

## INCREASING COAST GUARD AND HOMELAND SECURITY ATTENTION TO RECREATIONAL BOATS

In recent months, the Coast Guard, and officials at the Department of Homeland Security, have been paying increased attention to the 58 to 70 million recreational boats in the United States, fearing a repeat in U.S. waters of the speedboat attack that wounded the *USS COLE* and killed 17 sailors. This attention could lead, in this author's opinion, to increased registration or regulation of recreational boating. What price domestic security?

On July 1, 2004, the new maritime security requirements of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code and the U.S. Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) went into effect in the U.S. From July 1-6, foreign vessels made a total of 1,600 calls on U.S. ports, according to Coast Guard statistics. Of the foreign vessels scheduled to call on U.S. ports, nine were denied entry, 10 were expelled from port, and 30 were detained for failing to comply with the new security requirements.

The same week, USCG Commandant Tom Collins expressed his concern that recreational boats are not covered by the new international security standards and could present a risk to port safety, especially to the two ports involved in the upcoming political conventions. Subsequently, the Commandant floated a new maritime security plan that would include a system to obtain information on the millions of recreational boats in the U.S. According to Collins, "we need a way to identify and track [these boats] and manage this large amount of information."

If recreational boating organizations don't step up to the plate and develop their own reporting system, the Coast Guard will surely do it for them.

In the meantime, conferees have completed work on a \$7.9 billion reauthorization measure for the Coast Guard for FY 2005, and final passage is expected before the August 2004 recess. The bill (H.R. 2443) includes \$5.4 billion for operations and expenses; \$1.5 billion for acquisition, construction, and improvements; \$24.2 million for R&D; and \$19.7 million for bridge improvements, and \$17 million for environmental compliance. The conferees rejected a proposal to have the Coast Guard substitute its judgment for foreign governments in review of vessel security plans.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection Division of the Dept. of Homeland Security has issued new regulations requiring all visiting pleasure boat operators entering the U.S. to immediately present themselves in person to an officer at the first Port of Entry. Any person that does not comply with these procedures may be subject to a \$5000 fine, seizure, or criminal penalties.

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## NEWS FROM THE NORTH

"Keeping a lifejacket handy versus wearing one is like attempting to buckle a car seat belt just before the car crashes," says U.S. Coast Guard official. This quotation has been the most memorable phrase from the *CSBC Will It Float? Study* on PFD wear, as it resonates immediately with all. Since the release of the CSBC commissioned study in

September 2003, we have been on a "road show" sharing the results of the study in Canada, the USA and in Italy. Our goal is to gain endorsement from individuals and boating stakeholder groups in Canada for mandatory wearing legislation for all occupants of vessels under 20 feet. We know it will take time. We are building our file, one organization at a time. . . next column, please >



## KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS: NECESSARY IN SAFE BOATING

Knowledge is a critical component when it comes to safe boating; however, knowledge alone will not keep you safe and accident free. One very important factor called "skill" needs to be coupled with knowledge for the safest boating experience possible. The NSBC has always stressed the importance of safe boating with slogans like: "Know Before You Go," "Take a Safe Boating Course," "Don't Drink and Boat," "Boat Smart - Wear Your Life Jacket," and several other message related themes. We have rarely addressed the issue of actual boat handling - controlling the boat with skill.

We are entering into agreements with member organizations on that very concern. Long time member organization, Gateway Multimedia, produces an excellent instructional CD Rom entitled the *Wheelhouse Companion*. It has been an official training product of the NSBC for a number of years. This CD is an instructional program and presents important information on the navigation rules of the road. We actively promote this program. Through its sales, the NSBC will be able to better support the training programs that are offered. More on the *Wheelhouse Companion* program will appear on our web site.

Another integrated training program, which will address the issue of boat handling skills head-on, is "Close-Quarter Boat Handling." This is a program addressing the issue of operator training for our member organizations. This will be offered as an on-the-water hands-on training program. It is a practical course in proper boat handling, and yes, it is very equipment and labor intensive. The training will be conducted primarily on a "request" basis. If you want training for staff or employees on proper boat handling skills, we will provide it.

In the "Close-Quarter Boat Handling" program we will address operating scenarios such as ability to steer, stop under control, and turn in tight spaces. Since all boats are different and the conditions that govern the boat's operation may vary, those differences are also taken into consideration during the training program. In other words, the boats and conditions will determine the training scenarios. This program is offered with manuals that were developed by member organization, Bayshore, owned and operated by Captain James K. Battye. Mr. Battye, a known stickler to details, clearly defines the essentials in proper boat-handling skills in each of his training manuals. Each manual captures the condition along with the type of boat propulsion and explains the basic maneuvers needed to accomplish the desired outcome.

The NSBC will be offering the "Close-Quarter Boat Handling" training starting this fall. We will supply the program including manuals and instructors. Interested organizations will supply students, boats and site. This is an opportunity to provide professional training to those in the sales force, enforcement officer division, water safety patrol staff or fishery / wildlife specialists that use a boat in the performance of their duties. This program is not available for the general public. If you are interested in boat operation training for the general public, you should contact member organizations:

Bayshore 410-827-9100, BoatBoy Marine Training 800-493-9514 or Boatwise 800-698-7373.

For more information call the NSBC office at 703-361-4294.

Don't miss our Canadian Safe Boating Council's Symposium 2004. It will be held at the Westin Resort & Spa in beautiful Whistler, BC on September 23 - 25. The agenda is packed full of great sessions. Conference fees include a white water rafting excursion and the sights will be spectacular! Join us, won't you?

Submitted by Barbara Byers