



## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The civilian component of the U.S. Coast Guard

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### WebWatch

Division 8, 5NR

April 2010

#### A. Death of A Distinguished CG Veteran

Adm. T. W. Allen, Commandant, United States Coast Guard

1. It is with deep regret that I announce the passing of Lieutenant Herbert M. Collins, USCG (ret.), a legendary Coast Guardsman and the last surviving crewmember of the All African-American Pea Island life saving station. Lieutenant Collins succumbed to cancer on Sunday evening, March 14th, surrounded by family and friends.
2. Lieutenant Collins service to the Coast Guard and our nation alone is significant, especially in light of the challenges that African-Americans faced as the service was integrated. Yet his legacy runs even deeper in our collective heritage as he was also the grand nephew of Dorman Pugh, one of seven gold life saving medal recipients from the Pea Island rescue of the crew of the stricken Schooner E.S. Newman in 1896. When Lieutenant Collins retired in 1976, he and his family set the bar for the longest continuous family service in the Coast Guard, a record that began with his grandfather, Joseph H. Berry, in 1880.
3. Born in 1921 in Manteo, North Carolina, Lieutenant Collins enlisted in the Coast Guard and attended boot camp in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. First assigned to the cutter *Tallapoosa* in Savannah, Ga., Collins served as a mess attendant. He then served at stations from Florida to Virginia, including aboard cutter *Mendota* in Norfolk, Va., alongside renowned author and Coast Guardsman, Alex Haley. Lieutenant Collins then transferred to the all African-American life saving station at Pea Island where he served as a surfman for the duration of World War II. He and his fellow surfmen carried out vital search and rescue responsibilities and responded to a distressed ship that had been hit by a torpedo between the Pea Island and Chicamacomico Coast Guard stations. In 1947, Lieutenant Collins ended an historic era in Coast Guard history as he handed over the keys when the Pea Island station was decommissioned. He later received his commission and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant before retiring in 1976.
4. After serving in the Coast Guard, Lieutenant Collins continued to be an outstanding advocate for our service. He shared his personal experiences and highlighted the proud history of African-Americans who have served.

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The extraordinary story of the heroes of Pea Island is the subject of a new film titled the rescue men, to which Lieutenant Collins contributed. Photos of Lieutenant Collins and additional information on Coast Guard African-American history are available at:

<http://www.uscg.mil/history/uscghist/africanamericanphotogallery.asp>.

5. A memorial service will be held at 1330 on 26 March 2010 At the Hines-Rinaldi funeral home located at 11800 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, Md., 20904. In lieu of flowers, the Collins family has requested that donations be made to the Montgomery Hospice Inc., 1355 Piccard Drive, Suite 100, Rockville Md., 20850. Details of interment remain to be determined .

### **B. Updates to Coast Guard Newsbreak and Blogsum Distribution**

RDML Karl L. Schultz, Director of Governmental and Public Affairs

1. The distribution of the Coast Guard Public Affairs Newsclip and Blog reports are a valued service to internal stakeholders, adding to their situational awareness by providing a daily snapshot of media reporting and commentary on Coast Guard and related issues.
2. As the Coast Guard continues to modernize, the Public Affairs program will continue to serve the information needs of our customers while at the same time improving efficiency and product quality. The Newsclip and Blogsum reports will now be centralized By the LANTAREA Public Affairs watch, which maintains global situational awareness of the condition of the information environment for the Coast Guard on a 7/24/365 basis. The summary will feature several improvements over our current products, specifically :
  - a) The previously separate newsbreak and blogsum will be merged into a single document called the U.S. Coast Guard News Clips and Blog Report .
  - b) The new summary will have a new look and feel to include a quick news brief section, followed by full text of the articles with links to their originating source.
  - c) The U.S. Coast Guard Newsclips and Blog Report will be issued twice daily, allowing for more timely sharing of news and Information for use by operational commands.
3. District Public Affairs Offices or Public Affairs Detachments currently providing daily newsclipping services are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the service provided through the U.S. Coast Guard News Clips and Blog Report.

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4. COMDT (CG-0922) recognizes the value of locally focused clip packages. However, Public Affairs Officers should examine the workload associated with local clips compilation and weigh those requirements against competing demands in light of the availability of a comprehensive, twice daily summary, as well as readily available, free news alerts and RSS feeds.
5. Even as subscribers anticipate the arrival of the updated format, the Public Affairs program continues to integrate new technologies and capabilities that may further change the product, making it more comprehensive, interactive and automated.
6. COMDT (CG-09221) POC is PAC Dan Tremper at 202.372.4613 or [Daniel.L.Tremper@uscg.mil](mailto:Daniel.L.Tremper@uscg.mil)

### C. NAMING OF THE FIRST SENTINEL CLASS CUTTER Adm. T. W. Allen, Commandant, United States Coast Guard

1. I am pleased to announce that the name of the first fast response cutter in the Sentinel class will be the ***Bernard C. Webber***. A Sentinel class cutter will be 153 ft, capable of 28 plus knots, with a crew of 22 guardians. We are planning to build 58 of these vessels to replace the aging 110 foot Island class.
2. The cutter ***Bernard C. Webber*** is named for Petty Officer First Class Bernie Webber who executed one of the most famous rescues in Coast Guard history. He piloted motor lifeboat CG-36500, from Station Chatham, Massachusetts, to the stricken freighter ***Pendleton*** which split into two during a massive storm off of Cape Cod on February 18th 1952. Fighting 70kt winds, 50ft seas, driving snow, and despite losing their compass and windshield soon after getting underway, Webber and his three crewmembers reached the freighter and safely rescued 32 sailors. They received the gold lifesaving medal for their heroism. Petty officer Webber's selfless behavior and courageous actions define what it means to be a Guardian. His legacy will continue to inspire the men and women who sail on the cutter that bears his name.
3. The keel laying ceremony, the first major milestone in a ships construction, for the Cutter Bernard C. Webber will be on 09 April 2010 in Lockport, La. We are honored that his daughter, Patricia, will be the ships sponsor and his granddaughters, Leah and Hilary, will be the maids of honor. Their presence will form a living link between Petty Officer Webber and the cutter.

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4. All of the Sentinel class cutters will be named after enlisted heroes to honor our past guardians who stood the watch. By choosing this naming strategy, we can highlight our maritime heritage by telling the stories of the people who created our vibrant history.
5. As Alexander Hamilton envisioned, a few armed vessels judiciously stationed at the entrance to our ports, might be useful sentinels of the law. The **Bernard C. Webber** and all of the Sentinel class cutters will continue to fulfill the vision that Hamilton saw for our service over 200 years ago.
6. Please visit these sites for more information:  
Sentinel Class - <http://www.uscg.mil/acquisition/sentinel/>, and  
Petty Officer Webber - <http://www.cg36500.org/rescue.html>

### D. Why Boats Sink (And How to Keep Them Afloat)

Seaworthy Magazine: <http://www.boatus.com/seaworthy/sinking/sinkingrequest.asp>

The cost of repairing a boat that has been underwater, even briefly, is usually about 40% of its value. Besides having to pay the deductible, the skipper typically loses the use of the boat for several weeks while it is being repaired. The best defense against a dockside sinking? Visit your boat. And, at least twice a season, inspect any fittings above or below the waterline that could be letting water into the boat. All too often, skippers rely on bilge pumps to bail them out when they can't visit their boats. The pump fails and the boat sinks. If you can't visit your boat regularly, consider using a buddy system with other boat owners to watch each other's boats.

Modern boats sink for a variety of reasons, which is the point of this discussion. According to the BoatU.S. Marine Insurance claim files, for every boat that sinks underway, four boats sink in their slips. There are two reasons for this discrepancy. One reason is whenever a boat leaves the dock, someone is aboard, which leaves open the possibility that the leak will be discovered and the problem corrected before it sinks the boat. And, reason # 2, boats tend to spend a majority of their time at the dock.

#### 1. Why Boats Sink at the Dock

The handsome sportfisherman had been an impressive floating beauty when the owner left the marina on Monday afternoon, barely 13 hours earlier, which is why he was having so much trouble believing that it was his boat that was on the bottom when the call came from the marina manager. There were five bilge pumps aboard, all of which were working. How could his boat have sunk so quickly? The

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answer was traced to a cracked generator intake hose, which, according to the surveyor's report, may have been leaking steadily for weeks or even months. The bilge pumps kept the water out until the batteries (and the pumps) died and the boat filled with water.

When a boat sinks at the dock, the question most likely to be asked is: "What happened to the bilge pump?" That's the wrong question, however. By dutifully emptying the bilge periodically, a bilge pump can actually hide a problem--until the pump clogs or the battery goes dead. Water, not bilge pumps, sinks boats. The correct question should be: Where did the water come from?

### 2. Prevention: Protecting Your Boat

Visiting Your Boat is the first line of defense against a dockside sinking. At least twice a season, inspect any fittings above or below the waterline that could be letting water into the boat. All too often, skippers rely on bilge pumps to bail them out when they can't visit their boats. The pump fails and the boat sinks. If you can't visit your boat regularly, consider using a buddy system with other boat owners to watch each other's boats. Another alternative is to ask your marina manager to keep an eye on the boat. Many marinas offer routine inspections, but usually at an extra cost.

### 3. Why Boats Sink Underway

In addition to studying why boats sink at the dock, BoatU.S. Marine Insurance examined 50 claim files for boats that sank underway, ranging from a tiny personal watercraft to a 54' ocean going sailboat. None of the 50 sinking claims involved fatalities, although that is always a possibility when a boat sinks with passengers aboard. One thing that became clear after reading the various claims: wearing life jackets or at least keeping them handy, should be a priority on any boat.

Any boat has the potential to sink underway for the same reasons that it could sink at the dock--a hose slips off, a packing gland leaks, etc. While Thirty four percent of the boats in the study sank because of leaks at thru-hulls, outdrive boots, or the raw water cooling system, all of which are routinely implicated when boats sink at the dock. There are many other reasons that boats sink underway, however, which have nothing to do with loose hose clamps or broken fittings. Boats underway can strike floating debris or stray onto a rocky shoal ("Navigation error"). There were claims for careless skippers who forgot to install drain plugs. Six percent of the boats sank after coming down hard off of waves and splitting open.



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Once a boat starts to sink, it will gain momentum as it settles into the water. If a boat has a two-inch hole that is a foot below the waterline, for example, over 78 gallons of water will pour into the boat per minute. When the same hole is three feet below the surface, the flow of water increases to 136 gallons per minute. Keep in mind also, that other thru-hulls that had been above the waterline will be underwater. If any of these fittings are cracked or missing, the flow of water into the boat will accelerate further.

Why Boats Sink On Open Water	
Reason	Percentage
<u><a href="#">Taking Water Over the Gunwales:</a></u>	30%
<u><a href="#">Leaks at Thru-hulls:</a></u>	18%
<u><a href="#">Leaks at Raw water Cooling System/Exhaust:</a></u>	12%
<u><a href="#">Drain Plug Missing:</a></u>	12%
<u><a href="#">Navigation Error (Grounding):</a></u>	10%
<u><a href="#">Boat Construction (Hull Split Open):</a></u>	6%
<u><a href="#">Leaks at Outdrive Boots:</a></u>	4%
<u><a href="#">Struck Floating Debris:</a></u>	4%
<u><a href="#">Other:</a></u>	4%

#### 4. A Few Important Words About Pumps and Bilge Alarms

Tow BoatU.S. Members tell a harrowing story about a log that almost sank their boat just before nightfall. After hearing a loud “thump,” Cliff checked the bilge and continued on. Sometime later the boat seemed to be losing power and felt sluggish, so he opened the hatch and discovered water was almost over his engine. Although Cliff had checked the bilge earlier, the damaged hull didn’t fail until it had pounded over some waves. Thanks to some nearby boaters who responded to Cliff’s “Mayday” by putting extra pumps aboard, the boat was saved.

The sooner a skipper discovers a leak down below, the more likely he or she will find and correct the problem before it’s too late. High capacity bilge pumps and even extra pumps can help in an emergency. So too can using the engine’s raw water intake hose (close the seacock first) for extra pumping capacity in an emergency.



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While more and better pumps may be able to keep up with the flow of water, it is critical that you discover the leak quickly, before the electrical system, the engine, and the leak itself are underwater. A bilge alarm is a simple device that warns you when water begins rising in the bilge. This early warning gives you more time find the leak, get passengers into life vests, deploy extra pumps, and put out a distress call, Bilge alarms are available from most marine chandleries, including BoatU.S.

### 5. Navigation Lights - See and Be Seen

In 1990, the BoatU.S. Foundation evaluated running lights, judging color, intensity, and arc of illumination. Running lights, which are generally installed by manufacturers, are now Coast Guard certified for color, arc of illumination and distance. Since it has been nearly 20 years since our initial test, we wanted to take a fresh look and evaluate the visibility of a typical recreational boat's running lights at the distances for which they were rated, and we also wanted to look at LED lights, which were not available for our first test .

There is no requirement for a boat manufacturer to install running lights on modern boats, but if they do they must use US Coast Guard (USCG) certified fixtures and installed per regulations. However, it is ultimately the boat owner's responsibility for the proper display of navigation lights and owners should take note if purchasing a used boat, especially if fixtures have been moved to accommodate additions like T-tops or bow pulpits. At the end of the day, it is your responsibility to be certain your lights are positioned properly and are the proper intensity for your sized boat.

In both tests, we found that even properly installed, Coast Guard certified lights can blend with background lights from other geographic features or get lost in the myriad of other possible light sources often called "backscatter." Sometimes backscatter even reflects off the water, making it difficult to determine exactly how many lights you are seeing. Reports of these challenges, as well as complaints about glare may leave many wondering if there are easy solutions to help the average recreational boater "see and be seen."

This test did not compare manufacturer's products head-to-head. Instead, we evaluated the lights that came factory-installed on our 11-year-old center console test boat. We then replaced them with a handful of new lenses, new fixtures, and some readily available portable LED lights to see what simple modifications can be made to improve the visibility of your boat at night, and to reduce on-board glare that can affect nighttime operators.



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### 6. Navigation Light Rules

Recreational boats operating at night are required to display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise. Recent changes to the Inland Navigation Rules make them nearly identical to the International Rules, so we will describe the International Rules to simplify the choices.

#### **Basic Rules:**

1. Sidelights are red (port) and green (starboard) and shine from dead ahead to 112.5° aft on either side.
2. Stern lights are white and shine aft and 67.5° forward on each side. (Thus, the sidelights and stern light create a full circle of light.)
3. All-round lights are white and shine through 360°.
4. Masthead lights are white and shine from 112.5° on the port side through dead ahead to 112.5° on the starboard side. They must be above the sidelights.
5. Sailboats under power are considered powerboats.
6. Sidelights may be combined into a single “bicolor” light.
7. Powerboats less than 20m (65.5') in length need to show sidelights, a stern light and a masthead light. Power vessels less than 12m may show a single all-round light in lieu of the separate masthead and stern lights.
8. Sailing vessels less than 20m in length need to show sidelights and a stern light. These may be combined into a bicolor light and stern light, or a single tricolor light at the top of the mast. Sailing vessels under 7m must have an electric torch or lantern available for collision avoidance.
9. Oar-driven vessels can show either the sailboat lights, or use the electric torch/lantern option.
10. When anchored outside a special anchorage, power and sail vessels under 20m must display an all-round light. Vessels under 7m are exempt, unless anchored in a narrow channel or anchorage, or where other vessels usually navigate.
11. Sailboats with sails up during the day, but which are also under power, must fly a black “steaming cone,” with its point downward, where it can be seen. When under power they must follow the rules of the road for powerboats.



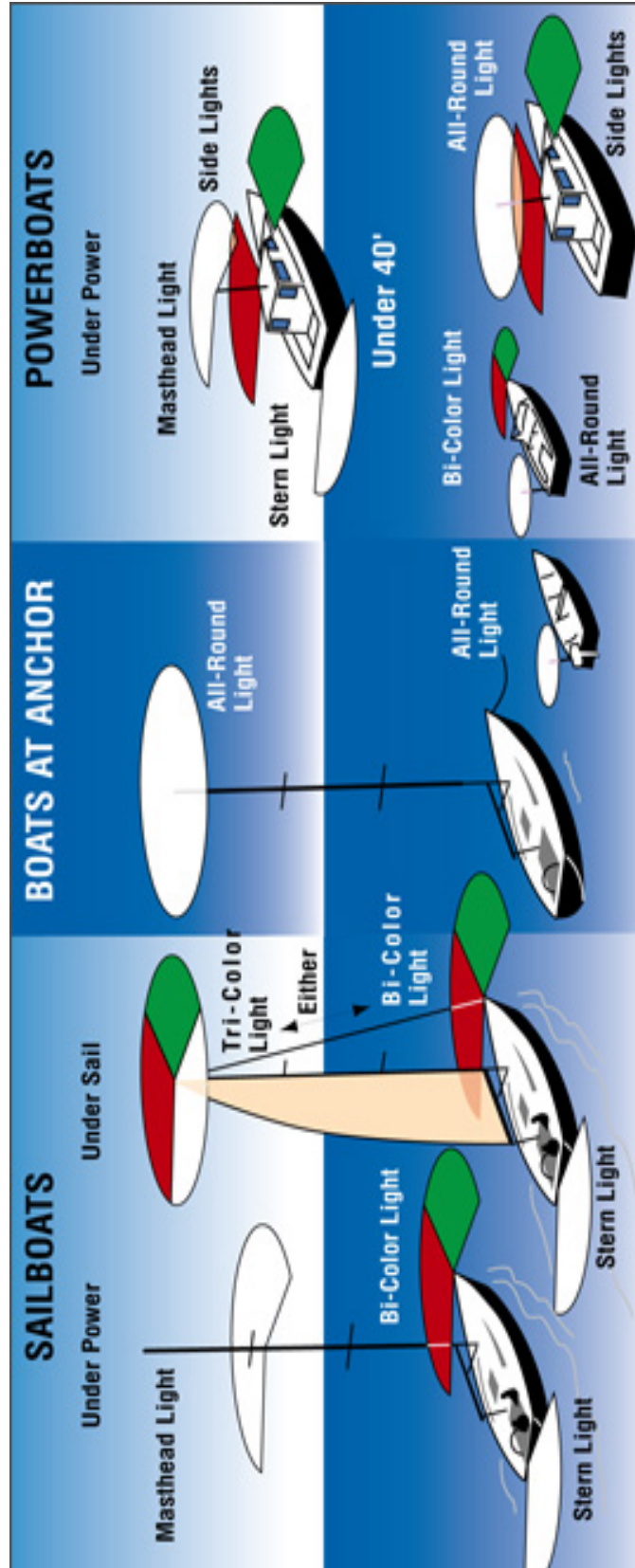


# U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

America's Volunteer Lifesavers<sup>sm</sup>

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UCSG Requirements				
Boat Length:	>16'	40'	65'	165'
Under Power	Sidelights, Stern Light, & Masthead			
Under Sail	Sidelights & Stern Light			
Rowing	Same as "Under Sail"			
At Anchor	All-Round Light (night) or Black Anchor Ball (day) when outside a designated anchorage			
Visibility Range	1nm sidelights, 2nm All others	3nm Masthead, 2nm All others	5nm Masthead, 2nm All others	

### 7. Antennas

The higher the rated gain of your antenna, the longer the range, and the narrower the beam. The transmission range, however, depends more on the height of your antenna than any other factor, including wattage. The higher the antenna, the greater its "line-of-sight". The only way to legally increase the sending and receiving power of your marine radio system is to use a longer antenna with more gain.

**Gain** is the ability of an antenna to amplify both outgoing and incoming signal power. It's a function of how much the antenna focuses the energy of the signal in a horizontal direction. When gain (measured in decibels, or dB) is increased, the normally oval radiated power pattern becomes more oblong and horizontal, reaching out further toward the horizon. Increasing gain increases your signal power geometrically: a step from 0dB to 3dB will double your signal's power, while a step from 3dB to 6dB quadruples it. Higher gain also means a more narrowly focused beam, which can cause the signal to fade in a rolling sea. The more stable your boat's platform, the less it rolls, and the higher the gain you can effectively use.

**Coaxial cable** is specially designed to transfer your radio signal to your antenna with as little power loss as possible. Use the largest 95% shielded coax that fits to reduce signal loss between the radio and antenna. PVC-coated (not plastic) cable RG-58 and RG-8X, frequently supplied with the antenna, are fine for cable runs up to 25'. For longer runs, use low-loss cables such as RG-8 or RG-213. RG-8U is not recommended for marine applications because it is foam-filled and will collect



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moisture, creating loss and quickly corroding the cable inside. Keep the cable run as short as possible and avoid sharp bends, kinks, or strains to get the most from your system.

The **ferrule** is the bottom fitting on the antenna that threads into your antenna mount. A plastic or nylon ferrule is fine on small boats for light use in calm or moderate waters. If your antenna is subject to more flexing because you cruise or fish in all types of weather, you'll need a more durable metal ferrule.

Match antenna mount and ferrule materials, that is, nylon with nylon and metal with metal. For extra strength and longer life, use stainless steel mounts or chrome-plated brass with a chromed antenna. Use silicone spray regularly on both the ferrule and the mounting threads to prevent corrosion.

*The connection between your radio and antenna is critical to your VHF system's operation.* If you must splice the cable, use proper PL-259 connectors to reduce loss. Use a silicone protectant spray or clear semiconductor heat shrink compound, and wrap them in Ancor Marine Grade - heat shrink tubing or quality vinyl electrical tape to prevent moisture intrusion, which will corrode the copper braid in the coax. Immediately seal up any nicks in the cable and antenna to keep moisture out. If you must solder, use proper soldering techniques and at least a 30-watt soldering iron and 60/40 rosin core solder. This job is not difficult, just exacting. If it's beyond your abilities or patience, hire a professional.

### **E. Life Jacket Loaner Program for Kids!**

Every parent wants to make sure his or her child is as safe as possible, and that goes double for parents who take their kids on the water. The BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety & Clean Water makes it easier for boating families to stay safe with its national life jacket loaner program. Around the country, over 350 marinas, fuel docks, BoatUS Towing Operators, Army Corp recreation sites and other waterfront businesses lend out kids' life jackets for the day or weekend to families who have a temporary need for one.

### **F. Putting "Safe" in Safe Catch**

Cape May County Herald - Petty Officer 3rd Class Jonathan Lindberg



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It. J.G. Christopher O'Meara, a boarding officer aboard the Coast Guard Cutter *Vigorous*, homeported in Cape May, N.J., talks with Julius Brothers, captain of the Bay Star III, during a boarding off the coast of NJ 3/17/2010

Cape May-- the last man climbs over the rail of the fishing boat and with a swift leap he lands with his feet firmly planted on the deck to join the other three members of his team. Dressed in orange and black survival suits, they make their presence known. They quickly get to work by talking to the crew and checking the fishing and safety gear. Each man is focusing on their part and moving throughout the creaky boat with a sense of purpose.

This is just the first of many at-sea inspections that will be conducted by the members of the Coast Guard Cutter *Vigorous'* boarding teams during their patrol. They are just one part of a bigger mission the Coast Guard is continuing to conduct along the coastlines of the central Atlantic states until April 30, 2010 in support of the cold weather fishing season. It is called Operation Safe Catch.

Operation Safe Catch has a couple different aspects to it. One is the shore side aspect which includes local safety seminars geared towards fishermen and having Coast Guard commercial fishing vessel examiners that perform dockside exams and issue vessel inspection decals. The other aspect is the at-sea law enforcement.

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The Coast Guard cutter *Vigorous*, home-ported in Cape May, N.J., and its crew is part of the operation's at-sea side and is on patrol enforcing the commercial fisheries laws and regulations and performing safety inspections of the commercial fishing fleet off the coast of New Jersey.

The at-sea boarding teams are led by a boarding officer. He or she is in charge of how the inspection is conducted as well as the safety for the other members in their team.



“The boarding officer is the one who is leading the boarding team to make sure they are directing their efforts appropriately,” says Lt. J.G. Christopher O’Meara, a crewmember aboard the *Vigorous* and a boarding officer of 18 months. “For an inspection on a fishing vessel the team has to check the fishing gear, properly identify safety hazards and the different fish species and verify their quantities.”

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These boardings act as a two-way street of information sharing. Not only is the Coast Guard team sharing information to the fishing boat crew regarding fishery law and regulation, but the fishing boat crew gives feedback on how the laws affect their fishing efforts.

“They can tell you whether or not certain policies are beneficial,” says O’Meara. “We take that information in and send it to Coast Guard commands to let them know how current policies are affecting the fishing fleet and if there is anything to consider.”

The two main purposes for conducting the at-sea boarding are the safety and stability of the fishing fleet and the protection of the living marine resources.

The safety and stability is monitored by checks the Coast Guard team makes on the fishing boat’s safety equipment including survival suits, life rafts and emergency positioning indicating radio beacons and also the importance of hull condition, maintenance of critical machinery and equipment, vessel stability, and watertight integrity.

These safety checks can be made before the fishing boat leaves the dock by a Coast Guard Commercial Fishing Vessel Examiner at no charge to the fisherman by having a voluntary, no-fault commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Exam. This exam reduces the amount of items the Coast Guard at-sea teams inspect on the fishing boat.

“When they get that dockside examination done and then we conduct the boarding, we just check the major safety things and it eliminates some of the items checked because we know they had a dockside exam completed,” says Petty Officer 1st class Stephen Miller, who has been A Boarding Officer on the *Vigorous* for 6 months. “The exams are not required but, the Coast Guard highly recommends it.”

When the dockside inspection is complete the Coast Guard inspector will issue an inspection decal showing that the vessel has completed a satisfactory vessel dockside examination and was found to be in full compliance with all applicable federal commercial fishing vessel safety regulations. The decal is valid for a period of one year from the date of issue.

“By a fisherman choosing to go through with a voluntary dockside exam and as long as the inspection decal is current we go aboard and check one or two things to verify the gear is still good,” says O’Meara. “It saves us time and saves him time but most importantly it gives him the peace of mind before he even leaves the dock his boat is in good shape.”



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In preparation for *Vigorous*' northeast fisheries patrol the command has sent some of its members to specialized training centers.

“We’ve sent four people to the northeast regional fishery training center located in Cape Cod, Mass.,” says Cmdr. Brendan McPherson, commanding officer of the *Vigorous* and a native of Bradley Beach, N.J. “That provides them with the training and experience of conducting living marine resource enforcement. That includes both checking safety equipment to examining the different species and what are the right rules and regulations.”

Since March 1, 2010 was the opening of the scallop season there is an added importance of the presence of the *Vigorous* and its crew needed to enforce fishing laws and regulations.

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“We’re seeing a lot of scallop boats out here,” says McPherson. “Our job will be to get aboard and make sure whatever fisheries they are involved in are being conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations. That helps protect that fish species so there is future opportunities for that species in the region.”

To carry out these at-sea boardings the *Vigorous* and its crew uses different resources aboard the cutter as well as Coast Guard support from land.

“We use different tools that are at our disposal including our helicopter aboard, air support from Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City, N.J., and even air support from Coast Guard Air Stations all the way north as Cape Cod and as far south as Elizabeth City, N.C.,” says McPherson.

These aircraft are used to survey the fishing areas.

“That helps us determine where the fishing fleet is and what they are fishing for,” says McPherson. “Then we will go out and come in contact with the fishermen in that area and make a determination of a boarding by need.”

McPherson says there are some factors taken into consideration to determine whether or not a fishing boat is boarded.

“It comes down to the weather conditions, what vessels you have available, when the last time they have been boarded and the likely hood there may be an issue with their safety or the fisheries that are being conducted,” says McPherson.

Another item that is one of the determining factors is the inspection decal the fishing boat may have if the captain chooses to have a Coast Guard dockside Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Exam.

“One thing we look for is if they have the vessel inspection decal,” says McPherson. “If they have the decal and it was just issued we have the assurance the vessel is safe. If I have another vessel that doesn’t have that decal I don’t have those same assurances. Given the choice between the two I’m probably going to board the vessel that doesn’t have the decal.”

These at-sea boardings and dockside inspections stress the importance of safety and how it can affect the fishing fleet.





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“Having the dockside exam and maintaining the integrity of the inspection is the most important thing that is going to preserve the fishing fleet,” says O’Meara. “The ship’s stability is one of the most important aspects of the survivability of the fishing fleet.”

O’Meara mentions how the stability of the fishing fleet impacts the fishing community.

“We have a substantial fishing fleet in Cape May and we have had losses of life this past year in the fishing industry,” says O’Meara. “I think that highlights the importance of the fishing and safety gear. It is a tight knit community and it affects everyone when you lose a shipmate.”

A reality that has to do with one of Coast Guard’s primary and oldest missions: the protection and safety of lives at sea.

The dockside and at-sea boardings are a way the Coast Guard is able to carry that mission out on the high seas and ensure the fishing fleet is safe and fishermen have resources they need to carry out their dangerous job.

“That’s what operation safe catch is about, identifying potential hazards, removing them and increasing the knowledge of the fishermen,” says McPherson.