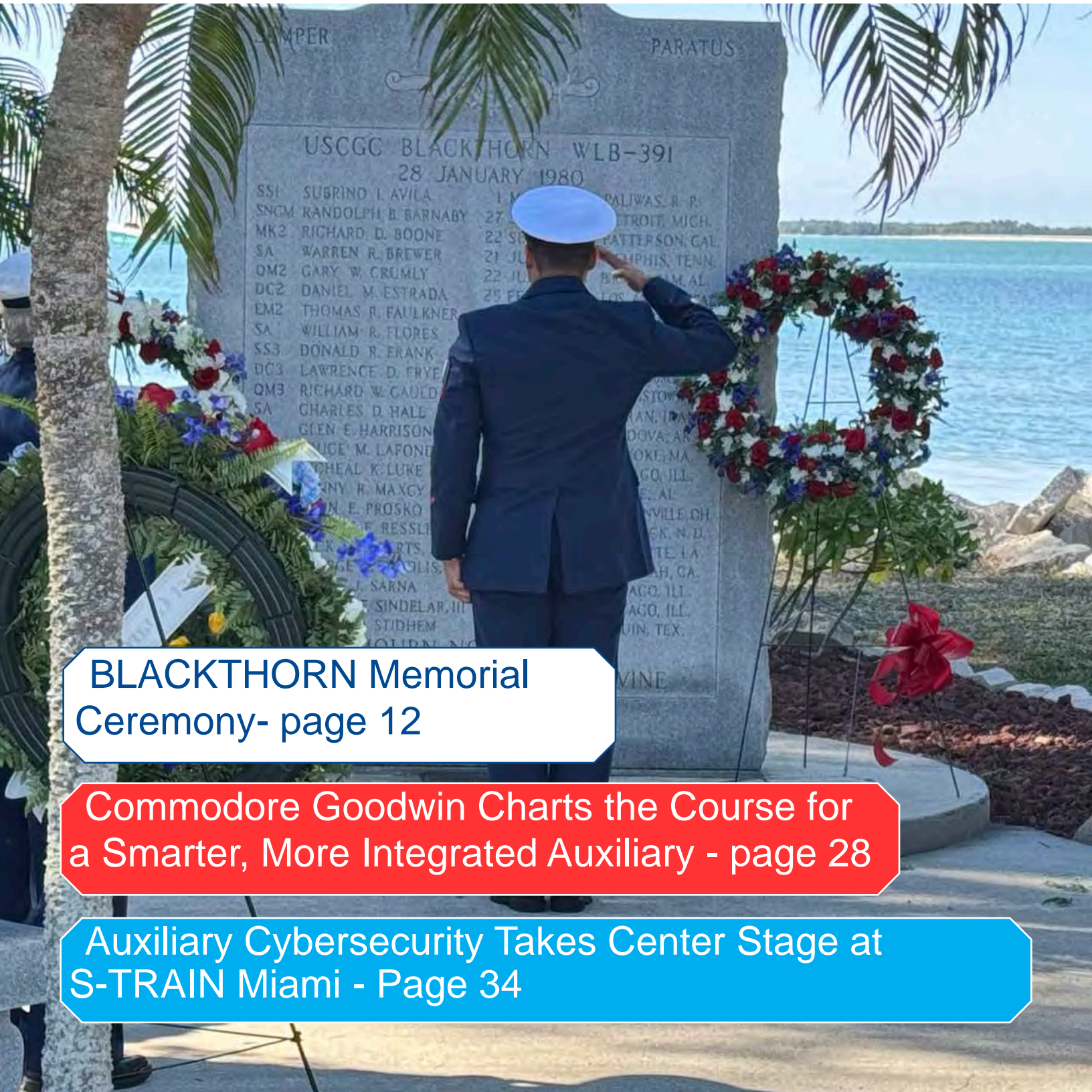


# Breeze

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Spring 2026



**BLACKTHORN Memorial Ceremony- page 12**

**Commodore Goodwin Charts the Course for a Smarter, More Integrated Auxiliary - page 28**

**Auxiliary Cybersecurity Takes Center Stage at S-TRAIN Miami - Page 34**

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Cover photo: A Coast Guard member from Sector St. Petersburg salutes the USCGC BLACKTHORN memorial after laying a rose at its base on Jan. 28, 2026. USCGC photo by Lisa Repetto.

## DISTRICT BRIDGE

**District Commodore (DCO)**  
 Commodore Martin Goodwin

**District Chief of Staff (DCOS)**  
 Murray D. Price

**Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX)**  
 LCDR Benjamin Tuxhorn

**District Captains (DCAPT)**  
 Jeffery Barnes (East)  
 Sean Flynn (North)  
 Karen L. Miller (West)

**Immediate Past District Commodore (IPDCO)**  
 Commodore John Holmes

## COMMODORE'S AIDES

Awards (D-AA-DAC) ..... William Ballard  
 Letters (LT) ..... Donna Saunders  
 Special Projects (SP) ..... Dennis McBride  
 Statistics (ST) ..... COMO Robert Weskerna  
 Conference Coordinator (CC) ..... Jim Nickels Jr.  
 Safety Officer (D-AD-Safety) .. Noah Kalemkiewicz

Performance Measurement ..... Susan Hastings  
 Member Outreach ..... Randy Patton  
 Marine Safety Advisor ..... Mark Wronowski  
 Force Augmen. and Mission Support ..... Gary Gray  
 RBS Outreach ..... Natalie Bunting  
 Strategic Planning ..... Jonathan Javitt  
 Special Advisor ..... Phillip Poole

## SECTOR COORDINATORS

Charleston (CHA) ..... William Hayes  
 Jacksonville (JAX) ..... Gregory Hendricks  
 Key West (KW) ..... Ed Pratt  
 Miami (MIA) ..... Natalie Bunting  
 San Juan (SJ) ..... Ramses M. Rodriguez  
 St. Petersburg (SP) ..... Chris Juall

## DISTRICT DIRECTORATE CHIEFS

Logistics ..... Nichole Betterson  
 Prevention ..... Daniel J. Helou  
 Response ..... Douglas Armstrong

## DISTRICT STAFF OFFICERS

Aviation ..... Wilson Riggan Jr.  
 Culinary Assistant ..... Patrick McAlvey  
 Communications (CM) ..... Joe Blanchard II  
 Communication Services (CS) ..... Carlos Arenas  
 Emergency Management (EM) ..... Jeffery Barnes  
 Finance (FN) ..... Gwendolyn B. Dougherty  
 Flight Safety Officer (DFSFO) ..... Ron Kaplan  
 Human Resources (HR) ..... Faron Petteys  
 Information Services (IS) ..... Kevin S. Wilcox  
 Legal/Parliamentarian (LP) ..... J. Michael Williams  
 Materials (MA) ..... Jon A. Hunt  
 Marine Safety (MS) ..... William Saltenberger  
 Member Training (MT) ..... Karen L. Miller  
 Navigation System (NS) ..... John R. Frassanito  
 Operations (OP) ..... Chris Juall  
 Public Affairs (PA) ..... Mary B. Patton  
 Publications (PB) ..... Dorothy J. Riley  
 Public Education (PE) ..... Sean E. Hunt  
 Program Visitor (PV) ..... Bryan Bowie  
 Scout (AS) ..... Daniel Muelhaupt  
 State Liaison (SL) ..... Anda A. Ray  
 Secretary/Records (SR) ..... Julie Bouchard  
 Vessel Examinations (VE) ..... Patricia McGowan

## DIVISION COMMANDERS

Division 1 ..... Angel G. Saldana  
 Division 2 ..... Gregory Michael Fonzeno  
 Division 3 ..... Charlene Marie Dykman  
 Division 4 ..... Kaivan Rahbari  
 Division 5 ..... Shari Gail Forman  
 Division 6 ..... Henry Kaufman  
 Division 7 ..... Anthony Hooper  
 Division 8 ..... Trevor James Evans  
 Division 9 ..... Michael Anthony DiPierro  
 Division 10 ..... David W. Bird  
 Division 11 ..... Matthew N. Copeland  
 Division 12 ..... John Earl Swink, Jr.  
 Division 13 ..... David Green  
 Division 14 ..... Gary R. Gray  
 Division 15 ..... Shaune D. Hunter  
 Division 16 ..... Hector Luis Colon  
 Division 17 ..... Paul E. Thompson

## FUTURE ISSUES OF BREEZE

Photos, stories, and updates are always welcome. Please send all submissions to DSO-PB for review via email to: [dso.pb.d7@gmail.com](mailto:dso.pb.d7@gmail.com)

[pb.d7@gmail.com](mailto:pb.d7@gmail.com)  
 DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 2: June 15, 2025

Breeze Editors: Dorothy Riley and Michael Stringer

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# Commander, Coast Guard, CGD-SE

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**RDML Adam Chamie**  
**Commander, U.S. Coast Guard**  
**Southeast District**

## **To the Auxiliarists of the Southeast District,**

As we welcome 2026, I want to take a moment to wish each of you a Happy New Year and express my heartfelt gratitude for your outstanding contributions throughout 2025. Together, we achieved remarkable successes that reflect your dedication and commitment to our mission.

In 2025, the Southeast District Auxiliarists contributed over 405,000 hours in support of the Coast Guard, the recreational boating community, and our maritime partners. This incredible commitment is a testament to your hard work and passion for service. Our year was characterized by tempo, transition, and transformation as we aligned our priorities, invested in leadership, and modernized our operations, all while maintaining a strong focus on our members.

Looking ahead to 2026, you can expect a continued emphasis on integration and simplification, ensuring it is easier for you to serve, lead, and succeed. We will build on our momentum by enhancing operations with new tools, developing systems that integrate Auxiliary capabilities into Coast Guard frameworks, and exploring emerging technologies and new mission sets.

Thank you again for your service and commitment. May this new year bring you joy, health, and continued success in all your endeavors.

Warmest wishes,

*Adam Chamie*

RDML Adam Chamie  
Commander, Coast Guard Southeast District  
Director, DHS Operation VIGILANT SENTRY (OVS)

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# DIRECTOR *of* AUXILIARY

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The start of 2026 brings a fresh wave of energy and opportunity across the Southeast District. This excitement is especially evident in our flotillas and divisions, where newly elected leaders are now taking the helm. I was honored to attend many of the Change of Watch ceremonies and witness this transition firsthand. To all our new leaders, I offer my full support and look forward to the innovative ideas and renewed momentum you will bring to our shared mission.

This past quarter has been a testament to your commitment. I have been particularly impressed by the highly successful Sector Training Events held throughout the Southeast District. I was thrilled to see the program's continued expansion this year, with both Sector St. Petersburg and Sector Miami successfully expanding their training to include "North" and "South" events. This strategic growth allows us better to serve our members across a wider geographic area, and the high turnout at all events was inspiring.

I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to our CY26 Director's Administrative Assistant (DAA) billet. Your assumption of these critical program responsibilities and duties is invaluable to the smooth operation of our district, and I look forward to our continued collaboration.

Looking ahead, I want to highlight the importance of Force Design 2028 (FD2028). This is a strategic vision for the entire Coast Guard enterprise, and the Auxiliary is a critical partner in its success. I encourage you to see this as an opportunity to further integrate your unique talents with the Coast Guard's operational needs. This includes the new Southeast District website and an AI Assistant, de-



LCDR Benjamin Tuxhorn, DIRAUX

signed to be a 24/7 resource for your questions. We are investing in you and want to empower you to carry out your duties more effectively.

Finally, we are in the planning phase for the 2026 Southeast District Training Activity (D-TRAIN) in Orlando this September. It is an invaluable opportunity for professional growth that directly contributes to our collective readiness. Please take advantage of the opportunity to provide input for classes, panels, or workshops you would like to see. Your input will help us build a strong and engaging D-TRAIN program.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and service. Your contributions are essential to the Coast Guard's success. ★

# BRIDGE NOTES

## LEADING TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION IN THE SOUTHEAST DISTRICT



**COMO Martin Goodwin,  
District Commodore**

The Southeast District continues to build momentum in one of the most important areas shaping the future of our organization: technology innovation. As highlighted in the recent district briefing presented during our series of town hall events, innovation is a key part of

our broader modernization effort, alongside readiness, member support, and deeper integration with the active-duty Coast Guard. The district's vision is clear: use technology and Artificial Intelligence as practical tools to improve mission execution, strengthen operational awareness, support our members, and better serve the boating public.

A major part of that effort is the continued modernization of our Standard Operating Procedures. The SOP modernization project is progressing steadily, with work underway to ensure that edited SOPs can be integrated into the district website in a structured, searchable format. This provides members with clearer, human-readable guidance while also enabling AI tools such as the District AI Assistant to reference authoritative documents more effectively. Over time, this work is creating a structured knowledge base that can support both member training and automated assistance, helping reduce confusion and making it easier for members and leaders to find the answers they

need. This aligns directly with the district's emphasis on SOPs as a central pillar of modernization and on AI-enabled access to curated guidance.

The district is also continuing development of our Auxiliary Asset and Workforce Awareness for Readiness and Engagement (AuxAware) program, an initiative with significant promise for operational integration. AuxAware is designed to provide Coast Guard command centers with real-time visualization of Auxiliary assets and mission activity through an interactive dashboard and map interface. Its intended capabilities include facility positions, capabilities, operator contact information, and easier underway tasking, all of which can improve readiness and operational awareness. This program is already underway with Auxiliary vessels in Sector St. Petersburg. As the prototype evolves, AuxAware could become a valuable shared awareness tool that enhances operational integration between active-duty and Auxiliary units.

Another exciting initiative is Auxiliary Software-Defined Radios (AuxSDR), which is now moving into its next phase. Radios built using low cost components, AuxSDR is intended to expand communications monitoring through AI-enabled listening and analysis. The team is planning a three-unit prototype rollout to validate both the operational concept and the hardware configuration. These units represent an affordable path toward a distributed monitoring network that could significantly increase communications coverage at modest cost. As the prototypes mature, the district will need to consider long-term program structure, equipment procurement, funding options, and member recruitment for hosted stations. The opportunity here is substantial: a scalable, relatively inexpensive capability that could materially improve situational awareness and communications support.

The district is also preparing to advance its Visual Detection and Ranging (Aux ViDAR) program. This is an exploratory effort focused on AI-assisted

*(Continued on page 7)*

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visual detection. This initiative will evaluate camera systems, optics, and detection models for use in search, reconnaissance, and maritime domain awareness. The concept mirrors the district briefing's description of AI-enhanced SAR and target-of-interest detection: continuously scanning, identifying objects of interest, and processing information in real time. While still in the testing phase, Aux ViDAR points to a future in which Auxiliary crews may be able to augment search effectiveness and operational awareness with affordable, onboard AI tools.

Taken together, these initiatives reflect a broader strategic direction already identified by the district: deeper integration with active-duty Coast Guard operations and the use of innovation to improve mission performance. The district's technology momentum has already included a modernized website serving as a hub for AI tools, dashboards, SOP libraries, calendar integration, and communications. These efforts are not isolated experiments; they are the building blocks of a more connected, more responsive, and more capable Auxiliary.

To help organize and sustain this work, we are establishing the Southeast District Cyber-Human Systems Working Group as a district staff committee focused on technology research, innovation, and human systems integration to support district mission effectiveness. This work includes identifying emerging technologies, evaluating

operational and administrative use cases, studying human-machine interaction and workflow design, recommending pilot initiatives, and developing proposals that improve readiness, safety, training, communications, and member support.

What makes these initiatives especially important is that they are not innovations for innovation's sake. They aim for real outcomes: helping members accomplish tasks faster, improving how we deliver guidance, increasing awareness of available assets, extending communications coverage, and exploring new ways to support search-and-rescue missions. Just as important, they strengthen our ability to integrate with active-duty Coast Guard

units by providing better information, more responsive support, and more capable mission augmentation.

The Southeast District is demonstrating that modernization, readiness, and innovation can advance together. Our ongoing progress in SOP modernization, AuxAware, AuxSDR, Aux ViDAR, and the broader Cyber-Human Systems

Working Group shows the district's growing ability to build and apply the early framework of a truly modern technology capability. That capability will help us better support our members, better serve the boating community, and better augment Coast Guard activities in the years ahead. ★



No, our District AI Assistant does not look like this representation, but if it did, then possibly our members would be more open to exploring AI capabilities. (Gemini AI created image.)

# STAFF BRIEFINGS

## SOUTHEAST DISTRICT DCOS UPDATE



**Murray Price**  
District Chief of Staff (DCOS)

Thanks to Sector Training (S-TRAIN) events across the Southeast District, we are seeing a significant increase in training and currency completions early this year. Unfortunately, this momentum has been challenged by periods when parts of the U.S. federal government stop normal operations due to a lapse

in funding (a government shutdown), specifically affecting the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard, resulting in delays across our surface patrols and air operations.

As we navigate these operational hurdles, safety remains our top priority. Due to new threats targeting the U.S. military, the Coast Guard has raised Force Protection levels at all stations and sector units. Auxiliarists must mirror this posture by remaining hyper-vigilant regarding uniform wear. Whether you are conducting vessel safety checks, staffing public affairs exhibits, or attending meetings, wearing your Operational Dress Uniform (ODU) or Tropical Blue uniform in public can inadvertently make you a soft target. Please practice strict situational awareness and exercise good judgment regarding when and where you are in uniform.

This past month, my fellow Chiefs of Staff from all 17 Coast Guard Auxiliary districts were asked to analyze their respective districts to determine

what a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) survey would reveal when polling Division Commanders (DCDRs), District Staff Officers (DSOs), Auxiliary Sector Coordinators (ASCs), and Auxiliary Unit Coordinators (AUCs) regarding the Southeast District's performance since January 2025. The responses reflect the specific prompts provided. Different prompts could produce different outcomes; therefore, to ensure national consistency, all Chiefs of Staff used the same criteria for this assignment.

Below is a summary of the data collected from the Southeast District. Feel free to share this summary with your fellow members to give them a clear picture of where we excel and where we need improvement:

### Where We Are Strong (Our Strengths)

The Southeast District is doing an excellent job executing our core missions. In daily operations, our members consistently excel in the following areas:

- **Core Missions:** Vessel Safety Checks are widely regarded as our greatest strength, followed closely by Surface and Air Operations, and Public Education.
- **Member Support and Standards:** The Chaplain Program and Auxiliary Culinary Assistance (AUXCA) are performing well. In addition, members generally demonstrate a strong understanding of uniform wear and standards.
- **Organization and Training:** The district continues to provide excellent member training and meeting opportunities, achieving a strong balance of in-person and hybrid sessions.
- **Prevention:** Our efforts in Aids to Navigation (ATON) and Port and Facility Activities continue to be a highlight of the district's prevention programs.

*(Continued on page 9)*

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## Where We Need to Grow (Our Weaknesses)

While the district performs well in many areas, leadership has identified several key areas that require focused attention to strengthen our operations.

- **Recruitment and Retention:** This is our biggest operational hurdle. We must improve both general and targeted recruiting to attract members with necessary skills. Retaining our outstanding members is equally critical.
- **Stepping Up in Operations:** While we remain strong in Surface Operations, there is a clear demand for our increased involvement in Coast Guard Augmentation, Emergency Management and Response, and Public Affairs, extending beyond activities such as staffing a table at a boat show.
- **Leadership Pipeline:** We need stronger succession planning. Currently, we must do a better job supporting our officers and ensuring that qualified, trained individuals are ready to step into leadership roles when positions become vacant.
- **Modernizing Outreach:** We are currently behind in effectively using social media, particularly for unit recruiting purposes.

## Where We Can Excel (Our Opportunities)

Looking ahead, there are several exciting avenues for members to get involved and make a difference:

- **Active-Duty Support:** There is a significant opportunity to provide direct support to the active-duty Coast Guard in areas like Watchstanding, Information Services (IS), Marine Safety, and Culinary Assistance (CA).
- **Inclusivity for All Members:** A key



VSC



OP



AUXCA



MT



NS

opportunity is creating and expanding “activities from home” for older members or those affected by mobility challenges. This ensures that every member, regardless of physical ability, has a meaningful way to contribute to the mission.

- **Technology and Surface Operations:** Expanding the use of technology and identifying new opportunities to conduct Surface Operations are key areas for growth.

## What We Need to Watch Out For (Our Threats)

To protect the future of our district, we have to be honest about the internal challenges holding us back. The survey highlighted a few cultural and structural threats we need to address together:

- **Leadership Burnout:** Our biggest threat is a lack of qualified and trained members willing to step up and take on leadership roles. We are relying too heavily on the same small group of people.
- **Recruiting Apathy:** Although every member is supposed to be a recruiter, many members do not actively recruit or spread the word about the organization in their communities.
- **“Gatekeeping” and Culture:** Some members have been reluctant to share certain skills or qualifications, limiting training opportunities for others. Addressing these “good old boy club” mentalities is essential to ensure that all members feel welcome, included, and valued. ★

Images: USCG Auxiliary

# Pride, Poise, Perfection

By Fiona Woods, FSO-PA, Flotilla 13-4, Ocean Reef

Today, there is only one fully trained and certified Ceremonial Color Guard Auxiliariest team within the Southeast District. Daniel Oliveras envisions one in every division.

At 5'8" tall, Oliveras, strapping and poised, describes himself as vertically challenged and at the lower end of the allowable height range for this prestigious and serious duty. Meeting physical appearance criteria is the first step outlined in the Personnel Qualification Standard for Auxiliary Ceremonial Color Guard (AUXCCG).

Oliveras (Flotilla 17-6, Central Brevard) is the Ceremonial Color Guard Coordinator for the Southeast District, a job which could expand significantly as more Auxiliariests receive training and new teams are formed. He and team members Clive Hurlock, James Lhernault, and Ron Olgin (Flotilla 17-11, Orlando/Winter Park) are actively training others to participate in Color Guard Ceremonies and Funeral Honors for fallen comrades on both the Silver and Gold Sides. In December 2025, Oliveras' team performed Funeral Honors for Rear Admiral Wayne E. Justice, who served as Coast Guard Aide to Presidents Bush and Clinton.

Earlier that month, Oliveras led training for 39 active-duty Coast Guard members in Jacksonville. The program took place over two days at the Sector Jacksonville Command Center and U.S. Coast Guard Station Mayport. Coast Guard personnel were trained in a classroom setting, with rolling tables used as caskets. Explanations of etiquette and expectations preceded demonstrations of flag folding and presentation. Next, students were given flags to practice proper technique. Oliveras describes being the victim of a "bowtie," a dreaded complication that

occurs when previous handlers incorrectly fold a flag. As the flag is ceremoniously unfolded, it results in not the flowing, horizontally laid stars and

*(Continued on page 11)*

Instructors Daniel Oliveras (left), Clive Hurlock, and Ron Olgin instruct trainees on the proper removal of a flag from a casket at Station Port Canaveral in June 2025, during Military Funeral Honors Training for the Marine Safety Unit. USCG Auxiliary photo.



(Continued from page 10)

stripes we expect, but a flag twisted in the center like a Tootsie Roll wrapper. Oliveras and his instruction team teach a secret signal to be passed between Color Guard members should the bowtie condition arise, and the foldout remedy is schooled and practiced.

Active-duty Coast Guard personnel receive Honor Guard training only if selected upon graduation from Cape May. Some are reluctant to take the opportunity, deterred by intensive drilling and inspections. This has led to a scarcity of trained Ceremonial Color Guard personnel, which is where Oliveras comes in. He has earned the moniker “The Guru of Military Funeral Honors.”

Oliveras grew up in the Bronx and found work as a utility lineman. He became an expert problem solver in his field, but after a few years, he found the work not entirely fulfilling. Fourteen years ago, he joined a local Auxiliary flotilla at the urging of friends to enrich his life and give back to his country. This is where his Color Guard work began. After retiring, he relocated to Florida and transferred into the Brevard County flotilla. Little did he know what lay ahead.

The Standing Operating Procedures and personnel qualification standard (PQS) create an environment that trains and prepares Auxiliarists to serve as a flag force multiplier for the Coast Guard. In Oliveras’ own words, he seeks to “not just meet but exceed” the standards expected by the Coast Guard. This standard is demonstrated nowhere better than in the training this team of Auxiliarists provides to the Gold Side in their area of expertise. Oliveras teaches how to carry and present not only flags but also urns and coffins with deference and respect, and how to form an Honor Guard for the return of remains of those who have crossed the bar, with guardsmen arrayed in faultless order, arranged by height to create an upslope or inverted V formation.

The team’s schedule already holds an unprecedented thirty-seven teaching and presentation events for 2026. Auxiliary members in Georgia, the Virgin Islands, Florida, and Puerto Rico want to expand their Color Guard programs. There is much to accomplish, and Oliveras still wants to further his own training and understanding of the Coast Guard’s needs, so that when the next widow of a fallen comrade requests Military Honors for their loved one’s funeral, they stand ready to answer the call with respect and dignity. ★



Above: A line of Coast Guard personnel with folded flags— Instructors and trainees at the end of the two-day training in Funeral Military Honors for active-duty Coast Guard in Sector Jacksonville, December 2025.

Below: Daniel Oliveras takes personal pride in his trainees and has designed a special coin as a gift for those who complete the Southeast District personal qualification standard. USCG Auxiliary photos.



# USCGC BLACKTHORN Service of Remembrance

By Dorothy Riley

On January 28, 2026, the Coast Guard family gathered for the 46th BLACKTHORN Service of Remembrance, honoring the twenty-three members who perished in 1980. The ceremony opened with an aerial salute from Air Station Clearwater and all the honors of a formal military ceremony, including the posting of the colors and the playing of the national anthem.

Distinguished guests included RADM Adam Chamie Commander, Coast Guard Southeast District, CAPT Courtney Sergent, Commander, Sector St. Petersburg, MCPO Chief Keith Naker, and retired ADCM John L. Chassereau, Jr. The Coast Guard Auxiliary was strongly represented, with leaders from Divisions 7, 8, and 11 standing together—a testament to the unity and camaraderie that define our community.

Auxiliary members attending included Karen Miller, District Captain-West; Christopher Juall, Auxiliary Sector Coordinator, Sector St. Petersburg; Matthew Copeland, Division 11 Commander; Daniel Helou, Director, Prevention Directorate; Dean Hoskin, Immediate Past Division 7 Commander; Anthony Hooper, Division 7 Commander; Brenda Burger, Staff Officer-Information Services Division 7; Kevin Wilcox, Staff Officer- Information Services, Division 8; Dorothy Riley, District Staff Officer-Publications; Lisa Repetto, Staff Officer-Secretary of Records, Division 11.

RADM Chamie delivered the keynote address, followed by the cuttermen tribute and the solemn reading of the twenty-three names. As each name was spoken, a Coast Guardsman placed a rose at the memorial's base. Daniel Helou and Matthew Copeland presented a wreath on behalf of the Auxiliary, joining others in a moment of collective



Above: Matthew Copeland, Division 11 Commander, and Daniel Helou, Director, Prevention Directorate, SE District, stand beside the wreath they will place before the BLACKTHORN memorial.

Below: Matthew Copeland, Division 11 Commander; Anthony Hooper, Division 7 Commander, and Karen Miller, District Captain-West, speaking with CAPT Courtney Sergent, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, after the formal remembrance ceremony on Jan. 28, 2026. USCG Auxiliary photos by Lisa Repetto.



*(Continued on page 13)*

(Continued from page 12)

remembrance. “Eternal Father” and “Amazing Grace” carried across the gathering before the ceremony concluded with taps.



service reaffirms that commitment and ensures that the sacrifice of the twenty-three is never forgotten. Their legacy endures in every cutter that sails, every watchstander who stands the line, and every member who gathers to honor their memory.

### Honoring the Legacy of USCGC BLACKTHORN

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter BLACKTHORN (WLB-391) remains one of the most storied vessels in Coast Guard history. “Built by Marine Iron and Shipbuilding Corp., Duluth, MN... and commissioned 27 March 1944,” it served as one of the 180-foot buoy tenders—the largest class ever constructed for the service. Throughout its decades at sea, BLACKTHORN carried out the demanding work of maintaining aids to navigation while responding to emergencies, salvaging downed aircraft, and assisting mariners in distress.

Its long career reflected the endurance of its class, many serving more than 45 years. After an extensive overhaul in Tampa, BLACKTHORN began its final transit on January 28, 1980. A series of navigational errors placed it in the path of the inbound tanker Capricorn, resulting in a collision that claimed the lives of twenty-three Coast Guardsmen. The Marine Board later concluded that “the primary responsibility for the collision rested with Lieutenant Commander Seipel,” while also identifying contributing violations aboard both vessels. The tragedy led to sweeping improvements in training, equipment standards, and navigation practices across the service. ★

*(All assistance to condense the article from previously published versions.)*

Above: Coast Guard honored guests in attendance stood behind the wreaths placed before the memorial during the playing of “Eternal Father” at the end of the ceremony.

Below: RADM Adam Chamie, Commander, Coast Guard Southeast District, CAPT Courtney Sargent, Commander, Sector St. Petersburg, at the speaker’s podium prior to the start of the remembrance ceremony. USCG Auxiliary photos by Lisa Repetto.

The BLACKTHORN tragedy reshaped the Coast Guard’s commitment to safety, readiness, and professional excellence. Each year, the memorial

## Welcome to the 2025-2026 Southeast District Publications Contest!

This contest is open to all newsletters published within the Southeast District between **May 1, 2025**, and **April 30, 2026**. To participate, please submit your best three issues to Dorothy Riley, District Staff Officer-Publications, via email at (<mailto:dso.pb.d7@gmail.com>) no later than May 1, 2026.

Submitting your newsletters to the Southeast District Publications Contest can provide several benefits, including:

**Recognition:** If your newsletter wins an award, it can help to raise your organization's profile. Winning an award can also boost team morale and demonstrate to members that their hard work is appreciated.

**Feedback:** Entering the contest can provide you with valuable feedback on your publication's strengths and areas for improvement. Judges will provide detailed feedback on your entries, allowing you to learn and grow as a publication editor.

**Benchmarking:** The contest can help you benchmark your publication against others in our district. This can help you identify new ideas and best practices to incorporate into your publication.

**Networking:** The contest provides an opportunity to connect with other publication editors and professionals, exchange ideas, and learn from others' experiences.

Overall, entering the Southeast District Publications Contest can be a valuable experience for publication editors and teams, providing an opportunity to showcase their work, receive feedback and recognition, and learn and grow as professionals.

If you have any questions or concerns about this contest, please don't hesitate to let me know. I'm here to help! ★

# Southeast District Publication Contest

### CONTEST RULES:

- Units must have successfully published at least three newsletters per division and four per flotilla
- Other Southeast District publications must have successfully published at least four newsletters during the contest period.
- Each entry must be identified with the name of the editor and the division/flotilla or other entity name.
- Each submission must enter the number of issues published per year.
- The judging of these publications shall be conducted by a committee consisting of the DSO-PB, who will serve as chairperson, and a minimum of four additional Auxiliaries knowledgeable in the field of journalism and Auxiliary publishing guidelines.
- Entries will be judged using the standards contained in the current USCG Auxiliary Publication Officer's Guide.
- Submissions should have been produced between May 1, 2025, and April 30, 2026.
- Send your best three issues to Dorothy Riley, District Staff Officer-Publications at ([dso.pb.d7@gmail.com](mailto:dso.pb.d7@gmail.com)) no later than **May 1, 2026**.

# Update to ALAUX 014/26: Your Personal Safety and Uniform Wear

There have been some questions regarding the ALAUX 014/26 concerning the wearing of AUX uniforms and personal safety. After consultation with BSX and Force Protection, the below serves as a clarification to the ALAUX.

1. Personal safety is key.
2. Uniforms may be worn while conducting Auxiliary activities, but not while in transit to/from the mission.
3. If possible, choose a lesser uniform vs ODU or tropical blue. For example: VE polo shirt vs ODUs when conducting Vessel Safety Checks.
4. When holding large gatherings in uniform in the community (not on federal property) the local Auxiliary leadership and event planners are advised to request local law enforcement presence if possible. Your Sector (via your Sector Coordinator or AUXLO) should be kept aware of your intended activities.
5. The display of logos on PA booths and at boat shows are acceptable.
6. Again, personal safety is key. Maintain situational awareness when in uniform in public.

Go out and do the great work of the Auxiliary. Have fun, but stay diligent.

Stay safe out there!

*Mary Kirkwood*

COMO Mary Kirkwood



AI Image created by Adobe Firefly

# *Building Safer Waters One Paddle at a Time:* Charles Hayes Brings AUXPAD to Life at District Training

By Susan Wetzel



Photo: <https://www.uscgboating.org/>

Coast Guard Station Miami Beach hosted Sector Miami Training (S-TRAIN) January 2026. Auxiliaries from across the region gathered for an eye-opening and energizing session on the Auxiliary Paddlecraft (AUXPAD) program, led by Charles Hayes, the district's go-to expert and American Canoe Association (ACA) Level 2 instructor. His presentation was equal parts education, demonstration, and passionate call to action, emphasizing that paddlecraft safety outreach is now one of the fastest-growing—and most vital—missions of the Auxiliary.

### A Program with Purpose

Hayes opened with context: the AUXPAD program began under a 2013 Commandant Instruction and has evolved rapidly ever since. In alignment with other modernized Auxiliary initiatives, the program now operates under a living handbook rather than a static manual, allowing for faster updates and improved responsiveness to real-world conditions and safety trends.

"This program is changing constantly," Hayes explained. "Every year we find new risks, new equipment, and new opportunities to train smarter. A handbook lets us adapt as the maritime world does."

The AUXPAD team is nationally organized, with Hayes serving under Branch Chief Todd Wilkinson for AUXPAD Afloat. Supported by leaders such as Joey Taguding (Branch Chief, D.C.) and Roland McNevin (Division Chief, Paddlecraft Safety), Hayes travels throughout the district teaching both AUXPAD Ashore and AUXPAD Afloat operations—empowering members to reach paddlers where they are, both on the shore and on the water.

### The Stakes Are Real

Behind the enthusiasm lies sobering data. In 2024 alone, 26% of all boating fatalities nationwide involved paddlecraft—kayaks, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards. According to Hayes, most deaths share the same root cause: paddlers not wearing life jackets.

"People still think paddlecraft are toys," Hayes cautioned. "But under federal law, these are vessels—subject to the same rules as any boat. The single most effective life-saving device is the one you're already wearing."

He recounted recent tragedies across the South-

east, including experienced athletes and even lifeguards who lost their lives due to cold water, unexpected currents, or inadequate preparation. Each story underscored a central message: education saves lives.

### Educating from Shore to Surf

AUXPAD outreach—known as AUXPAD Ashore—focuses on Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) education, bringing awareness to paddlers who often lack formal training. The effort connects with vessel examiners, public affairs officers, program visitors, and educators, all of whom can weave paddlecraft materials into their existing missions.

Hayes encouraged members to order paddlecraft safety pamphlets and student workbooks from the National Supply Center and to build partnerships with local retailers: "Go to the big-box stores and ask to zip-tie our safety guides to new kayaks. That's an easy touchpoint with new paddlers—and every one of those conversations can prevent an accident."

He also highlighted tools for engagement, such as "If Found" stickers, advising members to personalize outreach: "Tell people to use a permanent marker over the sticker so it lasts longer. Ask if they've ever taken a paddle safety class or had their vessel examined—that's how AUXPAD connects."

### AUXPAD Afloat: Meeting New Standards

For those pursuing on-water qualifications, AUXPAD is distinctive in that it follows external industry standards: the program's training benchmarks come directly from the American Canoe Association, one of only two Auxiliary programs to do so (the other being the Aviation program).

An ACA Level 2 assessment opens the door to AUXPAD Afloat qualification. "Once that's complete," Hayes said, "there are just a few administrative steps left before you're officially underway."

During the workshop, Hayes demonstrated the essential elements of paddlecraft vessel safety checks using Form 7012A, including how to inspect hull identification numbers, scupper holes, hatch covers, and bungee integrity. He underscored the importance of applying the same rigor to kayaks as to powered boats: "If you wouldn't feel safe in it yourself, don't pass it."

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## Building Confidence and Camaraderie

Hayes's teaching style blended technical precision with warmth and humor. He urged members uncomfortable with paddlecraft examinations to reach out for mentoring—"Call me, FaceTime me, or invite me down. I'll walk you through it, step by step."

Beyond the safety message, Hayes reminded attendees that fellowship and visibility matter, too. Wearing the bright AUXPAD uniform—the orange shirt, blue shorts, and Tilley hat—serves a dual purpose: safety and approachability.

"If we're going to make a scene out there," he quipped, "let's be seen."

### A Call to Action for Every Auxiliarist

In closing, Hayes reminded everyone that AUXPAD is not a niche initiative, but an essential extension of the Auxiliary's core mission—recreational boating safety. Whether conducting exams, teaching classes, or simply engaging the public, every Auxiliarist can play a role in spreading awareness among the 40 million Americans now paddling.

"Every conversation, every safety exam, every time we show up in uniform," he said, "we change the culture on the water. And that saves lives." ★



**"HAVE KAYAK-WILL TRAVEL."** Charles Hayes loads his kayak after another successful individual teaching segment in Riverview, Fla., May 22, 2022. Charles will extend his knowledge wherever he is needed, be it to groups or individuals. He is dedicated to making paddlesports safer. USCG Auxiliary photo by Dorothy Riley.

# Auxiliarist Jim Fogle Provides Boating Safety Tips Over the Tampa Bay Airwaves

By Lisa Repetto, Southeast District, Division 11

A call into a Tampa Bay fishing program landed Jim Fogle a regular spot on Saturday morning's Reel Animals Fishing Team (RAFT) Radio Show on 970 AM WFLA and Sunday morning's The TA Mahoney Co. Reel Animals Fishing Team (RAFT) Radio Show on 95.3 FM WDAE and 620 AM.

## The Unexpected Beginning of a Broadcasting Career

On Saturday, February 5, 2011, Auxiliarist Jim Fogle was driving to a Division 7 meeting in Tampa. While en route, he tuned into a popular Tampa Bay weekly fishing call-in radio show, RAFT. Stuck in traffic and listening to 970 WFLA, Jim thought, "Just for the heck of it, I'm going to call in." Jim spoke with the producer, who asked, "Who are you?" Jim answered, "This is Jim Fogle with the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. I was wondering if I could share a safe boating tip with your listeners?"

The producer replied, "Well, I guess. Let me check." After a few moments, the producer told Jim, "Yeah, that'd be great. Stand by, please." Jim responded, "Standing by," and was soon on the air providing a safe boating tip on wearing life jackets.

After the show, Jim received a call from the producer who said, "Capt. Mike Anderson (host of the show) would like to talk to you." Later that Saturday, Jim received a call from Capt. Mike, who introduced himself and said, "You know, we have this show, and I suddenly had an enlighten-



James Fogle joins the 'T.A. Mahoney Co. Reel Animals Radio Show' on the radio from his home studio. Photo provided by James Fogle

ment about what I need on the show—safe boating tips."

Capt. Mike offered Jim the opportunity to join both the Saturday and Sunday shows when available. Jim accepted and became a regular contributor to the RAFT team.

## About the Reel Animals Fishing Team (RAFT) Radio Show

Based on recent Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) data, there are over 100,000 registered boats in the Tampa Bay area, specifically in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties.

A nearly 20-year staple in the Tampa Bay area, the Saturday morning call-in show airs from

6–8 a.m. on 970 AM WFLA. Hosted by Capt. Mike Anderson, and co-host Capt. Dylan Hubbard, of Hubbard's Marine at John's Pass, Madeira Beach, the show has grown its weekly audience to more than 25,000 listeners, making it the #1-rated radio fishing show in the Tampa market. The program features local fishing experts who report current fishing conditions in various areas and provide informative answers to listeners.

## Jim's Invaluable Role as a Safe Boating Ambassador

Jim has been a valuable contributor to RAFT for 15 years, with more than 1,160 broadcasts

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Sunday show James Fogle with Mike Mahoney (left) and Capt. Ben Marshall (right). The T.A. Mahoney Co. Reel Animals Radio Show airs Sunday mornings from 7–9 a.m. on 95.3 FM WDAE and 620 AM. The Sunday show features Capt. Mike Anderson, co-host, Capt. Ben Marshall, and Mike Mahoney, owner, T.A. Mahoney Co. The Sunday show follows the same general format as the Saturday show. Both shows are streamed online and on iHeartRadio. Photo provided by James Fogle.

to his credit. In his role as a safe boating expert, he covers major boating events, including National Safe Boating Week (NSBW) and the Gasparilla boat parade, emphasizing adherence to boating rules and regulations. While he has visited the recording studio on several occasions, he primarily participates from his home office.

Jim prepares his discussion topics in advance and explains, “During the week, something will strike me, and I’ll write up a couple of paragraphs on it.” Jim explains, “I share as many known details as possible about an incident—whether a rescue was successful or not and why—highlighting how having an EPIRB, PLB, or VHF marine radio may determine a boater’s survival and reduce search time.”

Because Jim appears on both Saturday and Sunday shows, he notes, “I try not to talk about the same topics because I know we have many of the same listeners.” While Jim’s radio handle, “Capt. Jim,” is not affiliated with the CG Auxiliary, he has held a 100-ton Master U.S. Coast Guard Captain’s license for 25 years.

Since fishing is the primary topic, Jim is careful not to overwhelm listeners with too many laws and regulations. “Most of the time, I give them the requirements and recommendations, depending on the topic,” he explains. Common call-in questions include: “What equipment should I have on my boat?” and “What is the difference between an EPIRB and a PLB?”

Over the years, Jim has observed that most boaters “think

they are safe on the water” and do not always focus on safety until requirements or consequences are discussed. Frequently, Jim shares details about boating incidents that he believes help remind boaters to take safety seriously, including one involving himself, “A buddy and I sank in the middle of Tampa Bay several years ago,” he says, explaining what caused the accident, what could have prevented it, and how they were rescued.

When Jim attends fishing tournaments or boating events, listeners often recognize him. “Guys will come by and say, Hey, Capt. Jim, I listen to you all the time,” he shares. Many tell him they have been boating for decades but appreciate the reminders about safety equipment and preparation. “When that happens, I feel like I’m doing my job successfully and know it’s worthwhile.”

Jim also uses the radio platform to promote the Coast Guard Auxiliary, boating skills and seamanship classes, and vessel safety checks. He worked with the show’s hosts to add the National Coast Guard Auxiliary web link to the RAFT website sponsor page, making it easy for listeners to find classes and request vessel safety checks.

### **Jim’s Background, Service, and Dedication to Boating Safety**

Jim was born and raised in Sumter, South Carolina. He attended The Citadel in Charleston before enlisting in the U.S. Army, where he trained as an airborne radio teletype operator. He was then

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assigned to U.S. Strike Command (U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base), deploying to conflict zones and joint exercises while providing real-time communications support.

Jim later graduated from Officer Candidate School, was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and requested deployment to Vietnam, where he served for one year with the 101st Airborne Division. He served a total of seven years in the U.S. Army.

After earning bachelor's and master's degrees, Jim worked in hospital and healthcare administration. Following relocation to St. Petersburg, he joined Flotilla 72 in November 2003, serving as Flotilla Commander (FC), Flotilla Staff Officer for Finance (FSO-FN), Flotilla Staff Officer for Public Education (FSO-PE), and Division Staff Officer for Public Education (SO-PE). He was also active as a coxswain, crew member, instructor, program visitor, and vessel examiner.

In 2024, Jim received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteer Service from President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. At that time, he had recorded over 11,000 Auxiliary volunteer hours, six competencies, and 51 awards.

**Jim and his wife, Ruth, reside on "Big Bayou" in South St. Petersburg.**

When asked how long he plans to continue broadcasting, Jim says, "I sometimes think I don't want to wake up early, but I do it anyway. I feel like I'm doing something positive, so I'll keep at it. I don't really have a retirement date." It seems safe to say the boating community hopes that



James Fogle and Capt. Dylan Hubbard in the Saturday radio show WFLA studio Photo provided by James Fogle

day is still far off.

**A Coordinated First Air/Trauma Workshop**

Following an on-air discussion of a serious boating accident, it became apparent that most charter captains were not very knowledgeable about stopping bleeding, using tourniquets, and similar emergency procedures. The RAFT hosts asked Jim to organize a workshop. Together, the RAFT team, the Florida Guides Association, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary offered a first-aid and trauma-treatment workshop specifically for charter captains. The class covered injury assessment, applying tourniquets, performing CPR, administering Narcan, and treating burns, fractures, stings, and wounds until responders arrived.

Jim coordinated the event at Flotilla 79 in Tampa, enlisting fellow Flotilla 72 members, Daniel Helou, District Directorate Chief of Prevention, and Gordon Hornby, Flotilla Staff Officer for Public Education (FSO-PE). With assistance from Air Station Clearwater

leadership, Dr. Andrew Kropp, a Flotilla 72 member, agreed to teach the workshop. Dan Helou asked me to take photographs at the workshop, which I was happy to do. That's where I crossed paths with Jim—and that chance meeting led to this story.

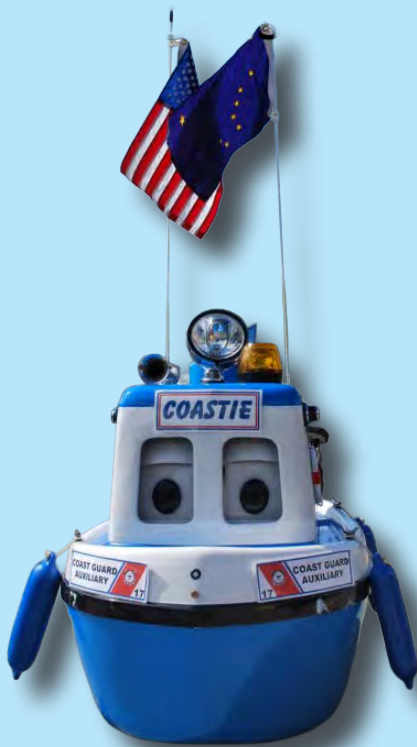
Auxiliarist Jim Fogle has become a trusted voice for safe boating across the Tampa Bay area. Whether reminding listeners to wear life jackets, carry proper safety equipment, or prepare for emergencies, his message remains consistent: safety saves lives. ★

WEBSITE: <https://reelanimals.com>

# Coastie

## The Safety Boat

By Erik Amato,  
Flotilla 29, Lake Lanier,  
Georgia



Sometime in 2024, words began circulating about an old Coastie RC robot that had surfaced in the back of a trailer. The trailer had been acquired by Larry Cole, Flotilla Commander, Flotilla 25, Hartwell Lake, though its exact origin was unclear. A photograph of that trailer, filled with assorted equipment and debris, offered the first glimpse of what would eventually become known as "Coastie 2.0".

Interest in restoring one of these units had existed for many years, and it was made clear early on that there was a strong desire to take on the project. Over time, it became apparent that this Coastie had been moved between multiple locations, with numerous unsuccessful attempts made to revive it.

After many discussions and considerable back-and-forth, a proposal was put forward: the Coastie unit would be assigned for restoration with no oversight or imposed schedule, and all expenses would be personally underwritten. If successful, and if the unit became operational again, Coastie would be assigned to Flotilla 29 at Lake Lanier, Georgia, where it would serve as a boating safety ambassador for both the flotilla and the surrounding community. With the proposal accepted, work began on figuring out how to put this particular "Humpty Dumpty" back together again.

The plan was to use a 24-volt electric wheelchair as the power unit. A search of Craigslist quickly turned up an inexpensive used chair located nearby, and a friend agreed to retrieve it and deliver it to the workshop. The seller's

only comment was, "It doesn't work."

With a bit of faith and a fair amount of testing, probing, pushing, and partial disassembly, two new AGM batteries were installed. Once the batteries were in place, the result was immediate: the wheelchair worked perfectly.

Flotilla 29 hosted a public affairs exhibit at the April 2025 Lake Lanier Islands Boat Show, and the empty Coastie shell was brought to the booth to gauge public response. The reaction from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. One of the most valuable outcomes of the multi-day show was meeting metal fabricator, Chris Shocka, whose booth was located nearby.

Over the course of the two-day event, extensive discussions took place about modifying the electric wheelchair drive components to fit inside the Coastie shell. This provided an ideal opportunity to closely examine Coastie's outer structure, evaluate the limited space available for a drive unit, and agree on an approach. Mr. Shocka agreed to follow the proposed design concept and assist with the modifications required to make the system work.

Most electric wheelchairs are at least 24 inches wide, including the unit selected for this project. This presented a significant challenge, as Coastie allowed for only 18 inches of maximum clearance for the drive mechanism. After exploring many promising ideas that ultimately proved unworkable, the wheelchair was completely disassembled, and a new plan was developed that appeared

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likely to succeed.

The components were taken to Shocka Metal Fabricators to put the design to the test. A couple of weeks later, the call came to pick it up. The result closely matched the original design specifications, a testament to clear communication throughout the process. The finished assembly was slightly wider than 18 inches, but that was a problem easily solved with cutting tools.

Coastie's plastic hull tapers significantly between the deck and the waterline, and it quickly became clear that additional trimming would be required. After many "just a little bit more" adjustments, the drive wheels were finally able to slide into the hull. The front and rear pivot wheels also required additional clearance, necessitating trimming both fore and aft. Eventually, everything fit.

The next challenge was determining how to attach the drive mechanism to the hull securely. This phase produced no shortage of creative ideas, many of which ultimately failed. After numerous iterations and many cardboard templates, a solution finally emerged that allowed the two assemblies to mate securely while still providing easy access for battery replacement and drive-unit maintenance.

In the final design, only four wing nuts hold the hull and drive unit together. This allows the two sections to be separated with minimal effort whenever service or maintenance is required.

Throughout the project, the primary design goal was quick and easy access to all components, combined with a logical

layout and straightforward, non-complex circuits that future caretakers could easily understand. The secondary goal was to achieve maximum battery endurance.

Attention then turned to the upper unit. The assembly containing the eyes, lights, speakers, servos, and related components revealed a tangled "bird's nest" of wiring. Each wire had to be traced, tested, and organized. Some required replacement, while others needed to be lengthened or shortened to suit the new layout. Complicating matters further was a 31-pin connector carrying an equal number of wires in similar condition. This connector required the same careful tracing and correction process, as it provides power, radio control signals, and relay connections between the lower hull and the upper unit.

All servo units used for eye movement and overall wheel control were either added or replaced with modern, more efficient models. Every incandescent bulb was replaced with LEDs, including the flashing red light. The spotlight remains



Erik Amato and Coastie at the Atlanta Boat Show, January 8-11. Children were captivated by Coastie despite the absence of the voice system. USCG Auxiliary photo.

mounted on Coastie but is not powered due to its extremely high-power demand, approximately 400,000 candlepower.

The most critical component governing Coastie's movement is the original wheelchair joystick controller and its onboard computer. A method was developed to integrate two servo units with the joystick, allowing proper movement through the radio-control system. Retaining the original controller was essential to preserve built-in safety fea-

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tures such as adjustable power settings, magnetic brakes on the drive motors, and compatibility with the original charging cable.

Positioning the joystick controller on the main board was critical, as the AGM batteries are charged via a cable that plugs directly into the controller and must remain easily accessible. The primary wheelchair power system operates at 24 volts. All lighting, pumps, audio components, and accessories required stepping the voltage down to 12 volts, which then had to be reduced further to 5 volts to properly power the radio-controlled servos and relays.

Throughout the project, Coastie was assembled, function-tested, and disassembled repeatedly as it gradually became fully operational. Once all circuits were confirmed to be working properly, a major teardown took place to allow for surface preparation, sanding, reinforcement of weak areas, masking, and painting. After painting, every component was reattached and reassembled to its final configuration, followed by another complete round of testing.

The original horn and siren sounds were generated through a complex proprietary motherboard that proved impractical to restore. A wireless horn and siren assembly with its own mini controller was added instead, mounted on the radio controller for easy access. The original listening and voice systems also relied on the same motherboard and were far too complex to duplicate. In their place, a wireless voice-altering microphone and speaker system was installed, giving Coastie the ability to “talk.” The listening capability has been temporarily eliminated.

The Coastie trailer required approximately a week of work to remove accumulated mold and green growth, restore all lighting, install proper tie-downs to secure Coastie during transport, and complete general cleanup and refurbishment.

Coastie’s debut at the four-day Atlanta Boat Show was exceptionally well received, drawing smiles wherever it moved through the crowds. Children in particular were captivated. The only issue encountered was a complete failure of the voice system. The venue contained so many microwave communication repeaters that the Bluetooth signal was effectively suppressed. In other environments, the system operates reliably at distances of up to 30 feet.



Erik Amato and Coastie at the Atlanta Boat Show, January 8-11. After months of effort, Coastie returns to its mission of promoting boating safety. USCG Auxiliary photo.

As a result, Coastie returned to the workshop for further upgrades. After rummaging through all the old parts, enough original speech and listening pieces were salvaged, cleaned, assembled, and tested. Amazingly enough, it all worked. The challenge, then, was finding logical space to place all the necessary components. After a couple more Amazon deliveries, stepping another voltage supply down to 9 volts, and several weeks later, Coastie 2.1 emerged, ready for its first parade on March 1st.

Overall, the project was a rewarding effort, returning Coastie to its mission of promoting and teaching boating safety. ★



# SEMPER GUMBY HOOYAH!

“Semper Paratus prepares us for the mission.  
Semper Gumbly gets us through it.”

*Classic Coast Guard truth, with a knowing smile.*

“Semper Paratus”, Always Ready, is the official motto of the U.S. Coast Guard. It reflects discipline, preparedness, and mission-first thinking. On paper, it’s crisp and inspiring.

“Semper Gumbly”, Always Flexible, is the unofficial, lived-experience motto. It’s what happens when theory meets reality.

### 1. The Mission Never Changes; Everything Else Does

You train to be ready...

Then the weather shifts, assets break, priorities change, guidance updates, and the phone rings again. Being “always ready” quietly morphs into “always adaptable.”

### 2. Flexibility Becomes a Survival Skill

Schedules move.  
Rules get reinterpreted.  
Resources are “limited.”  
Deadlines remain firm.  
Enter Gumbly logic: bend without breaking.

### 3. Institutional Humor Fills the Gap

“Semper Gumbly” isn’t disrespectful; it’s affectionate realism.

It’s the way Coasties (and Auxiliaries especially) acknowledge that success often depends less on perfect plans and more on creative problem-solving under pressure.

### 4. The Two Mottos Actually Coexist

This is the key insight:  
Semper Paratus = What we strive to be  
Semper Gumbly = How we actually get it done

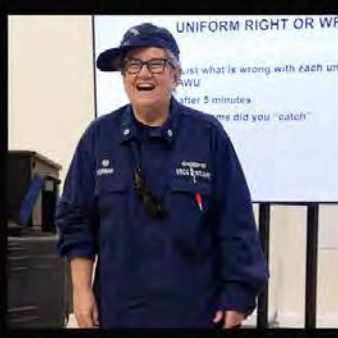
Readiness requires flexibility. The second doesn’t replace the first; it makes it possible. ★



Ramiro Antorcha, Flotilla Commander, Flotilla 17-9, North Brevard, presents the SEMPER GUMBY AWARD to member James Hutson, on Jan. 4, 2026, at the flotilla’s Change of Watch ceremony. USCG Auxiliary photo.



# S-TRAIN Miami 2026



# S-TRAIN Miami 2026

By Dorothy Riley

USCG Sector Miami held S-TRAIN (Sector Training) on January 31, 2026. S-TRAIN focused on enhancing operational capabilities for active duty and Auxiliary members, including specialized training for Aids to Navigation Teams (ANT). These annual training weekends often involve units like ANT Fort Lauderdale to ensure readiness for maritime safety and security missions in the Southeast District, including checks of navigational aids.

Sector Miami S-TRAIN 2026 included training for Auxiliary members in boat crew proficiency and navigation checks, conducting Vessel Examinations, logging hours, and producing basic reports in the Auxiliary Data System, 'Stop the Bleed,' cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Auxiliary Cybersecurity, and other Member Training

workshops in addition to several courses designed to assist new members.

COMO Martin Goodwin discussed new initiatives for the Auxiliary to enhance support for the Coast Guard. These areas include modernization, member-centered leadership, recruitment, maintaining members' dignity, streamlining flotillas, realigning leadership, and incorporating AI tools to simplify and speed up writing tasks.

This issue does not feature one single article about S-TRAIN, but rather several articles by different authors on some of the most significant areas of training. S-TRAIN offered so much material that a single article could not do justice to the amount of information presented.

Members showed strong enthusiasm for the training and workshops. It was great to learn face-to-face and to network with fellow members. The photos on the facing page, by Gustavo Montano and Susan Wetzel, offer a window into the event. ★



Gustavo Montano performs chest compressions on an "infant" at the cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course offered Jan. 31, 2026 at S-TRAIN Sector Miami. USCG Auxiliary photograph.



## Redefining Readiness:

# Commodore Goodwin Charts the Course for a Smarter, More Integrated Auxiliary

By Susan Wetzel (Flotilla 59, Stuart)

Following the conclusion of the January 2026 Sector Miami Training (S-TRAIN), Commodore Martin Goodwin delivered an uplifting speech that energized Auxiliarists. Following remarks by CAPT Florio, Station Miami Beach Commander, Commodore Goodwin outlined a transformational vision—one that embraces innovation, integration, and member empowerment as the foundation for the Auxiliary's future.

### Modernization and Member-Centered Leadership

"We've accomplished a lot in 2025," COMO Goodwin began, reflecting on a year defined by modernization and simplification. The focus, he said, was on reducing administrative burden so members can do what they joined to do: serve the Coast Guard and their communities.

"We revamped our award system, improved how we report, and established standardized processes across the district—all to make it easier for our members and leaders to accomplish their missions," COMO Goodwin said. "Member satisfaction is our mission. If our members aren't satisfied, they won't engage. It's that simple."

A major milestone in that effort is the rollout of the new district website

(<https://cgauxsoutheast.org/wp/>), which debuted alongside a built-in artificial intelligence assistant. This AI feature, located in the lower corner of the homepage, gives Auxiliarists real-time answers to procedural and administrative questions.

"We've essentially built a digital shipmate," COMO Goodwin explained. "It's responsive, accurate, and dynamic, designed to make your job easier."

### Artificial Intelligence and the New Operating Model

Looking beyond communication tools, the Commodore highlighted the Auxiliary's AI-powered standard operating procedure initiative, a project that is already revolutionizing how organizational processes are developed.

"Initially, we created a handful of SOPs manually," he recalled. "Then we realized—this is hard work, and the list keeps growing! So, we turned to AI. We uploaded our approved material, gave it reference sources, and directed the system to draft additional procedures. Now, those AI-generated SOPs are being validated by human experts and converted into member-friendly documents that will be available online soon.

This fusion of technology and teamwork", COMO Goodwin said, "ensures consistency, speed, and accessibility—all while keeping the human element in decision-making."

### Streamlined Reporting and Realigned Leadership

The Commodore devoted special attention to the topic many Auxiliarists view as a chore: reporting. He reframed it as an essential communication tool. "Reports are how we hear you—your successes, your challenges, your needs. If we don't know your obstacles, we can't fix them," he said.

To strengthen communication pipelines, the district will realign its leadership structure, increasing District Captains (DCAPT) from three to six district captains, one per sector, and expanding Auxiliary Sector Coordinator (ASC) roles from one to three, each paired directly with active-duty liaisons in prevention, response, and logistics.

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“This relieves the bottleneck,” COMO Goodwin emphasized. “It removes single points of failure and creates peer-to-peer relationships with the sectors. That’s how we build trust—and that’s how we get the mission done.”

## Recruiting for a New Generation

Recognizing changing demographics, COMO Goodwin announced the launch of a generation-focused, multi-channel recruiting campaign, targeting specific age groups through customized messaging and media. A \$25,000 grant proposal is already in progress with the Auxiliary Association to fund airtime across six major district markets.

“We’re looking for quality over quantity,” COMO Goodwin said. “We want to inspire capable, motivated people who see service as an opportunity—not an obligation. That’s how we grow the Auxiliary of tomorrow.”

Supporting that push will be new recruitment kits, on-the-ground outreach teams, and updated talking points designed to strengthen coordination with the Coast Guard’s own recruitment efforts.

## Mission Focus and Flotilla Flexibility

COMO Goodwin stressed that not every flotilla must be “full service.” Instead, he urged units to focus on what they do best.

“Do one thing—and do it well,” he advised. “If your flotilla’s strength is aviation support, paddlecraft safety, public affairs, or marine safety, lean into that. Specialization creates value and sustainability.”

As an example, he highlighted a Miami-area flotilla slated for disestablishment that was successfully rechartered as an aviation-focused unit and now supports directly supports Air Station Miami. “A change in mission turned a struggling flotilla into a thriving one,” he said.

## Data-Driven Readiness: The AUX-AWARE Dashboard

Perhaps the most “jaw-dropping” development unveiled in COMO Goodwin’s speech was the Auxiliary Asset and

Workforce Awareness for Readiness and Engagement (Aux AWARE) Operations Dashboard, a live, interactive web portal that maps every active facility, aircraft, radio station, and asset across the district.

“It’s really, really cool,” he said with a grin. “You can click a vessel, see its facility number, location, operator, and even view which ones are under orders that day.”

The dashboard merges internal Auxiliary data with command center overlays, allowing both active duty and Auxiliary leaders to see resource availability in real time. Future development will allow it to serve as an operational layer within Coast Guard sector command centers—a breakthrough for responsiveness and coordination.

## Protecting the Dignity of Membership

Looking ahead, COMO Goodwin discussed an ongoing membership redefinition proposal that is being jointly reviewed by Coast Guard oversight offices. The initiative aims to clarify the requirements for active, core, and non-active status while preserving every member’s dignity and opportunity for advancement.

“This isn’t about exclusion,” he said. “It’s about creating pathways—so members can easily move from inactive to active status, based on their availability and goals. We’re modernizing what it means to serve.”

## A Vision Grounded in Service

In his closing moments, COMO Goodwin returned to his central theme: integration, simplification, and service.

“Everything we’re doing—AI tools, leadership realignment, reporting reform, recruiting—is to make it easier for you to succeed,” he told the assembled Auxiliarists. “Our mission is to support the Coast Guard and keep the boating community safe. But to do that, we must first take care of our own.”

With that, the 2026 Southeast District, Sector Miami, S-TRAIN concluded not just on a note of optimism, but of confident momentum. The message was clear: the Coast Guard Auxiliary is evolving—smarter, sharper, and more connected than ever. ★



COMO Martin Goodwin, District Commodore Southeast District, speaks at S-TRAIN Miami, held January 2026. USCG Auxiliary photograph by Susan Wetzel.

# VIEW FROM THE DECKPLATE

## Division 6



Members of Division 6, Miami-Dade County, staff a public affairs exhibit during the Miami International Boat Show at the Miami Beach Convention Center on Feb 15, 2026. From left: Peter Stroumtsos of Northeast District, Flotilla 11-2, Woods Hole Flotilla (Upper Cape Cod); Nichole Betterson, Flotilla 6-11, Miami; Gustavo Montano, Flotilla 69, Opa-Locka; and David Adams, Flotilla 6-10, North Bay. Attending visitors were educated on recreational boating safety, vessel safety checks, and upcoming public education courses. USCG Auxiliary photo provided by Nichole Betterson.

## Division 17

Division 17 held its annual Change of Watch ceremony on December 7, 2025. A Change of Watch is a formal ceremony marking the transition from one set of elected or appointed leaders to the next. It honors the service of outgoing officers, installs incoming leadership, and reaffirms the continuity of mission,



tradition, and stewardship within the unit. It's both ceremonial and communal — a moment to recognize accomplishments, express gratitude, and look ahead to the coming year with renewed purpose, and a great opportunity for fellowship.

Left: Paul Thompson administers the oath of office to incoming staff officers: Clive Hurlock, Flotilla 17-11, Orlando, (guest); Anthony Wong, James Kelley, Nancy Fleming, and Geoffrey Ross, members of Flotilla 17-10, Osceola.

Right: Anthony Wong, Division Vice Commander; Clive Hurlock, Flotilla 17-11, Orlando (guest); Marlene Thompson, Flotilla 17-6, South Brevard; Paul Thompson, Division Commander; Geoffrey Ross, Flotilla Commander; Nancy Fleming, Flotilla Vice Commander; partial picture of Cheyenne Fleming, member of Flotilla 17-10, Osceola. USCG Auxiliary photos provided by Anthony Wong.

# VIEW FROM THE DECKPLATE

## Division 4

### Three Flotilla 44, Daytona Beach Members with 154 Years of Combined Service.

At the Change of Watch ceremony held on January 17, 2026, Division 4 honored three U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Southeast District members from Flotilla 44, Daytona Beach, with a combined total of more than 154 years in the Auxiliary: The ceremony was held at the Halifax River Yacht Club in Daytona Beach. From left are Calvin (Cal) Gordon, with 51 years, Zoraida (Zory) Sorrentino, with over 50 years, and William (Bill) Sorrentino, with over 52 years. USCG Auxiliary photo by Julianne Bouchard.



## Division 7

Commander Ben Stanley and Commodore Martin Goodwin administered the oath of office to the division's elected leaders, Tony Hooper, Division Commander, and Charles Lambeth, Division Vice Commander, at the Division 7 2025 Annual Change of Watch ceremony on Dec. 7, in St. Petersburg. USCG Auxiliary photograph by Dorothy Riley.





# HOW TO USE AI TO WRITE ARTICLES AND REPORTS:

## A Practical Guide

By Dorothy Riley (with AI assistance)

AI image by Adobe Firefly

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a powerful ally for writers, students, and professionals who need to create high-quality written content efficiently. From brainstorming topics to editing and formatting, AI tools can accelerate every stage of the writing process — as long as they are used thoughtfully. This guide explains how to use AI to write effective articles or reports while maintaining accuracy, coherence, and relevance.

### Understand What AI Writing Tools Can Do

AI can assist in a variety of writing tasks, such as:

- Generating ideas and outlines — AI can help you brainstorm topics, identify trends, and propose content structures.
- Creating first drafts — AI text generators can produce coherent drafts in just a few minutes.
- Refining tone and style — Tools like Grammarly, Microsoft Copilot, or ChatGPT can adjust your writing for professionalism, persuasion, or simplicity.
- Providing research summaries — Some AI models can summarize long documents and extract key points.
- Formatting and proofreading — AI can automatically correct grammar, reformat citations, and ensure consistent terminology.

Understanding these capabilities helps you choose the right tools for each part of the process.

***“AI is a tool, not a replacement for critical thinking or expertise”***

### Start with a Clear Objective

Before using AI to write, clarify your purpose, target audience, and tone. For example:

- Are you writing a staff office report, a news release, or a newsletter article?
- Who will read it — members, or the general public?
- Should the tone be formal, conversational, or persuasive?

Providing this context to the AI ensures that the output aligns with your goals. The more specific your prompt, the better the results.

### Use AI for Outlining and Research

You can begin by prompting the AI with questions like:

“Write an article about *(a recent on-the-water mission/event)*. Include: *date, coxswain name, crew names*, *purpose of mission, where the mission took place, and why you are writing about this.*”  
Think: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY/HOW, the five elements of a news article. These can be written as bullet points when prompting AI.

or

“Create a structured outline for a 1,000-word article about the impact of marine debris on boating, fishing, or other activities.”

*(Continued on page 33)*

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or:

“Summarize the main points in a recent policy change or directive.” You can copy and paste the directive into the prompt box as the document source for a more accurate summary.

This step helps you define the article’s flow and gather key points before writing. Remember to fact-check any data or statistics the AI provides — AI models can occasionally generate inaccurate or outdated information.

### Generate the First Draft

Once you have an outline, ask the AI to expand each section. For example:

“Write a 200-word introduction on how life jackets save lives.”

You can then refine the wording yourself, ensuring that the draft reflects your voice and intentions. AI-generated content is a starting point — not the final product.

### Edit and Personalize

Good writing still depends on human oversight. Leverage AI to improve your writing while maintaining creativity.

- Revise for clarity and flow. AI can overproduce or repeat ideas — trim unnecessary parts.
- Adjust the tone. Use prompts such as, “Make this paragraph more formal,” or “Simplify this explanation.”
- Add human insight. Include examples, experiences, and analysis that AI cannot fully replicate.
- A strong article or report combines AI’s efficiency with human judgment.

### Use AI for Proofreading and Formatting

After your draft is complete, AI tools can handle

the polishing phase:

- Grammar and style checkers (e.g., Grammarly, ProWritingAid) for language consistency.
- Citation generators for reports requiring references.
- Layout suggestions for readability, such as headings, bullet points, and summaries.

These finishing touches ensure your document looks professional and is easy to read.

### Maintain Ethical and Academic Integrity

- Finally, be transparent and responsible. If you use AI for academic or professional work:

- Disclose AI assistance when required by guidelines or publishers.
- Verify all claims and data — never assume AI’s output is factual. Avoid plagiarism by rewriting and citing properly.
- **AI is a tool, not a replacement for critical thinking or expertise.**

### Conclusion

Using AI to write articles or reports

can dramatically improve efficiency, creativity, and accuracy — when done thoughtfully. The key is to maintain a collaborative approach: let AI handle repetitive tasks while you guide the ideas, verify the facts, and shape the final message.

When writers harness AI ethically and strategically, it becomes less about automation and more about amplification — helping you do your best work, faster. ★

**“Good writing still depends on human oversight. Leverage AI to improve your writing while maintaining creativity.”**



*Guarding the Digital Waterfront:*

## Auxiliary Cybersecurity Takes Center Stage at S-TRAIN Miami

By Susan Wetzel

*A comprehensive session on emerging threats, new Coast Guard regulations, and how Auxiliarists are becoming America's maritime cyber defenders.*

On Saturday, January 31, 2026, Auxiliarists gathered in Miami for one of the most forward-looking sessions at part one of Sector Miami S-TRAIN: a deep dive into the rapidly expanding world of maritime cybersecurity. The presentation, conducted by Cliff Neve, Director of the Cybersecurity Directorate, illuminated both the Coast Guard's evolving regulatory mission and the Auxiliary's critical, and surprisingly robust, role in protecting America's ports, waterways, and critical maritime infrastructure from digital threats.

### **The Threat Is Real, and Growing**

The session opened with a stark reality check: cyber vulnerabilities in maritime systems are expanding at an alarming rate, driven by artificial intelligence, increased connectivity of operational technology, and persistent nation-state interest in disrupting U.S. infrastructure.

"Just like there are physical threats to ports and waterways, there are threats inside," the presenter explains. "Things like propulsion systems on ships used to be isolated. Now they're networked. Pumps, navigation systems, everything is getting connected as bandwidth increases."

The implications are profound. A cyberattack on a port facility, offshore oil platform, or vessel control system could disrupt commerce, threaten safety, and compromise national security, all without a single physical intrusion.

### **The Coast Guard Steps Up**

Auxiliarist Cliff Neve traced the Coast Guard's journey into cybersecurity regulation, beginning with the **Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) of 2002** (enacted post-9/11), which focused primarily on physical security. It took a full decade for the service to formally acknowledge that cyber threats fell under that same mandate.

In 2020, the Coast Guard officially accepted responsibility for regulating maritime cybersecurity. Then, in January 2025, the service published its landmark **Maritime Cybersecurity Rule**, which went into effect last July.

The rule establishes baseline cybersecurity standards for thousands of MTSA-regulated entities, including U.S.-flag vessels, outer continental shelf facilities (especially oil and gas platforms in the Gulf), and port facilities nationwide.

*(Continued on page 35)*





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### Key requirements include:

- **Designated Cybersecurity Officers:** One person, named in writing, must be individually accountable for the facility's cybersecurity, no more passing the buck between IT staff and Facility Security Officers.
- **Annual Assessments:** Regular evaluations of cyber risk and readiness.
- **Written Cybersecurity Plans:** Including risk assessments, incident response protocols, and recovery strategies.
- **Operational Compliance:** Organizations must actually follow their plans, not just file them on a shelf.

Notably, the Coast Guard's focus is not on protecting corporate data or trade secrets. *"What the Coast Guard cares about is resilience,"* the presenter emphasized. The mission is to ensure that ports can continue operating and commerce can flow, even in the face of cyber incidents.

### The Problem: 40 People, Thousands of Facilities

Here's where the challenge becomes clear: to regulate and support thousands of maritime facilities nationwide, the Coast Guard has assigned **exactly 40 civilian cybersecurity specialists**, one per sector or Marine Safety Unit, stretched from the continental United States to Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*"Do you see the mismatch?"* the presenter asked. The answer was obvious.

Enter the Auxiliary.

## Three Pillars of Auxiliary Cybersecurity

The Auxiliary's cybersecurity ecosystem, developed over just the past three years, operates on three distinct but interconnected levels:

### 1. The National Staff Office

Responsible for protecting the Auxiliary's own network and IT infrastructure and serving as the program office that matches supply (skilled Auxiliarists) with demand (Coast Guard needs).

### 2. Auxiliary Cybersecurity (AUXCYBER)

A vetted corps of cybersecurity professionals throughout the Auxiliary who contribute to Coast Guard and Auxiliary cyber missions. Members are credentialed experts, engineers, analysts, penetration testers, and compliance officers, who undergo a qualification process to join.

### 3. The Cyberspace Flotilla

Chartered in 2023 with 19 plank owners, (Eastern District-Southern Region, Flotilla 22-12) this administrative flotilla was created specifically to attract new members who want to serve in cyber roles but may have no interest in traditional boating safety missions.

Dispelling a common myth, the presenter clarified: "Ninety percent of the Cyberspace Flotilla are new accessions, people who would never have joined otherwise." The flotilla is not meant to pull members away from traditional flotillas; in fact, four members have transferred out to join traditional units after discovering they enjoyed the broader Auxiliary mission.

The demographics are striking:

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the average age in the cyber flotilla is 42, far younger than the national Auxiliary average, and only two members are at or above the typical age range.

### Elite Talent, Real-World Impact

The caliber of talent within AUXCYBER is formidable. Members include:

- Personnel from the **National Security Agency (NSA)**
- A first-class cadet at the **Coast Guard Academy**, majoring in electrical engineering and cybersecurity
- Professionals from the **New York City Police Department, DHS, American Bureau of Shipping, Amazon Web Services, and Ernst & Young**
- The incoming Chief Data Protection Officer for American Express
- A Coast Guard Academy instructor teaching credited cybersecurity courses (Dr. Gary Kessler)
- These Auxiliaries are now embedded in 13 sectors across the country, with the goal of covering all 37 by the end of 2026.

### What AUXCYBER Does

AUXCYBER's mission breaks into two main operational lines:

#### Supporting Active-Duty Coast Guard:

- Risk assessments and authorization for systems like **Rescue 21**
- Red team/blue team exercises to test network defenses
- Vulnerability assessments

- Cyber Protection Team augmentation and remediation support
- Teaching at the Coast Guard Academy

#### Supporting the Maritime Transportation Sector:

- Partnering with **CG-5P** (Coast Guard Prevention Directorate) and sector-level Maritime Transportation Security Specialists (MTSSCs)
- Conducting non-punitive, courtesy cybersecurity inspections (similar to vessel safety checks)
- Hosting webinars on topics like **AIS/GPS hacking, artificial intelligence threats, and building cyber programs**
- Publishing white papers to raise awareness and capability across the maritime sector

The presenter stresses that AUXCYBER currently accepts **only certified cybersecurity professionals**, no beginners. "I can't hand an untrained Auxiliarist to a busy MTSSC and say, 'Can you babysit them?' That's a recipe for program failure," he explains. "But if people want to learn, there are certifications and pathways to get there."

#### Personal Cybersecurity: Practical Tips for Auxiliaries

The session's second half focused on actionable advice for protecting personal devices and accounts, a topic that resonated deeply with attendees.

#### Top Recommendations:

##### 1. Use a Password Manager

The presenter admits he only knows one password: the 32-character master key to his  
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password manager. Everything else is randomly generated and stored securely. He recommended tools like 1Password or Bitwarden (he no longer recommends LastPass after its acquisition). The Coast Guard now requires active-duty personnel to use KeePass.

Hackers exploit password reuse. If a defunct site like Myspace is breached, attackers will try those credentials everywhere, banking, email, and shopping sites. Unique passwords for every account eliminate that risk.

## 2. Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) Everywhere

MFA, requiring “something you know” (password), “something you have” (phone/token), or “something you are” (fingerprint), stops the vast majority of attacks. Even an imperfect MFA (like SMS codes) is vastly better than none.

“Unless you’re being individually targeted, and none of us in this room are that important, hackers are casting a wide net,” he said. “MFA makes you a much harder target.”

## 3. Beware of Phishing and Social Engineering

The presenter shared chilling examples, including a friend’s mother who lost \$29,000 to a scam involving fake DHS credentials, gold purchases, and Bitcoin. He also described “sextortion” schemes where attackers send emails with old passwords in the subject line, claiming to have compromising videos.

His advice: **“If someone calls you, do not give them any information. Hang up and call the organization directly.”** Microsoft



SECMIA S-TRAIN, Station Miami Beach – The Auxiliary Cybersecurity training class at S-TRAIN was conducted by Cliff Neve, Director of the Auxiliary Cybersecurity Directorate. Auxiliarist Neve delivered a concise overview of the mission, roles, and emerging challenges facing the Auxiliary in the cybersecurity domain, emphasizing the importance of awareness, readiness, and member engagement in this evolving operational field. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by Susan Wetzel.

will never call you proactively about a Windows problem. Your bank will never ask for your debit card number over the phone.

He even runs drills with his mother in Florida, calling to ask for her card number, training her to reflexively refuse.

## 4. Keep Software Updated

Microsoft’s “Patch Tuesday” is followed by “Hack Wednesday”, when hackers analyze disclosed vulnerabilities and exploit unpatched systems. Automatic updates are essential.

## 5. Avoid Public Wi-Fi Without a VPN

The presenter demonstrated a device called a Wi-Fi Pineapple—a \$150 tool that tricks devices into connecting to a fake hotspot, allowing an attacker to intercept unencrypted traffic. On travel, he always uses a VPN or

his phone’s hotspot instead of public Wi-Fi.

## 6. Remove Admin Access from Your Daily User Account

By creating a separate administrative account used only for software installations, users can prevent most malware from executing even if they click a malicious link.

## A Culture of Vigilance

Throughout the session, the presenter emphasized that cybersecurity is not a technical problem; it’s a human behavior problem. Attackers prey on urgency, fear, curiosity, and trust. Education, skepticism, and good digital hygiene are the best defenses.

One attendee raised a concern about Auxiliarists using Gmail accounts whose addresses

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include birth years (e.g., "JohnSmith1967@gmail.com"). The presenter was blunt: "That's a problem. Controlling personal information is critical."

### **The Road Ahead**

As the session concluded, it was clear that maritime cybersecurity represents both an urgent challenge and a tremendous opportunity for the Auxiliary. With only 40 Coast Guard specialists covering thousands of facilities, the need for skilled, vetted, mission-ready Auxiliarists has never been greater.

The Auxiliary is no longer just about life jackets and courtesy vessel exams. It's about defending the nation's economic lifeline, the maritime transportation system, from invisible, relentless, and increasingly sophisticated threats.

As one participant remarked during Q&A: "This isn't just IT support. This is national security."

And the Auxiliary is answering the call.

For Auxiliarists interested in learning more about AUXCYBER or improving their personal cybersecurity posture, contact information and resources are available through district leadership and the national AUXCYBER program office.

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Cyber security risk assessment. Image source: Defense.com

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### **Jeffrey Barnes, DSO-EM/DCAPT-E, Presents at ICS-620 Area Command Course to Coast Guard and Auxiliary Members From Across the Country.**

Auxiliarist Jeff Barnes, District Captain and DSO-EM (CGD-SE), represented the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary at a three-day ICS-620 Area Command course February 2026, joining about 50 active-duty and reserve Coast Guard members from across the country.

Barnes provided an overview of how the Auxiliary supports Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and Area Commands (ACs), highlighting the vital role our volunteers play in emergency management and disaster response.

LCDR Ben Tuxhorn praised Barnes for providing clear, useful examples that made it easier for the class to grasp how the Auxiliary fits into Coast Guard operations.

Courses like ICS-620 strengthen collaboration and readiness across all parts of the Coast Guard and ensure the Auxiliary remains ready to serve. ★



# Coast Guard Auxiliary Celebrates 20 Years at Station Fort Myers Beach

By Daniel Eaton (Flotilla 91, Ft. Myers Beach)

Chartered by Congress in 1939, the purpose of the Coast Guard Auxiliary is to assist the Coast Guard, as authorized by the

ing active-duty personnel and backfilling staff positions during holidays and periods of special need. From surface operations to culinary services, the volunteers of Flotilla 91 consistently answered the call.

These dedicated members contributed more than 121,090 total support hours, including over 13,000 hours of surface operations, more than 4,000 program visits, over 2,400 free vessel safety checks, over 9,000 hours of radio watchstanding, and over 5,583 hours of Coast Guard administrative support.

“Train, Maintain, Operate”. The Mission of a Coast Guard Station is to Operate Boats Safely and Effectively in Support of All Coast Guard Missions.



Commandant. In doing so, the Commandant may well have underestimated the depth of commitment demonstrated by these dedicated local volunteers. At this year's Change of Watch ceremony, the Auxiliary celebrates 20 years of service at CG Station, Ft. Myers Beach. In 2006, Chief Warrant Officer Pete Louzao, the Officer in Charge at Coast Guard Station Fort Myers Beach, understood the value of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the benefits it brought to the small boat station.

Members of Flotilla 91, Fort Myers Beach, contributed countless hours of service, augment-

Training is a fundamental aspect of the Coast Guard's daily routines. The Auxiliary participates in many two-boat training missions as the target vessel for search-and-rescue operations and boarding team training. Both the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary learn much from these experiences. Auxiliarists also serve as role-players, allowing boarding teams to board non-standard boats. Without PowerPoint, these presentations highlight an impromptu, unscripted style to prepare them for real-life encounters. Some of our Auxiliarists were seen on John Walsh's "America's Most Wanted," a Coast Guard  
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segment offshore of Fort Myers Beach.

Some of the public education instructors from Flotilla 91 participated in the “Enduring Friendship Initiative”, a multi year maritime security assistance and partnership program led by U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) under the broader Department of Defense (DoD) security cooperation framework. The initiative is designed to build and strengthen the maritime security capabilities of partner nations in the Caribbean and Central America by enhancing their ability to detect, deter, interdict, and respond to threats, including illicit trafficking, terrorism, and other maritime challenges.

The Operational Excellence Program (established by COMDTINST 16794.4) is a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary recognition and proficiency initiative designed to challenge and motivate Auxiliary boat crews to demonstrate high levels of operational skill, teamwork, and coordination beyond basic qualification standards. Flotilla 91, Ft. Myers Beach, sent members to the International Search and Rescue Competition in Portsmouth, Virginia, to compete with the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Our Public Affairs Team gained significant media exposure through appearances on ABC7, Fox 4 News, ESPN Radio, and Beach Talk Radio, promoting boating safety and encouraging vigilance within the maritime domain. Outreach efforts included discussion of the former Waterway Watch Program, now referred to as “See Something, Say Something”, emphasizing public awareness of potential

maritime threats to the homeland, as well as numerous in-person engagements, including participation in the “Fit to Float” program to promote safe boating practices. The team took Paddlecraft Safety demonstrations to local community swimming pools. They were instrumental in obtaining local government to issue proclamations for National Safe Boating Week initiatives at the community level. Our team



Coast Guard Auxiliarist Hua Lin McCaffrey prepares for boarding at sea in the Indo-Pacific, May 9, 2022. Volunteers with interpreting skills like McCaffrey are in high demand in the Coast Guard Auxiliary to help the Coast Guard detect and deter Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Nate Littlejohn.)

partnered with Safe Kids Southwest Florida to assist with Life Jacket Loaner Stations at local beaches and boat ramps.

Flotilla 91 member, Hua Lin McCaffrey, was deployed to Coast Guard Cutters as an interpreter in support of the

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U.S. Coast Guard mission patrolling the Pacific Ocean, and the territorial waters of many countries in the Indo-Pacific to

McCaffrey was critical for Munro's mission success. But what Munro's crew never saw coming was McCaffrey's ability and initiative to exceed expectations in every capacity during her time aboard the cutter.

Flotilla 91 members support the Marine Safety Detachment in Fort Myers with hundreds of hours of on-call pollution investigation and response across Southwest Florida. Our members are in Auxiliary Aviation (AUXAIR) as observers and aircrew, flying offshore for search-and-rescue missions and security patrols to identify potential targets of interest.



Top left: Flotilla 91, Ft. Myers participates in interagency and Coast Guard training vital to keeping skills honed.

Bottom left: Flotilla 91, Ft. Myers Beach, members compete in the International Search and Rescue Competition in Portsmouth, Virginia with the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary. USCG Auxiliary photographs.



This past year wasn't all business. Beyond their regular duties, Auxiliary volunteers opened their hearts and homes to Coast Guard personnel, hosting picnics for active-duty members rotating to new assignments, welcoming them into their homes for holiday-season dinners, and even organizing baby showers, helping create a sense of home for those serving their country far from their own. Flotilla 91 instructors taught boating safety classes to over 5,000 boaters, hopefully saving lives. Teaching the importance of wearing your life jacket, along with an understanding of risk management, increases the

*(Continued on page 43)*

help combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. During Operation Blue Pacific, Coast Guard Cutter Munro's 2022 spring patrol to combat IUU fishing in the Indo-Pacific,

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odds of survival when something doesn't go exactly as planned. These instructors took it on the road with the Suddenly in Command seminar at many marinas, yacht clubs, and the Lee County Sheriff's outreach center.

The true winner is the Fort Myers Beach community, which benefits from the dedication of volunteers committed to promoting boating safety throughout Southwest Florida. ★

Public Education instructors from Flotilla 91 participated in the "Enduring Friendship Initiative", a multi year maritime security assistance and partnership program led by U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) under the broader Department of Defense (DoD) security cooperation framework. Participating partner members pose with their certificates of course completion. USCG Auxiliary photograph.



Flotilla 91, Ft. Myers Beach has taught boating safety to over 5,000 boaters. They advertise to a wider audience with aids like this YouTube short in MP4 format, which can be posted to social media including Facebook and Instagram.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/RTy8XjmR1mE>



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