

US Coast Guard Auxiliary
Department of Marine Safety and Environmental Protection

MTSA

Best Practices

Bulletin Number 1 - MSO St. Louis

Assessing the Situation

Upon assuming command of MSO St Louis, CDR Suzanne Englebert, who was previously a USCG participant in negotiating many of the MTSA components, assessed the situation regarding the MSO's MTSA, MDA and MARSEC missions. She found that the MSO's human resources were insufficient to ensure compliance and that the Auxiliary "outnumbers" the Active Duty personnel by some 10 to 1, making the participation of the Auxiliary vital to the MSO's success in meeting the various requirements of these missions. CDR Englebert then approached the D8WR District Board for help. COMO Bill Boom was designated as the POC for the Auxiliary in developing and executing plans to support the MSO in its MTSA, MDA and MARSEC missions.

The Approach Taken

An approach for MTSA Missions was adopted bringing together the USCG Active Duty, Reserve, Civilian Staff and the Auxiliary in a partnership to analyze and resolve the problems posed in implementing MTSA requirements within the MSO's Area of Responsibility. It was determined that the USCG needed to better understand the role of volunteers and how to best use their talents - and vice versa, so the MTSA mission was used as the unifying vehicle that would cause all Coast Guard Forces to be trained to the same standard in the same manner. This was accomplished using joint 3-day weekend training sessions, bringing Active Duty, Reserve and Auxiliary together in the same classroom.

The Result

As a result, three-part teams now exist throughout the AOR with the mission of conducting the Facility and Vessel safety and security inspections. Inspections are headed by the most qualified person available – regardless of the member's status (Active Duty, Reserve, Auxiliary). Currently, an Active Duty member leads the majority of the inspections, since the Reserve and Auxiliary members are still in the process of receiving the necessary qualifications to handle the inspections.

As inspections proceed, the mission of the teams is two-fold. One mission is to train the unqualified members and the second is to review the plan for the Facility or Vessel, see that it is properly vetted, in place, and being properly used. Follow-up inspections are intended to be handled by the nearest qualified Reserve or Auxiliary team member, leaving LE-intensive re-inspections to the Active Duty member.

Uniforms are being provided by the MSO to insure all members have the proper PPE and look the same to the public. All inspections are under orders and they are underway as this article is being written, with no problems to date.

90 Members Trained

About 90 team members have received their initial training, of which 25-30 are Auxiliarists, with overall coordination being managed by LCDR Pat Clark of the MSO. COMO Boom continues to act as the Auxiliary's POC and ombudsman to resolve problems – of which none of any substance has occurred to date.

What Auxiliarists are Doing

Currently, Auxiliarists are assisting the MSO with Facility Safety and Security Inspections, MDA overflights and multi-mission patrols, and when necessary, with MARSEC verifications. As an example, Auxiliary members currently volunteer more than 40 man-hours a week with the MSO conducting facility safety and security related activities. Other members are working with the MSDs to augment their resources.

Next Steps

The next step, MTSA follow-up and MARSEC verification, now being implemented, is to place trained and qualified Auxiliarists in the Area Maritime Teams in major locations throughout the MSO's AOR with the mission of identifying and assembling the people who will be needed as the MARSEC level moves to 2 or 3. HARPATs are being conducted in the AOR – including 400 hours in December as part of a large drill including the USCG, Auxiliary, State, County and local police, fire, EMS, Civil Defense, marine industry participants, public utilities, etc. – all of whom will need to work together in case of an increase in the MARSEC level. As a result, the Auxiliary is becoming better known as a participant and a part of the inter-agency response activities. It is estimated that the Area Maritime Teams could utilize as many as 400 Auxiliarists.

Currently, the skeletal plans for responding to MARSEC 2 and 3 in the AOR are being developed and the next step will be that of training the Auxiliarists to do what is needed and to develop appropriate position descriptions.

As a result of all of the above, MSO St Louis is proceeding to execute its MTSA, MDA and MARSEC missions with the active participation of the Auxiliary and is representative of a true case study in how to bring together all parts of Coast Guard Forces to accomplish critical missions that require more resources than would normally be available.