

U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Amphibious Vehicles

DUKW

The 38-foot DUKW was designed for the U.S. Army to carry men and supplies from offshore ships and across a beach. The term "DUKW" is a manufacturer's code designation. It translates to "D" for 1942, "U" for utility vehicle, "K" for front-wheel drive, and "W" for two rear-drive axles. The nickname "Duck" grew out of this code and the amphibious capability of the craft. The DUKWs acquired from the U.S. Army were constructed of sheet steel. The following modifications were made by the Coast Guard: installation of an aluminum alloy cover over the driver's area and extending aft over the forward part of the cargo space; a self-bailing cockpit in the after part of the cargo space; a walkway along each side of the cover; towing bits and tow rail; and navigational lights. In 1948 the Coast Guard constructed additional units at the Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, MD. These had aluminum bodies and incorporated the experience learned from using the Army model. DUKWs were most useful in flood relief. However, the craft suffered from high maintenance costs, rapid deterioration due to salt water, and a lack of watertight subdivisions. All of the vehicles had been disposed of by 30 September 1970.





LARC

The 35-Foot Land Amphibious Rescue Craft was designed for the U.S. Army to carry men and supplies from offshore ships to the beach or to an inland area. It can carry a maximum load of five tons on either land or water. The Coast Guard used the LARC primarily for shallow-water flood-relief rescue and as a platform for underwater searches. The amphibian was constructed of aluminum. It was fitted with four low-pressure tires that permitted it to travel over soft surfaces, such as sand or mud. It could ascend and descend grades of up to 60 degrees. Due to the extremely high maintenance cost associated with these amphibians, LARCs were used only when the task could not be accomplished by another type of craft. The vehicles, which were stationed along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to North Carolina, were eventually disposed of between 1968 and 1979.





