

PE Best Practices

Field-Proven Techniques For Better Boater Education

Hands-On Exercises Boost Interaction & Reinforce Learning

By Fredric Miller, DSO-PE 9WR

When teaching boating safety classes, I always try to include a number of hands-on exercises. While this might seem obvious at first glance, it's easy for us as instructors to get caught up in the processes of delivering content and "lecturing" to our students. Hands-on exercises enhance the learning experience by bringing content to life.

I find hands-on exercises to be particularly helpful when teaching the Aides to Navigation (ATON) and Inland Boating sections of Boating Safety and Seamanship. Many of our students boat on the Illinois River and its tributaries. Navigating on these waters can be much different than Lake Michigan. To highlight these differences, I use homemade flash cards with ATONs depicted on each card.

Students work individually or in small teams to arrange the cards as they would expect to see them when navigating the river and/or returning to port. Students always seem to enjoy this particular exercise, and it provides a great opportunity for interacting with other classmates.

Another exercise I use combines ATON and chart reading. I ask students to study a chart depicting a section of the river and then match various ATONs with their respective locations on the chart -- including barge anchoring and swimming areas,

marinas, no wake zones, mile markers, range markers, wing dams and hazards, and harbor entrances. To accomplish these tasks, students must be able to determine which way the river flows and what direction they are traveling on the river relative to the chart. They always find it challenging to figure out which way the current flows (down bound versus up bound) and their relative position.

These exercises enable students to experience various aspects of navigating and reading ATONs. As an instructor, hands-on work allows me to get better acquainted with the class and provide some one on one education. I am also able to stress the importance of having a chart on board, and to emphasize how the river "scene" can change throughout the boating season.

Instructors, if you're not currently using hands-on exercises in your classroom, consider giving it a try. Hands-on work has been proven to increase attention and improve retention-Ed.



Prepare For An Exciting 2004 In Public Education

*By Dick Clinchy,
Department Chief-Education*

This will be the most exciting year in the history of U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Education. Let me share with you a preview of "coming events" that will make you, the Auxiliary Instructor, the most valuable asset in our "arsenal."

One of the showpieces of Operation Patriot Readiness III is **WaterWay Watch**, which makes America's 50,000,000+ boaters the front line for protecting the maritime domain from terrorism. We're asking you to deliver this program to every public education class that you present...every one! We want those most familiar with what's normal on the waterfront prepared to recognize what isn't normal, and to know what to do. Above all, we want them to remember **1-877-24-WATCH** as the number to call when they see anything suspicious.

Continuing our efforts to bring recreational boaters the information they need, here are some of the courses in the offering:

- The to-be-named *Auxiliary sailing course* will be reintroduced in 2004. We will again have a course that is responsive to what our dedicated sailing instructors feel we should be offering.
- **GPS for Mariners**, recently introduced, should become one of our most popular short courses. The course teaches recreational boaters who utilize hand-held GPS devices how they can most effectively use these instruments.
- Along the same lines as GPS for Mariners, we are exploring the possibility of launching **Radar for Navigators**...more on that one as it evolves.
- Another one-day course that's nearly completed, **How to Read a Nautical Chart** will help

recreational boaters become as comfortable with a nautical chart as with a road map in their car. This fun and exciting course will attract many recreational boaters for whom charts are like reading a foreign language.

Also, this year think about using the non-core lessons in Boating Skills & Seamanship as stand-alone courses that segue into other programs. For example, the Navigation lesson can be used to lead participants into Advanced Coastal Navigation, GPS for Mariners, or How to Read a Nautical Chart. The bottom line is that you can create exciting educational programs that attract students and bring needed revenue into your Flotilla.

At N-Train we are introducing the **Mandatory Instructor Workshop**. For the first time in many years, all instructors are required to participate in a workshop that has one principal focus...to make all our instructors even better than they are. The stronger we make our instructor cadre the stronger our enrollment, since boaters will tell their friends and associates that "Those Auxiliary Instructors are terrific and I really got a lot out of the class I just took with them!"

Remember, too, that the major source of variable income for your flotilla is revenues from public education. We offer quality instruction and materials, and we should price our efforts at a level similar to what other adult continuing education classes are going for in our community. In fact, if we price our services below market value, we are at risk of sending a very wrong message in this perceived "get what you pay for" age.

Finally, if you see needs that are not being met by your Education Department, let your SO-PEs know about it. They will pass that information along to the DSO-PE, and the Education Department will respond to those issues that need attention. Like you, we are volunteers, but we are here to serve our principal customers, YOU the Coast Guard Auxiliary Instructor.

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Teaming For Success: RBS=Education

By Robin Freeman, DSO-PE 11NR

Out here in 11NR, a big push has been made by the Director's Office for the three District Staff Officers in Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) to be funded and sent out into the field to provide workshops and training. Division 7, which comprises the state of Utah, was the catalyst in this effort. The division captain and vice captain teamed the SOs-VE, MV, and PE and invited their DSO counterparts out for an all day event. Let me tell you, it was fabulous!

My RBS compadres, Jimmin Chang, DSO-MV, and John Goldschmidt, DSO-VE, and I have always believed that we are a team when it comes to educating the boating public. What PE does in the classroom, VE does at the docks and MV does in business establishments. We are ALL "educators." Many vessel examiners are likewise public education instructors, and quite a few are also marine visitors. Given the high degree of synergy between these three functions, we eagerly embraced the idea of conducting a joint workshop.

Division 7 provided a wonderful room, coffee and goodies for breakfast, a laptop computer, and a projector. Lunch was brought in for a minimal cost, which allowed plenty of time to "mingle" with the members. Ted Woolley, Boating Law Administrator for the state of Utah, attended as a special guest. Addressing the more than 45 attendees, Woolley emphasized the importance of the auxiliary's efforts to improve boating safety, and expressed his gratitude for a job well done.

Every person in attendance was given a free raffle ticket, and at the conclusion of the three-part workshop we had a fun drawing. The SOs had told businesses in the area about the workshop and many of these donated boating safety or boating fun products. I had my eye on the big inner tube, but alas, I didn't win. Not a bad thing, really, as I don't think it would have fit in my carry-on bag!

What did we accomplish? In the first place, everyone in the room came to realize that the auxiliary's educational outreach takes many forms-whether conducting short vessel safety checks, teaching boating safety classes over many hours, or even making sure that the local marine dealer has good contact information and a full rack of materials on a day to day basis.

We also saw greater interest in the three program areas by members who previously might have participated in only one area. We drove home the point that RBS = Education, and that everyone in attendance was an educator. The three SOs in Division 7 worked very hard to make it a fun, memorable, and highly productive workshop.

Division 7's "Best Practice" has led to DIRAUX funding the RBS team again this year, again to Utah, to Northern California, and to any division who is willing to schedule a day for the training. Getting out there always provides the best results - face to face with the members doing the job. We expect increased teamwork throughout our district as other divisions follow 7's lead.

We can accomplish so much more when we're all pulling in the same direction. PE Officers, will your public education plan for this year leverage the work of your teammates in MV and VE? – Ed.

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Growing PE Market Share

By Tom Angott, DSO-PE 9CR

Here in the Great Lakes area, we've been fortunate to have an active public education program. While geographical location is certainly an important factor, we've learned that we can do a lot to help ourselves reach more boaters. For our RBS mission to succeed, we have to put people in the seats.

As DSO, I ensure that the area Coast Guard Station has my name and address as point of contact for any inquiries about Safe Boating Classes. Typically, I direct inquiries to the appropriate division or

Growing PE Market Share *(continued)*

flotilla, based on the prospective student’s location. If the inquiry occurs during the summer, when many of our flotillas do not offer classes, I ask if the student is willing to travel a bit. Through the summer, we offer the eight-hour Safe Boating Class at the Coast Guard Station so that interested boaters can get trained right away, rather than having to wait for a fall session closer to home.

We have also taken advantage of regulatory changes to boost enrollments. Our state, like many others, has mandated safety training for persons between the ages of 14-21 who want to operate personal watercraft. A lot of our students have birthdays in mid-summer, and they want to get on the water while the weather is good.

We raised our prices on the Safe Boating class, and now include a light lunch such as pizza and a soft drink. We have Saturdays where we pick up 25 to 30 people who otherwise would have been missed. Collectively, these actions have increased the number of boaters getting trained and improved our revenue stream.

I strongly urge all flotillas to make use of the Flotilla Marketing Plan that was made available last year. If you study this plan, coordinate your flotilla’s PE, PA, VE, and MDV efforts, and really put these practices to use, you are going to be surprised at the improvement in your flotilla’s cash flow. Like everything else it takes time and energy, but I assure you it will work. The good news is it will be even easier this year, with the new price we have established for our ABC course.

This Best Practice is a great example of using marketing’s 4Ps to fill a customer need: promoting the right product at the right place and time, and at the right price. – Ed

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Question of the Month

Question: My flotilla has successfully offered Boating Safely for quite some time. Where does America’s Boating Course fit in?

Answer: *With the price of America's Boating Course at parity with what you have been paying for Boating Safely, we expect you to replace all your Boating Safely activities with ABC. Why? First, Boating Safely is a nine-year old course and both the content and the educational structure of the course are dated. ABC, on the other hand, is totally up-to-date and supported by exciting classroom PowerPoint presentations. Plus, each student receives both a terrific text and a CD to facilitate review and enable sharing with family members.*

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Contribute to PE Best Practices

Do you have a Best Practice to share with your teammates in the public education arena? If so, please email Tom Angott at tangott@comcast.net.

