



COMDTINST 16134.2D
25 JUN 2015

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 16134.2D

Subj: CUTTER SURFACE SWIMMER PROGRAM

- Ref:
- (a) Navigation Rules and Regulations Handbook
 - (b) Rescue and Survival Systems Manual, COMDTINST M10470.10 (series)
 - (c) U. S. Coast Guard Maritime Law Enforcement Manual (MLEM), COMDTINST M16247.1 (series)
 - (d) Navy Search and Rescue (SAR) Manual, NTPP 3-50.1 (series)
 - (e) Cutter Training and Qualification Manual, COMDTINST M3502.4 (series)
 - (f) Boat Crew Seamanship Manual, COMDTINST M16114.5 (series)
 - (g) U. S. Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue Swimmer Manual, COMDTINST M3710.4 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction provides policies, procedures, guidance, and minimum standards for the training, qualification, certification and employment of Cutter Surface Swimmers (CSS).
2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers in charge, deputy/assistant commandants, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements will comply with the provisions of this instruction. Internet release authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. Cutter Surface Swimmer Program, COMDTINST 16134.2C is canceled.
4. DISCUSSION.
 - a. Cutter search and rescue operations, such as rescue and assistance, person in the water or man overboard recovery might require the use of the CSS. The preferred method of recovering

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personnel from the water is by boat. However, deploying the CSS to aid tired, entangled, or injured survivors might be necessary.

- b. The procedures, equipment, health and fitness prerequisites noted in this Instruction are minimum requirements. Commands should fashion or engage in available training opportunities to enhance their unit's swimmer program.
 - c. Normally, cutters that operate primarily on the "Western Rivers" (defined in Reference (a)) would not deploy a CSS because of river current risks. Therefore, compliance is optional for cutters operating on the Western Rivers. Any CSS deployed in the Western Rivers will be certified in accordance with this Instruction.
5. DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.
 6. MAJOR CHANGES. The requirement for use of a dry suit and appropriate thermal layering was changed to 50 degrees in accordance with a recent change to Reference (b).
 7. IMPACT ASSESSMENT. No impact assessment warranted.
 8. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. The development of this directive and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office and are categorically excluded under current USCG categorical exclusion (CE) #33 found in reference (d) (figure 2-1) from further environmental analysis, in accordance with Section 2.B.2 and Figure 2-1 of the National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures and Policy for Considering Environmental Impacts, COMDTINST M16475.1 (series).

This directive will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy of substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policies in this Instruction must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Policy NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, DHS and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.
 9. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Instruction. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) web sites. Internet: <http://www.uscg.mil/directives/>, and CGPortal: <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/library/SitePages/Home.aspx>.
 10. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This instruction has been evaluated for potential records management impacts. The development of this Instruction has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no records scheduling requirements, in accordance with Federal Records Act, 44 U. S. C. 3101 et seq., National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requirements, and Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). This policy does not have any significant or substantial change to existing records management requirements.

11. POLICY.

- a. Flight deck equipped cutters will, at a minimum, have two outfitted and certified Cutter Surface Swimmers onboard when the cutter is underway. Non flight deck equipped cutters will, at a minimum, have one outfitted and certified Cutter Surface Swimmer onboard while the cutter is underway. If deploying a CSS from a cutter boat, the boat will be considered an extension of the cutter and the requirements of this Instruction will be applicable. A certified tender, in accordance with Enclosure (1) of this Instruction, must be assigned to each deployed cutter swimmer. Operational commanders have the discretion to increase these requirements.
- b. The decision to deploy the swimmer(s) rests with the commanding officer/officer in charge (CO/OIC).
- c. Follow the principles of Operational Risk Management (ORM) before and during swimmer deployments in both training and operations.
- d. The CSS will not enter the water without permission from the officer of the deck, or if the cutter boat is deployed, the coxswain.
- e. The CSS has the authority to decline deployment if they believe the situation is beyond their capabilities.
- f. In accordance with Reference (b), if the water temperature is less than or equal to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, the swimmer must wear a dry suit and appropriate thermal layering.
- g. CO/OIC must ensure drills are conducted in the cutter's open water environment to acclimate the CSS to actual conditions. If a CO/OIC chooses to execute a live "victim" man overboard recovery drill to train the CSS, ensure the following (at a minimum):
 - (1) Launch the cutter boat, which remains near the "victim."
 - (2) The "victim" dons flotation and hypothermia protective gear, appropriate for the present conditions, that meets or exceeds the hypothermia protective gear requirement of the CSS.
 - (3) The provisions of Chapter 2-60, Swimming, Shipboard Regulations Manual, COMDTINST M5000.7 (series) must be met.**
 - (4) The cutter will not approach a live "victim" for drills.
 - (5) Never deploy the CSS or "victim" while the cutter is making way.
- h. A certified tender will tend the swimmer by tending line at all times. The swimmer will only detach him or herself from the tending line for compelling reasons (e.g., entanglement in debris, embarking on a vessel, or other unforeseen circumstances).
- i. Per Reference (c), the CSS will not deploy for a person in the water (PIW) to compel compliance in a law enforcement role.

- j. The cutter swimmer will not swim into or under a capsized or submerged vessel, aircraft, or vehicle. If deployed next to a capsized object, the CSS is permitted to search visually and reach inside while maintaining a grasp on a reference point on the exterior of the object. If the CSS determines that a person is trapped under or in the object and cannot be reached from the reference point, the CSS must request alternate assistance.
 - k. The vessel deploying the swimmer must be constantly aware of the swimmer's position. Keep the vessel as stationary as possible to prevent dragging the swimmer. Keep the swimmer clear of the screw(s), auxiliary propulsion, rudder(s), suction/discharge openings, and other hazards.
 - l. Each cutter must develop and maintain a CSS pre-deployment checklist and/or add checklist items to current MOB checklists. The checklist items will mitigate individual, unit-specific, and underwater hazards (i.e. only use the shaft closest to the swimmer as a last resort). At a minimum, the checklist will include securing sea suction/discharge valves and sonar if equipped. Destroy copies of the checklist when the drill or exercise is complete. Destroy the master when superseded, or obsolete.
 - m. Uncooperative or combative PIWs might require launching the cutter boat or second CSS, if available. Do not deploy the CSS independently for known combative PIWs.
 - n. When possible deploy the CSS with the cutter boat for multiple PIWs.
 - o. If deploying the CSS from the cutter boat, tend to the swimmer as if deployed from the cutter.
 - p. A unit's Health Services Technician (HS) and/or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), particularly those on independent duty, will not normally be assigned as the CSS. Although possibly beneficial, the cutter surface swimmer need not be trained in life support beyond Commandant's Mandated Training. The CSS's primary function is initial assessment and transport of the victim to the cutter for medical assistance.
 - q. A designated Safety Observer must be on deck at all times while a CSS is deployed. The Safety Observer should have no additional duties beyond safety. The Safety Observer will ensure that communications are facilitated with the bridge; this person will not be the Safety Observer.
12. PROCEDURES. These procedures are generic in nature and intentionally describe only the swimmer's and tender's actions. Once in the water, a swimmer's tactics and procedures remain the same throughout the fleet. Deployment and recovery of the swimmer is unique to each individual class of cutter.
- a. Upon receiving the word of man over board or use of the CSS is necessary, both the CSS and Tender will muster and dress out the swimmer. The goal is to be manned, ready and on station in three minutes from initial notification.
 - b. After deploying the swimmer, the tender gives enough slack for the swimmer to swim away from the vessel. The tender must carefully manage the line at all times to prevent fouling.

- c. As an option, the swimmer can push a ring or torpedo buoy while advancing to the person in the water. If using the ring buoy, remove the line and light to avoid entangling the swimmer or victim.
- d. The swimmer should establish communications with the person in the water (PIW) to promote confidence, cooperation and to reduce the possibility of panic. The swimmer can then establish physical contact with the PIW. References (d) and (g) explains proper swimmer techniques for recovery of a person in the water.
- e. Once on-scene with the PIW, the swimmer should assess the victim (i.e. visually, ask questions) for injuries that might affect shipboard recovery.
- f. There are three methods of communicating with a CSS; visual, whistle and tug signals. The pre-mission brief must indicate which means of communications will be primary, secondary, and tertiary. The descriptions and explanations of these signals are described in the table below. The tug signals are similar to the Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (OATH) signaling system.

Meaning	Whistle/Tugs	Visual Signal
I am OK / Are you OK?	One	Taps Top of Head
Advance	Two	One Arm Raised Over Head
Take up Slack / I am Ready to Return to vessel	Three	One Arm Waiving Over Head
Help / Do You Need Help	Four	Two Arms Waiving Over Head

- g. The swimmer signals the cutter when ready to return. The tender pulls the tending line to assist the swimmer and victim in returning to the vessel. When returning to the vessel the swimmer should concentrate on the victim while the tender pulls them in. Swimmer tenders must carefully manage swimmer tending lines to prevent fouling especially when hauling back. The certified tender is responsible for managing the tether in the case of more than one tender on the line.
- h. Once alongside the cutter, recover the CSS and victim by whatever means are available onboard that class of cutter.

13. CERTIFICATION.

- a. Each unit is responsible for qualification and training. General procedures for the certification of personnel are found in Chapter 5 of Reference (e). Prior to initial certification, the prospective cutter surface swimmer must:

(1) Complete the applicable sections of the Cutter Surface Swimmer PQS Enclosure (1).

Demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of CSS policies and procedures to an oral examining board. Each unit's duty assignment instruction must designate oral board members. The oral board recommends certification to the CO/OIC. **The CO/OIC will ensure that, upon certification, the appropriate competency code (OPSHY) is entered in TMT.**

- b. In addition to the initial certification requirements, cutter swimmers and tenders must complete annual and semi-annual refresher training per Enclosure (1). This currency/proficiency requirement assures the command that the individual stays proficient. Skills must be practiced on a regular basis for cutter swimmers to retain required levels of expertise. A swimmer failing health or fitness requirements during the semi-annual re-certification period will not be re-certified until the failed requirement is successfully demonstrated.

14. EQUIPMENT.

- a. See Reference (b) for standard cutter surface swimmer gear, build-up, and maintenance.
- b. Individual class cutter requirements for deck equipment can be found in applicable Command Assessment Readiness and Training (CART) checklists, Special and Emergency Operations and Procedures (SEOPS) checklists and shipboard Allowance Equipage Lists (AEL).
- c. Swimmer tending lines will be 600ft, 3/8" diameter, yellow, polypropylene line (SPEC MIL-R-24049). Cutters less than 200 feet may size the tending line to three times the length of the cutter.

15. FORMS/REPORTS. None.

16. REQUESTS FOR CHANGES. Change recommendations should be routed via memo through the chain of command to the Office of Cutter Forces, Commandant (CG-751).

JOHN P. NADEAU /s/
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Assistant Commandant for Capability (CG-7)

Encl: (1) Personnel Qualification Standard for Cutter Surface Swimmers

PERSONNEL QUALIFICATION STANDARD FOR CUTTER SURFACE SWIMMERS

101

HEALTH AND FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

After the health and fitness requirements have been satisfactorily completed, the trainee may proceed with the qualification. All Coast Guard cutter surface swimmers are required to meet the below prerequisites annually.

Push-ups	Sit-ups	12 Minute Swim
29	38	500 yards

*Notes

- (1) 12-minute swim test is based on Dr. Kenneth Cooper's research.
- (2) Push-ups and sit-ups must be performed within a one-minute period

Completed: _____
 (First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

201

SAFETY FUNDAMENTALS

201.1

Describe Commandant and unit policy concerning:

- a. Authority to deploy swimmer
- b. Swimmer's right to decline deployment
- c. Tethering of swimmer
- d. Capsized hulls, airframes, or submerged vehicles
- e. River current risks, tidal currents, etc.
- f. Hazardous "own ship" areas that a swimmer should avoid
- g. Duties and responsibilities of tenders
- h. Care and inspection of cutter swimmer equipment

Completed: _____
 (First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

202 **SWIMMER'S OUTFIT SYSTEM**

202.1 Demonstrate the use, limitations, care, and any potential hazards of the following gear in accordance with Reference (b):

- a. Hypothermia protective clothing
- b. Swimmer's mask
- c. Rescue fins
- d. Approved swimmer's harness/life vest/knife
- e. Tending line and reel
- f. Strobe light
- g. 4" Chemical-light
- h. Signal whistle

Completed: _____
(Survival Systems Petty Officer Signature) (Date)

203 **SWIMMER'S OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT**

203.1 Demonstrate the use, limitations, and care of the following:

- a. Non-tethered life ring
- b. Torpedo buoy
- c. Stokes litter
- d. Available flotation (small fenders, PFDS, life raft, etc.)
- e. Care and inspection of tending line and associated hardware

Completed: _____
(Survival Systems Petty Officer Signature) (Date)

204 **PERSONNEL RECOVERY SYSTEMS**

204.1 Demonstrate the following methods and equipment for bringing personnel on board your vessel in accordance with References (d) and (f):

- a. Stokes litter
- b. Personnel retrieval line (PRL)
- c. Other (man overboard hoist, etc.)

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

205 **SWIMMER'S/TENDER'S COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS**

205.1 Demonstrate the communications signal system as it applies to cutter swimmers: (OATH: 1-OK, 2-Advance, 3-Take up Slack, 4-Help)

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301 **WATCH STATION - CUTTER SWIMMER**

301.1 **INITIAL QUALIFICATION TASKS**

- a. Demonstrate/perform steps for each of the following tasks
- b. Explain the reasons for each step
- c. Demonstrate the control/coordination required
- d. Show knowledge of required safety precautions
- e. Demonstrate/simulate the required methods of communication

(Note: all in water tasks will be conducted in the proper swimmer outfit)

301.1.1 Dress out as cutter swimmer (don equipment in 3 minutes or less)

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301.1.2 Swim out a minimum of 75 percent of tending line and retrieve a nonviolent, conscious, simulated victim. The swimmer must utilize visual/sound communication signals with the tender when applicable.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301.1.3 Describe and demonstrate the listed release/escape methods in accordance with Reference (d):

- a. Front head hold release
- b. Front head hold escape
- c. Rear head hold release
- d. Rear head hold escape

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301.1.4 Use available flotation (life ring, buoy, etc.) to tow simulated victim back to the vessel.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301.1.5 Swim out a minimum of 75 percent of tending line, and retrieve a simulated unconscious victim.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301.1.6 Alongside the vessel, secure a victim in the stokes litter with tenders steadying the litter via tending lines.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

301.1.7 Rig simulated victim for recovery using all recovery systems available aboard the vessel.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

302 **ANNUAL CURRENCY MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

302.1 Health and Fitness Prerequisites

Complete Health and Fitness Prerequisites in Section 101

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

303 **SEMI-ANNUAL CURRENCY MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

303.1 While vessel is underway with all way off, perform the following personnel retrieval drills. Each swimmer and tender team will use proper signals during each evolution.

Each swimmer will perform the following tasks:

- a. 301.1.2 Swim out and retrieve a nonviolent, conscious, simulated victim.
- b. 301.1.6 Alongside the vessel, secure a victim in the stokes litter with tenders steadying the litter via tending lines.
- c. 301.1.7 Rig simulated victim for recovery using all recovery systems available aboard vessel.
- d. Exercise each available method of ship deck recovery of surface swimmer in accordance with Reference (d) and (f).
- e. Describe and demonstrate the listed release/escape methods in accordance with Reference (d).

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

304 **WATCH STATION - SWIMMER TENDER**

Tenders will complete swimmer PQS, 201 through 205.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

304.1 **INITIAL QUALIFICATION TASKS**

For optimum training effectiveness, the above PQS items should be completed prior to starting your assigned tasks.

304.1.1 Assist the cutter swimmer in dressing out.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

304.1.2 Demonstrate proper line tending techniques.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

304.1.3 Tend the cutter swimmer during a drill scenario.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)

305 **SEMI-ANNUAL CURRENCY MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

305.1 While vessel is underway with all way off, perform the following personnel retrieval drills. Each swimmer and tender team will use proper signals during each evolution.

Each tender must perform the following tasks:

- a. 304.1.2 Demonstrate proper line tending techniques.
- b. 304.1.3 Tend the cutter swimmer during a drill scenario.

Completed: _____
(First Lieutenant Signature) (Date)