



# Up Top In Operations

April 2003

Monthly Newsletter of the National Operations Department

Volume 4

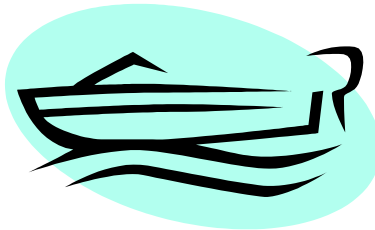
## A Message from the Department Chief

Linda Nelson, DC-O  
[echopeep@ixpres.com](mailto:echopeep@ixpres.com)

**T**he events of the past weeks are sobering indeed. Although none of us can predict how a Middle Eastern conflict might ultimately affect us personally or our homeland, we can and must remain "at the ready".

Please understand that over the next few months (hopefully, it is just months) that your obligation as an operations-qualified Auxiliarist to the Coast Guard, the nation, and your fellow members is especially critical. *If you are asked for or commit to something that is mission critical or time sensitive, please honor those deadlines.*

Like this nation, the Coast Guard Auxiliary will be tested. You are each a patriot in your own way, demonstrated by your years of service to this country. The Operations Department appreciates your service.



## It's Facility Outfitting Time

Edwin Kroeker, DVC-OE  
[ekroeker@seaqueue.com](mailto:ekroeker@seaqueue.com)

**S**pring is the time for operational facility (OPFAC) owners in many areas of the United States to prepare vessels to come out of off-season storage or limited usage.

This is the time for that extra check of equipment, condition, and readiness. The 2003 operational year, perhaps more than any in the past, deserves special consideration as our first year under the Coast Guard banner of "Department of Homeland Security".

Look at the facility checklist (this is available on the USCG Auxiliary National web page as Form 7003 CG-2736). Make

sure every required piece of gear is actually on board, not just in the garage or basement at the start of the season. The facility checklist is a minimum required list; consider having more than the minimum.

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## Phaseout of USWMS nears

Edwin Kroeker, DVC-OE  
[ekroeker@seaqueue.com](mailto:ekroeker@seaqueue.com)

**I**n 1998, the Coast Guard implemented the final regulations to phase out the Uniform State Waterway Marking system (see Federal Register for June 19, 1998). We're rapidly approaching the completion of the phase out program.

The Uniform State Waterways Marking System (USWMS) prescribes regulatory markers and

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## USWMS Phaseout

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aids to navigation that may mark navigable waters that the Commandant designates as state waters. The USWMS may also mark the non-navigable internal waters of a state.

The United States Aids to Navigation System (USATONS) prescribes regulatory markers and aids to navigation that mark navigable waters of the United States. Navigable waters include territorial seas and internal waters that have been or can be used for interstate commerce, either by themselves or in connection with other waterways.

The Coast Guard amended 33 CFR in 1998 to accommodate the phase-out of the USWMS.

For Auxiliarists that remember the USWMS markings from long-time use and habit, some reminders are in order as the final phase-out completes this year. Most states will have been performing these changes over the past five years as they performed normal maintenance on ATONS.

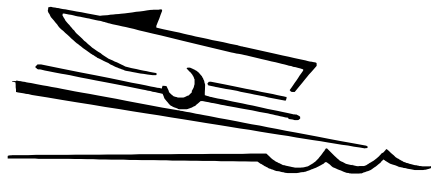
**Channel markers:** The USWMS black buoy will be replaced with the green buoy required by the USATONS.

**Red and white vertical striped buoy:** The meaning of the red and white vertical striped buoy changes from the USWMS "do not pass between the buoy and nearest shore" to the USATONS "safewater all around." Obstructions previously marked with the USWMS red and white striped buoy might instead be marked with the USATONS' side mark, the isolated danger mark, or the black and white vertical striped buoy.



**Cardinal marks:** In the USWMS, white buoys with a red top band mean that the mariner can pass safely south or west of the buoy, and white buoys with a black top band

mean that the mariner can pass safely north or east of the buoy. The USATONS does not contain cardinal marks, and areas presently marked with these USWMS aids might be replaced with the USATONS isolated danger mark, the side mark, the isolated danger mark, or the black and white vertical striped buoy.



## Operational Commitments must be serious

**Edwin Kroeker, DVC-OE**  
[ekroeker@seaqueue.com](mailto:ekroeker@seaqueue.com)

**T**imes and circumstances are different now for the Coast Guard Auxiliary than in the past. The Coast Guard, in fulfilling homeland security requirements, must look at Auxiliary augmentation in a different light.

When committing to a patrol, it is increasingly essential that you fulfill that obligation. You may not have visibility as to how important your patrol is to the controlling station/group. You should consider having backup crew, and perhaps even a replacement OP-FAC lined up for the event that your OPFAC or crew come up short.

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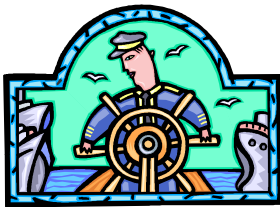
SOs to FSOs

## Commitments

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Many OPFACs operate with the minimum district-required crew levels. Consider operating with more crew; this provides some protection for the mission in the event of a crew member being unable to fulfill their commitment for some reason (it generally doesn't hurt safety either!).

The previous examples are from the surface operations area, but the same consideration is needed throughout all operation areas.



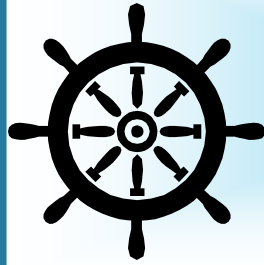
## Facility Outfitting

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Some boaters (and after all, we remain recreational boaters between ordered patrols) like to leave mooring lines at their slips or docks. OPFAC owners should insure that they have a complete 2<sup>nd</sup> set of mooring gear if they use this practice, allowing mooring of their OPFAC for any period of time at any other location. The facility requirement for mooring lines is that you can moor anywhere, not just at your home port.

Towing gear (lines, bridle, additional fenders) is another oft-

**"Up Top in Operations"** is the monthly newsletter of the National Operations Department of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.



**Linda Nelson, DC-O**  
[Echopeep@ixpres.com](mailto:Echopeep@ixpres.com)

**Jerri A. Smith, BC-OEE, Editor**  
[dogmom1@sch-net.com](mailto:dogmom1@sch-net.com)

overlooked area. Review the Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual (COMDTINST M16794.51) and other references to update your knowledge of what size tow line and bridle is appropriate for your size facility. Establish towing limits for your facility based on your local area of operation and your facility itself, thinking in advance about the maximum size vessels you might tow either in a long tow or alongside tow (some districts formalize this process; all OPFAC owners should consider setting these limits for their OPFACs). Estab-

lishing these limits in advance outside of a stress situation increases safety (remember your risk management training?).



## National Operations Department & Gold Side Contacts

Program	Staff Member	E-mail Address
Department Chief	Linda A. Nelson	echopeep@ixpres.com
Deputy Department Chief	Gail A. Fisher	sardog@ixpres.com
Aids to Navigation	James B. Duncan	dvc.on@attbi.com
Aviation	James D. Jacobsen	jjacobsen@coastalnet.com
Communications	Warren Schneider	S157125@aol.com
Surface Operations	Mark Simoni	mark@simonisystems.com
Education	Edwin "Ned" Kroeker	ekroeker@seaqueue.com
G-OCX Operations Division Chief; Aviation Branch Chief	LCDR Mike Staier, USCG	MStaier@comdt.uscg.mil
G-OCX Surface Operations Branch Chief	LTJG Nina Leonard, USCG or MCPO Glenn Wilson, USCG	NLeonard@comdt.uscg.mil GWilson@comdt.uscg.mil