

Operation and Care of Agency Boats

Index Code: 1405

Effective Date: 04/15/09 (Revised 3/21/17)

I. Purpose

The purpose of this written directive is to establish a process for the operation, supervision, maintenance and documentation of boats owned, leased or utilized by the Office of the Sheriff.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Office of the Sheriff to patrol the waterside perimeters of property owned, leased or controlled by the County of Queen Anne's, as well as all waterways within the jurisdiction of Queen Anne's County, and assist other Counties within valid mutual aid agreements in order to provide assistance and conduct law enforcement activities.

III. Operational Objectives

Agency boats may be used to assist with special events and special investigations, respond to emergency situations requiring a police boat, for crime prevention, recover victims of drowning, deter, detect, and prevent crime and terrorism and assist other Police and Fire agencies. Agency boats may also be used for additional activities as directed by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or any division commander.

IV. Organization

A. Boat Program Coordinator

The Sheriff's Resource Unit Supervisor will serve as the Boat Program Coordinator to maintain the agency's boats, coordinate the program, and maintain overall responsibility for the following:

1. General operations of agency patrol boats and assigned personnel.
2. Maintaining administrative reports on boat operations and maintenance records.
3. Familiarization with agency boats and authorized operators.
4. Requesting equipment and supplies, through the agency Quartermaster, as needed for safe mission operations.

5. Arranging all necessary maintenance and upkeep for agency boats, motors, trailers and associated equipment as needed.

6. Assisting the Training Coordinator with obtaining and scheduling any training required for the safe and legal operation of agency boats.

7. Scheduling personnel, through their chain of command, to work the boats as needed.

B. Boat Operators

The Sheriff, or his designee, along with the Boat Program Coordinator will select Boat Operators who will be responsible for the following:

1. Loading, towing, unloading, launching and operating agency boats.

2. Making sure that the boats are kept clean and in good working order.

3. Helping the Boat Program Coordinator maintain the agency boats and associated equipment.

4. Checking all fluids (i.e. Oil, Water, and Fuel) prior to starting the boat.

5. Complete entries into the boat's operational log book.

6. Complete and forward a boat inspection report to the Boat Program Coordinator.

C. Boat Crewmembers

A Boat Crewmember is any member of the Office of the Sheriff trained to assist a Boat Operator. Boat Crewmembers are responsible for the following:

1. Assisting Boat Operators at all times.

2. Helping ensure that the boats are kept clean and in good working order.

3. Operate agency boats at the direction of the Boat Operator if the Boat Crewmember is trained

and qualified to operate said vessel. Boat Crewmembers will not operate any agency boat alone unless an extreme emergency exists (i.e. Boat Operator is incapacitated, not available, etc.).

4. Boat Crewmembers will assist with line handling when docking or undocking the vessel. Boat Crewmembers will make sure fenders are utilized and adjusted to prevent damage to agency boats, or any other boat or pier in contact with it. Fenders are not required with inflatable vessels.

V. Certification and Training

A. Boat Program Coordinator

The Boat Program Coordinator must meet the following minimum qualifications:

1. Possess a current U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Certificate.
2. Be designated as the Boat Program Coordinator by the Sheriff or his designee.
3. Be a Certified Boat Operator by attending a minimum of a 24 hour boat operator course. i.e. MDNRP Patrol Boat Operator Course or its equivalent.

B. Boat Operators

To be selected as a Boat Operator, agency personnel must:

1. Possess a current U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Certificate with any additional training approved by the agency Training Coordinator and the Boat Program Coordinator.
2. Be designated as a Boat Operator by the Sheriff, or his designee, with the recommendation of his division commander and the Boat Program Coordinator.
3. Be completely familiar with the operation of agency boats. This will be accomplished by logging a minimum of eight hours as a Crewmember under the supervision of the Boat Program Coordinator.

VI. Boat Operations

A. Each time a boat is used a Boat Inspection Report will be completed by the Boat Operator in charge. These reports will be forwarded to the Boat Program Coordinator, who will maintain the inspection reports for a minimum of three years.

B. All routine maintenance, such as adding oil, water, diesel fuel and or gasoline will be completed by the Boat Operator prior to the end of their shift.

C. Each time an agency boat is placed in service, and at the conclusion of the patrol or activity, the communications section will be notified via police radio using standard protocol.

D. An incident number will be obtained whenever any action is taken such as: towing another boat, assisting with a search of a potential drowning victim, bridge structure check, security check, criminal investigation, etc. Any completed ICIS report will be forwarded to the deputy's supervisor via the ICIS Reporting System.

E. A boat will only be placed into service when there is sufficient manpower for the shift working, unless an emergency arises and is approved by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Boat Program Coordinator or a division commander.

F. A minimum of two deputies will be on an agency boat when it is involved in a scheduled operation. There can be a single operator without crew in the event of an emergency or for maintenance. When two Boat Operators are on board the boat, the ranking Operator will be in charge. Rank will have no bearing regarding the operation of the boat when the Boat Operator is accompanied by a higher ranking deputy who is not a Boat Operator.

G. All U.S. Coast Guard and Maryland Laws will be adhered to at all times.

H. The safety of persons on board, as well as other boaters and swimmers in patrol areas, will be closely observed. Basic boating safety principles will be followed at all times. In an emergency, the boat may be operated above maximum posted speeds.

I. Agency boats will not be utilized when severe storms, known icing conditions, dense fog, or hazardous inclement weather exists, unless an extreme emergency exists, or it is approved by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy or a division commander.

J. No unauthorized passengers are permitted on board an agency boat. Any person taken on board must wear an approved personal flotation device (PFD) and be seated at all times. Prisoners taken on board the boat will be handcuffed, wear an approved PFD, and be seated on the deck in the forward bow area. Two or more deputies will be on board when a prisoner is transported.

K. The patrol boat will render assistance to any small craft using the following guidelines: When encountering a disabled, stranded, or grounded boat, the Boat Operator will determine if the boat has the means to make necessary arrangements to be towed. If not, the operator of said boat will be advised that our Boat Operator will notify the U. S. Coast Guard, and a Marine Assistance Request Broadcast (M.A.R.B.) will be requested for a U.S.C.G. Licensed Marine Tower to respond and assist. All requests for Marine Towers will be made through the Coast Guard. Our vessel will stand by if needed until the arrival of the Marine Tower.

Towing by an agency boat is only to be done if the other watercraft is in a hazardous location or is creating a danger to themselves or other vessels (i.e. seas, weather conditions, poor visibility, etc.). When towing, the condition of the towline, the towed vessel and its occupants will be monitored at all times. Towing or escorting shall be to the nearest place of safety only.

L. Hazards to navigation will be reported to the Construction and Maintenance Division of the United States Coast Guard (410-576-2693). Debris that must be moved by the patrol boat will be towed to a safe location and appropriate arrangements made for its removal.

M. Deputies on boat patrol will be alert for pollution on waterways. If detected, contact will be made with the United States Coast Guard for a complete report, investigation and determination of the source and substance if necessary. Precautions will be taken to insure the safety of life and property that may be endangered by flammables, toxic chemicals or other pollutants. When requested, the boat crew will place, or assist in placing, a boom around the affected area.

N. After the completion of assignment or patrol, the boat will be secured at an approved location or placed on the trailer and towed to the Sheriff's Office or authorized storage facility. The boat will be cleaned and ready for service at the end of each shift. The boat will always have sufficient fuel for the next shift. If prior to the end of the shift the fuel gauge shows a reading of ½ tank or less, it will be fueled before docking.

O. When in operation, patrol boats will monitor the VHF marine radio channel 16 as well as the Sheriff's Office talk group at all times.

P. The patrol boat's basic function will be to patrol all waterways, the shoreline, property owned, leased, operated or under the control of the County of Queen Anne's to assist authorities as requested and to assist in investigations that may require waterside surveillance.

Q. The patrol boats will respond to any distress signals and assist other boaters and or other agencies that request assistance within their designated patrol area. Vessels may respond to neighboring waterways if mutual aid is requested

R. All boating accidents involving death, injury or loss of property that are observed or reported to the Office of the Sheriff will be referred to the Natural Resources Police. The observing deputy will provide any and all crucial witness information to the responding units. Manpower and weather conditions will be considered before responding to any incident.

S. Agency boats are not equipped to drag for persons feared drowned. However, the unit is equipped with side scan sonar and may assist with recovery operations when requested.

VII. Authorized Uniform

A. The agency authorized utility uniform will be worn by deputies while on board the boat, unless circumstances or time constraints exist which prevents the opportunity to change. The utility uniform will consist of agency issued polo shirt, BDU type trousers with black boots, or black utility type shoes appropriate for boat operations and capable of being polished.

B. An agency authorized baseball type cap, black in color, may be worn as part of the uniform.

C. Sunglasses may be worn, and are highly recommended, for the protection of the eyes from sun and wind conditions.

D. Agency authorized personal floatation devices (PFD) will be worn as part of the uniform when riding in or operating an agency boat.

VIII. Mandatory Equipment

The Sheriff will designate what kind of boat or boats will be utilized by agency personnel, with recommendations from the Boat Program Coordinator. The Boat Program Commander will maintain all records of the boats, motors, and trailers, as well as other authorized equipment. The boats will be equipped with all U.S. Coast guard required and or recommended equipment. The following is a list of required or recommended equipment currently used to comply with U.S. Coast Guard Regulations.

- One Coast Guard approved PFD of proper size for each person on board
- One Type IV (Throw) PFD
- One single B2 fire extinguisher or two B1 fire extinguishers
- One Approved Audible Warning Device
- Emergency lights, siren and horn
- An approved emergency flare kit
- Navigation lights
- Electric bilge pump
- VHF marine radio and antenna
- GPS
- Depth finder
- Marker buoys
- Electronic Compass
- Current Nautical Charts
- Boat hook
- Anchor and 100 foot rope
- Tow and tie down ropes
- First aid bag
- Disposable rescue blanket
- Oar
- Bucket

IX. Preventive Maintenance

A. Trailer

1. Daily Pre-Patrol Check

a. Visually inspect the trailer for any loose, missing, bent or broken parts, as well as proper tire pressure.

b. Check trailer lights for proper function and condition.

c. Check to ensure that the hitch connection is secure.

d. Once in movement check to ensure that the wheels are turning freely and that the brakes have not locked up the wheels.

2. Weekly Check

a. Check rollers (if installed) for cracking and wearing.

b. Check the entire trailer for loose bolts.

c. Check condition and inflation level of all tires including the spare.

d. Check winch cable for fraying.

3. Monthly Check

a. If the trailer has not been used, rotate the wheels and check wheel bearings for grease. Grease should be injected to keep water out of the bearings. Sufficient quantity of grease is indicated when it starts to squeeze out of the hub

b. Inspect the trailer for rust and wear on parts.

B. Boat

1. Daily Pre-Patrol Check

a. Visually inspect the exterior of the boat for any chips, cracks milling parts and general cleanliness.

b. Visually inspect the interior for chips, cracks, loose bolts or screws, and the general cleanliness.

c. Check all radios and communications equipment

d. Check the operation of the bilge pump and pump out any water in the boat

e. . Ensure that battery connections are tight

f. Check all lights for proper operation and condition.

g. Check steering for proper operation, fluid level and condition of cables.

h. Check fluid levels by observing gauges for levels or warning lights.

- i. Check mandatory equipment for presence and condition.
- j. Check “kill switch” and lanyard. The lanyard is to be attached to the boat operator while the vessel is underway.

CALEA Reference: None
Proponent Unit: Support Services
Cancellation: Directive dated 5/5/09

Any discrepancies in the above must be reported to the Boat Program Coordinator PRIOR to operation of the boat.

Sheriff Gary Hofmann

X. Starting the Engine

- A. Trim the engine fully down.
- B. Turn ignition switch on and check operation of gauges, lights and alarm horn test signal, depending on the year of the engine.
- C. Place the engine control in the neutral position with Quick Start.
- D. Once the engine is running check for outboard water discharge from the engine.

XI. Operating Range

- A. Cruising speed is up to 4200 RPM.
- B. Speed will also be dictated by sea and weather conditions.
- C. The engine should be trimmed up slightly when operating at cruising speeds.

XII. Alarm Signals

A. Overheating Alarm – there are two types of overheating alarm systems; beeps or constant alarm tone.

1. If the overheating alarm sounds, and/or the indicator light comes on, place the throttle in neutral and quickly check the overboard discharge. If no water is coming from the discharge area immediately shut the engine off. Trim the engine up and check for blockage of the intake area. After ensuring that the intake area is clear, trim the engine down and restart the engine. If no alarm system activates continue use and frequently check engine gauges and the overboard discharge. If the alarm system activates DISCONTINUE THE USE OF THE ENGINE IMMEDIATELY and notify the Boat Program Coordinator who will schedule the necessary repairs.