



Coast Guard Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety Exhibits

Prepared by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary National Marketing Group

Introduction: Since the number of boaters who drowned not wearing a life jacket has remained around 90 percent for several years, its time to approach boating safety exhibits differently to get better results. 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. So make good use of these tried and tested concepts that will make your exhibit a success.

Purpose: To make an exhibit display say “Come see me” so your organization can effectively market core programs and current initiatives to the recreational boating public.

Method: To apply proven marketing techniques to effectively communicate key messages.

Goal: Reduce boating fatalities by promoting “Wear It” to boaters most at risk for a fatality.

The Core Programs are the four components of Recreational Boating Safety:

- Life Jackets Save Lives - Wear a Life Jacket
- Safe Boats Save Lives – Obtain a Vessel Safety Check
- Knowledgeable Boaters Save Lives - Take a Boating Course
- Sober Boaters Save Lives – Never Boat Under the Influence

Other possible initiatives depending on the geographical area or season and space permitting:

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

Groups of boaters most at risk for a boating fatality:

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

Approachability: An exhibit and those staffing it must be able to attract a visitor’s attention and entice them to stop. 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. You’re in competition with all the other event distractions for that short time. So in addition to planning the display, selecting the right Auxiliarists to operate it and having them appropriately attired is equally important. The concept for a successful exhibit is for visitors to be able to relate to Auxiliarists as “affable” rather than “authority” figures. Auxiliarists must be physically and mentally able to perform the duties. We recognize this is not an easy task and it is usually difficult to obtain enough volunteers. Avoid problems by having those who will stand watch read this guide, the Exhibit Operating Procedure and Inflatable Life Jacket Basics article in advance so they know what is expected and can answer questions about life jackets.

The Exhibit Operating Procedure (sample below) covers procedures, appearance and hygiene, which are important considerations. Table tops are for display items and not a resting place for hats, jackets, reading materials or water bottles. Eating at the exhibit should not be permitted and breath mints are a good idea. Watch standers should stand or use backless stools (no chairs) to maintain eye contact, and not more than two in an exhibit per shift. Socialize with family and other members away from the exhibit area so visitor access is not discouraged by a crowd. Watch standers should be able to answer questions about new style life jackets.

Wear any authorized/designated uniform EXCEPT one that has stripes, shoulder boards and ribbons. The Undress Blue – Summer Alpha uniform (or Undress Blue – Winter uniform when appropriate) is specified in the Auxiliary Manual for boating safety exhibits. One Auxiliarist staffing the exhibit should wear an inflatable life jacket and the other a belt pack to show off new styles. Wearing a Tropical blue long or Service Dress Blue Bravo uniform is discouraged because wearing a life jacket can damage shoulder boards and ribbons, and looks awkward when worn with these uniforms. Recommend the Auxiliary member device rather than elected or staff office insignia be worn when staffing exhibits, like when we work side-by-side with the gold-side. This is because many visitors to an exhibit were junior enlisted military personnel who will relate better to members rather than those they mistake for military officers because of the elected/staff insignia. Exhibits must have **“approachability”** to attract visitors.

Most exhibit spaces are only 10' x 10' so design an open “L” shaped exhibit to draw visitors into the space, enabling you to engage them. Exhibits SHOULD NOT have a table across the front because it is a visitor barrier. Exhibits with a front “barrier” table do not work. They are outdated and should be avoided. An open front encourages visitor access. This change in concept may be difficult for some, but exhibits should be effective not inflexible if you are going to promote boating safety. Use table cloths and table skirts. Paper products are available.

Encouraging boaters to wear life jackets is a primary objective so a colorful life jacket display should be the first thing people see. Display automatic and manual inflatable, inherently buoyant and children’s Type II life jackets in bright colors. A life jacket display stand is easy to fabricate from “cow pen” wire sold for about \$27 at most feed stores. It is 16' long by 4' wide made of galvanized rods with 1' squares and can be cut in half to make two 4' x 8' tall sections. District Operation Boat Smart Coordinators received a life jacket selection to display a few years back. If it is not available, contact a local retailer and borrow their newest life jackets in each category. Most are accommodating about letting you borrow a few choice designs, especially if they know you will tell visitors where they came from.



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. A good opening line is “do you do much boating?” NOT “do you own a boat?” DO NOT ignore visitors even if you are busy. Display life jackets on the rack using coat hangers and encourage visitors to try them on. Orally inflate an inflatable life jacket on a visitor to demonstrate how buoyant they are when worn. Do not display old style over the head types, only new types in different styles. Secure life jackets when the exhibit is not staffed. An inexpensive 1/8” steel cable with loops on both ends can



easily be fabricated with materials from a hardware store. Attach a card to each so those staffing the exhibit can answer questions about type, price and source; and ensure they read the article “Inflatable Life Jacket Basics.” Use free Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC) and National Safe Boating Campaign literature to round out the exhibit.

D5 designed several effective pull up displays. They cost less than \$150 each and anyone can piggyback on the contract. This center life jacket display uses signs (behind some of the life jackets) explaining life jacket types. The two pages on blue backing (left side) explain how to fit a life jacket and inflatable life jacket preventative maintenance needs. Life jacket type and fitting information is in ANSC 3006. With a pull up on both sides of the colorful life jacket display you have an eye catching exhibit that will attract volume business.



Posters can be taped to foam boards or stronger materials for more durable free standing table top displays. Include a list in large print of mandatory and recommended VSC items for 16-21’



boats (most common). If you display a boating course book, secure it to the board with a wire. The flare gun cartridges displayed are inert and so marked. Update outdated terms (such as “Courtesy Marine Examination”) on the ANSC 3507 Join the Auxiliary poster, with “Vessel Safety Check,” and add a sixth block for “Maritime Domain Awareness” Post your flotilla’s boating course and VSC schedule; and have sign-up forms for both available. Display no more than three panels to avoid crowding. (Note: The old style life jacket displayed has a sign on it saying “I am why people don’t wear life jackets, I’m hot and uncomfortable. Come in and try on our new style life jackets.”)

Most people like to see symmetry and order which is why displays work much better and attract more people if items are organized. Visual clutter is avoided by using literature racks or individual plastic holders which can be purchased from an office supply store. Using individual holders also permits displaying brochures in front of related posters on each panel. Have recruiting brochures in front of the recruiting poster, life jacket brochures mounted on the life jacket display rack, etc. This also frees slots for brochures in the ANSC #9018 – five slot RSVP Literature Display rack or the newer ANSC #9018a, a 6 slot version. Limited decals or oversize items should be neatly stacked on the table. Do not use outdated materials.

The ANSC 3026 series America’s Waterway Watch materials (pamphlet and sticker) appeal to patriotic instinct. If you have a boating enthusiast, the 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. 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.

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.

Some owners of 26' or larger boats are not aware of the requirement for an oil pollution and garbage placard to be displayed on-board. 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 CG recruiting literature available at the exhibit.

Exhibit security is always a concern and attendants should be alert for shop lifters. Items should be secured at night. That means extra work but it will also avoid problems, especially if you are displaying borrowed items. Use empty CO2 cartridges for any inflatable life jackets displayed or worn, or remove the cartridge to preclude pranksters from inflating them.

Maintaining a Watch Log provides a record of who staffed the exhibit for reporting; what was sold for accountability; inquiries received so they can be responded to, or even the number of meaningful contacts for an after action report. It also provides information so subsequent watch standers know what occurred on previous shifts. A correctly maintained log would show where items stored for security the night prior can be found or where additional literature is stored. Regardless of advance planning and best intentions, there may still be some who arrive to stand watch in the incorrect uniform or not understanding the NEW operating ground rules. The log book would be a good place to have this guide and Exhibit Operating Procedure available for them to read. Also, include contact information, lock combinations and numbers.

Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC) items are ordered by the FSO-MA from ANSC by snail mailing or faxing an order form to them. These order forms can be found in the back of the ANSC catalog. There is a series of pre completed order forms where the requestor only has to enter quantity but there is one blank order form as well. What frequently occurs is a new item will be announced via e-mail or on the Auxiliary Member's What's New Page but it will not yet be listed on one of the order forms. All the FSO-MA needs to do is write in the item on the bottom of one of the forms, use the blank form, or even attach a piece of paper to a form.

Brochures and pamphlets have maximum ordering quantity limits. When more than the maximum is needed, include a short justification. For example: "Needed for the Jones Boat Show, estimated attendance 5,000; or needed to stock 10 marine dealers in the Spring. When ordering, keep in mind one event Marketing handled for the past four years averaged 30-35,000 visitors over three days but we gave away less than 300 of the most popular item (#3006 Federal Boating Regulations), and usually 100 or less of the other items. Order enough for the event and justify the larger amount on the form. These materials are free to your flotilla but cost the Coast Guard money to produce and ship. Plan for the anticipated crowd but avoid waste.

Visit http://www.cgauz.info/g_pcx/publications/misc/DCAT.pdf for the ANSC catalog. Or go to www.cgauz.org, select “Members”, then on the right side select “Chief Dir of Auxiliary”, then on the left top under MANUALS select “ANSC Catalog”, then at the top of this page under Auxiliary Manuals select “ANSC 2007” which is the 5th item down and you will access the ANSC catalog. **Prior planning is always a good idea because some items can be out of stock,** especially at the end/beginning of a new fiscal year. Here is the key literature/poster list:

ANSC literature and accompanying decals (** indicates should always be used at events):

3002 Brochure Your Guide to Towing (YIC) (6” wide)
**3003 Pamphlet You're In Command (YIC) - Boat Responsibly
**3006 Pamphlet Federal Boating Regulations (YIC) or State Boating Regulations
3009 Pamphlet Global Maritime Distress & Safety System (GMDSS)
**3023 Pamphlet Join the Auxiliary
**3026 Pamphlet America's Waterway Watch
**3026a Decal America's Waterway Watch
3031 Pamphlet Safe Boating for Anglers and Hunters (6” wide)
**3032 Pamphlet How to Choose the Right Life Jacket (YIC)
3033 Pamphlet Beware of Boat Propellers (YIC)
9025 Boat Responsibly Plastic Bag

ANSC Posters

3003b Poster Take the ABC Course (8 ½” x 11”)
3003c Poster 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 - large
3026c1 Poster America's Waterway Watch (14” x 12”) – laminated.
**3505 Poster Which Life Jacket For You? Laminated, free standing – excellent item.
3506 Poster Ten Ways to Paddle Safely (11" x 15")

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)
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

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).

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 at a show.

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). Although available from other services, only use Coast Guard recruiting materials.

The National Marketing Group is available to assist flotillas with exhibits and advice. Contact Stu Soffer for assistance, at (870) 247-1177 after 0900 CST, or cgaugstu@yahoo.com.
Guide updated January 15, 2009

Sample 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 watch standers as "affable" as opposed to "authority" figures. And the Auxiliary volunteer 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. Remember, free exhibit space sometimes does not include a carpet. Many venues rent them. If your exhibit space is carpeted, or you bring your own carpet, it has to be cleaned daily so think about a vacuum cleaner or broom. Having electricity also costs money at most boat shows.
4. Operating the Exhibit:
 - a. Only two watch standers should staff the exhibit at one time. Socialize with family and other members away from the exhibit area so visitor access is not blocked or discouraged.
 - b. The Undress Blue – Summer Alpha uniform (collar member insignia) is designated and hats are not worn under cover. Key rings, knives or other non-uniform items should not be worn on belts or hooked to belt loops. Gold chains or other inappropriate jewelry should not be worn in view. It's always a good idea to review the Auxiliary Manual on uniform and accessory wear policies before meeting the public.
 - c. Encouraging the boating public to wear "today's" life jackets is a primary objective, so you wearing a new style life should be the first thing people see when they enter our exhibit space. One of those staffing the exhibit should wear a PV/PE/VE inflatable life jacket and the other a belt pack to show off both styles. The inflatable life jacket pouch is an ideal place for cell telephones and car keys, pen and pad, sun glasses, etc.

d. 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 relieves you.

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. Do not tell “sea stories.”

f. Don’t hand literature to everyone. Even if the literature is potentially interesting, thrusting unwanted literature at visitors is offensive. Do not pre-bag literature for visitors. This is a waste of literature. Let visitors select or ask for what they want or you can suggest items.

g. Ensure all are wearing the uniform of the day correctly before taking photographs. This is especially important if a photo is going to be published in a newspaper, magazine or on a web site. One frequently overlooked item is wearing a hat under cover or prohibited items on belts.

h. Watch standers are required to log in and out in the Watch Stander’s Log. Record the location of any items secured for the night, literature out of stock, contacts to be followed up on, estimated number of meaningful contacts for each shift and any other pertinent information.

4. Be Professional and Effective:

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. Neatness. Table tops should be kept neat and orderly. Do not place hats, jackets, water bottles and other personal items on them. Store all items not in use out of sight.

c. 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.

d. Don’t Chew Gum. No one wants to talk with someone who’s chewing.

e. Don’t Eat or Smoke: Take a break. Remember, garlic, onions, and some foods cause unpleasant breath as does tobacco. Carry breath mints or other breath cleansers. Some mouth wash products contain alcohol and can give the false impression the user consumed alcohol.

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 at least acknowledge them and subsequently try to include them in the conversation.

Have the DVCR sign the operating procedure.