

DATE: 22 January 2005

FROM: Weldon Faull, DSO-AN
TO: William Crouch, VCO

SUBJECT: Aids To Navigation Report

The Coast Guard Auxiliary Aids to Navigation Program in the Eighth District Coastal Region continues to make a major contribution to both commercial and recreational boating in the area while serving as an effective participant with the Coast Guard ATON Teams. A measure of the effectiveness of the programs was apparent when the National Outstanding ATON Awards for Coastal and Inland Waters were both awarded to units in the 8th District Coastal Region. Looking beyond that is the outstanding performance of units that conducted the required annual checks of the Private Aids to Navigation. The successful completion of this responsibility meant that the Regular Coast Guard did not have to divert manpower to this project.

As is apparent from the above remarks, the ATON program in the 8th Coastal Region is a very diverse operation. ATON operations are active in six of the nine Divisions of the Region. The three Divisions of limited activity have no Federal Navigable Waters in their areas. Some areas work on Inland River waters while some work mostly in the Coastal Harbor areas. Some put their emphasis on Federal Aids while others have a full job keeping track of and reporting on their Private aids. As is readily apparent each area has it's own problems and responsibilities but each area is making a major contribution to the Coast Guard and safe boating.

Turning from what we have done well to what we need to do better;

1. Better preparation for post storm operations. A review of the effects of Hurricane Ivan indicated a void that should be filled before another storm. The void was in having an experienced ATON watchstander available at the ATON Stations to facilitate communications plus an Auxiliary boat crew to run parts out to the active duty units working on the waterways. We also need to recognize that this help may have to come from outside the area due to local damage.
2. Improved mission reporting. We are still plagued with incomplete reports of ATON activity. With the diversity of our operations, proper reporting is varied and a major problem, but a necessary one. If we are to receive recognition, not for awards per se, but for the funding and training which are required by these diverse operations we must do a better job of reporting our accomplishments.
3. Chart Updates. With reduced funding being experienced by NOAA our charts are not keeping up with the local area changes. Our crews boat these waters on a regular basis and no one is more aware of the changes than us. We need to take the time to review these changes and to get the information forwarded to NOAA for incorporation in the next issue of the chart. These updates can now be reported via the internet so we need to take advantage of the new system to report these changes.

In closing we need to recognize the outstanding accomplishments over the past years. However the world moves on and new challenges and opportunities appear and we need to be adaptable and react to these new challenges. The Auxiliary Aids to Navigation teams have always met the new challenges and am certain they will do so again.