

Auxiliary REC Surge Operation

Background:

An interim rule went into effect on January 13, 2006 requiring nearly all Merchant Mariners to present themselves to the Coast Guard for ID verification and fingerprinting. This has resulted in an increase of approximately 40 percent in walk-in traffic at the Coast Guard's 17 Regional Examination Centers (REC) s and burdened the staffs with processing this additional business.

The RECs are not adequately staffed to process these applications and delays have occurred, all giving rise to voluminous complaints from mariners, maritime Industries and Congress.

This new requirement is part of the **Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA)** requirements to assure that Maritime America remains safe and secure.

The importance of this operation was stressed to COMO Seibert during the most recent Flag Conference by the Commandant, and is being followed up almost daily by requests for this assistance and offers of support from the Gold Side.

This operation is of the **highest importance** and **essential** to maintaining the safety and security of our ports and waterways. This is an opportunity for the Auxiliary and our membership to make a needed and appreciated contribution of direct support to the USCG.

This **SURGE OPERATION** is of 12 to 18 months duration and is of the **utmost importance** to the **USCG Homeland Security Mission**.

Needs Assessment:

The possibility of the use of the Auxiliary in meeting the needs of the RECs was discussed with the Auxiliary M Department by Capt. Smith (G-PCX) and Capt. Fink, CO of the National Maritime Center. This discussion resulted in a survey of each REC to identify and quantify their ideas of how the Auxiliary could supplement their staff to meet this new challenge. The results of this survey are attached as **Appendix A**.

The RECs stated needs vary from REC to REC and may be influenced by their prior experiences, good or not so good with the Auxiliary. Their perception of how the Auxiliary can help them may also be limited by this experience and could be expanded and improved by a positive new experience with the Auxiliary.

In addition to the survey, Capt. Fink met with all the REC Chiefs/Assistant Chiefs on April 25th and asked them to be prepared to work directly with the Auxiliary. The response from the RECs is overwhelmingly positive and they are ready to begin.

BACKGROUND DOC.

There appear to be at least two, if not more, potential areas of Auxiliary direct support to the RECs.

One area is on-site at each REC, where trained and qualified Auxiliarist would take over the fingerprinting and document verification tasks, under the direct supervision of their designated REC supervisor.

The second area is providing the same service at a Coast Guard installation (Station, or Sector) remote from the REC. This opportunity would be especially helpful in those areas where there are licensed mariners in locations distant from an REC.

Program approach:

In order for this operation to be successful, it must be fully supported by the Auxiliary, the National Executive Committee (NEXCOM) and the District Commodores. Specifically, the National Area Commodores and District Commodores must **actively** support and monitor this operation.

Each District DIRAUX is also essential to the success of this operation. They must be actively involved and in support of this program. They have access to the pool of talent already trained to perform the fingerprinting of the Auxiliarists, and have the equipment with which the work may be accomplished. In addition, they may be called upon to assist in the issuance of orders and the guidance to the RECs in the “care and feeding” of the Auxiliary

The success of this program will depend directly upon the quality of and the dedication and dependability of, the members recruited and assigned to lead and participate in this operation.

It is proposed that an Auxiliary REC Coordinator be appointed by the District Commodore to directly interact with each REC. The initial purpose of this Auxiliary REC Coordinator is to meet with the REC Chief/Assistant Chief and discuss the needs of the REC and how the Auxiliary may assist in meeting these needs.

A list of the RECs with contact information is enclosed as Appendix B.

The Auxiliary REC Coordinator would be the link between the REC and the Auxiliary. They would become the communications link to the rest of the Auxiliary in recruiting members to assist at the REC and in communicating the needs of the REC to the Auxiliary, and of the Auxiliary to the REC.

To assist the Districts and the Auxiliary REC Coordinators in identifying the best candidates for meeting the RECs needs, a national Auxiliary media campaign is envisioned. By utilizing the talents of all Auxiliary Departments to marshal and focus our

resources towards a common goal and objective, we should be able to rapidly put this operation into action.

Training:

The USCG, under the leadership of Captain Ernie Fink, CO of the National Maritime Center is preparing and “fast-tracking” the approval of the training program for the Auxiliarists to participate in this operation. This fast action is being directly supported by RDML Craig Bone.

In addition to the special training that may be required of Auxiliary participants, many Auxiliarists already have received training in fingerprinting and document examination while being trained to perform these services for the Auxiliary as a part of the PSI operation. These trained members are a natural source of talent to meet this new need, especially as their level of operations is decreasing.

REC support to the Auxiliary:

As a part of the comprehensive survey completed by the RECs, the importance of support to the Auxiliary members who would be supporting them was addressed. The results are shown on the survey.

The need to provide the Auxiliarist who supported the REC with basic “out of pocket” reimbursement was addressed and each REC’s response is included in **Appendix A**.

National Program Oversight:

National program oversight will be through the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Department.

A Branch Chief under the Marine Safety Division will be appointed to liaise with the District Auxiliary REC Coordinators, through the DSO-MSs.

The purpose of this activity is to provide a venue to gather and publicize “Best Practices”, share and disseminate information, and to provide a resource for supporting and expanding the program as the opportunities and needs are identified.