued from page 19)

ed the Coast Guard with 106 missions totaling 712 hours.

Members augmenting Air Station Clearwater and other units contributed at least 650 operational, administrative, and CGIS support hours. In addition, Auxiliarist Andrew Kropp provided 154 hours of Clinical Operational Support and Health Care Training to the Air Station.

Despite the hurricanes affecting our locations and target market, the division graduated 214 adults and 532 youths from its Public Education programs.

One hundred twenty members logged 2,551 '99D' hours, supported by twelve active instructors who taught 141 hours. Three members provided 69 hours of Emergency Management/Incident Command System training plus 58 hours of command post and planning support.

Division 7 hosted S-Train at Air Station Clearwater for the second year, providing food, logistic support, tours, and contributing instructors for 170 attendees.

Forty active examiners conducted 1,598 Vessel Safety Checks, two Facility Inspections, and 770 paddlecraft checks for 2,370 inspections, despite many boat ramps being out of service. Twenty active Recreational Boating Safety Partner Visitors conducted 603 visits, notwithstanding the number of businesses closed after the storms.

Thirty-three members undertook 310 missions related to Public Affairs, logging 1,723 hours. This includes a remarkable 492 hours of Community Relations, in which Flotillas 77, Polk County, and Flotilla 7-16, Gulfport, set the pace with 330 hours. Flotilla 77 took the lead in organizing Auxiliary support for the 2025 Sun 'n Fun Aerospace Expo in Lakeland. Flotilla 7-16 was a regular presence at the Gulfport Market and other events, especially important in a community ravaged by hurricanes. Other Public Affairs events included the Tampa Boat Show, the Tampa Sailing Squadron Flea Market, and the weekly presence of Flotilla 78 at West Marine in St. Petersburg. Division 7 members actively participated in National Safe Boating Week.

In the first half of 2024, 43.2 percent of our members recorded hours. For the same period in 2025, 45.3 percent were active. The hours per member were level at 109.

DIVISION 070-07 MEMBERSHIP EVOLUTION SEP 2024 - AUG 2025												
FLOTILLA	9/1/2024	RET	FDUE	MREQ	DADM	XFER OUT	DTH	NEW MEMBER	XFER IN	8/31/2025	NET CHANGE	
72	86	(6)	(1)	(13)	(1)	(2)	-	2	-	65	(21)	-24%
74	41	(3)	(1)	(3)	-	-	(1)	2	-	35	(6)	-15%
75	53	-	(4)	(4)	-	(1)	(1)	3	-	46	(7)	-13%
77	24	(1)	-	(2)	-	-	(2)	1	-	20	(4)	-17%
78	49	(1)	-	(1)	-	-	(1)	3	-	49	0	0%
79	45	(1)	-	(1)	-	-	(1)	5	1	48	3	7%
7-16	20	-	-	(4)	-	-	-	1	-	17	(3)	-15%
Div 7	318	(12)	(6)	(28)	(1)	(3)	(6)	17	1	280	(38)	-12%

N.B. This report does not include retirements and deaths currently being processed



Christopher Anderson, Kenneth Hoover, and Howard Bush set up the radio outside the 7-16, Gulfport facility which was destroyed by the hurricanes to conduct the Nov. 2 radio guard for a boat crew qualification examination. USCG Auxiliary photo by Tom Steiger.

Membership has declined by 12 percent since September 1, 2024.

Division 7 established a central inventory of available uniforms to facilitate the onboarding of new members.

Recognizing the challenge of staffing so many appointed Flotilla Staff Officer positions, we began a pilot program in which staff officers serve two or more adjacent units.

We have progressed from having 93 members (30 percent) with a total of 227 certifications to 99 (35 percent) with a total of 240. Ω





# Coast Guard Awards Hoskin, Bell, and Marquez the Auxiliary Achievement Medal.

(Submitted by Charles Lambeth)



COMO Martin Goodwin, Commander, Southeast District, USCG Auxiliary, and CAPT Sarah Geoffrion, USCG, Coast Guard SE District Director of Prevention, (third from left), present Dean Hoskin, Division 7 Commander and Dean Bell, Division 7 Operations Officer the Auxiliary Achievement Medal at the Southeast District Training Conference on Sept. 19 in Orlando Florida. USCG Auxiliary photograph by Karen Miller.

**Dean Hoskin** from Flotilla 72 in St. Petersburg, Dean Bell, and Miguel Marquez from Flotilla 79 in Tampa have been recognized for their superior performance of duty.

Dean Hoskin served as an Auxiliary Qualification Examiner from November 6, 2012, to August 1, 2025. According to the award, "Throughout this period, Mr. Hoskin displayed exceptional leadership, technical expertise, and an unwavering commitment to mission readiness. He personally trained and qualified 74 Auxiliary coxswains and crew members, conducting 123 classroom sessions, and nearly 100 hours of underway training patrols. These efforts directly increased the Auxiliary's operational capacity, providing vital on-water support for Coast Guard safety patrols during events such as the St. Petersburg Tall Ship Parade, Gasparilla, the Frogman Swim, and critical interagency patrols aimed at

combating boating under the influence during OPERATION DRYWATER."

**Dean Bell** demonstrated remarkable operational skills, accumulating 823 underway hours during various search and rescue and maritime observation missions. This included training with Air Station Clearwater, where he participated in 66 hours of air-vessel intercept missions supporting OPERATION SUNCOAST SHIELD, significantly enhancing the service's capability to bolster maritime border curity.

**Miguel Marquez**, also from Flotilla 79 in Tampa, contributed hundreds of underway hours as a crew member for Bell. His reliability and readiness for any mission made these missions successful.

The Operational Distinguishing Device has been authorized. Ω



# *Bon Voyage to a Valued Member and Friend.*

## Division 7 Members Say Farewell to Dean Bell.

Submitted by Thomas Steiger



Dean Bell at the console and crew aboard his facility recognized by all recent graduates of the Division 7 boat crew training program. USCG Auxiliary photo.

Samy Hanna from Flotilla 78, St. Pete Beach, hosted Dean Bell's going-away party on May 25. The party celebrated the last boat crew member class and Dean's final crew training cycle. This was the first training cycle in recent memory in which 100 percent of the candidates passed.

All class members signed a placemat-sized photograph with a photo of Dean Bell's facility taken in December or January. Thomas Steiger also printed the image on a five-by-seven-inch refrigerator magnet.

Dean Bell served as Division 7 Staff Officer-Operations for the last several years. His efforts helped rebuild the division's boat crew program after the COVID-19 stand-down. Ω







Top: Samy Hanna hosted the farewell party for Dean Bell which featured a cook-out. Dean Bell is at right and Dean Hoskin is filling his plate.

Mid-page left: Dean Bell. He plans to move away from the Tampa Bay area.

Mid-page right: The graduates of the last boat crew class present Dean Bell a signed poster of his facility.

Bottom left: Dean Bell and Dean Hoskin.

Bottom right: The gifts are opened and the food is gone. Now, it is time to "chew the fat" and enjoy each other's company.

USCG Auxiliary photos by Thomas Steiger.





# MEMBERSHIP TRENDS ANALYSIS

BY ANTHONY HOOPER

## Overview of Membership Evolution

This review examines how the membership of our division and its flotillas has changed over time, comparing these trends with those observed across the broader Auxiliary.

The data presented is sourced from the U-Directorate and covers 2021 through 2025.

## Annual Membership Data

The membership figures in the upper portion of the referenced table correspond to September 1 of each year, while the lower portion provides year-end data. For 2025, the numbers reflect the status as of August 31.

## Division Membership Trends

Since 2021, our division has experienced an average membership decrease of 2.9 percent. This rate of decline is consistent with the trends seen at both the national and district levels. Compared to the average for Sector St. Petersburg, our decrease was slightly below the sector's 3.3 percent decline—neighboring divisions to the south—Divisions 8 and 9—experienced significantly lower membership losses. In contrast, the two divisions north of our area of responsibility (AOR) suffered greater member losses than we did.

## Flotilla Comparison and Current Decline

A different baseline was utilized for the flotilla-level analysis in the lower part of the table, as full-year data for 2025 is unavailable. It is expected that membership will continue to drop throughout the remainder of 2025, as some members may choose to disenroll rather than renew their dues for the coming year. The year-end data through 2024 reveals that, on average, we experienced a 1.2 percent annual decline in membership. However, 2025 has seen a marked acceleration in member loss, with Flotillas 75, 72, and 77 being the most affected. Ω

MEMBERSHIP							
1-Sep	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	'21 - '25	Average
All Aux	22,322	21,384	20,881	20,402	19,735	-12%	-2.9%
District	4,210	4,126	4,079	3,890	3,725	-12%	-2.9%
Div 7	317	344	326	313	280	-12%	-2.9%
Div 8	248	261	273	261	246	-1%	-0.2%
Div 9	427	429	438	410	394	-8%	-1.9%
Div 11	247	197	180	179	166	-33%	-8.2%
Div 15	121	119	112	104	95	-21%	-5.4%
Sector SP	1,360	1,350	1,329	1,267	1,181	-13%	-3.3%
	Year End				1-Sep	'21 - '24	21 - 25
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Average	Average
72	80	83	76	82	65	0.8%	-4.7%
74	37	34	39	36	35	-0.9%	-1.4%
75	61	51	51	48	46	-7.1%	-6.1%
77	24	25	23	21	20	-4.2%	-4.2%
78	41	50	42	47	49	4.9%	4.9%
79	49	48	45	49	48	0.0%	-0.5%
7-16	18	17	22	17	17	-1.9%	-1.4%
Div 7	310	308	298	300	280	-1.1%	-2.4%





In case you ever wondered what Anthony Hooper does in his spare time... *(did I say SPARE time?)*



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AUXILIARY COMMENDATION MEDAL  
TO AUXILIARIST ANTHONY W. HOOPER**

Auxiliarist HOOPER is cited for outstanding achievement while serving as Assistant District Staff Officer - Navigation Systems (NS) for Sector Saint Petersburg from 01 January 2021 to 31 March 2025. He took on the monumental task of rewriting and updating all District Seven NS training materials, including Power-Point presentations, to ensure they met current district needs. Auxiliarist HOOPER's efforts significantly enhanced the quality of the training provided. He played an instrumental role in compiling the necessary research to verify the location, characteristics, and ownership of every Coast Guard-permitted bridge in mainland District Seven\*. Auxiliarist HOOPER created comprehensive spreadsheets and geographic data files for each sector, enabling the NS program to work seamlessly with Google Earth. This initiative greatly improved members' ability to determine Coast Guard file numbers and properly identify bridges with navigational aids. He provided the necessary software, kept track of participants, ensured accurate AUXDATA II entries, and followed up with members to complete their workshops. His hard work and leadership had a profound and positive impact on district operations and training programs. Auxiliarist HOOPER's dedication, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

\* Southeast District





Donations are down,  
requests are up

# THE POWER OF US IS RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

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