

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
Marine Safety Administrative and Management Specialist
Qualification (AUX-MSAM)

Study Guide



Revised 08 December 2025

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
Marine Safety Administrative and Management Specialist Qualification
(AUX-MSAM)
Study Guide

Introduction

Upon successful completion of the Marine Safety Administrative and Management Qualification, an Auxiliarist will hold the minimum competencies to successfully fill Marine Safety staff positions in a Flotilla, Division, District or National post, or participate in Marine Safety and Environmental Protection missions to support US Coast Guard goals and objectives. This qualification is not intended to be a mandatory prerequisite for any assignment. Instead, it is intended to be a professional development tool for any/all Auxiliarists interested in serving in Prevention missions in a knowledgeable, professional manner.

Special Nature of the Auxiliary Marine Safety Administrative and Management Specialist Qualification (AUX-MSAM)

Candidates for the Auxiliary Marine Safety Administrative and Management Specialist Qualification (MSAM) shall complete each requirement of the PQS workbook; no waivers shall be granted.

Candidates shall work with an Auxiliary Verifying Officer (VO). Auxiliary Verifying Officers shall be experienced and qualified personnel who have demonstrated the ability to evaluate, instruct, and observe other personnel in the performance task criteria. The VO must hold the MSAM Qualification and shall be responsible for signing off PQS tasks as they are satisfactorily completed by the candidate. The VO shall observe the successful performance of each task and document such with date and initials in the appropriate space provided in this booklet. It may be necessary to perform a task several times. The VO will not give credit for any task that is not performed satisfactorily. Simply taking the online set of Qualification Modules does not meet the requirement for demonstrating successful performance. *The VO will also examine and verify all supporting documents required and initial the space for that verification in the Record of Completion.*

To find a qualified Verifying Officer, the member should ask their FSO-MS for help; the FSO-MS should check to see if there is a qualified VO within the Flotilla first. If not, then the FSO-MS should check AUX Officer for a member holding the qualification. If there is no properly

qualified VO within the District, the DSO-MS should send a request for assistance locating a VO to the Division Chief, Communications and Education, in the national Prevention Directorate.

Acceptable proof of completion of Practical Tasks shall consist of a letter on official letterhead from the CG supervising the task observation or an email from the FC, VFC or IS Officer. *A copy of the material presented (lesson plan, PowerPoint, handouts, etc.) should be reviewed by the VO prior to signing off the task.*

Upon completion of the PQS Workbook, the candidate will request that the VO organize an oral board. The VO shall work with the candidate's DSO-MS to select members of the oral board and convene the board at a date agreeable to all involved. The Oral Board shall consist of at least three Auxiliarists who hold the MSAM qualification. Active Duty Officers may participate and ask questions pertaining to the structure and function of the USCG. The Oral Board may be conducted by phone or electronic meeting if distance or other consideration prohibits a face-to-face gathering. If the VO cannot meet with the candidate for the Oral Board, then an elected Officer from the member's Flotilla or one of the Oral Board Examiners may sit with the candidate for the Oral Board exam.

Once the Oral Board has been successfully completed, the signed MSAM qualification package, together with copies of all supporting documentation, shall be submitted to the DSO-MS for review and signature. A cover letter with the candidate's name, address, phone contact information, email address, Division and Flotilla, and EMPLID shall be submitted with the completed PQS package. Once signed, the DSO-MS shall forward the entire package to the District DIRAUX with a request for his/her signature, the issue of a Letter of Designation, and entry into AUX DATA. ALCOAST 45/10 states: "Due to the unique nature of the AUX-MSAM and AUX-MEES PQS subject matter, Letters of Designation for these qualifications will be reviewed and signed by Regional Directors of the Auxiliary." (April 2013)

Procedure for Completion of This Qualification

Proper procedure for completion of this qualification requires the use of three documents: the Study Guide, the PQS Booklet which contains the tasks to be signed off by the Verifying Officer, and the online MSAM Qualification Modules which accompany the Study Guide.

The member will be required to complete the online MSAM Qualification Modules, submitting the required documents and proof of completion to the Verifying Officer to receive a sign off for the last task in the PQS booklet for each section. The online Qualification Modules must be completed in order and before the member may move to the next MSAM Qualification Section in either the Study Guide or the online modules.

Once all of the Study Guide Sections and the online Qualification Modules have been completed and properly signed off by the Verifying Officer in the PQS Booklet, the member is ready to apply to take the oral board.

NOTE: Completion of the online Qualification Modules does NOT confer the MSAM qualification; all work must be signed off by the Verifying Officer, including the Study Guide discussions, demonstrations and required OJT activities.



Revision Date: 20 September 2025

Auxiliary Marine Safety Administrative and Management Qualification

Section 1: USCG Structure and Function

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of Section 1, the member will:

- 1.0 Know how to access and navigate the uscg.mil website to find information.
- 1.1 Be able to describe the major structure and function of each of the five sections of USCG Headquarters organization using the link provided.
- 1.2 Be able to describe the major structure and function of the DC-Operations within USCG HQ and navigate to that page on the USCG website.
 - 1.2.1 Identify CG-5PC-BSX as the Office of the Chief Director of the Auxiliary.
 - 1.2.2 Be able to navigate to the BSX page under CG-5PC and describe the functions of that office.
- 1.3 Be able to describe the relationship between USCG HQ and the USCG Districts using the diagrams provided in the link and the Study Guide.
- 1.4 Be able to describe the structure of a USCG District and the functions of major sections within a District with an emphasis on Prevention.
- 1.5 Be able to describe the structure of a Sector and the functions of major sections with an emphasis on Prevention.
 - 1.5.1 Be able to describe the structure and function of an MSU and MSD as well as their relationship to a Sector.
- 1.6 Be able to describe the position and role of the AUX-LO in a Sector.

1.0 US Coast Guard Structure and Function

1.1 Organizational Structure Within the US Coast Guard Headquarters.

The following link illustrates the basic structure of the US Coast Guard:

<https://www.uscg.mil/Units/Organization/>

The parent organization of the Auxiliary is the US Coast Guard, and in order to understand the role and function of the Auxiliary in support of the US Coast Guard and its missions, Auxiliarists need to be familiar with the structure and function of the parent organization. Take time to explore the organizational chart and learn about the duties and responsibilities of each section. This website is a valuable resource for Auxiliary members seeking additional information about the USCG missions in general and those in which we are authorized to participate.

1.2 Structure and Function of the Deputy Commandant for Operations Office (CG-DCO)

This Office encompasses nine major areas as shown in the diagram of the USCG organization; each has a particular set of duties, responsibilities and missions as discussed under each heading found in the following link:

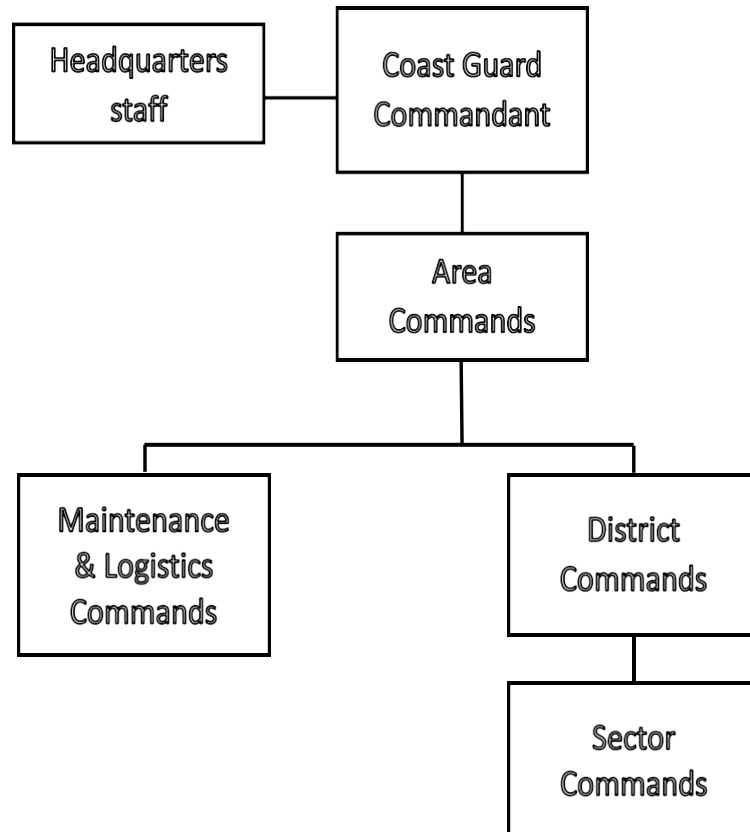
<https://www.uscg.mil/Units/Organization/#dco>

Members should explore this Office to learn about each section. The Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy Office (CG-5P) is of particular importance as it includes the Office of Inspections and Compliance, where the Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety (CG-BSX) is found. CG-BSX is the Office of the Chief Director of the Auxiliary.

1.3 Relationship Between US Coast Guard Headquarters and USCG Districts

As can be seen in the US Coast Guard organizational chart, the United States is divided into two geographic areas: Atlantic Area and Pacific Area. Each Area contains a number

of USCG Districts under the command of a senior officer, usually a Rear Admiral (RADM). Each District is composed of one or more Sectors under the command of a Captain of the Port (COTP). The following diagram illustrates this Chain of Command from USCG HQ down to USCG Sectors.



1.4 Structure and Function of USCG Districts

Although geographic and cultural characteristics vary among Districts across the country, they all share common structure and function. Missions may vary depending on geographic area and the activities in those areas, but all Districts share in the core values espoused by the USCG in the execution of those missions. As can be seen in the USCG organization chart, within the two Area Commands there are 14 Districts. Some Districts have cutters assigned to them and some have air stations;

some may have Marine Safety Units and/or Marine Safety Detachments included, but all Districts have at least one Sector with its associated Area of Responsibility (AOR).

The diagram on the next page shows the general organization of a District and the interrelationships among its components. Compare this with the structure of your own District using the USCG organization chart.

The following units report to the District Commander through various Chains of Command if present in the USCG District; all USCG Districts have at least one Sector in the AOR.

Sectors

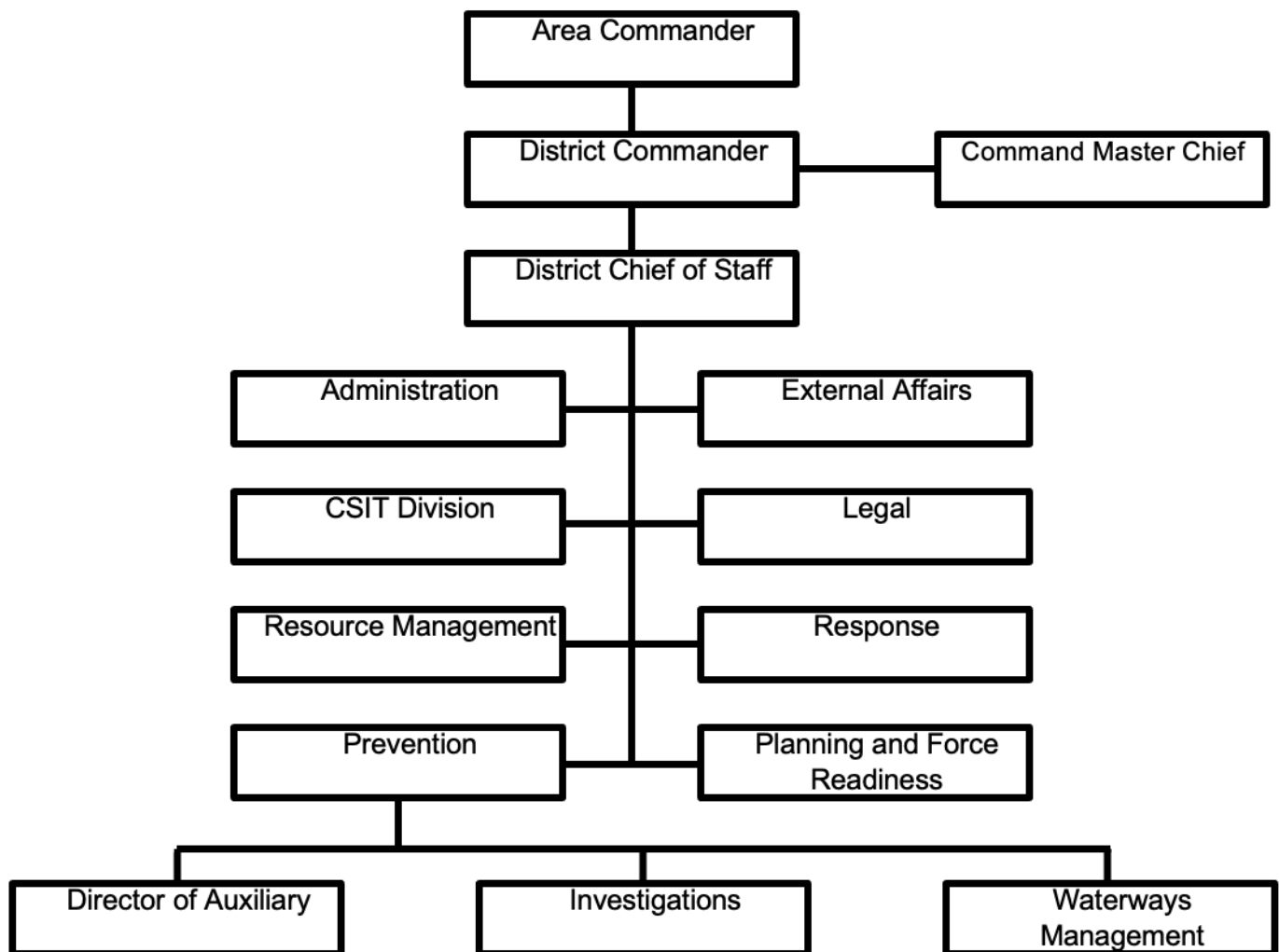
Cutters

Air Stations

Buoy Tenders

Mission Support Commands

Vessel Traffic Service



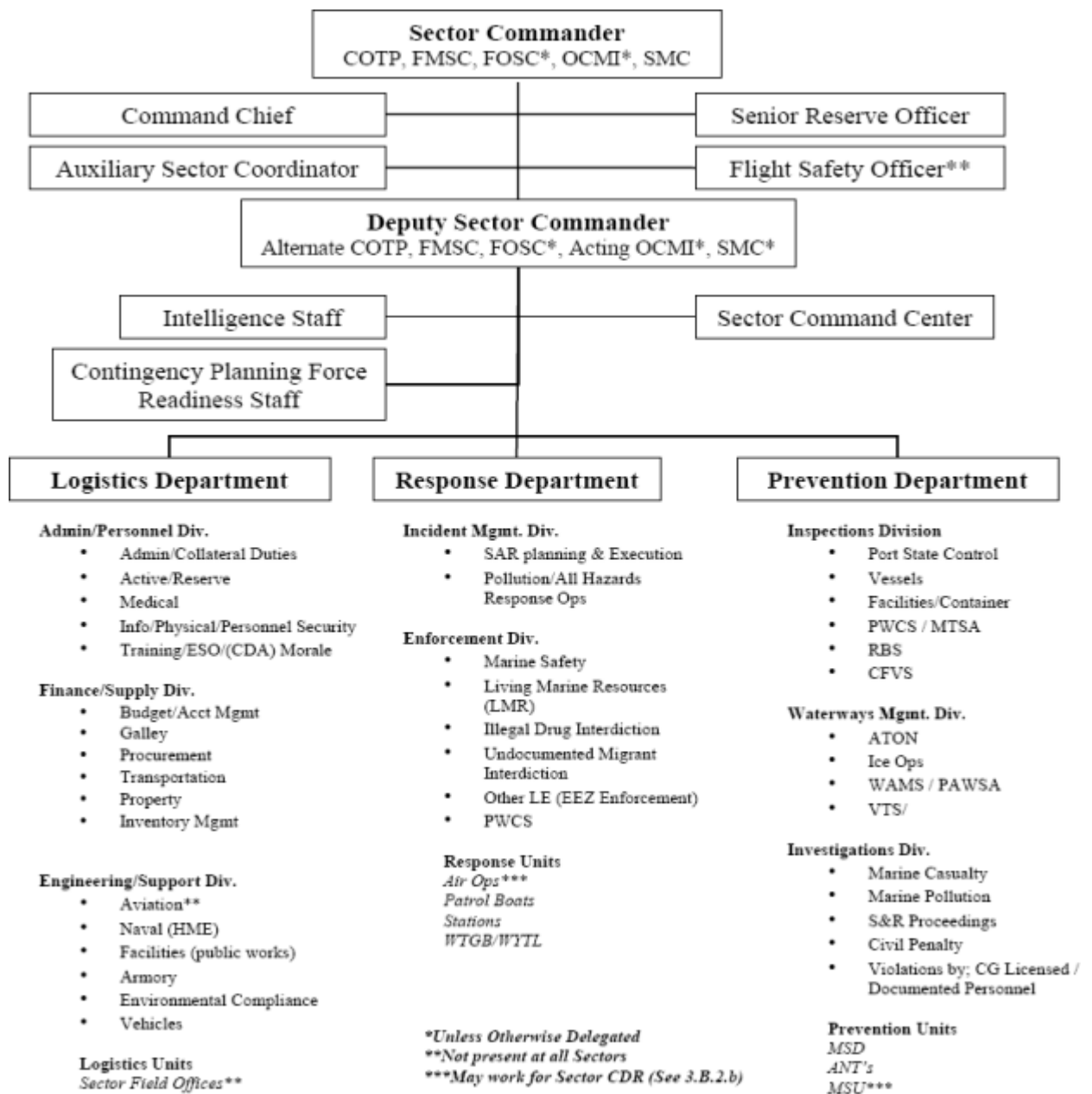
US Coast Guard District General Organization Chart

1.5 Sector Structure and Function

Just as the structure of Districts may vary based upon geography, local environment, mission activities and cultural characteristics, the Sectors included within a District may vary in structure for the same reasons. The diagram on the next page illustrates the common structure of a Coast Guard Sector, with brief outlines of the responsibilities of each subdivision or position. Most commonly, Auxiliarists will interact with the Sector in which they reside, but may occasionally serve in the AOR of an adjacent Sector for various missions.

The **Sector Commander** is responsible for all activities within the Sector, including (but not limited to) the day to day operations of any ports, law enforcement activities, incident response activities, facility and vessel inspections, investigations, environmental protection and response activities, force training and readiness, and contingency planning for the Sector's geographic Area of Responsibility.

The Sector Commander is aided by the **Deputy Sector Commander** and those additional personnel who comprise the Intelligence Staff, the Command Center Staff, the Contingency Planning Force Readiness Staff, the Command Chief, the Senior Reserve Officer, the Flight Safety Officer and (if appointed in a particular District) the Auxiliary Sector Coordinator (ASC), who is responsible for conveying Sector needs to the Auxiliary District.



Each Sector is comprised of a **Prevention Department** (responsible for Investigations, Inspections and Waterways Management), a **Response Department** (responsible for Enforcement and Incident Management) and a **Logistics Department** (responsible for Finance and Supply, Engineering and Support, Contingency Planning and Personnel/Administration).

The **Sector Prevention Department** focuses largely on gaining compliance with regulatory standards and the design and maintenance of waterway systems to prevent incidents. Prevention functions include the following:

- (a) Inspections/examinations of vessels and waterfront facilities to ensure compliance with federal safety, security, and environmental regulations.
- (b) Investigations of marine casualties to determine the cause of accidents, pursuing Maritime Personnel Actions/Civil Penalties, and to serve as a feedback loop into compliance inspections and regulatory development.
- (c) Development and maintenance of the waterway navigation infrastructure (i.e. Aids to Navigation (ATON)).
- (d) Management of traffic through Vessel Traffic System (VTS) centers and the use of Captain of the Port Orders, Limited Access Areas, and Regulated Navigation Areas.

The **Sector Response Department** focuses on command and control activities associated with an emergency incident response and/or heightened threat situation that requires swift enforcement actions. Response requires proficiency in high tempo command, control and communications processes, and the exercise of response and security enforcement expertise to accomplish incident command and crisis management. Legacy Marine Safety functions that moved to the Response Department include pollution/all hazards response and response to reports involving Living Marine Resources.

The **Sector Logistics Department** provides the capabilities to support Sector operational missions and prevention activities through the coordinated balance between asset maintenance, personnel management, medical readiness, food preparations, and financial aspects of planned and unscheduled operations.

Some Sectors may also include **Marine Safety Units (MSUs)** and/or **Marine Safety Detachments (MSDs)**. Marine Safety Units (**MSUs**) operate under the direct supervision of the Sector but may be geographically removed from Sector Offices. MSUs specialize in port security, marine inspections, environmental response, maritime investigations, and waterways management. They also may conduct some limited Response missions such as search and rescue (SAR) as well as pollution response. Some MSUs still retain OCMI, COTP and FOSC authority over a designated portion of the Sector's area of responsibility. **MSDs** are smaller than MSUs and focus primarily on port safety and security, marine environmental protection, and commercial vessel safety missions.

The **Sector Auxiliary Liaison Officer (AUX-LO)** functions as the primary contact between the Auxiliary District and the Sector. The AUX-LO communicates directly with the **Auxiliary Sector Coordinator (ASC)** (if assigned within an Auxiliary District) to pass information about Sector needs that may be met by the Auxiliary. The ASC reports directly to the Auxiliary District Commodore (DCO).

Find your own Sector using the USCG Organization Chart to link to your USCG District; look at the Sector's geographic AOR and your location within that AOR. Find out what kinds of resources and missions are found within your Sector; what are some of the missions you might be interested in or qualified to support? Compare your Sector to other Sectors within your USCG District to see how they are alike and how they differ.