

# Alaska Bear

REPORTING ON THE LAST FRONTIER

May 1, 2009

17th Coast Guard District

Spring 2009



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## A Quarter-Century Underway

By PA1 Kurt Fredrickson  
Alaska Bear Staff

A Coast Guardsman stationed in Kodiak, Alaska received the Coast Guard's newest honor during an informal ceremony in Kodiak February 12, 2009 where he was named the services 12th Master Cuttermen.

While many Coast Guardsmen proudly wear the Cuttermen's insignia, which represents five years of sea service, the distinguished title of Master Cuttermen is awarded to those having served more than 20 years at sea.

(see **CUTTERMAN** page 13)



photo by PA1 Kurt Fredrickson

**Chief Warrant Officer Randy Salenski examines his newly presented Master Cuttermen certificate Feb. 12, 2009 during a ceremony at Coast Guard Base Kodiak, Alaska.**

## Cutter hosts day with students, scientists

By Ens. Danielle Verna  
Coast Guard Cutter Sycamore

The Coast Guard Cutter Sycamore hosted 34 guests on March 23, 2009 for a seven hour field trip in Prince William Sound. The excursion was an opportunity for high school students and adult members of the local Prince William Sound Science Center to conduct aquatic scientific experiments and gain some basic knowledge about the Coast Guard and cold weather survival. During the hour long transit to Simpson Bay,

every visitor received a tour of the Sycamore's weather decks, common spaces, and a few machinery spaces, given by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Walker and Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Bonner. They also reviewed the anticipated experiments, birds native to the area with Kelly Weaverling, and oil spill issues with Dr. Scott Pegau.

Upon arrival in Simpson Bay, Sycamore maintained position while the activities on the buoy deck began. Crew members, Petty Officer 1st Class Markiel Perkins and Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew Siegel, hosted a

(See **SYCAMORE** page 9)

## Alaska Bear

- District Commander -

Rear Adm. Gene Brooks

- External Affairs Officer -

Lt. Eric Eggen

- Deputy External Affairs Officer -

Chief Dana Warr

- Editor/Layout -

PA1 Kurt Fredrickson

- Public Affairs Specialists -

PA1 Sara Francis

PA3 Richard Brahm

PA3 Jon-Paul Rios

PA3 Walter Shinn

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All queries concerning news and editorial content should be directed to Coast Guard external affairs, 709 W. 9th St., Juneau, AK 99801. (907) 463-2065. [www.uscgalaska.com](http://www.uscgalaska.com)

Is there an event you want covered for the Alaska Bear? Do you have an opinion to be heard? Does your unit have anything newsworthy to report? If so, we want to hear from you, call 907-463-2065.

Coast Guard external affairs  
709 W. 9th St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

## Family, the heart of influence in life



By Lt. Cmdr. Todd Orren  
District 17 Chaplain

Families are important to all of us and the military is no exception. The military even has a month dedicated to military family appreciation. Families are the cornerstone of our society. It is the place we receive instruction, values, meaning and love.

Some of us have been blessed with families that do this better than others. Families have produced heroes and presidents and others have produced murderers and thieves. Still families are the heart of influence in our world.

What makes the difference in our families? How can we influence our children to help improve our society? I think there are three keys to help our families: training, time and love.

Training is hard work. It takes goals, planning and determination. Parenting is not for the lazy. Mothers and fathers are examples and role

models whether they like it or not. They are examined by their kids with a fine tooth comb. If there is any inconsistency they will see it. Parents need a plan and teach according to that plan, I've heard it said that people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan. To instill values and morals we must teach and train with consistency and determination.

Time is something that seems to slip ever more quickly through our hands. We never seem to have enough time to do those things that we say we should. I believe our children need someone to trust. They find it hard to trust someone they rarely see. We need to spend both quality and a quantity time with our kids to influence them in the direction we want. We are fooling ourselves to think that we are the primary guide for our children if we don't spend any time with them. I understand we can't be there every second, but we should try and spend as much time as possible with them.

Love is an action. It is a verb. Love always does something. If I say I love my wife and then do nothing – it shows my lack of love. To keep our families alive and exciting we must love in an unselfish way. This opens the door to get hurt but it often gives back more than is given.

May God bless us with families that train well, where time is given in abundance and love is experienced daily.

Chaplain Orren



# New Arctic PFD: saving lives, culture

By PA3 Jon-Paul Rios  
Alaska Bear Staff

For more than a century the Coast Guard has played an essential role in the survival of northern Alaska natives.

Dating back to 1892, during the times of the Revenue Cutter Service, the crew aboard the cutter Bear introduced Siberian reindeer to northern Alaska natives in an effort to provide the natives with a dependable food supply. The crew taught the natives to herd and raise the reindeer and by 1941, what started as a small herd grew to half a million reindeer.

"Today the Coast Guard has come full circle," said Michael Folkerts, a recreational boating safety specialist with the Coast Guard.

In the summer of 2008, the Coast Guard Seventeenth District recreational boating safety team visited northern Alaska in an effort to assess ways to help the survival of the natives.

"We spent a lot of time learning about their cultures and how to integrate our missions with their culture," said Folkerts.

For thousands of years, the northern Alaska natives have hunted whales and walrus in homemade skin boats. Without modern survival equipment they hunt armed with harpoons and battle the cold in white parkas.

The northern Alaska natives have come to accept death as a part of survival. In order to eat they have to take that risk of hunting without the standard orange lifejackets.

"They've come to accept that if they fall in the water they die,"



photo illustration by Noreen Folkerts  
**Mike Swanson, 17th District recreational boating safety specialist, models the prototype all-white float coat.**

said Folkerts.

The recreational boating safety team advised natives that if they wear lifejackets, it will buy them time to be rescued. The only problem brought up by the natives is that the standard orange life jackets will scare off the whales. One of the natives mentioned that they would wear the lifejackets if they were white, said Folkerts.

"The Coast Guard listened to what they wanted and responded," said Folkerts.

As soon as the safety team returned to Juneau, Alaska, they began working on developing a prototype for not only an all-white float coat but also an all-white  $\frac{3}{4}$  length parka lifejacket.

The recreational boating safety team has been working with major

lifejacket manufacturers who have created a prototype for the all white float coat that Rear Adm. Gene Brooks, the Coast Guard Seventeenth District Commander, recently took to Coast Guard Sector Anchorage so it can be then taken to northern Alaska on their next trip, said Folkerts.

"Rear Adm. Brooks is very cognizant of peoples needs, always thinking of new ways to help," he added.

The recreational boating safety team and lifejacket manufacturers have completed the prototype for the all-white  $\frac{3}{4}$  length parka lifejacket.

"We believe the demand is high enough," said Folkerts. "We are going to take the samples to the natives and if the demand is high enough, the manufacturers will likely make a full run."

This is just another prime example of how important it is to the Coast Guard to not only integrate the Coast Guard mission but also promote safety, going that extra mile to ensure the survival of the northern Alaska natives. 🐾



photo by Michael Folkerts  
**The Barrow natives use this type of skin boat when hunting because its white color is less likely to startle whales.**

# Alaska Bear Video Features

Click on the images to the right of text to view video features or visit [www.uscg.mil/d17/alaskabear](http://www.uscg.mil/d17/alaskabear)

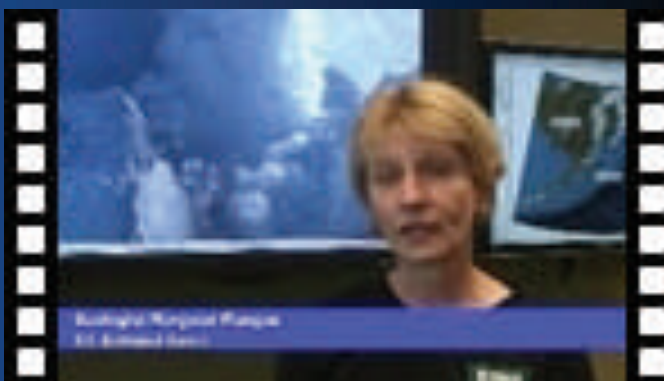
Since 1990 the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association has been educating commercial mariners on how to be safe at sea. Alaska fisheries are carried out in some of the harshest environments on earth and deaths have historically been high. Course participants, veteran and green-horn alike, review basic safety equipment and procedures that can mean the difference between life and death on the Bering Sea. (Coast Guard video by PA1 Kurt Fredrickson)



Inspectors from Coast Guard Sector Anchorage surveyed damage on board the 698-foot Horizon Anchorage at the Port of Anchorage March 9, 2009. The vessel was damaged by a wave of at least 40-feet in height while transiting the Gulf of Alaska from Seattle. Inspectors generated a list of about 90 items, only about 18 were critical and required attention prior to the ship returning to Seattle. (Coast Guard video by PA1 Sara Francis)



The Coast Guard, Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation, U.S Geological Survey and Cook Inlet Pipeline Company worked to address the effects of the Mt. Redoubt volcanic eruption on the Drift River Terminal. The terminal holds millions of gallons of oil in an area under increasing danger from volcanic activity. Multiple eruptions have been observed recently by the Alaska Volcano Observatory and lahars have resulted. By forming a unified command the environmental threat posed by the facility was safely reduced. (Coast Guard video by PA3 Richard Brahm)



Coast Guard units in Southeast Alaska participated in cold weather survival training to prepare them for service in the last frontier. Extreme weather, remote distances and limited communications in the state mean that Coast Guardsmen may have to rely on their survival skills until help arrives. Students participating in the class learned about cold water survival, wilderness survival and teamwork. The course lasted for five days. (Coast Guard video by PA3 Walter Shinn)





# Long range medevacs save lives in Alaska

By PA3 Richard Brahm  
Alaska Bear Staff

People are injured everyday across the United States and many require some kind of medical assistance. But what do you do if you're injured in one of the most remote and unforgiving parts of the world? Hundreds, even thousands of miles from help? You call the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard Air Station on Kodiak Island, Alaska, is home to some of the most highly trained crews responsible for saving the lives of people in some of the most removed places in North America.

These crews responded to more than 160 search and rescue cases in 2008. About 30 percent of those were medical evacuations. Some have likened the medevacs performed by the crews from Kodiak as nothing but a glorified ambulance ride, but it goes far beyond that.

The personnel at Air Station Kodiak train constantly to prepare themselves for any eventuality, long-range medevacs being one of them. The efforts involved with coordinating the flight of multiple assets long distances, with multiple crew swaps and refueling is hard work.

One such coordinator is Lt. Cmdr. Scott Jackson, the MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter assistant operations officer for Air Station Kodiak and a MH-60 pilot. His job is to keep the logistics and operations under control and running smooth.

Of the multiple medevacs conducted by the air station annually, three long-range medevacs stuck out in Jackson's mind that took place in 2008 between October and Decem-



photo by Air Station Kodiak

***Personnel from Air Station Kodiak transfer an injured patient from an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter Dec. 29, 2008. The Coast Guard air lifted three Indian nationals from the chemical oil tanker Bum Chin 200 miles south of Adak Island. The men were transferred to a Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules airplane in Adak for further transport to Anchorage.***

ber; the motor vessels Sparrow, Lavien Rose and Bum-Chin.

All of the crews involved in these long-range cases logged thousands of miles to medevac the injured individuals, and as usual, the weather conditions weren't in their favor. Most of the rescues were flown with winds gusting up to 60 mph and seas swelling 20 to 40 feet. To top it all off, the medevacs took place off some of the most remote islands in the Aleutian Chain, some closer to Russia and Japan than the U.S.

"There is no standard medevac. They come in different forms," Jackson said. "It depends on a multitude of factors like what's the

weather look like, what's the distance away from home station, how many support assets have to go out to pick this person up?"

According to Jackson none of the medevacs are easy or fall under a "typical" medevac category. They never happen in fair weather and intricate planning goes into the use of multiple assets.

"Almost all of the medevacs we fly on have multiple assets involved," Jackson stated. "You always have your retrieving asset and that's usually an MH-60 or an HH-65 helicopter if one is deployed on a nearby Coast Guard cutter. You then have your cover asset which is a C-130."

(see **MEDEVAC** page 8)

# Inspectors travel far and wide for safety

By PA1 Sara Francis  
Alaska Bear Staff

In Alaska the Coast Guard is known for rescuing fishermen, conducting medical evacuations and monitoring oil tankers transiting in and out of Valdez. The personnel of Coast Guard Sector Anchorage conduct numerous missions beyond these. The state of Alaska is vast and requires these individuals to go to great lengths to protect the environment, ensure the flow of commerce and the safety of life at sea - literally.

Sector Anchorage's area of responsibility (AOR) is the largest of any Sector in the nation; 23,000 miles of coastline, 4,000 miles of navigable river and a search and rescue zone of 28,750 square miles of open water.

Sector personnel conducted 29 deployments during 2008 in support of marine safety and security missions. The locations range from Barrow, the most northern city in the U.S., to as far west as Adak Island in the Aleutian Island chain. Deployments range from vessel inspections

to commercial fishing vessel exams to pollution mitigation to port state control exams to security inspections and on. However, these deployments do not account for nearly weekly trips to Whittier and Seward.

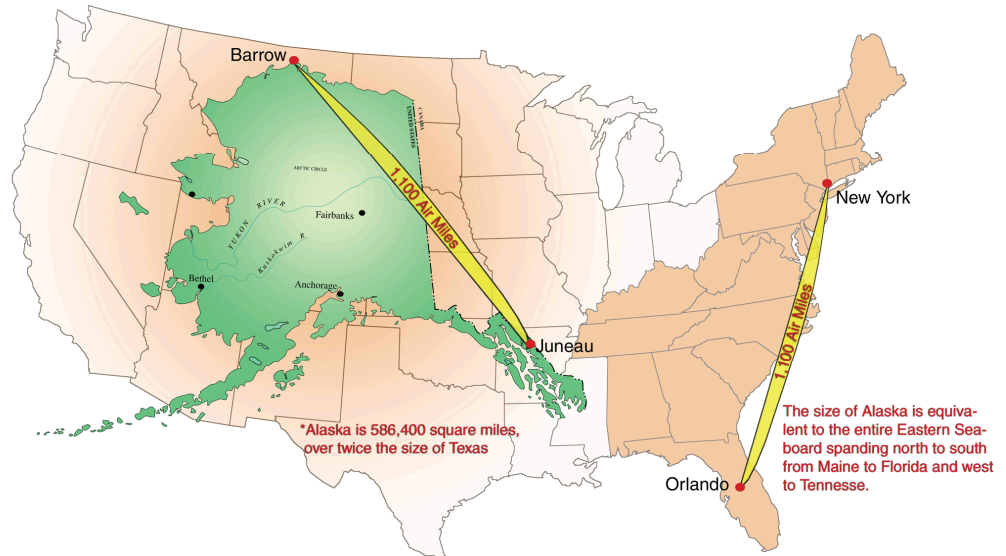
"Most Sectors can reach their furthest facilities or ports with in three to four hours of driving," said Capt. Mark Hamilton, commander Sector Anchorage. "With the exception of Whittier, Seward and Anchorage most of our operations are more

than three hours by car or require travel by plane or vessel."

Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach conducted 5,585 marine safety related activities for fiscal year 2008 with about 40 people. Sector Anchorage by comparison conducted 1,800 activities with about 18 people. What is not immediately apparent or capturable in the statistics is that the personnel at Sector Anchorage travel much further to conduct their activities

(see **SAFETY** page 7)

## SIZE AND DISTANCE COMPARISON



## **Marine Safety and Security Inspections and Exams at a glance**

### **Facility Security Exam**

Exams conducted by the Coast Guard to verify adherence to the Maritime Transportation Safety Act and Code of Federal Regulations by various maritime facilities. Facility security is the protection, and the measures taken toward the protection, of a waterfront facility. Among the components of facility security are access control or the protection against entry by unauthorized persons. Coast Guard inspectors work with the facility security officer to evaluate the measures in place and the facility's adherence to their security plans.

### **Annual Facility Security Inspection**

An annual Facility Security Exam. This is a comprehensive look at the facility, its security measures and records.

### **Facility Security Spot Check**

Unannounced facility security exams conducted to ensure adherence by the facility to regulations at all times by testing or examining a sampling of security measures and documentation.

(**SAFETY** from page 6)

ties.

“While I spend two days flying to Red Dog Mine to conduct a vessel inspection my counterpart in L.A. conducts four or five in roughly the same amount of time because he doesn’t need to fly 600 miles to reach them,” said Lt. j.g. Christopher Nichols, an inspector at Sector Anchorage.

In 2009 the Sector deployed 1,198 miles to Adak Island. The population of the island is 316. It is a deep water port, formerly a Navy base, and receives diesel by ship to power the remaining village. Adak has only three flights a week. The crew arrived on a Sunday and remained on the island until Thursday. At the expense of \$1,200 per ticket plus per diem, the crew intended to make the most of the visit.

During the five days on the island the four personnel conducted seven separate inspections. They visited the facility, the port, a tug, the tank vessel Renda and another vessel that came into port with damage.

In February, Chief Warrant Officer Darrell Howells flew 627 miles to Prudhoe Bay for an overnight stay to conduct an inspection

on the Arctic Hawk, a 41-foot fishing vessel.

Personnel from Anchorage, Juneau and Kodiak spent 10 days in Barrow to evaluate the effectiveness of standard equipment for conducting missions in the Arctic. The challenges – the distance, the environment, the limited infrastructure and the logistics.

“We have a responsibility to the public to conduct our missions effectively in Alaska,” said Hamilton. “We have more to do than resources allow. Thus we are forced to weigh the costs and benefits of each task. In some cases we rely on class societies and civilian contractors, in others we bring up personnel from other units to augment our operations.”

In an effort to meet deadlines for compliance and full enrollment in the Alternate Compliance and Safety Agreement program Sector deployed three inspectors 804 miles to Dutch Harbor for several days on the eve of the new year to complete vessel exams on 10 ships. They were successful and five vessels were able to meet the requirements and head to the fishing grounds on schedule. The other five chose to adapt their fishing practices placing them in a different regu-

latory category.

Whitter is only an hour away by car but requires travel through a one-way tunnel so arrivals and departures must be timed correctly. Seward, 128 miles away, is a two and a half hour drive but requires travel through several avalanche zones. During the last year, inspectors, fishing vessel examiners and pollution investigators spent more than 140 days in Seward. A shipyard exists in Seward and inspectors remain in Seward for up to four weeks to complete as many small passenger vessel inspections as possible during the heightened activity preceding the tourist season.

On any given morning, crews may come to the office or receive late night calls requiring them to deploy immediately. In January, several Sector Anchorage members were deployed from Anchorage by Coast Guard C-130 to Kenai to respond to the sinking of the motor vessel Monarch, an offshore supply vessel that struck the Granite Pointe Oil Platform 12 miles east of Nikiski in Cook Inlet. Kenai is 65 miles by air but 155 miles by car.

Anchorage personnel spent several days in Kenai augmenting the

(see **SAFETY** page 15)

### **Facility Safety Exam**

Exams conducted by the Coast Guard to verify various maritime facilities adherence to the Code of Federal Regulations regarding safety, fire detection and suppression, and emergency-response planning.

### **Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Exam**

Coast Guard examinations on commercial fishing vessels to ensure safety standards and limit the number of casualties resulting from distress situations while at sea. Examiners look at documentation, safety gear and crew training as well as some limited material safety condition items.

### **Vessel Safety Spot Check**

Spot checks are conducted to look at safety items on board fishing vessels to ensure continued compliance with the regulations for safe operation at sea.

### **Transfer Monitor**

Coast Guard monitors and inspections of facilities, vessels and equipment for transferring bulk oil and hazardous materials to ensure compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations and to mitigate the chance of discharge or release.



(*MEDEVAC* from page 5)

“From there you have to figure out if the distance is beyond your helicopter crew’s flight time limitations,” Jackson said. “If it does exceed the helicopter crew’s limits we have to fly a second crew on the C-130 and figure out where we can swap the crews to maximize the time they are in the air.”

Another vital step in the process is refueling.

“The helicopter can only fly so far on a single tank of fuel, so we have to figure out how many times and where we will have a chance to refuel,” Jackson said.

During this process the crew and the planners must be conscience of the location of the nearest medical facility. Aircrews are only trained in basic first aid. However, on some extreme cases, a Coast Guard corpsman with additional medical training will accompany the crew.

“All of those things are only part of the planning portion of the case,” Jackson said. “The flights involved are subject to adverse weather conditions and other things out of the pilot’s control.”

One of those pilots is Lt. Dave McCown, an MH-60 pilot for Air Station Kodiak. McCown was involved in the medevac of a severely injured crewman on the 600-foot log carrier Lavieen Rose. The vessel was located 35 miles southwest of Attu Island which is roughly 1,700 miles west of Kodiak Island and almost 750 miles east of Russia. Because of the distance involved with the Lavieen Rose case the crew took off from Kodiak in a C-130 and had another crew fly the MH-60 to Adak, McCown stated.

When McCown and his crew landed on Adak it was nighttime. He



photo by Air Station Kodiak

***A Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter approaches the bulk carrier Sparrow 150 miles south of Adak Island to conduct a medevac of the ship's second officer Nov. 19, 2008.***

gathered his crew and began planning for a day hoist. They also discussed how much fuel they would need. The Air Force base on Shemya Island, near Attu Island, was the only place to get fuel that was even remotely close to the pick up location near Attu Island.

“We generally prefer to do the hoist during the daytime if the patient can wait that long because it’s safer and we like to be in a situation where we can get the patient back to a hospital as fast as we can,” McCown said. Unfortunately the weather was not looking good for McCown and his crew. The Lavieen Rose was reporting 40 knot winds coupled with waves up to 30 feet.

“It worked out that we were able to go out and do the hoist,” McCown stated. “It helped that the boat had moved to the leeward side of Attu Island so the waves were only about 10 feet and also due to the vessel’s size it was a fairly stable

platform.”

McCown said, “Helicopters are great for hoisting people because they can stay still but they can’t get anywhere fast especially with distances this far. If you were to look at a map we would have basically flown from Tijuana, Mexico, all the way north to Seattle to do a hoist and that’s just a small taste of what we do for people,” he added.

Between all three cases the Coast Guard conducted 52 flights using C-130 airplanes and MH-60 helicopters. The crew of both aircraft flew approximately 74,800 miles and logged 280 hours of flight time.

So if you are ever injured in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the Bering or Chukchi Seas and you need help, the highly trained members of the Coast Guard in Alaska are only one distress call away. 🐾



(*SYCAMORE* from page 1)

survival suit race amongst the students, to show the difficulty of properly donning a suit without practice, and the importance of knowing how to. Among the scientific activities was a Conductivity/Temperature/Depth (CTD) demonstration by Rob Campell, used to measure the salinity and temperature of the water as associated with depth. This instrument was lowered slowly over the buoy deck via line, to nearly the bottom of the bay.

The students also towed a fine mesh net upward through the water column to filter out microscopic organisms. The water samples were viewed under microscopes on the buoy deck, to reveal copepods, polychaetes, tunicates, and other life forms. Several sediment grabs from the bottom revealed organisms such as brittle stars. The sediment grabs were performed by Lindsay Butters and Torie Baker. The samples can be analyzed for sediment composition to reveal what other kinds of bottom-dwelling creatures are living in Prince William Sound, and also to reveal any lasting effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill below the surface of the sediment.

During the return transit to Cordova, everyone



*Petty Officer 1st Class Markiel Perkins, wearing hard hat, explains the proper technique of donning a cold weather survival suit to a group of high school students and adults.*

photo by Coast Guard Cutter Sycamore

had an opportunity to visit the bridge on Sycamore to witness how the cutter is driven by the officers and crew. Overall the trip was a resounding success, for both the visitors and the crew. It was a wonderful opportunity for Sycamore to interact with the community and for all parties to learn from one another. 🐾



*Visitors from the Prince William Sound Science Center and high school students pose for a group photo on the buoy deck of the Coast Guard Cutter Sycamore March 23, 2009. The Sycamore crew provided a tour of the cutter and assisted with a scientific examination of the bay's bottom life. The experiments revealed a variety of bottom life and tested bottom samples for any lingering effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. (photo by Cutter Sycamore)*

# Curb alcohol abuse with help from TRICARE

By Kristen Ward  
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

It only takes one. A single drink can have multiple effects on an individual. Depending on the person, these could include difficulty walking, blurred vision, slurred speech, slowed reaction times or impaired memory. Those are just a few of the short-term effects.

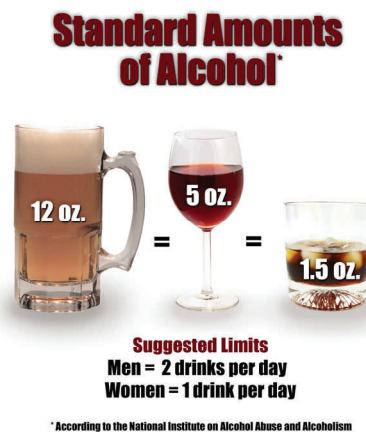
Heavy drinking over a long period of time can lead to anxiety, depression, blackouts or liver disease, not to mention the cumulative impact on spouses and children. Despite these dangers, the Department of Defense (DoD) estimates that nearly a quarter of active duty service members (ADSM) consider themselves regular heavy drinkers — defined as having five or more drinks at least once a week. This habit can also negatively affect military careers and relationships.

Fortunately, the DoD offers resources to encourage responsible drinking or eliminate drinking entirely as part of its TRICARE entitlement.

## **TRICARE Offers Behavioral Health Support**

If there is a pattern of heavy drinking or changes in personality, help is available. TRICARE covers certain treatments for abuse of alcohol and other substances. To use TRICARE benefits, ADSMs must get a referral through their primary care manager (PCM). Active duty family members may call 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378) to see what services are available in their area. Any applicable co-pays or deductibles and cost-shares (based on the sponsor's status and

TRICARE program) will apply. Use network providers to save money. Specific coverage and limitations are found at [www.tricare.mil/mybenefit](http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit)>Mental Health and Behavior>Types of Treatment>Treatment for Substance Use Disorders.



## **Steps to Curb Excessive Drinking**

Drinking can have less of an impact if a person seeks help. For anyone trying to cut back on their drinking, there are several steps to take:

**Write it down.** Keep track of how much alcohol is consumed on a calendar or in a journal. By taking note of each drink, a person becomes aware.

**Know the numbers.** Be aware of standard drink sizes—12 ounces of regular beer, five ounces of wine, and 1.5 ounces of 80-proof spirits

**Set limits.** Decide when and how much to drink. The National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism recommends that men limit them-

selves to a maximum of two drinks per day and women no more than one drink per day.

**Use the buddy system.** Just like on the battlefield, ensure that a buddy is protected from danger. Confront that person if his or her drinking is spiraling out of control. 🐾

## **Resources Available**

Other support groups and therapy treatments are also available. Check out these resources:

**[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org):** Find an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting near you.

**[www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com):** Visit TriWest's Behavioral Health portal under "Beneficiary Services" to watch streaming video of "Help From Home," which offers advice from behavioral health experts who are also combat veterans and military families that have coped with effects of combat stress.

**[www.thatguy.com](http://www.thatguy.com):** Learn about "That Guy" and the pitfalls of binge drinking through humor, testimonials and video.

**[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com):** Click on the "mind" tab on the left-hand menu, then click "alcohol" for many resources available to active duty Service members and their families.

**[www.afterdeployment.org](http://www.afterdeployment.org):** Read and watch testimonials from other service members describing how they overcame their post-deployment challenges.



# Grounded vessel threatens rookery, Coast Guard responds

By PA3 Walter Shinn  
Alaska Bear Staff

At the crack of dawn on an early morning in early March, the captain of the fishing vessel Mar-Gun made a VHF radio call to the Coast Guard reporting his vessel had run aground on St. George Island, Alaska with five crew members aboard and was carrying nearly 19,000 gallons of fuel.

Straraya Beach where the Mar-Gun ran aground is adjacent to an archeological site from an historic Russian Aleutian settlement. The fuel and lube oil posed an immediate threat to fur seal rookeries and sea lions, haul outs and many species of marine birds that use the area for refuge from the unforgiving Ber- ing Sea.

Once the Coast Guard safely rescued the five crew members, efforts immediately shifted to pollution mitigation.

Due to the potential harm to the environmentally and archeologically sensitive area, a team of six members from the National Strike Force Pacific Strike Team were launched. It took the Pacific Strike Team more than a day to travel from Novato, Calif., to St. George Island due in large part to the remoteness of the location. In the Lower 48, it would have only taken the team three to four hours, depending on where the incident was and its severity.

The Pacific Strike Team is one of three special teams that make up the National Strike Force. They are a vital national asset comprised of highly trained and dedicated Coast Guard professionals, who rapidly deploy with specialized equipment and



photo by PA3 Walter Shinn

***Response members from the Coast Guard National Strike Force - Pacific Strike Team, prepare to transport a portable pump to the 112-foot grounded fishing vessel Mar-Gun March 7, 2009 on St. George Island, Alaska.***

incident management skills any time to any place for any hazard. The team of six members who deployed were Chief Warrant Officer Mark Gregory, Chief Petty Officer Alan Dooley, Petty Officer 1st Class Bianca Witkowski, Petty Officer 1st Class Erik Vonstockhausen, Petty Officer 2nd Class Adam Anderson and Petty Officer 2nd Class Bret Steinle. They got the call at 9 a.m., in the middle of a training exercise, packed their bags and were on a plane two hours later.

The Strike Team, based out of Novato, Calif., flew from San Francisco through Seattle and to Anchorage, Alaska. The team needed to stop in Anchorage to acquire several pieces of a fuel hose, connecting pieces, along with other supplies needed to make the response a success.

In Anchorage they went through the equipment, which is permanently stored on the Ft. Richardson Army Base at the Navy Supervisor of Salvage Warehouse. The equipment and a few thousand feet of hose were loaded onto a Coast Guard C-130 from Air Station Kodiak, and flown from Anchorage to St. George Island. The team loaded up and after nearly 48 hours of travel time they arrived on St. George. They immediately began response efforts.

"The tactics employed and the use of the Strike Team allowed us to take advantage of the first weather window after the grounding and not waste valuable time," said Cmdr. Joseph LoSciuto, deputy commander Coast Guard Sector Anchorage and federal on-scene coordinator for the response.

(see **SALVAGE** page 12)

(**SALVAGE** from page 11)

In addition to the Pacific Strike Team response, Coast Guard personnel from several Western Alaska units were mobilized in an effort to support the civilian responders hired by the owner of the Mar-Gun. Responders raced against the closing weather window to begin operations. A second charter flight with additional Coast Guard and state personnel left Anchorage for St. George.

It was recognized early on by the responders on scene and in the Anchorage command post that this would be a difficult task to be accomplished on a remote island in the Bering Sea, a sea which has a reputation for violent weather conditions. Two days after the grounding proved to be the worst day of the lightering operation. Snow was blowing horizontally, which felt like sand paper scraping across the face upon looking into the wind.

The snow turned into ice pellets, which left a stinging sensation when the wind blew 30 to 40 mph. If it wasn't the snow or ice pellets, it was the wind itself proving to be the most painful. Temperatures hovered around 10 to 20 degrees, which felt more like 20 below zero with the wind. The cold temperatures and high winds created heavy surf conditions and getting to and from the Mar-Gun was difficult for the Strike Team. Dan Magone, owner of Magone Marine out of Dutch Harbor, Alaska, along with locals, built a system of pulleys extending from the shore to the vessel enabling a small inflatable boat to be pulled safely to the ship. As safe as it was, Pacific Strike Team members still had to charge their way through six to 10-foot waves.

Along the pulley system, the

transfer hoses were attached by a series of carabineers. The Strike Team members pulled the bumblebee line, which is called so for the effect caused as the carabineers race across the line one after another. Everything appeared to be going smoothly until a rogue wave appeared from seemingly nowhere and tangled the 150 pounds of connecting transfer hose. With it tangled in the line, it made a hard task much more difficult. Although it was difficult to do, three Strike Team members accompanied by a crew member from the Mar-Gun, were able to successfully pull the transfer hose on board the vessel.

The Strike Team then began the process of lightering the vessel.

The bulk of the lightering process took six days. In that time, the Pacific Strike Team assisted by Dan Magone and his company employees were able to safely pump a total of 19,000 gallons of fuel.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation accompanied by two Coast Guard Marine Science Technicians assessed the area in the days immediately following the grounding. A light intermit-



photo by PA3 Walter Shinn

**Chief Warrant Officer Mark Gregory, response officer for the National Strike Force - Pacific Strike Team, carries a fuel hose that will connect to other hoses to pump fuel from the grounded 112-foot fishing vessel Mar-Gun. March 7, 2009.**

tent diesel sheen was sighted but due to the properties of diesel it evaporated quickly. No impact has been seen on the shoreline. The state is working with contractors to establish a subsistence sampling program to ensure the safety of the local village who rely on local resources for nourishment.

"In my 25 year career, this is the best Coast Guard success story I have ever been a part of," said LoSciuto. 🐾



(**CUTTERMAN** from page 1)

Master Cutterman Chief Warrant Officer Randy Salenski is currently stationed aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley as the main propulsion assistant. In May his sea time will reach 26 years. In total his career has spanned 36 years aboard nine cutters and four tours ashore. But despite his impressive service, being awarded for it came as a complete surprise.

"I really appreciate getting the award," he said. "I had no clue this thing even existed, let alone being a candidate for it. I'm honored to be one of 12 people to actually get it in the Coast Guard."

In 1973 Salenski began his Coast Guard career as an engineman, a rate later renamed machinery technician. At that same time the Coast Guard was preparing to institute the newly created Cutterman's insignia. The insignia, worn on the uniform, is comprised of a helm wheel surrounded by waves which represent the heritage of the sea, a five point star noting five years sea service, and a shield representing the service and its seagoing traditions. Prior to 1974, no recognition was given to those serving extended periods at sea.

Recognition as a Cutterman meant that an individual had, in the tradition of professional mariners, performed duties afloat in keeping with their grade and rate and who have endured the rigors and dangers of sea duty for a substantial period.

For Salenski, this recognition came in 1982 shortly after he was promoted to chief petty officer. Today, after more than 20 years of sea service, he has exemplified the definition of Cutterman. But for some, the criteria of being called a Cutterman fell short in recognizing individuals, like Salenski, with a lifetime



***The Master Cutterman certificate is awarded to individuals in the Coast Guard who serve more than 20 years at sea. Each certificate is customized with the cutters that the Master Cutterman served on during his career.***

commitment to service at sea. In 2006 discussions began in Washington, D.C., to devise an award to recognize those with more than 20 years of service.

The final criteria for the award settled on the title of Master Cutterman, which would be presented as a certificate signed by the Commandant of the Coast Guard. It would also depict all the cutters the individ-

ual served on during their career. After deciding on the criteria of the award, the wording seemingly proved to be the most difficult. After two drafts of the award failed to meet the "salty" language the Commandant was looking for, he wrote the award himself.

The final text of the certificate is below.

(see **CUTTERMAN** on page 14)

#### **U.S. Coast Guard Master Cutterman**

*To all sailors who have crossed the deck of a cutter, from ghosts of the Revenue Marine to the United States Coast Guard, wherever ye may be; And to all Ancient Mariners, Albatrosses, Pterodactyls, Surfman and various Breeds of dogs:*

*Let it be known that CWO4 Randy S. Salenski has stood watch, laid before the mast, made rounds, checked the navigational lights, monitored engine temperatures, launched boats as required, balanced the electrical load, provided rations, and otherwise attended to the watch, quarter and station bill for all evolutions required to guard the coast and defend the Nation for 24 years.*

*Accordingly, all cutterman with lesser sea time and those unaccustomed to venturing offshore shall show due honor and respect at all times.*



(**CUTTERMAN** from page 13)

The first Master Cutterman certificate was presented to Chief Warrant Officer Paul Dilger at his retirement on July 27, 2007. Since then there have been 11 certificates awarded making Salenski's the 12th.

Salenski's award presentation was held informally at the club on Coast Guard base Kodiak with his shipmates and fellow Cutterman who are stationed in Kodiak. During the ceremony, Cmdr. Kevin Jones, Alex Haley commanding officer, recounted the first time he saw the certificate. "We had this thing show up in the mail wrapped in a tube; we pulled it out and thought, 'What is that?'" He noted that everyone soon realized what it was and what it took for someone to earn this particular recognition.

Breaking from the script, Jones looked out to those gathered and explained that they were recognizing a hero. To the young Coast Guardsmen he said, "You may not want to be a Cutterman, but right now you are. There are a bunch of us who are because this is our career path. This is what we signed up to do. These are our seagoing traditions and it is important that we recognize it," Jones stressed. "Here's a man who has dedicated his life to that."

Jones recounted Selinski's career from his beginning as an engine-man. Salenski's career has included service aboard Coast Guard Cutters Sledge, Ojibwa, Resolute, Alert, Planetree, Woodrush, Firebush, Maple and Alex Haley and shore duty at Loran Station St. Paul, Alaska, Station Buffalo, N.Y., Group Buffalo and Training Center Cape May, N.J.

Reflecting on the long list of duty stations, Jones looked to Salenski and asked about the first engine he worked on. "It wasn't steam was



photo by Cutter Alex Haley

***Chief Warrant Officer Randy Salenski, main propulsion assistant aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley, left, and his son, Petty Officer 2nd Class Randy Salenski, a machinery technician aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Hickory, stand in the engine room of the Alex Haley Feb. 11, 2009.***

it?"

Salenski accepted the framed certificate with few words, but a notable appreciation. As an added bonus, his son, Petty Officer 2nd Class Randy Salenski, was able to literally jump ship to attend the presenta-



***The Cutterman's pin has at its center a star, each point of which represents a year at sea. For Salenski each point represents five years.***

tion. Since the Hickory, home ported in Homer, Alaska, was already scheduled to conduct training off Kodiak, the cutter was able to nose up to the pier and let Salenski jump off to be part of the ceremony. Like his

father before him, he is a machinery technician. Salenski said his father deserves the recognition, and although he doesn't want the attention the award carries, he appreciates it.

Salenski's oldest son is a sergeant in the Marine Corps currently stationed in Camp Pendleton, Calif. Salenski's wife lives in Sitka, Alaska.

"I really enjoy my job," Salenski said. "Being able to teach someone what I know, that's where I get the most satisfaction out of my job."

After more than three decades of service, Salenski has three pieces of advice to pass on to Coast Guardsmen just starting out. "Separate your work and home time, pursue your hobbies and stay out of trouble." 🐾



(**SAFETY** from page 7)

five person marine safety detachment, state and local responders. The effort included monitoring the vessel and mitigating pollution. Removal of the vessel could not take place in the inlet's severe ice conditions experienced annually. Diving operations will proceed once ice condition abate.

More recently crews deployed 750 miles to the 137 person village on St. George Island to conduct pollution mitigation and vessel removal of the 112-foot fishing vessel Mar-Gun. The Mar-Gun grounded 120-yards from Staraya Beach on the north end of the island. The vessel had just over 19,000 gallons of diesel and 660 gallons of lube oil aboard. It grounded in an environmentally and historically sensitive area prompting the Coast Guard to deploy the Pacific Strike Team from Novato, Calif., and Sector personnel in an effort to commence operations as quickly as possible and take advantage of good weather windows. The operation is still underway and has been active for several weeks.

"We are called upon daily to

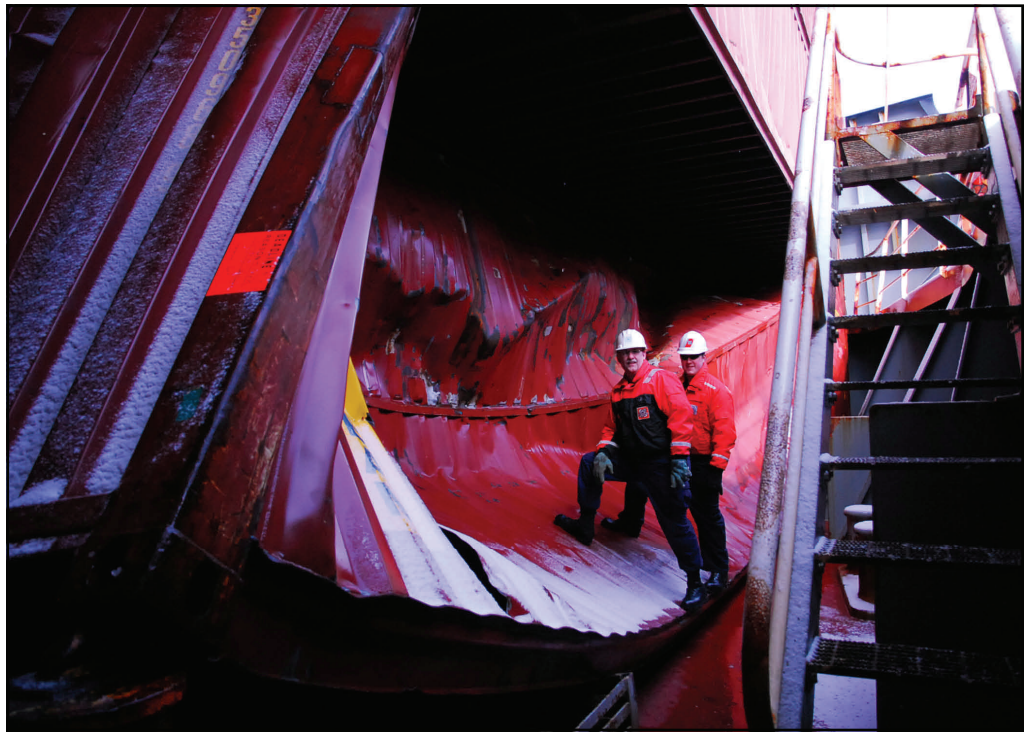


photo by PA1 Sara Francis

*Chief Warrant Officer Darrel Howells and Lt. j.g. Chris Nichols of Coast Guard Sector Anchorage examine and catalog damage on the cargo vessel Horizon Anchorage at the Port of Anchorage March 9, 2009. The vessel suffered damage from a 40-foot wave in the Gulf of Alaska while transiting to Anchorage from Tacoma, Wash.*

respond to vessels of sorted sizes with various issues operating in one of the most extreme and unforgiving environments in the world," said Hamilton. "Our staff is small but

dedicated and we continue to ask great things of them. This is one office where the operational tempo dictates that our personnel are trained

(see **SAFETY** on page 16)

### **Port State Control Exams and International Port Security Program (ISPS code)**

Coast Guard examinations of foreign vessels conducted to ensure the vessels are in substantial compliance with applicable international and domestic regulations. The scope of the inspection includes proper documentation, structural integrity, and examination of lifesaving equipment, pollution prevention, crew training, and machinery. Finally, Coast Guard personnel examine the vessel for compliance with appropriate security measures in accordance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Codes.

### **Vessel Security Spot Check**

A Coast Guard unannounced inspection of a vessel's required security procedures and plans.

### **Explosives Outload**

Coast Guard monitor, inspection or escort of explosive materials to ensure compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations. This may include inspection of packing and manifests as well as providing shore and/or waterside security.

### **Vessel Material Inspections**

Coast Guard inspections by a qualified marine inspector of various sizes and types of commercial passenger vessels or commercial vessels for hire. Inspectors consider material condition of the vessel, appropriate safety gear, crew training and documentation. Some inspections may be conducted specifically to examine temporary or permanent repairs to a Coast Guard inspected vessel.

(**SAFETY** from page 15)

and qualified from the time they arrive.”

The Port of Anchorage may only be a few miles from the Sector office but significant operations are conducted there on a regular basis; some scheduled, some not. More than 10 facilities are located at the port. Each facility requires annual and spot check inspections and exams in addition to transfer monitors and response to any incidents that may occur. These are only 10 of 400 plus facilities in the AOR.


The port itself is subject to safety and security inspections. Routine and specialty inspections are conducted on some of the vessels that transit to and from the port. More than five million tons of cargo comes through Anchorage. According to the American Association of Port Authorities Anchorage ranks number 21 on the list of North American ports based on cargo handled. The Coast Guard conducts container inspections as well as providing security during equipment outloads from the local

military bases. In March, the Horizon Anchorage, a cargo vessel inbound to Anchorage from Tacoma, Wash., suffered damage to the forward section of the ship from a 40-foot wave in the Gulf of Alaska. Upon arriving in Anchorage, Sector inspectors supplemented by colleagues from Marine Safety Detachment Kenai, spent 15 hours on board surveying the vessel and cataloging the damage. More than 50 cracks, deflections and fractures were located on over three decks. Personnel identified the most serious issues for temporary repairs before the vessel was allowed to sail to Seattle for further work.

“From the top of the building at Sector LA/LB [Los Angeles/Long Beach] I could see 90 percent of the AOR where commercial activity took place,” said Hamilton. “From the top of our current building I can see about one percent of our AOR in Alaska.”

Sector Anchorage’s AOR is only expanding as the retreat of the multi-year ice continues in the Arctic and more attention is focused on

northern operations. Personnel have been conducting facility inspections, port state control exams, pollution response and casualty investigations in the region for decades but increasing traffic calls for increased visits. In 2008 the Sector conducted 21 port state control exams. Three of those exams were on cruise ships. Two of which were visiting the northern reaches of Alaska. In 2009 10 cruise ship visits are anticipated above the Arctic Circle and the number of exams will be proportional. A few years ago there was not a single cruise ship to be found in the Arctic.

If you speak to Sector personnel who have spent time in the marine safety field on the Gulf Coast, West Coast, East Coast and the Great Lakes they’ll tell you it’s exceedingly rare to travel more than a few hours or more than 100 miles to reach most of the locations and cases they visited and responded to. For those at Sector Anchorage going to great lengths is an almost daily practice. 

## Calling all writers, bloggers and photographers

**Units in Alaska now have an official blog to post ideas, sea stories, information and imagery to educate and inform Coast Guard families and the public while providing an inside glimpse of Coast Guard life and missions.**

Individuals may make posts related to their responsibilities in the Coast Guard provided the information is appropriate and does not violate operational security.

Posts can conveniently be made by e-mail, allowing units to post from anywhere they have access to a computer, including underway. Posts can be shared through popular social media tools such as Facebook,

Individuals interested in posting to the blog should contact their unit public affairs officer or the 17th District external affairs staff in Juneau at 907-463-2065.

**The Alaska Logbook can be found on the internet at [www.USCGAlaska.blogspot.com](http://www.USCGAlaska.blogspot.com)**

