

Member Training - Boat Crew, Coxswain, and PWC Qualification Process

For a complete description of the training and qualification process and policies, refer to the Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual (COMDTINST M16794.51 series). Essentially, there are a series of qualification tasks that collectively define the minimum knowledge and skills' performance standards required for each boat crew position. Each task describes a certain job skill, and states performance criteria for that skill. Reference material must be studied, the skills reviewed with a mentor, practice-practice-practice, and when the trainee demonstrates mastery of the task, the mentor can sign off the task in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guide (COMDTINST M16794.52). The most recent version of this document must be obtained (or printed) in hard copy and carefully looked after, as it will be in your sea bag for the many months of your training (which must take place within two years of commencement). Experience dictates that this document be well protected from the elements, and that the member's name be liberally salted throughout. Qualification pages with mentor's signatures are a potentially "valuable" item to some less than noble souls who might attempt to short-cut the qualification process, and you should ensure that they are not easily transferable! The primary reference for seamanship skills is the 888+ page Boat Crew Seamanship Manual (COMDTINST M161114.5C). This manual in hard copy is designed as a shared flotilla resource, is available at our meeting place, and is available online in Adobe Acrobat "pdf" format (together with other valuable online resources) on our very own snazzy Division 5 web-site at:

<http://a01405.uscgaux.info/training.html>

Other important Coast Guard references would include the Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual (COMDTINST M16798.3 series) which manual includes policy guidance for performing missions under Coast Guard orders, and the Navigation Rules International-Inland (COMDTINST M16672.2D series), sometimes referred to as the NavRules (or the COLREGS) and should be kept under your pillow wherever you sleep! Members are encouraged to use the widest possible range of references for boat handling, navigation, and seamanship skills. For those aspiring Coxswains (COMDTINST M16794.53), supplement the above minimally with the National Search and Rescue manual, Volumes I and II, the Maritime Search-And-Rescue Assistance Policy manual (COMDTINST M16130.2B), the six (6) Auxiliary Operational specialty courses, and Chapman Piloting & Seamanship (currently in its 64th edition). Those interested in PWC (and the pending PaddleCraft) qualifications will be examined on a case-by-case basis, after completion of basic Boat Crew qualifications.

Here is a broad-brush outline of the things you need to obtain or accomplish prior to your dockside oral Qualification Examination and underway check ride.

01) Successful completion of a Safe Boating Course (Boating Skills and Seamanship

core minimum, or equivalent). In other words, in addition to being a member of the USCG Auxiliary, you must be at least BQ Basically Qualified.

02) Team Coordination Training (TCT) - This is a program that focuses on reducing the probability for human error by increasing individual and team effectiveness. TCT is required by COMDT Note 1574 and COMDTINST 1541.1. The Guide, addendum, and Cases/Exercises are available online via the Chief Director Auxiliary G-PCX at http://www.cgaux.info/g_ocx/training/tct/index.html

03) PFD Swim Test (Refer to task BCM-02-15 in the Qualification Guide for a complete description of the requirements).

04) All of the other Auxiliary Boat Crew member qualification tasks. There are a total of 51 Crew tasks with 7 optional tasks, and 62 Coxswain tasks with 7 optional tasks. Candidates are encouraged to train using the optional tasks, especially when they are applicable to their operational area. Trainees have two years from the date of the first task signoff to complete the program - else it must be started again.

05) Cool Uniform and all the accoutrements: Obtain and iron a properly sized Operational Dress Uniform (or other appropriate uniform - normally working, undress authorized), and ensure it is correctly adorned with your nametape, sew-on collar insignia, and USCG Auxiliary tape. Review <http://www.dirauxwest.org/AuxBQ/ODUwear.htm> for good online guidance on proper ODU wear. Uniform requirements will be specified by the respective mentor, coxswain, instructor, and DIRAUX and are specified in Chapter 10 of the Auxiliary Manual (AuxMAN M16790.1). Take your measurements after a big meal, and go online to the Uniform Distribution Center at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wp/udc/> and/or then to AuxCEN at <http://cgauxa.org> to order.

06) Cool survival stuff. Auxiliary survival equipment requirements are specified in the Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual at Chapter four (4) (COMDTINST M16798.3 series). Obtain the best quality, authorized (type I, II, or III with an impact rating commensurate with expected activity) Personal Flotation Device with reflective tape, whistle, Personal Marker Light (cyalume light stick, flashlight, or strobe), emergency signaling mirror, and flares/smoke (USCG approved if operating beyond 3 miles from land) that you can afford. The following equipment is recommended, but optional for each PFD/vest: EPIRB; ELT; VHF-FM marine band transceiver (preferably with programmable AuxNET capability and appropriate charging accessories); survival knife; surface dye marker. The very seamanlike and squared-away Auxiliarist also has a watch, and will secure the aforementioned items to his person and/or PFD/vest in such a way that they: are readily accessible in an emergency, do not interfere during the performance of one's Boat Crew duties, and do not slip away and fall from one's hypothermic fingers when in use. This Auxiliarist will have a case for his/her knife that permits one-handed retrieval and

deployment, and sensibly implemented breakaway lanyards (that if caught up in equipment or body parts, do not cause damage to oneself or others). Talk with your mentor(s) and qualified Boat Crew Auxiliaries for advice on equipment selection, maintenance, deployment and cost savings. For marlinespike seamanship, obtain and keep in your sea bag a length of rope (two would be better, in nylon or Dacron), in lengths of at least 2 meters each, in different colors, and preferably with different diameters at least 3/8" thick.

07) Charts: NOAA training chart 1210 Tr (not to be used for navigation), and official NOAA charts governing your actual Area of Operational Responsibility. NOAA charts designated 12334, 12335, and 12341 are good starting points for Members of the Flotilla 05-10, and for those of you working with Division 6 - you should obtain and study NOAA chart 12343. These charts go nicely with the NavRules under one's pillow. Contrary to popular belief, these charts ARE available for download in their most accurate, and up-to-date (Notices to Mariners) form online, together with free viewers at <http://chartmaker.ncd.noaa.gov>

A fundamental tool of marine navigation, NOAA's official Raster Navigation Charts are produced by scanning at high resolution and produced by NOAA's Office of Coast Survey. However, depending on how they are printed, accuracy can be (but not necessarily) compromised, and are certainly useful for study purposes. For a detailed discussion of horizontal and vertical chart data and accuracy, and for understanding chart symbols, I recommend "How To Read A Nautical Chart", International Marine, Nigel Calder, ISBN 0-07-137615-1, which includes the entire contents of Chart No. 1. The official Coast Pilots, Light List, NavRules, and Notices to Mariners are all reliably available online.

08) Incident Command System courses. Let's face it: you're going to have to get certified through the Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) for ICS 100/200/700/800, so why not get this done now?

09) Three (3) underway training missions, verified. Training is necessary to ensure that Auxiliaries meet the high standards of the service and their performance of duty reflects positively on the United States Coast Guard.

10) Learn the COLREGS! You know me by now.

Importantly, with respect to the rather daunting number four (4) above, the Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guide specifies conditions describing the environment and physical circumstances in which each task must be performed. Any tools or special equipment needed for completion of the task are listed here, too. Item number four (4) above refers to all of the qualification tasks that must be performed onboard, afloat, and likely underway. The standards describe the expected outcome of the task. Successful

task completion is a function of how well a trainee is able to complete the task without assistance. Generally, task performance standards are as follows:

Knowledge tasks require a candidate to be able to cite, from memory, the required information, including possibly, specific particular steps. Skill tasks require a candidate to be able to perform all performance tasks without prompting or assistance from the mentor. Each task demonstration must follow the correct sequence with confidence and little or no hesitation between the steps for accomplishment.

The good news is that many of the qualification tasks required may be performed ashore, or at the dock. I have carved out specific tasks above (i.e., TCT training) from the crew qualification guide, only to indicate that certain tasks must be performed that require additional conditions be met. The crew member qualification tasks for sun and heat related factors and emergency medical treatment (i.e., shock, bleeding, burns, hypothermia) may be signed off by appropriately qualified medical personnel (e.g., MD, RN, EMT). I will make myself available, at a time and place to be agreed (likely the USCG MIO-REC conference room), every week for two hours to help each of you in those shore based qualification tasks and signoff's. At our first meeting, we will conduct a brief interview session to help you ascertain your goals, and to prepare you for this commitment. John Kiernan - FSO MT and I are committed to getting your training and operational readiness levels up to your goals, and will be providing you with numerous training and operational opportunities. You won't even need a pillow, if you keep all of the above at the ready..!

"Train, Maintain, Operate"

Semper Paratus,

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

First District Southern Region, Flotilla 05-10

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