

BOAT CREW TRAINING ACADEMY

28 July 2007

It was a hot and humid Saturday in July at the Sandy Hook NJ Coast Guard Station. This was the kind of a day that just cried out for swimsuits, flip-flops and relaxing by the pool or on the beach.

What then were this group of Auxiliarists doing, in full ODU with boots, putting out gasoline fires on the beach and firing flares into the air as if it were a belated Fourth of July?

Of course! This was the District 1SR, Division 2, Boat Crew Academy. A large group of trainees involved in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program chose to spend this sweltering day undergoing eight hours of intensive Boat Crew Training under the watchful eye of Qualifying Examiners, and mentors.

The day was organized by Paulette L. Nedrow, Chief QEC and the SO-MT, and under the direction of Tom Evans, DCP and Bill Anania, VCP.

Training began promptly with a class on First Aid instructed by Steve Gillooly FC 2-2 and Phyllis Lindmeier SO-OP. Steve is a licensed EMT First Responder and Phyllis is a R.N. The course covered the basic information required by Auxiliarists and provided a foundation for the further study required to meet the standards for Boat Crew qualification.

The group then moved out to the beach for a demonstration and practical hands on instruction in the use of a variety of approved visual distress signals including hand-held flares, meteor flares and daytime smoke signaling devices. Don Lambrecht, QE, directed this demonstration. This was the first time that many of the trainees had actually had the experience of firing flares. Their use, limitations, and safety procedures were stressed.

The next area of training on the agenda was the use of the various types of fire extinguishers. It was quite a dramatic experience for most of the trainees to witness firsthand the intensity of a gasoline fire and the technique required to extinguish the flames completely while avoiding the possibility of flare-ups. Once again while everyone was of course familiar with the types of fire extinguishers most of the trainees had not previously had the experience of actually subduing a roaring fire. Bill Anania, Division 2 Vice Captain led the training exercise assisted by Bob Di Corcia FC 2-7.

Next was a break for lunch on the Mess Deck of Station Sandy Hook, followed by an opportunity for a Coast Guard Exchange run. Needless to say many of the trainees took advantage of the Exchange run to acquire needed uniform parts. There is a very visible and close bond that exists between the Regulars assigned to CG Station Sandy Hook and the Auxiliary. This is most evident in the cooperation given BM1, Kevin Buchwald, Auxiliary Liaison and CWO Sean McGarigal, Station Sandy Hook CO. Without their help and the cooperation of the duty regulars, the entire operation could not have been accomplished

The afternoon session began with training on the Coast Guard emergency gasoline operated de-watering pump. Under the direction of John Farrell SO-PS the trainees were broken up into two person teams and each team completed the exercise of setting up and putting the pump into operation. Interestingly John is on the Division 2 ISAR Team that placed second in the recent Cape May competition and is headed for the competition in Canada in September. Needless to say none of the trainee teams approached John's time in getting the pump operational but it was a great experience to be taught by a real expert.

A Communications workshop followed, instructed by Bob Di Corcia. Bob demonstrated the various marine band radios that are used including both mounted and handheld, and the scope and limitations of each. Bob stressed proper radio procedure including pro-words, language and using the phonetic alphabet. He made clear that an Auxiliarist on the radio represents the Coast Guard to the public and professional conduct and expertise is critical. No one of the trainees will ever be heard to say "over and out", or "roger, wilco".

The final event of the day was the swim test qualification for those trainees that required it which finally gave some people the opportunity to cool off. In addition to the scheduled exercises, trainees took advantage of the availability of mentors to sign off on such qualifications as marlinspike and other requirements.

The day was a great success from the viewpoint of the trainees and the veterans as well. It was a great morale booster for everyone and enhanced the comradeship for which Division 2 is known. The organization and pacing of the program was excellent, and of course the ability to conduct this training on the Coast Guard Station provided a unique experience for everyone.

Photo Credit: Tom Evans DCP Div-2, Dist.1SR