

SEC Del Bay/D5NR Towing and Salvage Policy Guidance

- Ref (a) http://cgweb2.comdt.uscg.mil/CGDirectives/CIM/CIM_16130_2E.pdf CG SAR Addendum
(b) http://www.uscg.mil/directives/cim/16000-16999/CIM_16798_3E.pdf CG Aux Ops Policy

Sometimes this policy is best left a little vague and open to interpretation since every case is different. We do not want to totally eliminate the Coxswain's on scene ability to make the call. However, with that said; when an Auxiliarist is under orders from OPCOM, they are working for the Sector or the local CG Station in their OP Area. Sector/Station Policy is to be followed. 5NR does not write local Operational Policy.

Quoted from the CG Addendum to the National SAR Supplement (NSS), Ref (a).

"Cases Discovered By Auxiliary Facility. When an Auxiliary vessel on routine safety patrol or otherwise on orders discovers a vessel requesting assistance, but not in radio contact with the Coast Guard, the Auxiliarist will relay the request for assistance to the Coast Guard operational commander and may undertake to provide assistance, if capable. If a tow is undertaken, the Auxiliary vessel is required to notify the operational commander of the identity of the vessel, the location of the vessel, and the destination to which the vessel is being towed. No Auxiliary vessel may undertake the tow of another vessel unless the Auxiliarist is reasonably assured of the safety of both vessels and the persons onboard. If the Auxiliary vessel cannot safely tow a disabled vessel that is standing into danger, it may endeavor to remove the persons from the threatened vessel and stand by until a more capable resource arrives on scene."

From the Aux Operations Policy Manual, Ref (b).

Auxiliarists on orders and operating an Auxiliary facility must follow the Coast Guard's Maritime SAR Assistance Policy. The U.S. Coast Guard Addendum to the United States National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS) to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR), COMDTINST M16130.2 (series), Chapter 4 sets forth policy and procedures for handling requests for any type of SAR assistance.

So let's break this down some more by possible scenarios:

Auxiliarist not on orders, "off duty" so to speak: Acts as a good Samaritan and does not need to notify or seek any CG permission.

Auxiliarist under orders: A different ball game. They work for the Sector or the Station and should always communicate their intentions via any available means, Cell phone, VHF, etc...

Cases discovered by the Auxiliary are a particularly sensitive section of the SAR policy. How the situation is dealt with is the end product of

sustained negotiations and compromise efforts on the part of all concerned parties. It intends that the Auxiliarist, not the SMC, will make the judgment as to whether the Auxiliarist can safely assist.

When the Auxiliarist notifies the SMC that they intend to assist the vessel, it's not "asking for permission". The Auxiliarist has already determined that he/she can safely provide assistance, and the notification to the SMC is a courtesy. This policy does not reduce the operational commander's authority and responsibility to exercise command and control over all assigned forces, including Auxiliary vessels on ordered patrols. The operational commander may override the Auxiliarists decision if warranted by an evaluation of the circumstances. However, unless there is a specific reason to do so, such as an indication of unusual risk or hazard, or an operational need to assign the Auxiliary vessel to a higher priority mission, the decision to assist should be left to the Auxiliarist.

With all that said: This is a very sensitive subject in areas where there is commercial towing services available. In ALL cases where there is the possibility of rendering assistance by towing in a "Non Distress" situation, it must be dealt with delicately so as to "not interfere with" commercial assistance. When in doubt, prior to taking a vessel in tow, contact the Sector Delaware Bay Operations Center (OPCEN) at 215-271-4944. If it is a distress situation or could deteriorate into a distress situation, act to render assistance and follow up with notification as soon as practical to the Sector OPCEN. This could mean towing a vessel out of harm's way to a safe area, having them anchor, and then standing by while commercial assistance is rendered.

Additional policy questions or concerns? Contact me, your OTO at:

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267-975-6454 (c)

SECTOR Delaware Bay OPCEN: 215-271-4944 (24 hours)