



Float Plans: Key to Your Survival



Frank R Lucca,
Flotilla 8-4
Vice Commander
Somerset, MA
with additional content by
Wayne Spivak,
USCGAUX National
Press Corps

I don't know about you, but whenever I leave the house, I let my wife know where I'm going and when I expect to get back. She, in turn does the same...usually.

Even if just rushing to the convenience store for milk, we take the time to let others know where we are. However, how many boaters take the time to be sure that others know where they are and when they expect to return?

The Coast Guard is adept at search and rescue (SAR) and the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary spend countless hours practicing those skills. But we are more interested in preventing the recreational boating public from getting into a situation where a search and rescue is needed!

The Coast Guard and the Auxiliary recommend that all boaters develop the good habit of completing a float plan before leaving the dock. A float plan will help the Coast Guard know who you are, where to look for you and when you plan to return.

A float plan is a simple form that lists all of the information about your vessel. A float plan asks the following types of questions: The vessels name, type, propulsion, types of electronics (radio and navigation), safety and survival equipment, the crew, (who are they, where do they live, etc.) and finally the vessels itinerary.

The float plan should be given to those folks who are expecting you at each stop. If the whole family isn't going, you can leave the information with a spouse or other family member who will be expecting you. If your immediate family is on the boat you can give the float plan to a neighbor, marina staff, or to a friend. You should instruct them when it would be appropriate to call authorities. You should notify those folks should your plans change so that an unnecessary search isn't started.

The float plan will provide most of the information that will be needed by the Coast Guard or local law enforcement to start a SAR mission. Without a float plan, a SAR mission is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary has made that as easy as click and print. We developed **Float Plan Central** at <http://www.uscgaux.org/~floatplan>.

There you will find a float plan in PDF format that allows you to fill in your information on-line, so that it's easy to read. All you need to do then it to print up the correct number of copies.

Float Plan Central also provides additional information to the boating public, including a Boating Emergency Guide™. It also provides you with a section called *Tales of the Plan*, which features real life stories of people who have used float plans, and how in many cases it has saved the day, if not saved lives.

If you would like additional information on float plans or the USCG Auxiliary, please visit our local website at <http://a0130804.uscgaux.info>.

See you on the water.