

From the Captain of the Port

In the last five years, I have been stationed at three different Marine Safety Offices (MSOs) and they all seem to suffer from the same identity crisis; people don't know what an MSO does. Sometimes I jokingly say, "Why, we keep Marines safe." They laugh politely then ask, "Seriously, do you work at the station or on the SUNDEW?"



OK, maybe you have never been directly involved with us at the MSO. But if you are one of the over half million people whose source of drinking water is the lake, we respond to oil spills and work to enhance your water quality. If you work in a mine or a factory, we inspect the ships that carry the coal and iron ore that keep America's economic furnaces burning. If you are a farmer, we keep the shipping lanes open for freighters carrying your grains to market.

If you would like to know more about what the MSO does, I encourage you to check our Web page. However, I thought it might be more convenient for some of you to get information through this publication. It is meant to inform you about our business and explain some issues you might find of interest. A survey has also been included to solicit feedback on areas you think we should give more attention to in the coming year.

And now, the \$64,000 question: who is responsible for safeguarding those who work on our waterways, for protecting our marine environment, and for ensuring commercial goods flow unimpeded through this area? I am, you are, we are. Each of us has to do our part. We recognize this and thank you for the great support and teamwork we have received from each of you this past year.

CDR William J. Diehl

Maritime Security

Protect our maritime borders from all intrusions by halting the flow of illegal drugs, aliens, and contraband into this country through maritime routes; preventing illegal fishing; and suppressing violations of federal law in the maritime region.

MSO Duluth's area covers the upper half of three states and shares approximately 450 miles of border with Canada. MSO Duluth personnel work closely with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to reduce the risk of security breaches occurring in the maritime environment.

MSO Duluth is an active member of the Minnesota Environmental Crimes Taskforce. This year we teamed up with CG Station Duluth to provide the taskforce members an overview of harbor facility activities. We have been steadily improving our ability to collect information on environmental crimes; for instance, we now use CG helicopters at night with infrared cameras to check for nighttime pollution. With enhanced intelligence, the MSO can also be proactive in analyzing and addressing threats of weapons of mass destruction.

To increase our eyes and ears on the waterfront, the MSO developed a comprehensive Harbor Safety Program for our Coast Guard Auxiliary patrols. Thirty-six members went through the training program and received their qualification. Members are trained in observing harbor activities and vessel operations. This program has increased the number of patrols in remote areas.

MSO Duluth also serves on the Duluth/Superior Passenger Vessel Task Force. This group works to increase the number of foreign passenger vessels calling on the ports in Western Lake Superior. Their efforts have tripled the number of port calls by foreign passenger vessels over the past couple years. The members are addressing the concern for passenger vessel terminal safety and adequate moorings.

The most important part of our MSO safety net is your input. If you see anything that adversely impacts safety or the environment, please call us!

Safety

Eliminate deaths, injuries, and property damage associated with maritime transportation, fishing, and recreational boating.

Our number one goal is to save lives. We do this by preventing marine accidents through regulations, public education, and safety training. This year we expanded our relationship with the ore carriers, the tribal fishing vessel operators and the charter fishing vessel fleet to improve safety awareness.

In 2000, three additional USS Great Lakes Fleet (USSGLF) vessels were enrolled in the Streamlined Inspection Program (SIP): EDWIN H. GOTT, PRESQUE ISLE, and ROGER BLOUGH. This program is an alternate method of verifying regulatory compliance on inspected vessels. By joining the program, companies are making a commitment to empowering crews to correct discrepancies on their own vessels, without waiting for Coast Guard direction. Licensed members of the crew inspect the vessel and provide Coast Guard inspectors signed affidavits that verify safety items have been inspected in accordance with procedures approved by the Coast Guard. Inspectors then spot check various safety systems to ensure standards are met. Participating crews have resoundingly expressed their approval of the program, and USSGLF is expected to enroll four additional vessels in the program in 2001.

MSO Duluth also partnered with the tribal governments of the Bad River and Red Cliff tribes on fishing vessel safety. The MSO gave Commercial Fishing Vessel (CFV) examiner training to each tribe, and qualified six examiners. Because of the expanded availability of tribal examiners, several additional tribal vessels received CFV examination stickers this year. During the winter of 2001, we will conduct additional training with the tribes utilizing the Ninth District CFV portable damage control trainer.

Working with the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the MSO was successful in expanding the uninspected passenger vessel (UPV) program with the charter fishing vessel fleet in the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park area. The UPV sticker program has been an excellent way to promote safety on vessels that carry six or less passengers. The ultimate goal of the program is to make a UPV sticker the “safety standard” that a prospective passenger looks for when hiring a charter fishing vessel.

Protection of Natural Resources

Eliminate environmental damage and natural resource degradation associated with maritime transportation, fishing, and recreational boating.

Lake Superior is filled with some of the most treasured plants and wildlife in North America. Isle Royal National Park, the Apostle Islands National Seashore, and the St. Louis River estuary are all environmental landmarks of Lake Superior’s watershed system. MSO Duluth actively participated in community meetings to keep these areas pristine. We also participate in both the National and International Ballast Water Programs. We are working closely with industry and other agencies to eliminate the further introduction or spread of harmful residues or foreign organisms in our sensitive ecological system. Our contingency plans are developed step by step with local and state authorities, and we train together so that we are always ready to respond.

In 2000, we continued to strengthen our ties with the Canadian Coast Guard. We visited them several times during the year and developed procedures for accessing the pollution response equipment they have stored in Thunder Bay, Ontario. We also participated in an unannounced drill with the Canadian CG regarding a freighter with a holed fuel tank operating in the area between Thunder Bay and Isle Royale, Michigan. We intend to pursue this relationship in 2001 by coordinating and participating in a joint equipment deployment exercise.

MSO Duluth actively led the Port Area Committees (PACs) – one in Duluth/Superior and one in Houghton/Hancock, Michigan. The goals in 2000 were to update the Western Lake Superior Area Contingency Plan and link it to the county Emergency Operations Plan (EOPs), update the maps showing environmentally sensitive areas, and improve accessibility to our customers via CD-ROM and website - we were successful in all areas. In 2001, the focus will be to expand our unannounced exercise program to ensure that the facilities contingency plans reflect proper response strategies.

Mobility

Facilitate maritime commerce and eliminate interruptions and impediments to the economical movement of goods and people, while maximizing recreational access to and enjoyment of the water.

As the head of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, Duluth/Superior is the highway on-ramp for shipping ore, coal, and grain down the lakes and to foreign ports. Each year, U.S. and foreign vessels make over 1,500 port calls into Duluth/Superior and neighboring ports along Western Lake Superior. Taconite makes up the majority of the cargo tonnage and gives the Twin Ports the distinction of being the largest loader of ore in the entire U.S.

The first four months of 2000 started off with the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge undergoing major repairs. MSO Duluth worked with the city and the bridge contractor to minimize the repair time. We also hosted a waterway user meeting to address issues and concerns associated with the bridge repairs. Concerns like shoaling and ice breaking traffic patterns out of the Superior Entrance channel were quickly addressed and resolved with the Army Corps of Engineers and the CGC SUNDEW.

This year the MSO also helped broaden the membership and issues addressed by the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC). The MSO played a key role in defining how the HTAC facilitates resolution of shipping, dredging, and environmental issues; in creating a two-year work plan; and in delineating the HTAC voting membership.

Late in the year, MSO Duluth responded to the sinking of the dredge barge, Billington #1 in the Duluth Harbor Channel. The barge sunk 200 ft into the channel in 30 ft of water. It was marked with a wreck buoy leaving 900 ft of channel available for vessel traffic. MSO Duluth worked closely with the salvagers to quickly remove all pollution threats and to develop plans for the refloating of the barge. Several refloat attempts were unsuccessful and early ice conditions have forced the salvage operation to wait until spring 2001.

2000 Summary



Safety

- In 2000, no merchant mariner or passenger in this area lost their life and only one person received a serious injury. Clearly, the 235 vessel boardings we conducted resulted in a heightened concern for safety.
- We had great success in expanding our partnership programs. The Streamline Inspection Program grew to seven with three more ships added this year, and we signed two agreements with local tribes to facilitate the training of additional tribal police as fishing vessel examiners.



Protection of Natural Resources

- Through our aggressive response and education initiatives, we were successful in reducing the number of vessel and waterfront facility spills by 40% this year.
- To ensure overall preparedness in the response community we integrated our area spill response plan with the emergency managers' county plans. We also updated the environmentally sensitive area maps and made everything accessible via a web site and distributed the same on a CD.



Mobility

- We kept the Duluth Harbor Channel open after a barge sunk in it. Working closely with the SUNDEW & Aids to Navigation Team we ensured the wreck was well marked and the ice track was made in such a manner as to minimize delays during the winter season.
- We helped broaden the membership and issues addressed by the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee.



Maritime Security

- We established a Coast Guard Auxiliary harbor safety program and trained 36 Auxiliary members to expand our eyes and ears on the waterfront.
- Anticipating the increase in cruise ship traffic next year, we updated our large vessel evacuation procedures and are working closely with port officials to review port security issues.