



Gene M. Seibert, National Commodore

SUBJECT:

Regional Exam Center Support

Auxiliarists Needed to Help Regional Exam Centers with Surge Operations!

During my last quarterly briefing with Admiral Collins (then Commandant of the Coast Guard) and subsequently confirmed by Admiral Allen, Commandant of the Coast Guard, we have identified a ***critical USCG need for Auxiliary support*** around the new requirement that all Merchant Mariners present themselves to the Coast Guard for ID verification and fingerprinting.

MTSA Requirements:

An interim rule, which is part of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA), went into effect Jan. 13 and requires nearly all Merchant Mariners to present themselves to the Coast Guard for ID verification and fingerprinting. Every one of more than 35,000 Merchant Mariners must now be fingerprinted and have their documents verified by the USCG Regional Examination Centers (REC). Needless to say, this is a Herculean task.

The Commandant and the USCG's senior leadership assign this operation the highest importance I heartily concur with their assessment.

This interim rule has resulted in an increase of approximately 40 percent in walk-in traffic at the Coast Guard's 17 Regional Examination Centers (RECs) and has over-burdened the staffs with processing of these additional required documents.

RECs Need Our Help:

Since the RECs are not adequately staffed to process these applications, delays have occurred, which has given rise to voluminous complaints from mariners, maritime industries and Congress.

The Commandant and the USCG's senior leadership assign this operation the highest importance and consider it essential in maintaining the safety and security of our ports and waterways. I heartily concur with their assessment.

The overall objective of this new requirement is to assure that Maritime America remains safe and secure. This rule was created in response to the possibility that a future terrorist attack could come from the sea. This is a realistic possibility, especially when you consider 95 percent of our nation's commerce is conducted via our oceans, bays, rivers, and lakes.

Therefore, I am asking you to consider this as another opportunity for the Auxiliary membership to make a needed and appreciated contribution towards direct support of the Coast Guard. This "surge operation" will likely run for 12 to 18 months and it is of the utmost importance to the USCG Homeland Security Mission.

Opportunities to Serve

There are two primary service opportunities for the Auxiliary to provide direct support to the RECs.

1. The first is to serve on-site at each REC, where trained and qualified Auxiliarists would take over the fingerprinting and document verification tasks, under the direct supervision of their designated REC supervisor.
2. The second opportunity involves providing these same fingerprinting and document verification tasks, but providing them at a remote location, such as at a Coast Guard installation (Station or Sector). This service is especially important in those areas of the country where there are licensed mariners who are not within easy traveling distance of one of the 17 RECs.

There may be additional opportunities to serve at your local REC. Check with your district REC Coordinator for details.

Fingerprinters and Document Verifiers Wanted:

Essential to the success of this operation is the involvement of each District Commodore and DIRAUX. Our DCOs and DIRAUXs must be actively involved and provide full support for this program. These leaders have access to the talent pool of (already trained) fingerprinters and these fingerprinters already have the necessary equipment. In addition, DCOs and DIRAUXs may be called upon to assist in the issuance of orders to Auxiliarists and guidance to the RECs in working with the Auxiliary

The success of this program will depend directly upon the quality, dedication and dependability of the members recruited and assigned to lead and participate in this operation.

National Campaign Planned:

To assist the districts and the Auxiliary REC Coordinators in identifying the best candidates for meeting their needs, a National Auxiliary media campaign is planned. By utilizing the talents of all Auxiliary departments and by marshalling and focusing our resources towards this common objective, we will rapidly put this operation into action.

The USCG, under the leadership of Captain Ernie Fink, Commanding Officer of the National Maritime Center is preparing and “fast-tracking” the approval of our training program for Auxiliarists participating in this operation. This fast-action is being directly supported by RDML Craig Bone.

Auxiliary Training:

Some special training will be required of Auxiliary participants. Many of you have already have received qualification in fingerprinting and document examination as part of the PSI operation. Those with this training will be able to leverage these skills as part of the REC surge operation’s qualifications. You who are already trained are a natural source of talent to meet this new need, especially since the demand for PSI processing is decreasing.

How to Participate:

I have asked each District Commodore to appoint district REC Coordinators and many have already done so. Each Auxiliary REC Coordinator will identify the specific needs within their local RECs and then enlist and coordinate Auxiliary volunteers for this surge operation. Please work through your chain of leadership and management to connect with your Auxiliary REC coordinator and get plugged into the needs of your local REC and to get involved in the training opportunities as they become available.

Once again our support is needed to meeting this critically important mission. Once again I thank you for your willingness to serve.

Semper Paratus



National Commodore