



Press Release

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PUBLIC IS INVITED TO BE A PART OF THE SHIELD OF FREEDOM:

**Coast Guard Auxiliary reminds those work live, work or play on the water
to use America's Waterway Watch Program**

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**"It's like neighborhood watch on the water"
Program has toll free number (1-877-24-WATCH)
to report suspicious activities and help prevent Terrorist Activities
on our waterways**

SACRAMENTO – One the eve of the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, and with a continued threat of a terrorist attack on our shores, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is enlisting the assistance of America's 80 million boaters and others, who work, play or live around our bays, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas for its *America's Waterway Watch* program, designed to help keep America safe and secure.

The program, commonly referred to as AWW, is a concept similar to the neighborhood watch program. "It's like neighborhood watch on the water," according to Mary Larsen, Chief- America's Waterway Watch Division for the Auxiliary's Marine Safety department.

With over 95,000 miles of shoreline and over 290,000 square miles of water, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and its parent organization – the United States Coast Guard can't be everywhere at once. They need all the eyes and ears of those who frequent our waterways.

The main objective of America's Waterway Watch program is to prevent acts of terrorism and other illegal activity by having members of the commercial and recreational boating industries, as well as the boating public, recognize and report suspicious activities that may be indicators of potential terrorism.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary urges Waterway Watch participants to **never** take action themselves, other than placing a call to the toll free number, or by taking photographs at a safe distance. All they are asking is that you keep your eyes and ears open.

According to Larsen, "We're appealing to those who live, work or boat on our waterways; they know the difference between what's normal and what's out of place."

Larson urges boaters to report anything that they think is abnormal or just doesn't look right. Furthermore, she urges them to take notes and let the National Response Center know the "who what when and where" regarding the observation. "If it makes you go 'hmmmmm', report it."

The sorts of details that will be helpful include a description of the individuals, the vessel or vehicle involved and what sort of unusual activity was taking place. Boaters and other water enthusiasts are asked to simply pass that information along using the 1-877-24-WATCH number.

The program has a central phone number, 1-877-24-WATCH (1-877-249-2824), where the public can report suspicious activities. This information goes to the Coast Guard's National Response Center, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Some examples of what the Auxiliary is asking the public to be on the lookout for include, but are not limited to the following:

- Suspicious persons conducting unusual activities - things that are out of the ordinary
- Unknown persons photographing, videotaping, or making sketches of commercial ports and infrastructures.
- Unknown or suspicious persons loitering around vessels and ports for extended periods
- Unknown vendors attempting to sell or deliver merchandise around waterfront areas
- Vessels anchored around bridges and dams, or fishing/diving in an area not typically used for fishing/diving
- Recovering or tossing items into/onto the waterway or shoreline
- Unusual transfer of personnel or items while vessel is moving

Furthermore, the Auxiliary is advising that if anyone observes a situation which is perceived to be an immediate danger, they should contact local authorities by dialing 911, or contact the U.S. Coast Guard on Channel 16 of their VHF-FM radio.

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NOTE: For additional information on America's Waterway Watch program, visit www.americaswaterwaywatch.org/

Remember - to be a survivor - WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!!!

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is composed of uniformed volunteers who assist the Coast Guard in all of its varied missions, except for military and direct law enforcement. These men and women can be found performing a variety of missions - on the nation's waterways, in the air, in classrooms and on the dock, performing Maritime Domain Awareness patrols, safety patrols, vessel safety checks and public education.

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary was founded in 1939 by an Act of Congress as the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and re-designated as the Auxiliary in 1941. Over 27,000 members donate millions of hours annually in support of Coast Guard missions.

For more information on the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, visit us at www.cgaux.org or www.axupa.org .