

PE Best Practices

Field-Proven Techniques For Better Boater Education

Education Department

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A Fun Way To Teach About PFDs

*By Carol M. Line
FSO-PE, Flotilla 09C16-06*

Our flotilla uses a series of simulations to teach children the importance of always wearing personal flotation devices (PFDs). To begin, set up your teaching area so that there are at least four chairs for boat passengers and one for the captain. Place PFDs of all types, sizes, and conditions in a pile on the floor next to the passengers. The PFDs are now in a readily accessible place, as the law requires.

Whisper in the captain's ear that he or she is to tell the passengers that the boat just hit a rock, is taking on water, and beginning to sink. Have the captain ask passengers to put on their PFDs as quickly as possible. Then time the passengers and captain to see how long it takes everyone to pick out a life jacket, put it on, and fasten it. Tell them how long it took everyone to don their equipment.

Then have the class look at each passenger and decide if each PFD fits properly, is worn correctly, and is the right type for each person based on age and weight. Make adjustments as necessary, so that you have each passenger and the captain wearing an appropriately fitting PFD. Ask the class how mismatches could have been avoided.

Next, ask students to remove their PFDs and place them under their seats. Now each person has a PFD that fits and is stowed in a readily accessible place...but *not* worn. Whisper to the captain that



Teaching 5th Graders at Soo Township School

the boat is on fire and that passengers should put on their PFDs and abandon ship. Again, time the exercise and share the results.

Finally, with passengers and captain already wearing their PFDs, have the captain tell passengers that heavy weather is approaching. Before the captain finishes this statement, announce that the boat has capsized. Ask the passengers and captain if they would have had time to get their PFDs on before the boat capsized.

Then talk to the class about the Baltimore water taxi that capsized suddenly in March. Even though the boat carried a PFD for each person in a readily accessible place, several people died and a number were injured or suffered from hypothermia.

Review the results of these exercises and let the students form their own answers.

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Rescue 21 & The Boating Public

By Samuel Z. Edwards, LTjg
Rescue 21 Public Affairs Officer

Rescue 21 is an advanced search and rescue communications system that will help the Coast Guard more effectively locate and assist boaters in distress. Rescue 21 is not an upgrade but rather the complete replacement of the Coast Guard's current short-range communications system. It uses proven technology implemented in a unique system requiring thorough testing to ensure reliable service.

Rescue 21 has been fully installed in Coast Guard Groups Atlantic City and Eastern Shore, and is currently being tested to ensure that the system reliably meets the Coast Guard's requirements. Rescue 21 anticipates full operational availability by the end of September 2006.

Recreational and commercial boaters will be positively impacted by the Rescue 21 modernization. Without requiring boaters to obtain new equipment, Rescue 21 will allow the Coast Guard to use direction-finding on distress calls from existing marine band VHF-FM radios.

Of course, recreational boaters need to be aware that the Coast Guard cannot direction-find on their cell phones, nor do cellular companies guarantee reception in such a way that would make the mobile phone a reliable distress-notification device.

Also, with Rescue 21, the Coast Guard will be able to receive Digital Selective Calling (DSC) messages. To be most effective, DSC radios should be connected to the vessel's GPS and registered for a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (or MMSI) Number.

Reminding boaters to use marine band radios for distress calls and properly registering and connecting their DSC radio constitute the two vital messages for the boating public.

The Rescue 21 project staff has partnered with the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety to maximize public awareness of Rescue 21 and the two vital messages.

During last year's National Auxiliary Conference, Rescue 21 was presented to a group of Auxiliary telecommunications experts. The Auxiliary quickly expressed interest in adapting its complimentary vessel examinations to check DSC radios for proper registration and connection.

Also, local Auxiliary groups have received frequent updates from Rescue 21's Regional Points of Contact in Atlantic City, NJ, and Eastern Shore, VA. Similar POCs are available in Groups being prepared to receive Rescue 21 infrastructure.

This year, Rescue 21 brochures have been sent to boating organizations across the country, as part of the National Safe Boating Campaign. Also, this will be the second year that Rescue 21 has participated in the International Boating and Water Safety Summit. Rescue 21's booth display will be present, and project personnel will address the general assembly and discuss the project in more detail during a breakout session that will happen on Tuesday morning.

Another exciting development is the completion of John Sabella & Associates' three-part video series, "Taking the Search out of Search and Rescue". This video explains how to properly use a DSC radio, and explains Rescue 21's involvement in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System. This video could be a valuable tool to Auxiliary units. For more information about the video, visit www.johnsabella.com and click the Recreational Boating link.

For more information about Rescue 21, you may visit Rescue 21's website, www.uscg.mil/rescue21, or contact me at sedwards@comdt.uscg.mil.

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High Energy BS&S, Recruiting With PE

**By Bruce Jacobson,
VCP 11S-02-09, FSO-MT**

In order to sustain a high energy level throughout the entire BS&S course, we have instructor members who are assigned only one or two week segments of the 13-week program. Instructors get to teach their favorite subject, which keeps the enthusiasm and energy levels high. Also, by distributing the workload we avoid burning out our instructors.

As a side bar, I am a Division VCP and teach the Navigation chapter. I start each class with a commercial break. I explain the basic role of the Auxiliary, and I invite the entire class to our next monthly Flotilla meeting. Our Flotilla is fortunate to meet at the local Yacht Club, where a superb breakfast is offered before the meeting for \$5.00.

We tell every student, "Come to our meeting and have a free breakfast on us!" We have been successful with membership growth in this endeavor.

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Simplifying The Paperwork

By Ruth White, ADSO-PE W7

Getting the paperwork done can be a hassle if you let it. Often we need to look up member numbers, or we forget to write down which auxiliarists attended. To get around this problem, I've added spaces for member number, name, and initials at the end of the class attendance sheet where participants check off their names. Since the top of the sheet has the date and chapter, I merely tuck the sheet into my bag, put it next to the computer when I get home, and type away.

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Leveraging Satisfied Customers To Promote PE Opportunities

**By Len Schulte
SO-PE Division 3**

I keep a fairly comprehensive database on all my students. In January, when I'm announcing my new course schedule, I also send my mailing to all of my students from the year just ended.

This has two benefits:

- If they *did not* complete the course, this gives them the opportunity to do so
- If they *did* complete the course and we did a good job, they pass this information on to their boating friends and recommend that they take the course themselves

I've had a fair number of new students report that this is how they learned about our course.

Also, while our instructors look great in their uniforms, some boaters can find the atmosphere a bit intimidating. So I encourage instructors to include in their slides a picture of their own boat. This practice tends to break down barriers and establish camaraderie, which in turn may lead to interest in membership.

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More Tips On How To Increase "Life Jacket" Wear

By Stuart D. Soffer
FSO-PE, Flotilla 15-4

One of our primary recreational boating safety goals is to increase life jacket wear. We call them life jackets because most civilians don't know what we mean by the PFD acronym. So outside of flotilla meetings, we refer to Personal Flotation Devices as "life jackets." Some sources project that increased life jacket wear would reduce recreational boating fatalities by at least half.

There are a couple of good methods for increasing life jacket wear. One that we have found to be effective is to introduce and show off the new types of "cool" life jackets (both flashy colors and weight) and especially the inflatable and belt pack life jackets.

We also have found that inflating an inflatable is a real attention getter, whether it is an auxiliary model or a commercial brand. I particularly like inflating a life jacket on the interviewer during TV interviews, and I always inflate one or two when teaching a boating class.

What we don't do is display the old orange "horse blanket," over-the-head PFD. All district Operation Boat Smart coordinators should have received a new life jacket assortment. Otherwise, local vendors should be willing to loan their state-of-the-arts models as long as they are returned in the condition received.



Teaching Navigation Like A Day At The Beach

By Kent Steinnagel
1st District SR, Flotilla 07-03

When I teach the concept of variation, I use a 14" inflatable "beach ball" (that comes printed like a school globe) and my dry-erase markers.

First, I mark the locations of magnetic north and geographic north. Then, I draw lines from various states in the U.S. to both poles showing that for each point, the alignment between true north and magnetic north is usually in error (east or west). It also demonstrates that there are very few places on the globe where there is no compass error (e.g. perfect alignment of magnetic and north poles).

I don't go into the concept of isogonic lines of magnetism for the BS&S folks, but do mention it to the BCN/ACN group. I also use the same globe for teaching latitude and longitude.

At the end of the lesson a paper towel and some window cleaner wipes the globe clean (wouldn't it be nice if it were that easy in real life) and it's ready for next time. Best of all, it deflates flat for storage and transport when not in use!

I found my inflatable globe at a tag sale, but they're available many places on-line. Prices vary widely (99 cents to \$25.00) so good shopping pays off. In fact, I've ordered a dozen of the 99-cent globes for students to mark them up themselves, turning this lesson into a hands-on exercise.

Contribute to PE Best Practices

Do you have a Best Practice to share with your teammates in the public education arena? If so, please email Tom Angott at tangott@comcast.net.