

## OWT – Frequently Asked Questions

The Commandant, CG HQ Legal, NEXCOM, and DC-L have approved and strongly encourage Auxiliary Flotillas to become involved in OWT.

Recurring questions and concerns are being heard from many segments of the Auxiliary family and we hope the following will be useful.

**A) May we use student vessels?**

**NO.** Only OPFACS under non-reimbursable written orders may be used.

**B) Are Coxswains, Crewmembers and involved OPFAC owner-operators protected from liability secondary to student injuries?**

**YES.** Protection is present in exactly the same way as for any other mission under orders. The protection from potential liability is no less nor more than that afforded to the Auxiliarists and OPFAC owner-operators during any operational activity involving OPFAC and Crewmembers. If, for some reason, a participant in OWT sues an Auxiliarist, DOJ will defend the suit and, if a finding is in favor of the individual suing the government will pay the damages on behalf of the Auxiliarists involved and OPFAC owner. As in all such situations, the DOJ defense and government's willingness to pay damages presupposes prudent, responsible behavior on the part of the Auxiliarists involved.

**C) Does the US Coast Guard cover OWT civilian/students if they are injured during the OWT mission?**

**NO.** Part of the reason we have participants sign a release is to put them on notice that the US Coast Guard affords them no protection. If during the OWT they are injured, either their own insurance will have to provide for their ensuing health care costs or they will be forced to pay personally for such expenses. It is, however, the Auxiliarists' responsibility to initiate normal procedures if someone is injured and see that the civilian/student is appropriately handled by the prevailing agencies providing such care. Your OTO will provide guidance should such a situation arise and you should make immediate contact with them.

**D) What guidance do we have if a prospective participant is, too young, too old or infirm so as to not be capable to perform the required tasks in safety?**

**The COXSWAIN retains the authority** to refuse to take any student on our OWT missions for safety concerns. Students who believe that OWT may place them at physical risk should check the "NO STRENUOUS ACTIVITY" box on the recommended sign-up form. Coxswains should be particularly observant of individuals who have checked that on the sign-up.

**E) Must students sign Waivers?**

**YES.** Every student must sign a waiver. Minors must have at least one parent or guardian sign the form.

**F) Are the OPFACS commercial vessels?**

**NO.** Vessels under orders are Public vessels of the US and (by law) are exempt from the equipment and licensing requirements of commercial vessels.

**G) May a fee be charged by the Flotilla?**

**YES.** A separate fee can be charged any student who elects to participate in OWT. The owner-operator of the OPFAC may be reimbursed for expenses by a check from the Flotilla. All fees should be payable to the sponsoring Flotilla and NOT the OPFAC owner-operator.

**H) Does the OWT crew have to perform every task listed in the OWT manual on every OWT mission?**

**NO.** The tasks and skills enumerated in the OWT manual are those skills and tasks that have been approved for OWT if the Coxswain and crew wish to perform all the tasks. NO tasks may be added to the approved list but if you identify tasks that should be added, modified or eliminated, pass those suggestions up the line to the Division-level, District-level and/or National OWT Review Board. Those suggestions will be taken into consideration for future changes and revisions.

However, to answer the specific question posed, the Coxswain is always in charge and if there are time, weather or personnel considerations that preclude completion of any of the skills or tasks, the OWT Crew may eliminate these.

**I) Must the same OWT Crew perform all OWT missions without any Crewmember substitutions?**

**NO.** As stated in the manual, we suggest that alternate crewmembers be a part of the OWT Crew. If scheduling problems, illness or injury, or work conflicts make it impossible for a specific member of the crew to participate on a single mission, alternate members of the designated OWT Crew may back-fill as needed.

**J) We do not have adequate OPFAC and personnel to train our own members, so why should we devote time, energy and resources to training Non-Auxiliarists.**

**No one is being forced to participate in OWT.** We strongly encourage your involvement since OWT is one more way to expose the general public to Team Coast Guard. In addition, OWT is likely to be a very effective way to attract potential new members to your Flotilla and, as a result, increase your membership and OPFAC resources. OWT participants can be informed that this is just an introduction to various safety aspects of good boating but if they'd like to learn more about boating proficiency, they can do so as members of the Auxiliary through the Boat Crew Training Program.

It is anticipated this program will pay big dividends both to the Operations program and promote safety with a trained and educated boating public.