Want To Try Something New?

Then check out the Prevention Department! Formerly known as the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Department, the Prevention mission is to plan and administer Auxiliary programs to support the needs and activities of the Coast Guard Prevention and Response Departments, which are part of the Coast Guard Operations Directorate.

In Auxiliary language, “prevention” is usually associated with Recreational Boating Safety programs and activities, which are designed to help “prevent” recreational boating mishaps, injuries and fatalities. In marine safety and environmental protection, the word “prevention” is used to mean all the different activities conducted (including outreach) to help prevent marine casualties and environmental damage due to human activity; this form of “prevention” applies to both marine and freshwater environments.

So how does the Auxiliary support the Prevention mission? What types of activities are available to members? Basically, there are three categories of activities that we are authorized to engage in: 1) public outreach, 2) member training and activities, and 3) Sector augmentation as needed and requested by the Sectors. The specific activities that we may participate in will be discussed under the basic categories of Prevention programs.

In order for a member to augment at a Sector – and we serve two Sectors: LA/LB and San Diego – he/she must apply to the Flotilla Commander using the District form, available on the District website under “Forms”. That request is then forwarded up the Chain of Leadership for consideration; the member will be interviewed through the Director’s office if there is a need and position available. Once the member is approved, he or she may then receive a letter from the Sector stating that they have been approved to augment at the Sector, and in what capacity.

Presently, Sector LA/LB offers an augmentation opportunity through the MDA Academy (Marine Domain Awareness); the Academy is the equivalent of a week-long training to become an MDA Inspector for Sector LA/LB. It is only open to Auxiliarists who are members of Flotillas within the Sector LA/LB AOR (Area of Responsibility), and carries the expectation that trained members will conduct at least one MDA foot patrol per week in their assigned area.

What kinds of general activities support the Prevention mission? Think “Soup to Nuts”? We can provide support for marine environmental response in both salt and freshwater locales, assist with port safety and security inspections or commercial vessel safety/security inspections and examinations, container inspections and MISLE support (Maritime Information for Safety and Law Enforcement). Or members might be assisting one of the Regional Exam Centers with mariner licensing/documentation reviews and evaluations, assisting with waterways management and navigation systems, training Active Duty, Auxiliary or the general public in any of the Sea Partners programs, America’s Waterway Watch, or other environmental issues. Any outreach we perform through our PA, PE, PV or
VE programs can – and should – include discussion and provision of information on all aspects of Prevention; there is a lot of material that supports many kinds of outreach activities beyond our standard PE courses!

Now – what are the divisions within Prevention where we might find opportunities to participate in activities? There are five separate divisions within Prevention, each with their own sets of goals and activities.

**The Navigation Systems Division** is responsible for the location and maintenance of aids to navigation (ATONS), private aids to navigation (PATONS), the bridge administration program, and chart updating. These are all areas where Auxiliarists may receive training through their Flotillas, Divisions or Districts and then perform annual reviews and updates. This is a tremendous force multiplier for the USCG that then frees up Active Duty personnel to do some of the jobs that are not open to Auxiliarists.

**The Port and Facilities Activity Division** is responsible for container inspections, marine safety-oriented MOM patrols and regional exam center support. Again, training is available for container inspection assistance and regional exam center support. We receive orders for MOM patrols from the Ops Center of the Sector in which we patrol; these are Marine Observation Missions, and may be conducted on the coast as well as on inland lakes and rivers. As Auxiliarists, we “observe” and report back to the Ops center on what we see as we patrol, looking for suspicious activity or objects, pollution or other dangers to navigation.

**Commercial Vessel Activity Division** is responsible for both inspected and uninspected vessels; inspected vessels include both foreign and domestic vessels as defined in the US Code and Code of Federal Regulations. Auxiliarists may receive training to assist with inspections of these types of vessels, but will not lead an inspection, since we may not engage in law enforcement activities – inspections are required for these vessels, and may result in various types of law enforcement activities which restrict the vessel and/or its cargo in some way.

Uninspected vessels include passenger vessels, tow vessels and commercial fishing vessels; currently, Auxiliarists may receive training to conduct the voluntary examinations of these vessels, and file their report with the appropriate Sector Inspections Division. They are not taking any law enforcement action, but simply reporting what is found. If there are deficiencies, they must be corrected, or the USCG may take legal action to assure the safety of the vessel, its crew and any passengers. We have a new Uninspected Passenger Vessel Exam program being promoted nationwide, and part of the program is devoted to outreach to identify UPV enterprises, both along the coast, and on inland waters to ensure compliance with SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea). This is a big area where trained Auxiliarists can be a great force multiplier for the Coast Guard.

**The Prevention Outreach Division** includes both the Sea Partners and America’s Waterway Watch programs, which Auxiliarists may present to Active Duty, Auxiliary members and the general public. Members who wish to participate in outreach activities should hold the
Instructor Qualification, and then have been trained or be familiar with both programs. America’s Waterway Watch covers marine domain awareness, and has its own materials for both training and handing out. The Sea Partners programs include topics like pollution, aquatic nuisance species, beach clean-ups, marine mammal protection and other environmental protection and education activities. These may be presented as stand-alone topics at all kinds of venues, including PA, PE, PV and VE events or grouped together at a topic-specific event or venue. There are materials to hand out, displays that can be set up, and interactive activities that can be part of any outreach event. If a member wishes to concentrate on the Sea Partners program, there is usually an annual Sea Partners Conference which offers training to one or two members from each District; applications are sent out a few months in advance, and the DSO-MS should be notified of the interest due to a waiting list of applicants.

The Communication and Education Division is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the national website, which is the main source of Prevention information for Auxiliarists, and for the Trident Program, which is the main Prevention training program. The division also maintains any additional information such as the Grants Assistance and Special Projects sections.

OK – I’m interested – how do I get trained? What do I need to know? The Prevention training program is called the Trident Program, and includes three parts, not all of which are required to participate in Prevention programs and activities. If a member is interested in earning the Trident Pin, then the entire program is required, but if someone is interested only in working with America’s Waterway Watch, for example, then they would need only the background education and a knowledge of the AWW program.

The first part of the Trident Program is the education component – you need to know something about marine safety and environmental protection if you want to assist in Prevention missions professionally and responsibly. There are two online courses available to members through the national Prevention website (pdept.cgaux.org); the first one is called IMSEP (Introduction to Marine Safety and Environmental Protection) – it counts as two points toward the Auxiliary AUXOP designation and is the equivalent of the US Coast Guard 12 week Marine Science Technician Rating training. The exam is available online and does not require a proctor. This is the basic MS/MEP training, and should be taken by any member interested in working in Prevention. The second course, Good Mate, is available in the same location, also with an online exam. It deals with clean boating and clean marina information.

ICS 100, 200, 210, 700 and 800 are also required – just as they are for participation in the Auxiliary Operations program as Crew or Coxswain.

Once these courses have been completed, a member may apply for the Marine Safety Training Ribbon by either contacting the DSO-MS to request the application, or downloading it from the District webpage for Marine Safety. A copy of each course completion certificate
must accompany the application, which is sent to the DSO-MS for review and signature. Once the Director has also signed the application, a certificate and the Ribbon are awarded.

The second part of the Trident Program involves additional OJT (On-the-Job training) with a mentor. There are 27 Personal Qualification Standards (PQSs) available to fulfill the Trident Pin requirement to earn four (the list can be found on the national Prevention Department webpages); two of these (Marine Safety Admin and Management, and Outreach Specialist) are Auxiliary-only, which means they may only be signed off by an Auxiliary Verifying Officer who holds that particular qualification. Not all PQSs are offered within a District – only those PQSs that are useful to the Sectors within the District will be available to the members. If a member is not interested in earning the Trident Pin, but wishes to work only with the Regional Exam Center or only in the Outreach programs, they do not need to earn four PQSs – they may take training in only that area which interests them. Many areas open to Auxiliarists in Prevention do not require any additional training beyond the basic education courses.

The PQSs are like the Crew Program – there is study material available, there are sign-offs to be done with a mentor (called a Verifying Officer) who already holds the qualification, there may be prerequisites to be completed, and there is an oral board exam once all else has been completed.

Then, regardless of whether the member wishes to earn the Trident Pin, the whole point of the education and training is for the member to provide service in their areas of interest. Anyone working to earn the Pin must provide five (5) years of service, to include a minimum of 96 hours per year.

If a member is working toward the Trident Pin, once the education courses, four PQSs and five years of service have been completed, they may apply for the Trident Pin by requesting the application from the DSO-MS and submitting it with all required paperwork.

Both the Marine Safety Training Ribbon and the Trident Pin are recognized as representative of significant time and effort, as well as interest and commitment, by the members who wear them proudly.

All service in Prevention is highly valued – whether the member is working to earn the Trident Pin or not. This is now a five-year career path in the US Coast Guard, so the Auxiliary assistance is becoming increasingly important as a force multiplier. Staff Officer positions at any level are another way to serve by helping to promote and manage the Prevention programs. Those of us involved in Prevention programs find it very satisfying, and have a lot of fun as well. There are activities available to everyone, regardless of age or physical capability, and the opportunities for learning and working with others to promote marine safety and environmental protection are limited only by your desire and imagination! So come join the fun – meet others and learn something new!