

CHAPTER 8. VESSEL SAFETY PROGRAM

- A. **Policy.** Safety is an integral part of all Coast Guard vessel operations. All members must commit to a personal responsibility to safeguard themselves, fellow crew members, and the property entrusted to their care. The leadership and responsibility for all safety programs must originate from senior leadership at each unit and follow the chain of command to each individual in the command. Each level of the command is responsible for safety enforcement through strict compliance with existing rules, professional practices, and standards.
- B. **Goal.** The goal of the Vessel Safety Program is to improve safety, enhance mission effectiveness, and increase the operational readiness of all Coast Guard floating units by:
1. Identifying the loss exposures that endanger our people, platforms, equipment and mission readiness;
 2. Evaluating the associated risks; and
 3. Controlling our accidental losses.
- C. **Scope.** This chapter applies to all Area, District, MLC, Group, and Unit commanders operating cutters and/or small boats to fulfill mission responsibilities. Vessels include cutters, small boats, Coast Guard Auxiliary boats operating under Coast Guard orders, and morale boats used as part of Coast Guard operations. All Program and Support Managers are subject to this chapter. This chapter also applies to the use of firearms by Coast Guard personnel. Group Commanders and Station CO's/OIC's shall also refer to the appropriate chapter of this manual for safety of their shore facilities.
- D. **Authority.** The laws requiring federal occupational safety and health programs are listed in section 1-D of this manual.
- E. **Standards.** (See Section 1-K of this manual) Because safety is an integral part of every operating and support program, many Coast Guard safety standards are contained within the policies and directives of those programs.
- F. **Organization.** The Vessel Safety Program is organized to function through the chain of command. The Commandant promulgates policy and sets program requirements. Area and District commanders carry out the policies and tailor program requirements to their operations. CO's and OIC's implement the program at the unit level, supplementing guidance with unit plans, instructions, and supervision. MLC commanders provide primary support to unit CO'S. Section 1-F of this manual lists the general responsibilities for the Safety and Environmental Health

8-F (cont'd) Program. The organizational components described in the following paragraphs are assigned specific responsibilities.

1. Commandant.

- a. Commandant (G-KSE-4), the Vessel Safety Branch, operates under the cognizance of Commandant (G-KSE).
- (1) Commandant (G-KSE-4) will initiate, develop, review, and modify policies, procedures, and standards for the Vessel Safety Program. The Branch shall also monitor and evaluate the implementation of the program.
 - (2) Specific duties of Commandant (G-KSE-4) are:
 - (a) Develop, recommend, promulgate and monitor policies and procedures for vessel safety in consultation with appropriate program managers.
 - (b) Recommend policies and procedures to protect the public from possible hazards of Coast Guard vessel activities.
 - (c) Advise and assist the chain of command in correcting hazardous conditions adverse to vessel safety.
 - (d) Maintain liaison with the U.S. Naval Safety Center.
 - (e) Coordinate and convene formal Mishap Analysis Boards (MABs) on behalf of the Commandant.
 - (f) Coordinate the activities of the Commandant's Vessel Safety Board and participate as a member.
 - (g) Maintain a master file of Class A and B mishap reports, safety recommendations and corrective actions.
 - (h) Monitor all safety recommendations and corrective action until completed.
- b. Program and Support Managers. Program and Support Managers have the responsibility to manage the Coast Guard's resources: people, time, money, and equipment. In carrying out this responsibility, they must incorporate safety and environmental health into all aspects of their respective missions. These Managers shall adhere

- 8-F-1. b. (cont'd) to, and enforce, the Commandant's vessel safety and environmental health standards.
- c. Commandant's Vessel Safety Board (CVSB). The CVSB is comprised of officers on the Commandant's staff having special knowledge of vessel operations, engineering, safety and environmental health matters. The CVSB is responsible for reviewing Class A and Class B vessel mishaps, as well as reviewing selected vessel mishaps and vessel safety matters. See enclosure (13) for the CVSB precept.
2. Area, District, and MLC Commanders. Area, District, and MLC Commanders shall ensure that the provisions of this program are implemented for all cutters and small boats. MLC Commander (k) provides the primary Safety and Environmental Health support to Area and District units. However, Area and District Commanders are responsible for controlling accidental losses to USCG personnel, property, and mission readiness for resources under their operational control. These responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:
- a. Identifying and evaluating specific hazards associated with vessel types and vessel operations within their area of responsibility.
- b. Developing abatement plans to eliminate, reduce, or control the risks associated with cutter and small boat operations. Putting to sea is inherently hazardous and decisions to eliminate, reduce, and control operational risks must always be weighed against the severity of the hazard, the probability of its occurrence, and the ultimate benefit to be gained by tasking a unit to perform a mission.
- c. Carrying out and monitoring abatement plans.
3. Group Commanders. Group Commanders shall perform the functions listed in 2. above for all cutters, small boat stations and small boats under their operational control.
4. Units.
- a. Commanding Officer/Officer-in-Charge (CO). CO'S of cutters and commands which operate small boats are responsible for implementing a vigorous Vessel Safety Program.
- (1) The CO is responsible for the safety and health of the crew, and is also responsible for the safe operation of the unit. Therefore, the program's effectiveness will

- 8-F-4. a. (1) (cont'd) be determined entirely by CO's interest and efforts. The CO's safety policy shall be conveyed through the following:
- (a) An active, visible role in safety stand downs and pre-briefs for major evolutions.
 - (b) Allocation of unit time and money to support administration of the safety program.
- (2) The unit CO must identify and weigh the risk of each operation and evolution. Every effort must be made to eliminate, reduce or control the risks to the crew and equipment. When the very nature of an evolution involves inherent, unavoidable risk, the CO must evaluate:
- (a) the training and experience of the crew,
 - (b) the adequacy of manning levels,
 - (c) the condition and operating limitations of the people and equipment to be used,
 - (d) the need for personal protective equipment/rescue and survival equipment,
 - (e) weather and sea conditions, and ultimately,
 - (f) whether or not to even undertake the mission/evolution.
- (3) Once the decision to get a small boat underway is made, the boat coxswain assumes these same responsibilities per USCG Regulations, CIM5000.3 (series).
- (4) The CO and coxswain shall always emphasize crew and mission safety.

b. Vessel Safety Officer. The unit Executive Officer/Executive Petty Officer (XO) shall serve as the safety officer per USCG Regulations, CIM5000.3 (series).

(1) Duties of the Safety Officer.

- (a) Act as the CO's representative and advisor on all unit safety matters.

- 8-F-4. b. (1) (b) Chair the unit's safety and health committee.
- (c) Conduct liaison with all support facility personnel to consolidate loss prevention programs.
 - (d) Ensure thorough and timely completion of vessel mishap investigations.
 - (e) Ensure proper mishap analysis is accomplished at the unit level.
 - (f) Ensure completion of mishap reports in accordance with this manual.
 - (g) Establish, maintain, and annually exercise the unit's Pre-Mishap Plan.
 - (h) Recommend the composition of the unit Safety Board for consideration by the CO. Commands may elect to designate a Permanent Mishap Board to investigate Class C and D mishaps, as well as carry out initial investigative actions outlined in the Pre-Mishap Plan. (See enclosure (15) for a sample Pre-Mishap Plan).

c. Unit Safety Supervisor. The unit safety supervisor shall assist the Safety Officer in managing the unit's safety program, and shall:

- (1) Disseminate safety information within the unit to ensure that all hands have access to it.
- (2) Coordinate and organize unit safety training.
- (3) Maintain written safety and mishap records.
- (4) Conduct annual training for the unit Safety and Health Committee members on the unit Pre-Mishap Plan, Accident Investigation, and Accident Analysis.
- (5) Maintain files of unit mishap reports and other mishap reports/lessons learned from other Coast Guard units.
- (6) Serve as recorder for the unit Safety and Health Committee.

G. Safety and Environmental Health Audits. The general requirement for an annual MLC audit of each unit is modified for cutters and shore facilities with boats assigned.

8-G-1. Cutters.

- a. Area, District, and MLC Commanders shall ensure that safety audits are scheduled and coordinated with all other requirements for cutters. All Coast Guard Cutters are considered to be "High Risk" units and as such shall have an annual safety audit. These audits will normally be scheduled prior to the first operational deployment after a lengthy shipyard or major dockside availability. MLC Safety Audits or Naval Safety Center Surveys will satisfy annual safety audit requirements. However, the time between MLC safety audits shall not exceed twenty-four months. All Imminently Dangerous and Serious hazards identified during these three activities shall be reported via the chain of command to MLC Commander (k) and abated per enclosure (1) to this manual. See enclosure (1) for definitions of imminent danger, serious, and non-serious conditions. Alternate evaluations, audits, and surveys do not preclude audits of a unit by the MLC when deemed appropriate by higher authority.

- b. The U.S. Naval Safety Center, Norfolk, VA (NAVSAFECEN) conducts Ship Safety Surveys upon request. A NAVSAFECEN survey meets the requirements of subparagraph 1.a. All Imminently Dangerous and Serious hazards identified during a NAVSAFECEN survey shall be reported via the chain of command to MLC Commander (k) and abated per the enclosure (1). The next subsequent safety audit shall be conducted by MLC Commander (k).
 - (1) The Navy survey team normally has ten safety specialists, but for smaller cutters a smaller survey team can be requested. Requests for NAVSAFECEN Surveys shall be submitted to MLC Commander (k) via message or rapidraft letter. However, CO's are authorized direct liaison with the Naval Safety Center for short lead time requests if the survey is to be conducted in the immediate Norfolk area.

- c. CO's are responsible for performing a comprehensive annual self-audit using the MLC Safety and Environmental Health checklist. Self-audits shall be performed midway between the formal audits required by paragraph G-1.a. and filed at the unit with a copy forwarded via the chain of command to the appropriate MLC Commander (k). All Imminently Dangerous and Serious hazards identified during the self-audit shall be

- 8-G-1. c. (cont'd) reported via the chain of command and abated per the enclosure (1). See enclosure (1) for the definitions of imminent danger, serious, and non-serious conditions.

2. Shore Facilities with Boats Assigned.

- a. District, MLC, and Group Commanders shall ensure that MLC safety audits are coordinated with Standardization Assessment Visits and other scheduling requirements for small boat stations. The recommended period between Standardization Assessment Visits and MLC safety audits is two years. Imminently Dangerous and Serious hazards identified shall be reported via the chain of command and abated per enclosure (1). See enclosure (1) for definitions of imminent danger, serious, and non-serious conditions.
- b. Nonstandard boat outfits and operating limitations are set by the district commanders. However, if the limitations are not specific enough for a unit's area of responsibility, the unit shall establish specific operating and area limitations. Boat crew qualifications for all boats are established in the Boat Crew Qualification Guide, COMDTINST M16114.9 (series). Written standards shall also cover preventive maintenance and inspections which are not established by higher authority. Standardization Assessment Visits are thorough and comprehensive assessments of a station's standard small boats. However, the Coast Guard now operates at least as many nonstandard as standard small boats. The need for written standards cannot be over emphasized.
- c. Shore facilities with boats assigned shall conduct annual unit self-audits using the MLC Safety and Environmental Health checklists. The self-audits shall be filed at the unit with a copy forwarded to MLC Commander (k). All Imminently Dangerous and Serious hazards identified during the self-audit shall be reported via the chain of command and abated per enclosure (1). See enclosure (1) for definitions of imminent danger, serious, and non-serious conditions.

H. Training. Safety training includes safety program indoctrination, safety management training at all levels of the chain of command, and technical safety training.

1. Training for Unit Safety Supervisors is sponsored by Commandant (G-KSE). The objective of the training is to help Unit Safety Supervisors develop a safety program and unit safety action plan.

- 8-H-2. Training for Unit Safety Officers (XO/XPO) is sponsored by Commandant (G-KSE). This training focuses on how to identify and manage an effective unit safety and loss control program.
3. Training for Unit CO's, Program, and Support Managers is sponsored by Commandant (G-KSE). This training focuses on risk assessment in decision making, the causes and effects of loss, and safety management.
 4. Human Error Accident Reduction Training and Vessel Resource Management are sponsored by Commandant (G-KSE). This training helps in developing greater crew coordination to enhance operational safety.
 5. Technical Safety Training that goes beyond the scope of the unit safety supervisors course such as: Fit Testing of Respiratory Protection, Shipyard Safety, Hazard Communication, etc. shall be requested from the MLC.

I. Pre-Mishap Plan. Each unit shall develop a pre-mishap plan to organize an effective unit response to Class A and Class B mishaps. The plan need not be a separate unit instruction, but may be reflected in Standing Orders, Standard Operating Procedures, and/or Operational Bills. A separate pre-mishap plan will however, serve to fill in the gaps that are not covered by existing instructions in outlining actions to be taken for mishaps that occur inport, away from home port, and underway. A sample pre-mishap plan is provided in enclosure (15).

1. Groups and Group Units. Because of the limited resources and response capabilities of our smaller units, Group Commanders shall establish pre-mishap plans which cover mishaps involving subordinate units within their Group. Subordinate units shall submit unit specific Plans to be incorporated into their overall Group Pre-mishap Plan.

2. The Safety Officer shall ensure that the following response priorities are reflected in the unit plan:
- a. Rescue, recovery, and emergency medical care for unit personnel.
 - b. Minimization of injury, property damage, and secondary or follow-on mishaps arising from the initial incident.
 - c. Preservation of evidence to facilitate analysis of mishap causes and, if possible, restoration of damaged property.
 - d. Preliminary mishap investigation and analysis.

- 8-I-3. A notification checklist shall be included in the plan along with a list of personnel responsible for making the notifications.
4. **Additional Support**. As part of the pre-mishap plan, prior arrangements shall be made with other CG units and agencies to obtain necessary firefighting services, rescue and salvage equipment, security, divers, medical support, logistics, photographers, etc. For cutters, many of these arrangements can be made through the host command at the moorings, local authorities, or the operational commander. For small boat stations, many of these arrangements can be made by the Group Commander, and should be reflected in the Group pre-mishap plan. For further guidance on pre-mishap planning and investigation, see Chapter 3 of this manual.