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## Starting a New Year in CFVS

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After a week at N-TRAIN in St. Louis, I walked away thinking about how many different directions the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is headed. Much emphasis has been put on Homeland Security, protecting the ports, rapid response teams, contingency plans, security patrols, etc. Somewhere in the conversations, the words CFVS and SAR may have been mentioned but I felt a different attitude among the Auxiliary leadership - a more urgent and serious demeanor than before.

Well, protecting our homeland is serious business, however, there is another pressing problem clamoring for the attention of the Coast Guard, and that is the rising number of deaths on the water in the US Commercial Fishing Industry. 2003 has been one of the deadliest years in recent history, and will be repeated in a news article reprinted for this newsletter.

### Why Are Fatalities Rising?

Why is this happening? Are we, as CFVS examiners not doing our jobs? The answers are numerous. With efforts underway to enhance Homeland

Security, the Coast Guard had to refocus its missions to meet the demands of the new Department. With limited resources, including manpower, the Coast Guard had to make a decision on where to focus its attention. The CFVS program essentially was left to the Auxiliary. Unfortunately, Coast Guard CFVS boardings at sea perforce were drastically reduced, leaving commercial fishermen with the impression that it was not necessary to have their vessels examined. Fishermen felt that they could take a chance on not being boarded by the Coast Guard rather than having their vessel examined - which may well cost them money. Auxiliary CFVS Examiners do not have the power to do enforcement and rely on the Coast Guard to deal with that function.

### Taking Risk to Save Money

Then came the money issue! The US Fishing Industry has fallen on economic hard times - foreign-sourced fish and farmed fish had taken their toll on the U.S commercial fleets. Fisherman said they could not afford "safety fixes" and there were many fishermen who have



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given up and have sold their licenses and boats. Banks repossessed many boats because owners could not repay their loans. As industry leaders struggled to help their members, the Auxiliarist CFVS examiners struggled to convince the fishermen that they can ill afford to lose their boats and, more importantly, their lives because they did not have the necessary safety equipment on board in a crisis.

#### **What Does This Mean for 2004?**

What does all this mean for 2004? Will we continue to struggle along? Will it be another record year for fatalities in the industry? I believe 2004 will be another challenging and interesting year – to say the least.

The Coast Guard has recognized the rising death toll in the commercial fishing industry and the emphasis will begin to shift to “at sea boardings” once again. The Coast Guard will be encouraging fisherman to get the proper

CFVS exam at the docks because the probability of “enforcement at sea” will be much greater this year. The fishermen know that corrective action at the dock is much cheaper than written violations from the Coast Guard at sea. CFVS Branch Chiefs from around the country will be attending fishing conferences in their areas, giving presentations, and working closely with the fishermen.

#### **What Will We Do?**

We will focus our efforts on another Regional “C” school to train Auxiliarists in the CFVS program. We will be working closely with Kevin Frost and Ensign Ken Rockhold at G-MOC-3 in Washington, D.C., to develop standard guidelines for Auxiliary examiners.

This year, our efforts will be dedicated to reversing the increasing trend of fishing deaths at sea. And this year, the Auxiliary will have help ...our partners in the U.S. Coast Guard.