

# Second Quarter Game Plan for Public Affairs Officers

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Spring is just around the corner, and has in fact, sprung in some parts of the country!

And with its arrival comes the busiest time of the year for Public Affairs Officers. We have so many “key” events that take place during the second calendar quarter, such as National Safe Boating Week (20-26 May) and VSC Mega Month (lasting from 20 May all the way through 9 July), you could say this is kind of like The World Series, The Super Bowl, The Stanley Cup, and the NBA Finals all rolled into one! Its exciting, isn't it?

Hopefully this article will give you a game plan from which to operate during this fun, yet hectic time of year.

## EVERY WEEK IS NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK

A few years ago while planning for NSBW, I had the pleasure to meet with VADM Terry Cross, then D11 and PAC AREA Commanding Officer (currently serving as the Vice Commandant for the USCG).. He was concerned that with all the emphasis on Homeland Security that our RBS program, including, NSBW, would suffer. His proposed solution: **“Every week should be treated as if it were National Safe Boating Week. There are too many needless deaths that most likely could have been prevented.”** If that statement doesn't motivate you, I'm not sure what will!

Are you ready for NSBW? If not, better get started **TODAY!** Here are some things you can use as a checklist to make sure you're putting your best effort into NSBW 2006:

- Have you ordered your supplies necessary for whatever you are planning for NSBW (VSCs, Safety Booths, etc)? Remember lead time for certain items can be up to 2 months. We've said it before, but we'll say it again (if necessity is the mother of invention, repetition is the mother of skill). Staples should include things like federal regulations, and **Join the Auxiliary** brochures. But don't forget unique items, such as the **Adventures of Captain Clearwater**, and **Inky the Whale**, available from the MSO. Anything for the kids that can help spread the boating safety message is invaluable.

Check the ANSC 2006 Materials Catalog (available for download at [http://www.cgaux.info/g\\_ocx/publications/misc/dcatjan-06.pdf](http://www.cgaux.info/g_ocx/publications/misc/dcatjan-06.pdf) ) to see what ANSC has to offer in terms of materials you can use for NSBW and other PA activities.

Also, check with your State Boating Law Administrators, and insurance companies, as they often have give away items; generally all you have to do to get some of these items is ask.

Lastly, the BoatU.S. Foundation also offers a number of brochures that can be ordered free of charge. Visit <http://www.boatus.com/foundation/brochure/default.htm> for details.

- A reminder: this year there will be no NSBW kit coming in the mail from the National Safe Boating Council. **Everything that you received in your kit previously, as well as everything you will need to run a campaign will be on the web site.** Go to [www.safeboatingcampaign.org](http://www.safeboatingcampaign.org) and check out their site. Here you can order your campaign materials, fill out an evaluation form, download and print safe boating week proclamations, USCG statistics, posters, graphics, logos, activity sheets, certificates and many more exciting resources. There will also be all of the media items that you will need to run a targeted press effort such as radio PSAs, television PSAs, press releases, print graphics and story ideas.

- There are FREE materials available on a first come-first served basis from the National Safe Boating Council's web site, and once they're gone, they're gone! This year the online resources are expected to be extensive and include all sorts of neat things that can be printed out, including a number of activities that can be conducted during NSBW. These activities are reorganized and revamped to go along with the NSBW slogan: **WEAR IT!** There is a fantastic *media guide* on web site (see <http://www.art4use.com/06campaign/06-campaign/web-content/mediaguide.htm> ), which is not only a great mini-introductory course for you new PAOs; it gives you some great ideas if you haven't already started planning events. **Study this material!!! Even if you use only half of the material on their web site, you will have a fantastic NSBW!** **AGAIN,** go to [www.safeboatingcampaign.org](http://www.safeboatingcampaign.org), and you can download all the material.
- **PROCLAMATIONS:** On the web site, there are proclamation documents. Available for download at <http://www.art4use.com/06campaign/06-campaign/web-content/proclamations/proclamation.doc> these make great PA events, where politicians sign the proclamations and give them to an Auxiliary representative. The media is usually present and asks questions about NSBW, safe boating, etc.
- Don't forget **Coastie** and **PFD Panda!** Get the kids involved and the parents will follow. These are great tools to engage kids of all ages on the topic of boating safety.
- Ideally, plan something for every day of NSBW week, not just the weekend. Offering some of our one lesson PE classes at one of boating safety partner's stores is a great idea for weeknight activities. And remember, anything involving kids usually gets the media's attention. So holding a Boating Safety Class for children is likely to be a winner, with or without media coverage!
- A previous article entitled **First Quarter Game Plan for Public Affairs Officers** contained a whole host of other ideas for making your NSBW campaign a success. Check it out for more ideas!

## TWO MAGIC WORDS IN ATTRACTING THE MEDIA

Although it may be difficult to compete for media coverage during these times we live in today, we should still do our best to get the word out on safety. And remember, The Coast Guard Auxiliary has been asked by the USCG to emphasize HOMELAND SECURITY concerns alongside our boating safety messages. My experience is you mention those two words HOMELAND SECURITY and the media will come running. **Make sure you exercise caution in commenting on homeland security issue though.** The media often wants more than we can (and should) give them. LCDR Jeff Carter, Chief – Media Relations, described the situation as: “Staying in your own lane. If you do it, you can talk about it. **Never speculate** or inject personal opinion. **Never, never**, comment on CG Operations or activities, or potential terrorist threats, no matter how tempting.”

The times that we live in require that we recognize the tighter safety and security measures in place for the current and foreseeable future boating seasons. Auxiliarists as well as recreational boaters have a number of new roles to perform as a result. Auxiliarists can assist the Coast Guard by emphasizing the following items that Recreational Boaters can do to help keep America's Homeland Safe:

1. Keep your distance from all military, cruise line, or commercial vessels. Do NOT approach within 100 yards, and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Navy vessels. Violators face 6 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, not to mention being the recipient of potentially deadly force as a response;

2. Observe but avoid all safety and security zones; Check with your Sector or COTP to find the safety and security zones in your AOR.
3. Avoid commercial port operation areas whenever possible;
4. Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel;
5. Keep a sharp lookout for anything that looks out of the ordinary based on your experience of the area;
6. Always secure and lock your boat when not onboard;
7. When storing your boat, make sure it is secure and its engine is disabled to a would-be thief; and
8. Make sure your vessel is safe and meets all federal safety requirements as well as those discussed as part of a Vessel Safety Check.

In addition to local authorities, emphasize the America's Waterway Watch (AWW) Program, which encourages boaters to report any and all suspicious or unusual activities to the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802 or 1-877-24-WATCH. This center is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Things recreational boaters should report to local law enforcement (or the National Response Center) include but are not limited to the following:

1. Persons conducting "unusual" activities for the area, or loitering in an area for no apparent reason.
2. Persons establishing roadside stands near marinas or waterfronts facilities; and
3. Unknown or suspicious behaving persons photographing or creating diagrams.
4. People fishing and/or scuba diving in areas not normally frequented by fishermen and scuba divers.

Visit <http://www.americaswaterwaywatch.org/> and scroll to the bottom of the home page, where you'll find links to other valuable resources you can use in getting the word out on AWW.

I used the above material in a press release previously, and within two hours of sending it out, I was being interviewed by 4 TV stations, the largest local talk radio station in the area, and two newspapers. I also tied the discussion back to the NSBC's WEAR IT slogan. **BONUS!**

### **AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST...**

Take advantage of the ideas promulgated by the **YOU'RE IN COMMAND program**, which has four simple truths: (1) wearing life jackets saves lives; (2) boater education saves lives (a major tie-in to our PE classes); (3) safe boats saves lives (a major tie-in to VSC mega-Month); and (4) sober boating saves lives.

The **YOU'RE IN COMMAND** program is literally a game plan, in and of itself. Visit <http://www.uscgboating.org/command/initiative.htm> for details and resources. Again, each of these items can be the subject of a lecture, press release, etc. **YOU'RE IN COMMAND** also encourages partnering with other agencies sharing a similar purpose, which for us would include the U.S. Power Squadrons, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State and Local Law Enforcement/Fire/Rescue agencies, etc. These relationships can and should be used for not only NSBW, but VSC Mega-Month as well.

And don't forget to get your Marine Dealers involved, in both NSBW and VSC Mega-Month. In my AOR, the local West Marine manager has agreed to have the Auxiliary and USPS hold lectures in his store during the week of NSBW. Yet another example of synergy! Marine Dealers are also often willing to sponsor VSC stations in their parking lot for the upcoming VSC mega-month, and many of the major retailers offer a discount to those boaters who have had a VSC.

## PA MISCELLANY

While my comments above are directed principally at NSBW and to a certain degree, VSC mega-month, there are other events that need attention during this period, including:

- Assisting the local recruiting office by handing out recruiting literature at our PA Exhibits. Also check with the Academy partner's Program to see if they need assistance with getting the word out about the Coast Guard Academy's summer programs.
- Earth day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>): consider getting involved in a river or beach clean-up program. The USCG Sea partners program would also make an excellent presentation. For more ideas on what you can do, visit <http://www.riversalive.org/organize.htm> . For more information on national rivers clean-up week, visit <http://www.americaoutdoors.org/nrcw/natao10.htm>
- The ever ongoing need to recruit new members to the Auxiliary. (I believe the P department is planning for a recruiting Blitz in April and again in July). Keep an eye on <http://www.auxpdept.org/> for more details.

***To sum up the second quarter, it boils down to this:*** Its going to take a lot of time and energy! But it also can be a lot of fun and immensely satisfying. If you have not already done so, develop a team and come up with a game plan to get our messages out to as many people as possible.

We all have a common goal- to make the public's boating experience a safe and enjoyable one!  
**NOW IS OUR TIME TO SHINE** - Let's get out there and do it!