

SUDDENLY IN COMMAND



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with additional content
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Too often we hear stories of situations that could have easily been remedied with a little preparation and thought. I have met many boaters out there who may be familiar with how to drive a boat, but leave the dock with other family members who have no idea nor any desire to know how to run the boat. I'm not sure if it is the macho thing that many men feel that would have them think that they are invincible and that nothing could ever go wrong on their vessel during a trip but it is critically important that each and every passenger on the vessel know what they can do should an emergency arise..

We've probably all heard the stories of a boater who had a medical emergency. Some of these incidents end well but many others end in a disaster that could have been averted. Each time you leave the dock, there must be someone else on that vessel that knows 1) how to use a marine radio, and 2) how to run the boat if they are "Suddenly in Command". Too often only the skipper knows how to start and run the boat. Better if everyone aboard can start and run it. If the skipper is incapacitated or falls overboard disaster is sure to follow.

In the event of a situation, make sure everyone knows how the radio works! Everyone should be told how to contact the Coast Guard. Let your guests and crew know that if they can't raise the Coast Guard, try to raise anyone else on VHF channel 16. Be sure they know how to turn the radio on (power it up); How to transmit and to remember that they need to RELEASE the microphone button so the Coast Guard can communicate with them. Simple suggestions, but most would be amazed to learn how many times these simple things can't be performed by passengers on the boat.

Make sure they understand and are ready with the type of information that the Coast Guard will request. What is your location? What is the emergency? What type of boat are you in or how can they identify the boat? How many persons are on board?

The Coast Guard recommends that you show everyone what steps to take in an emergency as a matter of 'smart' boating. I heartily agree. It could save your life or mine!

Better yet, insist that each family member take a safe boating class. Classes are offered by the US Power Squadrons and the USCG Auxiliary. The Somerset Flotilla of the USCG Auxiliary holds an 8 week Boating Skills and Seamanship course during the winter months and we are hoping to hold one day America's Boating Course (ABC) classes during the fall of 2008. These courses will give your loved ones (or even you) a good overview of what every boater needs to know to be safer on the water. Over the many years that I have instructed these courses, I have seen a number of families take the

course together. What a great way to spend some quality time with the family and to assure the others on your boat might better know what to do should something unexpected happen to you.

For more information about safe boating and safe boating courses please visit our local website at <http://a0130804.uscgaux.info>.

See you on the water.