

NACO REMARKS

N-TRAIN 2006

Once again, let me wish you a very good morning and a welcome to this year's National Training Conference.

I am hopeful that you have taken an opportunity to pause over the past few weeks to reflect on the many contributions the Auxiliary made in 2005. I want to commend you for your dedication to our mission, the sacrifices you make each and everyday, and your willingness to invest the effort necessary to truly make a difference. I ask that you communicate our appreciation both loudly and often to the membership, for it is what they do that make us a unique organization.

Before I ask for remarks from our special guest, I would like to provide you with some food for thoughts that is relevant to this conference and our primary focus for 2006.

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to attend the United States Power Squadrons Annual Meeting. While at that meeting and while in uniform, I received many questions about the Coast Guard Auxiliary. They were the typical questions regarding our relationship to the Coast Guard, our uniforms, our public education program and questions on our vessel safety check program and RBS Visitation program. However, one particular very simple question sort of caught me off guard and as I answered it, I also began thinking about how relevant it was to our 2006 N-Train theme.

The question was simply, "Who owns the Coast Guard Auxiliary?"

My first response was it really depends on how you want to define "**owns**". You could say the Congress of the United States, which chartered the Auxiliary, **owns** it for the people of the United States. That's one type of ownership.

Likewise, you could say the Coast Guard *owns* the Auxiliary as stipulated by law. We see this as recently as in 1996, when Congress passed the Coast Guard Auxiliary Authorization Act, which said, in part, "... the purpose of the Auxiliary is to assist the Coast Guard as authorized by the Commandant" That would seem to give the Commandant and therefore the Coast Guard *ownership* of the Auxiliary.

Those answers are certainly high-level definitions of who *owns* the Auxiliary.

But – each of us in this room know – that they are just part *owners* of the Auxiliary.

As we all know, the true *owners* of the Coast Guard Auxiliary are each and every flotilla member.

And since we can't do anything without them, **they hold the power** – and by that definition, THEY *OWN* the Auxiliary.

This is why we can not lose sight of the importance that we must always put our **people first**, the theme of this year's conference.

And like owners everywhere, unless they believe in what they do and are willing to put in the time and effort it takes to succeed, their *ownership* won't be successful.

We, the leadership and managers of this member-driven organization, **need to always remember that we serve the individual member.**

Each of us here today, in this room, has a limited time in our leadership and managerial rolls. Some of us are in our positions for a mere 2 years. Therefore, it is imperative on each of us, to leave our organization better off than when we assumed those rolls.

And the *owners* – the members – have every right to expect that we will do just that.

We are accountable to them and we, in turn, must provide the direction, training and tools not only needed for them to perform existing and evolving missions but additionally, to make our organization an inviting, hospitable environment that welcomes all and fulfills their expectations.

That's one reason we're gathered here at in St. Louis. The district staff officers will be trained by the Auxiliary National Staff and Coast Guard personnel and will bring techniques back to their districts for implementation, because in the end, we rely on the members for the implementation and performance of our missions.

But the fact still remains, that whatever we do in our leadership and managerial rolls, whatever planning, whatever guidance we can give, **means nothing** if the owners of our organization don't accept their portion of responsibility. It's up to each member to make the Coast Guard Auxiliary a viable organization that meets its goals and fulfills its missions and it is up to us to help them want to do just that.

What I am trying to reinforce, is that the power in the Auxiliary resides in the ***owners*** and anyone who doesn't believe that the ***owner***, the individual flotilla member, can make or break our organization, **is flat out mistaken**.

The power doesn't reside in the leaders and managers – it resides in the individual volunteers.

And unlike the Coast Guard, we can't require our ***volunteers*** TO DO anything. We don't have an actual hold on them unless they accept our leadership.

We can only request – we can only ask. And I know we certainly do ask a lot!

Therefore, we must provide the sort of leadership and guidance so that our ***individual owners*** can succeed.

And we need to encourage them, to thank them and to appreciate them for what they do in the amount of time they have to contribute, no matter how much or how little that may be.

As you attend the training sessions throughout today and tomorrow, and when you take this information back to your respective districts, remember who the owners of the Auxiliary are and that we can not accomplish anything without them. Keep them first in all that you do.

We saw in 2005, a year of many changes and we faced some challenges. Now as we look forward into 2006, I feel it is safe to say that in 2006 we will see even more changes and we will face new challenges.

We have updated our Strategic Plan for 2006-2007, to address the needs of our members, the recreational boaters and the Coast Guard. In fact, let me share with you, the 4 major 2006 initiatives that we will be focusing on. **They are not new, you have heard me state them before, but will require our full focus and attention if we are to be successful.** They are:

- **Balancing and Blending Missions and Resources**
- **Revitalize & Re-emphasize the importance of RBS**
- **Recruitment & Retention** – (Quarterly Reports)....
- **Collaborative Strategic Planning**, which includes business planning, both – strategic and tactical, and contingency planning at all levels.

Each is important in its own right but **ALL** are interconnected and need to be integrated into a system solution of sorts. Each feeds off the other parts.

As you know, as began last year, our mission was to transform the Coast Guard Auxiliary from an organization solely concerned with maritime safety, to one that gives

added attention to maritime security and I believe that we are well on our way to achieving this transformation.

Our intended course was and continues to be one that molds maritime safety and security into **one balanced effort** that will see the Coast Guard Auxiliary in step with the Coast Guard, in providing this country with safe and secure waterways.

However, I caution and ask you to recognize that a total equilibrium between these two missions is more of a hypothetical state, since each of our units faces unique local challenges.

That being said, this balanced blend of RBS and MHLS is the ultimate strategic objective for the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Why is this so important? I believe that since the enacting of the 1996 Auxiliary Authorization Act, we have experienced a **cultural transformation** that has only been accelerated by the events of 9-11 and the recent hurricanes.

These intense events created a tremendous operational focus by the Coast Guard and by the Coast Guard Auxiliary. These events necessitated additional mission creep, **with the end result being an even greater imbalance between the operational missions and RBS.**

The fact is and something I don't want you to lose sight of is that operations and direct Coast Guard support are very important and make the Coast Guard Auxiliary unique among boating organizations. There is no question about that.

And because of this, now there are some who say that **RBS does not make us unique;** that there are too many entities competing with us for public education and vessel safety checks. The Power Squadron, the states, private industry, the Internet. **Why should we compete? Why should we really care about RBS?**

The quick answer is that public education brings in money to support Auxiliary programs and historically has been our source of membership. Although important, that's not really the answer.

Our RBS missions are critical to the Auxiliary because they save lives and sustain our presence in the boating community.

I firmly believe that if the Coast Guard Auxiliary is promoted primarily for its operational involvement with the Coast Guard, *we will limit our membership.*

If, however, we are viewed by the public, and by potential and existing members, as an organization that promotes both safety and security, and consciously works to balance those missions, **then we will attract and retain a wider diversity of skilled members.**

Let me be very clear, I am not saying that these increases in operational activities are necessarily bad. In fact, we should be proud of our ability to respond and to meet the challenges placed in front of us. **However what can not be overlooked, is this success comes at a price** – an over utilization of our resources, our **capability and our capacity**. In other words, we risk the potential for burnout and the neglect of many of our other important missions, specifically Recreational Boating Safety.

It is important that our members know that the Coast Guard values their RBS efforts. This recognition by the Coast Guard is an unbelievably important catalyst for improving performance measures in RBS programs as well as operations.

So, Commodores and Directors, I ask you to constantly remind our Coast Guard shipmates of the importance of communicating the value of both, operational and RBS missions performed by the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The bottom line is that we need to work with our units to help them find the **BALANCE** between missions and resources; between recreational boating safety and maritime homeland security, and then they must manage both the expectations of the Coast Guard and the Recreational Boater with the expectations of our members.

As we continue to move forward in 2006, we need to sustain our momentum. And we can only do that with everyone's help.

In simple terms, this means that together, we must identify and communicate our priorities and expectations effectively at all levels, so that we can train and empower our members to find attractive service opportunities in both MHLS and RBS.

As I stated earlier, all areas of strategic focus in 2006 are interconnected and need to be integrated into a system solution. ***Each feeds off the other.*** Therefore, we also need to place continued importance on our ability to plan. This includes business planning both strategic and tactical, as well as contingency planning at all levels.

I applaud your efforts throughout 2005 as the DCOs and VCOs worked together to develop your district's strategic business plans. Additionally, as we looked at all of our internal programs, our Department Chiefs crafted Operational Plans based on our shared vision to keep this organization moving forward.

In November, we reviewed each district's business plan at our meeting in South Carolina. For most districts, your plans interfaced with our National Business Plan and your Coast Guard District's Operational Plans.

I am confident that by the sharing of information between you and your District Commanders, the development of each others plans will be in concert with each other. This is a major step forward.

Additionally I applaud many of the districts for taking your planning process and driving it down to your flotillas and ask that you all follow this process in 2006.

Furthermore, we learned a lot of lesson in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma and I ask that you give added consideration to developing your Auxiliary Contingency Plan. Just ask the Commodores from D7 or D8CR about the importance of Contingency Planning, I am sure they will tell how just important it is.

We all recognize that in a time of national emergency or surge operations, our ability to execute the mission and integrate into the boarder picture of a unified command is critical. Furthermore, planning for a contingency is the foundation of readiness. It allows us to assess our needs and capabilities, form the necessary civilian and military partnerships and plan not only for the mission, but plan to be both self supported and self sustaining. COMO Hertle and Linda Nelson will be discussing Contingency Planning with you later in the conference.

So in closing, I just want to thank you once again for all that you do. I ask that you to work with us in staying the course that we set together; and to focus your attention on the 4 major areas that I have just discussed.

And lastly, we need to involve our owners and engage each and every member's help to accomplish our missions.

I feel that together we can accomplish much if we just put our people first.

Thank you.