

## Chief's Message, Fall 2009

D/C \_\_\_\_\_ , members of D/ \_\_\_\_\_ , Bridge, fellow members, & guests:

I/we (if with wife) bring you greetings from your many friends in the United States Power Squadrons. I/We am/are most pleased to be with you today.

As always, we encourage you to take advantage of any type of forum to ask questions you feel are important. For questions I cannot respond to, I will follow-up with answers to your D/C.

Most of our Chief's Representatives are from your local area this fall. This was purely an economic determination by the Chief. Everyone was hit by the temporary economic downturn and these current assignments were made with that in mind. The Chief's Reps are here with you by choice.

As mentioned in the Chief's Christmas email message last year, we are attempting to move from a dues dependent organization to a combination of market and dues revenue.

The Chief, with the assistance of the National Educational Officer, V/C Bob Sweet, SN, and the ANEO, R/C Herman Green, SN, would like to take a few moments to explain where and how your Board of Directors would envision our future and that of the greatest boating organization in these United States.

Boater education has long been our core contribution to boating, and the primary means by which we have recruited and retained members.

Obviously, the future of our boating organization is closely tied to the success of our educational program.

We have totally revamped our courses adding new subjects, added 18 seminars, and developed Boat Operator Certification under our new umbrella, USPS University.

However, with fewer members and fewer instructors, it is difficult to deliver all of

these programs as consistently as boaters would like to receive them. Fewer members, especially fewer new members, means less demand for our member courses.

While we might be holding our own, that is not enough to rebuild our base. Here's how we feel that may be done.

We need to consider that boaters today want to learn in different ways.

**First**, they want more hands-on training. How do we accomplish that need?

- 1.) We are doing that as part of our Boater Certification Program and by our latest Seminars such as "Advanced Powerboat Handling".
- 2.) We are aggressively adding on-the-water training, aided in part by a grant from the Coast Guard.
  - a. The Coast Guard and National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NSBC) see on-the-water training as a critical need.
- 3.) Why now?
  - a. First time boaters are likely to be in their forties or older lacking the years of experience working their way up from smaller boats. Younger boaters also need to learn properly from the outset rather than experiencing trial and error training with all the attendant risks.
- 4.) We have taken the proper steps and are working our way around the districts training on-the-water trainers. USPS is well positioned with a base of squadrons located wherever people boat. On-the-water training is necessarily inefficient since an instructor can handle only a few students at a time.

- 5.) USPS is taking a unique approach. That is, we spend considerable time in the classroom helping boaters understand why their boats do what they do and how to control them. This helps them visualize what will happen on the water and speeds their training when they do get to the helm. This classroom time also allows us to move from a larger class to small groups on the water.
  
- 6.) Now that we have proper insurance, we are positioned to take the lead in on-the-water and hands-on training. That's where our squadrons need to be.

**Second**, today's boaters want to learn by new methods. The old-fashioned manual, overheads, and chalkboard approach doesn't meet their needs. We've progressed to professional quality books and manuals, PowerPoint and animations.

- 1.) That is necessary, but not sufficient, since many boaters want to:
  - a. learn online,
  - b. on their computers,
  - c. at home,
  - d. on the road, or
  - e. at their own pace.
  
- 2.) So, our traditional courseware must expand to utilize these new methods. While we will never abandon the classroom, that classroom may become more of an extension of the online, home-study experience.
  
- 3.) Recreational boating is one of the areas that interest many potential students.

**Third**, where we teach is changing somewhat as well.

- 1.) Local colleges and universities see the value to continuing education as a means to utilize their facilities. As a result, they are looking for new materials and methods.
- 2.) Recreational boating is one of the areas that interest many of them.
- 3.) USPS has the opportunity to reach out and teach using their facilities and taking advantage of their ability to promote and attract students. For their classroom courses, they need content (us) and in most cases instructors (our squadrons). However, we must be able to commit to be there.
- 4.) These colleges and universities, and internet sites are looking for online content to service the distance learning customers.

As a result, we are reaching out to those organizations that have invested heavily in the technology to deliver these programs to provide an outlet for our educational products.

For example, we have our **Seamanship** Course and a number of seminars available online at the University of West Florida. Members and the public who might not have access to one of our classes can take our programs, get our materials, and gain credit. We will be reaching out to more organizations and approaches

**Fourth**, what does all of this mean to our squadrons?

- 1.) First, we need to acknowledge that change is difficult but essential.
  - a. Our squadrons are the foundation of USPS. They need members to function.
- 2.) Historically, new members came from the public boating courses.
  - a. No more. Today, millions take the boating course online, mostly

state-sponsored. Over hundred thousand or so take it in a classroom, many just wanting to get their ticket punched.

- b. It's time for us to deliver what we can do best – local training for what boaters cannot get from an online course.

**Fifth**, we must find ways to increase the direct connection between boaters and our squadrons.

- 1.) For example, we require those taking our online or home-study America's Boating Course to come to a squadron for state-specific information and the examination.
- 2.) The question then becomes has the time come for USPS to allow squadrons to instruct our courses to the public.
- 3.) Teaching to the public will increase the flow of students to the squadrons. Anecdotal data indicates the non-members taking our courses lead to a high probability of them becoming members.
- 4.) The seminars were developed as a vehicle of attracting boaters (and members) into a wide range of venues that can support a single 2-hour session.
  - a. USPS, that is our Squadron and its members, needs to reach out to the boating public and use methods that attract them to us.
- 5.) Our educational program is our "ace in the hole". It's the best available and one of our principal tools to attract boaters to get to know us.

**Sixth**, during these soft times, while fewer new boaters are entering the market, it is imperative that we attract **experienced** boaters to USPS [**read my lips, experienced Boaters**]

- 1.) Over 70% of those have not taken a public boating course – **that's over 40 million boaters—that is our market.**
  - a. Let's teach them what they need to know and
  - b. The way they want to learn, and
  - c. While bringing only quality boaters into organization.

- 2.) We have positioned ***America's Boating Course*** as the premier public program which can be taken however the boater wants:
  - a. the classroom,
  - b. the Internet,
  - c. at home, or
  - d. a combination.

**Conclusion:**

In his Spring Message, the Chief suggested that:

- 1.) Our educational sales would increase;
- 2.) Our investment income would return,
- 3.) Our economy and employment would improve, perhaps not to the level of 4-5 years ago but better than yesterday or last week.

Each has occurred.

*Our people handled this economic downturn in style and we still exist, as strong as or stronger than ever and, as dedicated as ever, simply because of who you are and what we are.*

Our fraternal functions are as important if not so as ever before. Why would anyone join any organization where the people do not enjoy themselves and have fun. Make sure every person attending your Squadron activities enjoy themselves. If they do, you will also. Fun and enjoyment are contagious.

On a personal note, this will be my last message as Chief before the February 2010 Change of Watch. What an opportunity you gave to Glenda and me to represent you and our Organization. Thank you so very much.

God Bless you, our organization and these United States of America.

Regards,

Creighton Maynard

**["Boating is fun...we'll show you how®"](#)**