

Aviators – the Coast Guard Auxiliary Needs You!

By Wayne Spivak, ADSO-CS 1SR
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

Sailors (power and sail) and their younger brethren, Aviators, share many common attributes. Terminology, navigation, reliance on weather and weather forecasting, all makes the boater and the aviator part of the same circle of adventurers.

It is that sense of exploration, of the pilot against the elements, skill against the unknown that drive many to take their vessels and planes into un-charted (or unfamiliar) territory. It is because of this desire, that pilots and boaters have many of the same skills. We both share the skills of celestial navigation and dead reckoning. We also must learn to understand the environment and weather. For our lives depend on both these skills

Since the dawn of civilization, when man first ventured out into the uncharted seas, danger lurked. When man first took to the sky, danger was a constant companion. Centuries (decades) later, these same dangers still lurk on every air flight and boat trip. Aviators and Sailors share the desire to be out or in the great blue, whether it's the great blue sea or the great blue sky.

The United States Coast Guard has long been involved with aviation. Back in 1915, the Coast Guard used a Curtiss flying boat as the test bed of whether aviation was practical for search and rescue. Today it's obvious that those first tests have developed (after some trials and tribulations) into one of the major components of the Search and Rescue mission of the Coast Guard.

As aviation as both a sport and an industry grew, members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary privately, on their own, began to learn how to fly. These private pilots then volunteered their services to the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary, just as their brethren volunteered their boats and their boating skills. According the recorded Coast Guard history, Auxiliary pilots first flew during 1943, in the midst of World War II. The first official mention of Auxiliary aviation is when Congress passed Public Law 451, in September 1945, permitting aircraft to be used by the Auxiliary.

Today, there are approximately 38,000 Auxiliarists nationwide. In the Auxiliary's First Southern (1SR) District (southern New York State, northern New Jersey, southern Connecticut and Vermont) there are approximately 90 participating Auxiliarists in the Aviation program.

Currently there are 24 Aircraft (20 single-engine and 4 multi-engines) that have been accepted for service with the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. Another twelve aircraft are awaiting final inspections and qualifications for acceptance into the program.

Last year Aviators in the 1SR flew 279 missions for a total of almost 1000 flight hours and 4500 mission hours. This year, to date, they have flown 113 missions, and boating season has yet to begin.

Here is the list of missions that Auxiliarists Aviators normally fly:

- **SAR Mission** - Search And Rescue call out or the air equivalent to a vessel safety patrol. During a SAR mission, aircraft fly pre-determined search patterns based on complex algorithms. These algorithms are based on last known or assumed position, wind, current, and type of vessel that is missing.
- **Enforcement of Laws and Treaties** - Air support of a Coast Guard mission to monitor major fishing areas.
- **MEP Mission** - Air support in the area of Marine Environmental Protection. Missions include support of locating and estimating sizes of oil slicks, and other environmental accidents.
- **Ice Operations Mission** - Air support in the area of ice patrol operations. Aircraft search for and report blockages by ice of major ports and rivers.
- **Logistics Mission** - Transportation of personnel and equipment. Auxiliarists transport individuals for all types of Coast Guard support and humanitarian support.
- **Training Mission** - Training missions involving air operations, and coordination with land and surface vessels to hone those skills needed to support the aims and missions of the United States Coast Guard.

Auxiliary Pilots and Crews are, during an emergency call-out, available to lift off from their airfields on short notice on weekdays, and during boating season (weekends), are normally either in the air or at the airfield ready to fly. These men and women, like their boating counter-parts, volunteer their time and energy, and in many an instance their aircraft to assist the Coast Guard.

The Aviation Branch of the United States Coast Guard **is not** just for pilots! Any Auxiliary member can join the Aviation Branch and any US Citizen can join the Auxiliary (see below). While, the Coast Guard Auxiliary does not train pilots, it does train Observers and Air Crew.

US Coast Guard Auxiliary Aircrew Capabilities:

- *Aircraft Commanders* – Pilots with more than 1000 flight hours, an instrument rating, and checked out in SAR procedures. FAA medical certification required.
- *First Pilots* – Pilots with more than 500 flight hours, and checked out in SAR procedures. FAA medical certification required.
- *Co-Pilots* – Pilots with more than 200 flight hours. May only fly Ice Patrols, MEP patrols and logistics. FAA medical certification required.

- *Observers* – Auxiliarists trained in observation, communications, and the aviation program. Either pilots or observers are required as added crew on operational missions. No medical required.
- *AirCrew* – An upgrade for Observers who successfully complete additional training. Training elements consists of communication, navigation, weather, and flight planning. FAA or personal physician medical certification required.

Membership in the US Coast Guard Auxiliary:

Membership is open to men and women, 17 years or older, who are US citizens. Members cut across all socio-cultural and age boundaries, as well as military lines. The Auxiliary, which is the civilian, volunteer, uniformed branch of Team Coast Guard, boasts both current active duty and former members of all the uniformed services and their Reserve components, including the Coast Guard. *You do not have to have any previous military training or affiliation to join!* Facility (radio station, boat or aircraft) ownership is desirable but not mandatory.

For more information about the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary or Coast Guard Auxiliary Aviation, contact your local Coast Guard (Air) Station, or look for us on the web at <http://www.cgaux.org> or <http://www.uscg.mil>.