



Press Release

November 9, 2007

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COAST GUARD AUXILIARY DISCUSSES HOW TO BE A “GOOD MATE” TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Mylar balloons, other plastics are a major threat to wildlife

LOS ANGELES - A Coast Guard Auxiliary boat on patrol just off the coast of southern California responded to what appeared to be distress signal mirror last month only to discover it was a Mylar balloon, the type used for birthdays and other good wishes. But in this case, it diverted limited assets of the Coast Guard for naught.

Mylar balloons because of their reflective tendencies can be mistaken for a distress signal and cause rescuers to waste valuable resources investigating the source of what from several miles away can appear to be a distress signaling mirror.

Balloons in general are a particular nuisance because when exposed floating in seawater deteriorate much slower than those exposed in air, and even after 12 months of exposure still retained their elasticity. So remember with balloons - What goes up must come down! Balloons return to the land and sea where they can be mistaken for prey and eaten by animals. Balloons are hazards when they enter the aquatic environment because they can look a great deal like jellyfish—a major source of food for many animals. Sea turtles, dolphins, whales, fish, and seabirds have been reported with balloons in their stomachs. It is believed that they mistake balloons for jellyfish which are their natural prey.

Balloons, are not the only marine environmental nuisance. Most plastics and other debris are a danger to the marine environment because they persist for extremely long periods of time, for example Mylar balloons (centuries), derelict fishing gear (centuries), plastic bags (centuries), cigarette butts (2 – 10 years), monofilament (600 years), plastic bottles (450 years), 6-pack holder (400 years), aluminum cans (200 – 500 years), and Styrofoam buoy (80 years)

Many people and organizations are recognizing the importance of being “green.” The Coast Guard Auxiliary is no exception. Protecting the marine environment has long been one of the Coast Guard, Active Duty and Auxiliary’s, primary missions, and they are once again stepping up their outreach efforts to alert the public to the dangers of plastics in the marine environment. “The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary reminds boaters and the general public that marine debris is everyone’s concern and everyone’s problem,” said Pacific Area Commodore Lois Conrado.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE MARINE DEBRIS


The Coast Guard Auxiliary recommends the following practices that everyone can take to reduce plastics in the marine environment. :

- Never intentionally discard any item into the marine environment. In fact, make it a practice of following the Plus One” program, where you bring all your trash back ashore, plus at least one other piece of trash you find during your journey.
- Tie loose items down, secure it, stow it
- Secure all plastic wrap and packaging – make sure they don’t blow overboard
- Practice the Three Rs - Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle
- Properly dispose of trash and fishing gear so that birds and other marine life don’t become entangled in it.
- Participate in, or better yet – organize a coastal cleanup programs in your community
- Buy recycled products with little or no packaging
- Keep cigarette butts off streets and beaches
- Cut the rings in plastic six pack holders
- Set a good example and educate others about marine debris.

Under federal law, it is illegal for any vessel to discharge plastics or garbage containing plastics into any waters. Additional restrictions on dumping non-plastic waste are outlined below. Regional, state or local laws may place further restrictions on the disposal of garbage. ALL discharge of garbage is prohibited in the Great Lakes or their connecting or tributary waters. Each knowing violation of these requirements may result in a fine of up to \$500,000 and 6 years imprisonment.

Save Our Seas

The discharge of all garbage into the ocean or navigable waters of the United States is prohibited under MARPOL 73/78. A person who knowingly violates MARPOL 73/78 commits a Class D felony punishable by imprisonment up to six years and a fine up to \$250,000 for an individual, or up to \$500,000 for an organization.



LAKES, RIVERS, BAYS, SOUNDS, and 0-3 MILES FROM SHORE	ILLEGAL TO DUMP	Plastic Rags Glass	Food Metal Crockery	Dunnage Lining & Packing Materials That Float
3-12 MILES	ILLEGAL TO DUMP	Plastic Rags Glass	Food* Metal* Crockery*	Dunnage Lining & Packing Materials That Float
12-25 MILES	ILLEGAL TO DUMP	Plastic		Dunnage Lining & Packing Materials That Float
25 MILES OR MORE	ILLEGAL TO DUMP	Plastic		*unless ground smaller than one inch

We support this law. Please do your part while on board.
—YOUR CAPTAIN

Item 715021

PLACARDS ARE REQUIRED BY LAW for any boat 26 feet or more in length.

<http://www.boatus.com/foundation/cleanwater/images/save-our-seas.jpg>

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 30,000 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.auxpa.org .