

# **Auxiliary Marine Safety Administrative and Management Specialist Qualification**

## **Section 4: USCG Auxiliary Marine Safety Staff Officer Duties and Responsibilities**

### **Learning Objectives**

**Upon completion of Section 4, the member will be able to:**

- 4.0 Locate and access resources on the National Auxiliary website pertaining to Marine Safety Staff Officers and their duties/responsibilities.
- 4.1 Identify the MS/MEP Staff structure from District to Flotilla level.
- 4.2 Define “communication” and discuss its importance to the proper functioning of any unit or team.
- 4.3 Describe the Chain of Communication within the MS/MEP Staff structure and discuss the importance of maintaining good communication in both directions.
- 4.4 Discuss the training available to all MS Staff Officers; what is desirable at each level and why?
- 4.5 Describe and discuss the duties and responsibilities of a DSO-MS. Where is this information found?
- 4.6 Describe and discuss the duties and responsibilities of an SO-MS. Where is this information found?
- 4.7 Describe and discuss the duties and responsibilities of an FSO-MS. Where is this information found?
- 4.8 Describe what MS/MEP program resources are available to all MS Staff Officers and where they are found.

## **4.0 MS Staff Officer Duties and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 MS Staff Officer Structure within the Auxiliary**

The Staff Officer structure within the Auxiliary is outlined and discussed in the Auxiliary Manual, Chapter 4, Section G (AUXMAN); take time to look at this information and see how it is reflected in the structure of your own District. The AUXMAN can be found at the following link:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=H-DEPT&category=auxiliary-manuals>

#### **4.1.1 Auxiliary District Staff Officers for Marine Safety**

##### **4.1.1.1 District Staff Officer for Marine Safety (DSO-MS)**

The DSO-MS is the person responsible for the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection program within the Auxiliary District in which they serve. They are appointed by the District Commodore (DCO) to serve for one year at a time and report to either the District Chief of Staff (DCOS) or a District Directorate Chief of Prevention (DDC-P).

##### **4.1.1.2 Assistant District Staff Officer for Marine Safety (ADSO-MS)**

The ADSOs-MS serve as program assistants to the DSO-MS and are requested by the DSO-MS; they must be approved by the DCO and serve for one year at a time. They report to the DSO-MS and may be assigned either by geographic area or topic, or a combination of the two. For example, an ADSO-MS may be assigned to work with and report on a Sector within their District or they may be assigned to work District-wide with a particular program such as Uninspected Passenger Vessel Examinations (UPV). The assignments of ADSOs-MS are dependent upon the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection program needs within each District.

#### **4.1.2 Auxiliary Division Staff Officers for Marine Safety (SO-MS)**

The Division Staff Officer for Marine Safety (SO-MS) is appointed by the Division

Commander (DCDR) for a term of one year and reports to the Vice Division Commander (VCDR) as well as the DSO-MS. This person is responsible for the Marine Safety program at the Division level. There are no Assistant Division Staff Officers for Marine Safety per the Auxiliary Manual (AUXMAN, CH.4).

#### **4.1.3 Auxiliary Flotilla Staff Officers for Marine Safety (FSO-MS)**

The Flotilla Staff Officer for Marine Safety (FSO-MS) is appointed by the Flotilla Commander (FC) for a term of one year and reports to the Vice Flotilla Commander (VFC) as well as the SO-MS. This person is responsible for the Marine Safety Program at the Flotilla level. There are no Assistant Flotilla Staff Officers for Marine Safety per the Auxiliary Manual (AUXMAN, CH.4).

### **4.2 Communication: Key at All Levels and Between Levels**

#### **4.2.1 Definition of Communication**

Communication is defined as “A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior”.

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>)

#### **4.2.2 Types of Communication**

Communication may take several different forms: written, visual, aural or a combination of forms, such as a virtual meeting platform. Visual communications may include Power Point presentations, diagrams, graphs, human actions such as flag signals or hand motions, light signals such as Morse Code and other means. Aural communications may include lectures, phone calls, Morse Code tapped out, radio calls or programs, and other natural noises such as thunder, animal sounds, etc. Written communications may include manuals, books, letters, emails, newsletters, reports and other such materials intended to be viewed by the reader or recipient. Multimedia communications may include virtual meetings, digital files, phone calls, etc.

Within the Auxiliary, communication takes place between various levels, from National Staff down through FSOs and back up the Chain of Communication to address issues, answer questions, provide resources and disseminate information of various types. All of these forms of communication may be used between members and Staff Officers within the same District as well as between Staff Officers at the same level or with Staff Officers in other Districts as a form of networking.

#### **4.2.3 Key Features and Clarity of Communication**

##### **4.2.3.1 Clarity**

Clarity of communication is essential to the proper understanding of the message conveyed. Be clear, using plain language easily understood by the viewer or listener. Be brief so that the essence of the message to be conveyed is not masked by nonessential details or information.

##### **4.2.3.2 Intended Message vs. Understood Message**

Be sure that you send the intended message and then check for understanding to ascertain that the message received is the one intended. This prevents miscommunication and misunderstanding of messages, which could result in adverse situations. For example, if a person is sighted in the water during a Search and Rescue operation and the reporting Crew member says “270 degrees”, the Coxswain should respond with “Person in water, 270 degrees, Aye”. If the Coxswain did not hear the number correctly due to wind or other noise, he or she may turn the vessel in the wrong direction, delaying the rescue of the person in the water. It is the responsibility of the reporting crew member to listen to the Coxswain’s response to be sure that the message delivered was the one intended and received. This is equally important in all Auxiliary missions and duties, particularly if communicating with the USCG.

#### **4.2.3.3 Chain of Communication in the Auxiliary**

The Auxiliary Chain of Communication is a two-way street: messages are sent from the National Staff levels to the District Staff Officers for Marine Safety (DSO-MS), who will send them to their Assistant District Staff Officers (ADSO-MS) and down to their Division Staff Officers (SO-MS). The Division Staff Officers for Marine Safety (SO-MS) will send messages down to their Flotilla Staff Officers for Marine Safety (FSO-MS) who will ultimately share the information with their Flotilla members as needed. The flow of information goes up the Chain as well, from FSO-MS to the SO-MS and on to the DSO-MS if necessary. The DSO-MS shares reports and information with the National Prevention Directorate Staff as needed.

#### **4.2.4 Importance of Communication**

Within any organization, goals are made and met due to good communication of information both up and down the levels of organization. Businesses depend on good communication to achieve their goals and customer satisfaction. The US Coast Guard and general public are the Auxiliary customers who depend on our volunteer efforts, which can only be achieved through clear, concise and consistent communication both up and down the Staff Officer Chain and the Elected Officer Chain. We accomplish these communications in three major ways.

##### **4.2.4.1 Meetings**

Meetings may be held in-person at all levels, or they may be held using a virtual platform when travel or in-person meetings are not feasible. This type of communication transfers and returns information more quickly than reliance on multimedia means of communication by allowing for give-and-take real-time discussion of topics and issues, with more immediate problem resolution.

#### **4.2.4.2 Reports**

Written reports should be filed on a regular basis with the Marine Safety Staff Officer's Unit Vice Commander (Flotilla and Division) or District Directorate Chief (DDC) as well as the Marine Safety Staff Officer at the next higher level. This ensures that the higher levels of Auxiliary administration are kept informed of activities and issues at the lower levels. Likewise, information should be passed down the MS Chain to the next lower Marine Safety Staff Officer level to keep Staff Officers and members informed of activities and issues that are District-wide as well as regional or national in scope.

#### **4.2.4.3 Phone Calls**

Phone calls, like in-person or virtual meetings, can accomplish a lot of communication in a short amount of real time, and are often used for that expediency. There is one caveat – no one is taking minutes of the phone call, unlike a meeting. Therefore, a record of the phone conversation should be kept by all parties to the call for later clarification and documentation.

### **4.3 Marine Safety Training for Staff Officers**

The Prevention Directorate website offers training resources that are useful for any member wishing to participate in Marine Safety and Environmental Protection missions and activities, but are particularly relevant to the professional, efficient performance of MS Staff Officer duties and responsibilities at all levels. The website can be found at the following link:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=p-dept>

The **Introduction to Marine Safety and Environmental Protection course (IMSEP)**, found under “MS Courses” in the sidebar, gives both members and MS Staff Officers in-depth information about this discipline and its missions. It is worth two points toward the Auxiliary Operational Specialist (AUXOP) designation, and requires an online exam

to pass.

The **Good Mate course**, created and provided by the Ocean Conservancy, is also found in the same location, and provides information about clean marinas and clean boating that is beneficial to all members for all missions, but is a recommended part of MS training. Some MS qualifications require both courses. There is also an online exam for this course.

**Mentorship** by an existing MS Staff Officer is usually available and very effective additional training for any member wishing to become a Staff Officer in Marine Safety and Environmental Protection. The member's unit commander and vice commander are also good sources of information about what is expected of an MS Staff Officer at the unit level. Further information will be provided in the discussion of each MS Staff Officer position below.

The **Auxiliary Marine Safety Administrative and Management Specialist** qualification (MSAM) is highly recommended for MS Staff Officers as it includes information on all aspects of the MS/MEP program, including procedures and resources. It can be found on the Prevention Directorate website under Marine Safety in the sidebar.

#### **4.4 Duties and Responsibilities of Auxiliary Staff Officers for Marine Safety**

##### **4.4.1 District Staff Officer for Marine Safety (DSO-MS)**

The DSO-MS is appointed by the District Commodore (DCO) and reports to the District Directorate Chief for Prevention (DDC-P) or the District Chief of Staff (DCOS); each DCO will provide a Letter of Appointment that includes the duties and responsibilities of the office for that District. There is currently no standard format for this office, but the National Prevention Directorate does provide a

general training, either in-person at the National Training Conference (N-TRAIN) or online using training modules.

#### **4.4.1.1 Recommended Training**

The recommended training for the DSO-MS includes, but is not limited to, the IMSEP and Good Mate courses as well as the ICS 100, 200, 210, 700 and 800 courses that are required for MS mission participation and many MS/MEP qualifications. These courses supply the DSO-MS with the basic program knowledge and skills to discharge the duties of their office in a professional manner for the benefit of the USCG and the general public as well as the District members. If the DSO-MS completes one MS/MEP qualification from the list found on the Prevention Directorate website under Marine Safety, then he or she may apply for the Marine Safety Training Ribbon (MSTR) which indicates a high level of knowledge and commitment to the MS programs. As previously mentioned, the MSAM qualification provides MS Staff Officers at all levels with pertinent MS/MEP program information that is very useful in the execution of their duties and responsibilities.

The DSO-MS should be familiar with the natural environment and sociocultural characteristics of the District they serve as well as the USCG missions within the Area of Responsibility (AOR). In addition, the DSO-MS should be an active participant in the local MS/MEP programs.

#### **4.4.1.2 DSO-MS Duties and Responsibilities**

The DSO-MS is responsible for providing training in MS/MEP programs and resources for Assistant District Staff Officers in Marine Safety (ADSO-MS); MS Staff Officers at Division and Flotilla levels may receive training either at in-person workshops held by the District, or through virtual trainings provided by



the District. Training materials may also be posted to the District website; links to the Prevention Directorate training materials and resources should be provided on the District website rather than the materials themselves. The links provide easy access and do not require a District webmaster to continually update the District website as national resources and information change.

The DSO-MS is also responsible for generating an MS/MEP Staff report that goes to the District Directorate Chief for Prevention (DDC-P) or the District Chief of Staff (DCOS); this report should summarize MS/MEP activities within the District since the last reporting period, plans for the future, issues that need to be addressed and positive events or accomplishments. This information is included in the District report for all to receive. DSO-MS reports should go to all ADSOs-MS, the DDC-P or the DCOS and the SOs-MS to be passed down the Chain to the FSO-MS and on to the Flotilla members. Monthly or quarterly DSO-MS reports should also be sent to the Prevention Directorate to keep National Prevention Directorate Staff informed of what is going on in their Districts.

The DSO-MS manages the District MS/MEP programs as well as maintaining contact with the USCG Sector Prevention and Response Departments through the Auxiliary Sector Coordinators (ASC) to make sure that Sector needs are being met. He or she will also maintain contact with ADSOs-MS to make sure that they are taking care of their assigned responsibilities and provide any needed assistance and resources. Other duties and responsibilities may include updating the MS/MEP page of the District website, writing articles for the District newsletter, making presentations to District units on various MS/MEP topics, and managing the MS/MEP training programs for qualifications, the MSTR and the M-Pro Pin.

#### **4.4.2 Assistant District Staff Officer for Marine Safety (ADSO-MS)**

The Assistant District Staff Officers for Marine Safety (ADSO-MS) are requested by the DSO-MS for specific areal or topical responsibilities; they must be approved and appointed by the DCO. They serve for a one-year term and report monthly to the DSO-MS. These MS Staff Officers may be assigned to a specific area such as a Sector or an MSU, or they may be assigned to manage a specific program such as Uninspected Passenger Vessel Exams (UPV) or MS/MEP Outreach programs (Sea Partners, Aquatic Nuisance Species, etc.). They work at the direction of the DSO-MS and may assist with MS Staff Officer or member training as well as presentations, public activities and USCG requests for assistance.

##### **4.4.2.1 Recommended Training**

Recommended training for the ADSO-MS Staff Officer is the same as that for the DSO-MS, including coursework and participation in MS/MEP program activities. The Marine Safety Training Ribbon may be earned if the ADSO-MS completes a MS/MEP qualification from the list on the Prevention Directorate website; this is highly desirable for the experience it provides in understanding how a qualification is earned.

##### **4.4.2.2 ADSO-MS Duties and Responsibilities**

The duties and responsibilities of an ADSO in general are outlined in the Auxiliary Manual (AUXMAN CH. 4, Section G) found at the Auxiliary website previously listed. In general, an ADSO-MS assists with the management and administration of the District MS/MEP programs as requested by the DSO-MS; they may provide MS Staff Officer training, make a variety of topical presentations, be involved in USCG missions as liaisons for the DSO-MS, or organize Auxiliary activities for a particular program or event.

#### **4.4.3 Division Staff Officers for Marine Safety (SO-MS)**

Division Staff Officers for Marine Safety (SO-MS) are appointed for one year by the Division Commander (DCDR) and report monthly to the Vice Division Commander (VCDR). They are responsible for managing the MS/MEP program within their Division, including training of the Flotilla Staff Officers for Marine Safety (FSO-MS), offering member training presentations to Division Board and Staff, organizing Division-level MS/MEP activities and other duties as may be assigned by the DCDR.

##### **4.4.3.1 Recommended Training**

An SO-MS should have basic program knowledge which can be learned by taking the IMSEP and Good Mate courses found on the National Prevention Directorate website under Marine Safety in the sidebar and participation in MS/MEP activities and missions within their AOR. The Marine Safety Training Ribbon provides the added benefit of understanding the process to earn a qualification which allows the SO-MS to better assist their FSOs-MS in member training and advisement. Many MS/MEP qualifications also require the series of Incident Command System courses (ICS 100, 200, 210, 700 and 800).

##### **4.4.3.2 Duties and Responsibilities**

A complete description of the duties and responsibilities of the SO-MS can be found in the Division Procedures Guide at the following link:

[http://tdept.cgaux.org/AUX60/Division\\_Procedures\\_Guide\\_Training.pdf](http://tdept.cgaux.org/AUX60/Division_Procedures_Guide_Training.pdf)

#### **4.4.4 Flotilla Staff Officers for Marine Safety (FSO-MS)**

Similar to the SO-MS, the Flotilla Staff Officers for Marine Safety are appointed by the Flotilla Commander (FC) and report monthly to the Vice Flotilla Commander (VFC). They work with their SO-MS to make sure that they have

materials for Flotilla member training and presentations. In addition, they manage the MS/MEP program, missions and activities for their Flotilla members.

#### **4.4.4.1 Recommended Training**

Recommended training for FSO-MS includes the IMSEP and Good Mate courses as well as the Incident Command System courses required for operational missions and many qualifications. It is also recommended that they earn the Marine Safety Training Ribbon, which is indicative of in-depth program knowledge and provides experience earning a qualification from the list on the Prevention Directorate website under Marine Safety.

#### **4.4.4.2 Duties and Responsibilities**

The FSO-MS is the primary contact for members interested in Marine Safety and Environmental Protection missions and activities, and as such, needs to be very knowledgeable about all of the programs and training available to members. Among other duties, the FSO-MS is charged with providing member training in MS/MEP, planning individual and group activities in MS/MEP missions and facilitating further training for those members interested in earning qualifications. A complete list of FSO-MS duties and responsibilities can be found in the Flotilla Procedures Guide found at the following link:

[http://tdept.cgaux.org/AUX60/Flotilla\\_Procedures\\_Guide\\_Training.pdf](http://tdept.cgaux.org/AUX60/Flotilla_Procedures_Guide_Training.pdf)

### **4.5 Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Missions, Activities and Resources**

Information about MS/MEP programs, missions, activities and resources can be found on the Prevention Directorate website at the following link:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=p-dept>

Training information can be found under the Marine Safety heading in the sidebar; information about outreach programs and activities can be found under the Outreach Programs heading in the same sidebar. Marine Safety Staff Officers should use the

national Prevention Directorate website as a source for training, mission, activity and partner resources to help with member training, planning activities for their units, answering member questions and promoting a general understanding of what is involved in MS/MEP. They should also suggest that members explore the national website to see what is there, which will help them gain a better understanding of the depth and breadth of Marine Safety and Environmental Protection as a discipline.