Developing An Auxiliary Contingency Plan

This guide is intended to help Auxiliarists prepare an Auxiliary contingency plan at the District, Division or Flotilla level.

The Purpose of an Auxiliary Contingency Plan.

Ideally, a Sector’s contingency plan, an Incident Action Plan, or an Area Contingency Plan would identify and delineate the ways in which the Auxiliary could assist in response to a public emergency or other major incident. As a practical matter, however, most such documents are likely to make only limited mention of the Auxiliary, or none at all.

The development of an Auxiliary contingency plan therefore serves three purposes:

1) It suggests to the Coast Guard’s Planning and Force Readiness Department and other planning agencies some possible roles for the Auxiliary;

2) It provides a separate document, addressed specifically to Auxiliarists, explaining the roles they may be called on to play, without their having to be aware of an entire ACP or Sector contingency plan;

3) It also defines the training required for the Auxiliary to perform the expected tasks safely and effectively.

Sample Auxiliary Contingency Plans

Two sample Auxiliary contingency plans are available for download on this web site, one from District 1 Southern Region, the other from District 11 Northern Region. Although not intended to be comprehensive, each suggests numerous activities that the Auxiliary may play in response to an emergency.

Building the Auxiliary Contingency Plan, Step by Step

1) Consider what introductory material should be included.

As illustrated by the two sample plans, the introductory material may include a statement of the plan’s purpose (as discussed above), the relationship of the contingency plan to other documents, and the geographic area covered.

2) Specify the initial actions to be taken regardless of the nature of the emergency or scenario.

As illustrated by these two samples, an Auxiliary contingency plan should specify the initial actions that Auxiliarists should take regardless of the nature of the emergency.
The most important step is likely to be securing the safety and well being of themselves and their families. Other actions may be contacting the member’s Flotilla Commander, or assembling at a staging area.

The Auxiliary plan should also point out actions that should not be taken, such as calling the Sector Command Center to offer services.

3) Communicate with Coast Guard Planners

In response to an emergency or contingency, Auxiliarists will not be acting independently, but only as requested by the Coast Guard. It is important, therefore, that Auxiliary planners communicate with Coast Guard planners, both to understand what roles have already been defined for the Auxiliary, and to suggest other roles that the Auxiliary might play.

This communication may take place between the Sector’s Planning and Force Readiness Department (or comparable unit) and the Auxiliary Sector Coordinator, or (more commonly) through a committee established for this purpose.

4) Organize the discussion of roles the Auxiliary may play.

When the activities that Auxiliarists may engage in have been decided, they can be discussed under various scenarios, or by type of activity, as illustrated in the two sample plans. The activities listed will be only those agreed to by Coast Guard planners, or implied by more general statements in Coast Guard plans.

Auxiliary Activities, by Type of Activity

As illustrated in the sample plans, some of these activities can be discussed by type. One approach in deciding which activities to include is to ask Coast Guard planners a series of questions, as below, that suggest the possibilities.

Wellness Check. In some situations, will the Coast Guard want the Auxiliary to conduct a “wellness check” to account for the safety and well-being of its members? If so, how will the check be made? Through an automated system (such as Everbridge) or through a branched telephone calling system? Will email groups or land-mobile contacts be used?

Situation Assessment. Can Auxiliarists assist in situation assessment, through deployment of land-mobile operators or air facilities?

Emergency Communications. If Coast Guard communication facilities are damaged or disrupted (for example, by fire, flood, hurricane or earthquake), can Auxiliary communication facilities be called on to assist?
**Backfill.** Can qualified Auxiliarists be used as “backfill” in such capacities as communication watchstanders to free active duty members for other service?

**Search-and-Rescue Operations.** If there are search-and-rescue operations required and there are Auxiliary surface facilities under way, will they be diverted to assist?

**Persons in the Water.** If there are persons in the water (after a bridge collapse, for example), will Auxiliary surface facilities be asked to assist in their recovery?

**Safety Zone Enforcement.** If a safety zone is established, can Auxiliary surface facilities assist in enforcing it?

**Staffing of Incident Command Post.** Can Auxiliarists be used to help carry out certain functions in the Incident Command Post, such as handling telephone for the Information Office?

**Auxiliary Activities, by Type of Incident.**

In other incidents, or in the plan as a whole, the list of activities may be organized by type of incident or scenario. Some possible questions of this type are as follows:

**Oil Spill.** After an oil spill, may interpreters be needed if a foreign vessel is involved (as in the *Cosco Busan* case)? If so, is it clear how the needed interpreters will be identified and called upon? Will Auxiliarists be asked to perform Commercial Fishing Vessel Exams to insure the safety of fishing vessels volunteering to lay oil containment booms (as in the same case)?

**Hurricane or Major Flooding.** Can Auxiliarists help verify the position and proper functioning of aids to navigation (as after Hurricanes Ida and Katrina)?

**Closure of the Port.** In the event of a closure of the port, can Auxiliarists assist in getting the word out by contacting marinas, launch ramps and yacht clubs?

**Bridge Collapse or Closure.** If the incident involves the collapse or closure of a bridge, can Auxiliary surface facilities be used to provide personnel transport for active duty members?

**Hazardous Material Handling.** If the incident involves hazardous material handling, can Auxiliarists who have received the appropriate training and certification be used to assist in cleanup?

**Training Implications.**

Once roles for the Auxiliary have been identified and agreed on, the implications for training and force readiness should be identified. The training may include general
ICS training, specialized ICS courses, activity-specific training (such as communication watchstander qualification, boat crew qualification, or HAZMAT qualification), or other specialized training.

**Validating and Exercising the Plan.**

When the plan is completed and approved, drills and exercises should be held to validate it, identify any weaknesses, and evaluate the Auxiliary’s force readiness.