

Standard Operating Procedures Manual
City of Poquoson Fire and Rescue



**City of Poquoson
Fire and Rescue**

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS

SOP#: SO 10.00

Title: Boat Operations

Effective Date: 06/01/2009

Revised Date: 08/12/2016


Fire Chief's Signature


City Manager's Signature

BOAT OPERATIONS

I. PURPOSE

To establish standard procedures for the operation of the Poquoson Fire/Rescue Department Boat(s).

This SOP is not all-inclusive and cannot encompass all situations that may be encountered.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

The PFD boat(s) will be used for water-related emergencies within the city limits and the continuous inland and coastal waters.

They may also be responded to incidents requiring the Regional Marine Incident Response Team (MIRT) to support the Virginia Port Authority, and responded to assist other regional municipalities.

III. QUALIFICATIONS

The following criteria must be met to become a Crew Member:

- Complete an approved Virginia Safe Boating Class.
- Must complete and pass swim test listed in the City of Poquoson Fire/ Rescue Maritime Operator Task Book.
- Complete City of Poquoson Fire/Rescue Maritime Operations Task Book.
- Satisfactorily complete daytime operations scenarios as detailed in the City of Poquoson Fire/Rescue Maritime Operations Task Book.
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- Must obtain Shipboard Firefighter Certification or equivalent.
- Must be signed off and released by an existing boat captain and marine division supervisor.
- MUST attend and complete all assigned training.

The following qualifications and/or requirements must be met and/or obtained to become a Boat Captain for Poquoson Fire/Rescue:

- Must be released as a crew member
- Must have recommendation from two released boat captains and concurrence from the Fire Chief
- Must have Officer I
- Must be an existing pump operator.
- Must have MIRT symposium certification or equivalent.
- Must satisfactorily complete night operations scenarios as Boat Captain.
- Must satisfactorily complete daytime operations scenarios as Boat Captain.
- MUST attend and complete all assigned training.

The following qualifications and/or requirements must be met and/or obtained to become an Airboat Operator for Poquoson Fire/Rescue:

- Must be a boat operator
- Must have recommendation from two released boat captains and concurrence from the Fire Chief

- Must attend the Airboat Operators Course
- Effective January 1, 2017, all operators must conduct 10 additional hours of training under the supervision of a lead operator before being released as a lead operator

The following criteria must be met in order to maintain your status as a Boat Captain:

- Must complete 20 hrs of general boat training annually.
- Must also complete 20 hrs of training while under way annually.
- Must attend the S.A.R conference or equivalent once every two years.

IV. OPERATIONAL CHECKS

- Operational readiness checks of trailered boat(s) and the tow vehicle shall be conducted each shift. Both boat(s) and the tow vehicle shall be checked daily for all assigned equipment. Boat(s) will be operated for a minimum of 30 minutes per shift each month. After each monthly check, launch boat(s) shall be thoroughly rinsed and the engine shall be flushed with fresh water for no less than 5 minutes. This will be the responsibility of the assigned Boat Captain and his crew members on duty for the day.
- Any Department boat(s) moored in the water shall be checked daily for all assigned equipment, fluid levels checked, and appropriate vessel log entries made. All engines, pumps, and generators will be operated for a minimum of 30 minutes per shift cycle, except during extreme weather conditions in which boat(s) will be operated for a minimum of 1 hour per shift cycle. Boat(s) will be washed and rinsed after each run. This activity will be the responsibility of the Boat Captain and the assigned crew for the day.
- Preparation checks shall be completed as soon as possible at the beginning of each shift, and findings documented in the daily

check off. This activity will be the responsibility of the Boat Captain assigned to the boat for that day.

V. DISPATCH AND RESPONSE

- All boats shall respond with a minimum of 2 personnel. Minimum personnel staffing for operations shall be as follows:
 - Maintenance and Fueling Operations: Captain of the Boat (COB), 1 crew
 - Training Operations: COB, 1 crew
 - Search and Rescue Operations: COB, 1 crew(Airboat COB 2 Crew)
 - Fire Suppression Operations: COB, 2 crew
 - Dive Operations: COB, 2 crew
 - Regional MIRT Emergency Response: MIRT certified COB, 2 MIRT certified crew
 - All in water stand-by activities: COB , 1 crew

Note: The Battalion Chief, Company Officer, Officer in Charge, or the COB may supersede maximum staffing as the incident dictates.

- The COB shall be responsible for all decisions involving operational safety and is authorized by law to abort any incident where safety of personnel may be jeopardized.
- While onboard Fire Department boat(s), all personnel shall wear personal flotation devices (PFDs), and shall monitor the VHF/FM Marine Band radio and a departmental radio on all incidents.
- If receiving a phone call at the station requesting the launch of PFD boat(s), the following information must be obtained:
 - Location and type of incident
 - Name of person calling

- Phone number of person calling
- VHF channel vessel is monitoring
- Number of people on the boat or in the water
- Boat registration numbers and description of the vessel
- Longitude and Latitude of the incident, if available

V-2 AIRBOAT RESPONSE/OPERATIONS

The Airboat is a unique tool specially designed for shallow water operations. There are some special factors that need to be kept in mind while operating the vessel.

- **OUR TOP PRIORITY IS TO OPERATE WITH DUE REGARD TO SAFETY**
- Always operate the vessel in accordance with your training and skill level.
- Do not allow anybody to be in the danger areas created by the propeller.
- An airboat is extremely noisy compared to other boats, keep this in mind and utilize idle speed when possible and use appropriate hearing protection.
- You must keep in mind the potential for environmental impact. Only cross protected marshlands and private property when a life safety situation exists and there isn't another viable option.
- When operating in an urban flooding environment, be mindful of hidden dangers (posts, fire hydrants, etc.) that can badly damage the vessel.
- When operating in an urban flooding environment, remember that the fan produces an extreme amount of wind that can potentially damage structures and property always operate at the slowest safe speed possible.

VI. TOWING GUIDELINES

- Under most conditions Fire Department boat(s) shall not be utilized for towing other boats. Only if the boat in distress is in imminent danger and within the tow capabilities of the Fire Department boat(s) shall it be towed.

- Imminent danger/distress shall be defined as any condition, which endangers the health, safety, welfare or life of the occupants of the vessel involved. Examples of these types of situations may include but are not limited to:
 - Person(s) in the water or vessel taking on water
 - Leaking fluids or any situation that may harm the environment
 - Medical threats for persons on board
 - Threat of hazardous weather conditions
 - The vessel poses a hazard to navigation

- If the boat in distress is in imminent danger and cannot be towed, the occupants of the boat shall be transferred to Fire Department boat(s) while the crew attempts to mitigate the situation. Under no circumstances should the occupants be allowed to re-board the boat in distress once they have been transferred to a Fire Department boat.

- If the boat in distress meets all of the below listed criteria, the responding MIRT officer or senior team member may contact the distressed boat operator's choice of marine tow services.
 - There are no emergency conditions present.
 - The vessel has the required Coast Guard safety equipment on board
 - Life jackets for all personnel on board
 - The vessel has an anchor that is capable of holding the vessel in position.
 - The vessel and/or operator have 2 ways of communicating should water conditions change.
 - Cell phone with a strong battery and functioning VHF radio
 - The vessel has functioning navigation lights if tow response will last 1 hour before sunset or later.

- If the above listed criteria are not met, the distressed boat and its personnel may not be left unattended. The on scene MIRT

officer or senior MIRT member, must decide what resource(s) is/are necessary to tow and/or secure the vessel. The following considerations must be taken into account:

- Commercial tow services should be utilized whenever possible.
- If tow response will exceed 1 hour, consider towing the boat and meeting the tow service.
- If fire resources are used to tow a vessel, it will be towed to the closest safe harbor, marina, or ramp suitable for the vessel.
- The Coast Guard and Virginia Marine Police have resources that can assist with the boat while FD personnel treat life hazards.
- If the boat operator is not requesting any assistance and does not want assistance, units may be made available and the VA Marine Police advised.

VII. DESIGNATIONS AND DUTIES

- **Crew Designations:** Crew designations/assignments shall be the responsibility of the company officer and shall be routinely assigned at the beginning of each shift.

Designations/assignments will be dependent upon qualifications and accomplished so that assignments are rotated in order to acquire experience and training.

- **Captain of the Boat (COB):** The COB shall be responsible for operational readiness of the boat, as well as the effective and safe deployment, employment, and operation of the boat. The COB is ultimately responsible for the safety of all departmental and non-departmental personnel aboard, the safety of any and all personnel in distress once on scene, the condition of the boat in all waters, situations, and weather conditions. The COB is responsible for the tow once lines have been passed to a vessel in distress. The COB is in charge of the boat and boat operations

necessary to perform operational duties. The COB shall report to the OIC during incidents and to the station officer if an OIC is not aboard.

Additional COB duties include but are not limited to the following:

- Safe deployment, employment, operation of the boat.
 - Anchoring of the boat.
 - Navigation, Piloting, Rules of the Road, Maritime Law.
 - Search and Rescue operations/patterns as included in the National SAR manual.
 - Communications on departmental radios, marine radios, Port Authority radios.
 - Communicating with crew, OIC, incident personnel, guests.
 - Operation and interrupting of navigational equipment (GPS, Radar, Logs, navigation lights, etc)
 - Knowledge of pertinent titles of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs)
 - Operation of the main drive engines, fire pumps, generators, auxiliary systems.
 - Maintaining ship's logbook and station apparatus log.
 - Daily morning pre-operation checks.
 - After operations checks and services.
 - Proper securing of boat after operations.
 - All other duties assigned by senior marine operations staff.
- **Lead Operator:** The lead operator shall be responsible for training airboat crews and operators, conducting mission planning and supervising maintenance of airboat and related equipment.
 - **Marine Incident Response Team (MIRT) Members:** Personnel assigned to the Marine Incident Response Team. Any team member not assigned as crew and under direction of the COB shall be assigned duties by the OIC so as to accomplish required mission tasks.

- Incident Personnel: Department personnel not assigned as crew who are required for a marine incident, responsible to the OIC and COB as incident indicates.
- Guest: Departmental and non-departmental personnel aboard in an official or unofficial status, responsible to the COB.

VIII. Disciplinary Actions

Operations in the marine environment can be extremely dangerous. It is extremely important that both Captains and Crew follow guidelines set forth and exercise good judgment.

At any time a Boat Captain can be relieved of his position for the following.

- Operation of any vessel in a reckless manner
- Failure to complete training as required
- Failure to exercise good judgment.
- Conviction of DUI/BUI