Managing ABC Internet Students

Squadron and District Guide

2015 ABC3 Printing

AMERICA'S BOATING COURSE®

Third Edition
Boater Education Course—Basic Boating Knowledge

United States Power Squadrons

Table of Contents

Revised 8 January 2017

Background

The United States Power Squadrons (USPS) and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCGAux) first introduced America's Boating Course in 2001. Since then, the course manual has undergone several revisions, and USPS became the sole owner of the course. The 2015 printing continues as America's Boating Course – 3rd Edition (ABC3). ABC3 is a professionally designed education system, and was approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), and the individual states and territories in which it is presented. The approved educational system includes the America's Boating Course 278 page full color student manual, digital Instructor Manual, PowerPoint teaching aids, and final examinations. The student manual for the online course is provided in e-book format. Varying with the individual state policies, ABC3 may be completed through one of three convenient ways for student convenience:

1. via internet through online courseware, final examinations and documentation, or
2. via internet through online courseware, then proctored final examination and documentation by one of the Squadrons in your state, or
3. in a classroom course offered by an U.S. Power Squadron in the student's state.

Enrollment in the internet course is completed online at www.AmericasBoatingCourse.com or by telephoning 1-866-262-8222 (1-866-BOAT-ABC). Upon completion of registration and payment completion, online students will receive a Personal Identification Number (PIN) via email and may begin the course immediately and access the ABC3 e-book. The e-book student manual is in pdf format and must be downloaded by the student. The online course is convenient and meets the needs of many students, including:

1. Boaters who live too far away from a traditional classroom course location;
2. Boaters whose work schedule and/or home life demands make it impractical for them to attend classes;
3. Non-traditional boaters (e.g., anglers, hunters, paddle boaters); and
4. Boaters who are internet-focused and/or who are "turned off" by traditional classroom courses.

The objectives for America's Boating Course within USPS include:

1. Increase the number of recreational boaters who have basic boating knowledge education.
2. Increase public awareness of the U.S. Power Squadrons and membership benefits.
3. Establish a professional boating relationship between students and our squadrons, thereby increasing USPS membership.

NASBLA approved the 2015 ABC3 Boating Education System which is to be used in whole and serve as the sole source of student materials. Prior to presentation in individual states and territories, the **generic** state specific curricula in Section 8 of the Instructor PowerPoint program must be replaced by state approved, **tailored** materials. The state approved PowerPoint with instructor notes and minimum of 10-question supplemental final examinations are posted on the U.S. Power Squadrons Educational Department home web page in the State Information pull-down. As discussed earlier, some states and territories require additional state-specific education and proctored final examinations to complete the course. Online students are advised **prior to purchasing via the internet if the proctored exam provision is required.** All courses include required state specific questions in the final examination. Passing scores for the online final examinations vary by state from minimum of 80 to 90 percent correct answers; classroom passing score is 80 percent correct answers.

Two District **Coordinators** are appointed by the District Educational Officer (DEO) to serve as interface for online student registrations between HQ at time of registration and course completion. Their role will be discussed later, but in summary, upon receiving student registration and course completion information, the

Coordinators select a geographically appropriate squadron and pass student contact information the squadron educational officers (SEO). The SEO or squadron designated officer serves as mentor that may render student assistance to completion of the course, **and by working with the student, hopefully gains a new member**.

Internet / Online Course Sales

Online ABC3 courses are competitively priced with other online providers at $34.95, and include the ABC3 e-book student manual (the only source of this e-book). Squadrons should continue offering classroom classes, either in the 8-hour short course or 16-hour full course format, supporting class educational material needs through the USPS Materials Catalog located on the Educational Department homepage.

In states where classroom durations are set by the state, the online student will be expected use the provided e-book or pay any additional fees for classroom instruction as though a classroom course student (provided a Student Manual and state specific education). Course completion in the classroom environment, including the proctored examination provision, includes issuing graduation certificates and wallet cards, and registration using HQ800 system.

When processing the online student in the classroom provision, the ED46 Student Registration form should be completed to obtain student information for HQ800 entry. It is useful to review state specific information before administering the proctored ABC3 50-question examination complemented by any required state specific examination. Course completion is recorded using HQ800, either within an existing course student body or using the "exam-only/NUBC" provision. Squadrons are free to charge an examination fee to cover the cost of administering exams.

A primary objective for having District Coordinators is facilitating immediate and thorough communications with the online student, stressing the features and benefits of squadron membership. Often that includes joining in the continuum of boating education and on-the-water training. The time lapse from online registration to course completion is typically brief so timely communication is of the essence.

If we are successful in establishing this relationship, we will have the opportunity to provide them with the information necessary to be a safer boater and the opportunity to tell them about the benefits of membership in USPS. This opportunity will be in the form of person-to-person communications rather than instructor to class communications. One of the most important features that USPS offers is our personal experience in all aspects of boating. We have "been there and done that", and we know how to tell folks about it.

The role of the ABC District **Coordinator** is key to getting the right squadron linked to the new student in a timely manner.

District Coordinators

The appointed email addresses of the ABC District **Coordinators** are placed on the U.S. Power Squadron's server for automated contact. The designated **Coordinators** will be notified at time of purchase by online students, and again when the student completes the course. Typically, there are two coordinators in each district so that a backup is always available. Additional coordinators may be included if a district desires. The ideal "ABC district coordinator" handles their e-mail regularly, interfaces well with the squadrons, and follows up with the squadrons when a new student is not contacted on a timely basis. It is essential that e-mail addresses of the District **Coordinators** be kept up to date. System error messages due to obsolete e-mail addresses result in additional workload for our headquarters staff, but more importantly squadrons are not receiving timely notifications about a potential new member.

The District **Coordinators** each receive an e-mail message when an online student registers or completes a course in their area. ABC server is zip code based and is automated. That is, the first 3-digits of the student's zip code are used to determine which district should receive the new student alert message. Both **Coordinators** within that district receive the same message. The new student alert message is sent automatically by the ABC Server; USPS personnel are not involved with the day-to-day operation of this part of the system. ABC District **Coordinators**, because of ZIP code routing, may find it better for the student to be assigned in a neighboring district, In this even, they should so do and include the receiving DEO and BPECom@usps.org in the email.

District Guide

- **DEO Responsibilities.** It is the DEO's responsibility to:
  1. Recruit two members within the district who are willing to serve as District **Coordinators** for America's Boating Course and provide them with the information necessary to perform their job.
  2. Provide name and e-mail address of both District **Coordinators** to the chairman of the Basic Public Education Committee via BPECom@usps.org.
  3. Work with the SEOs and identify contact points within each squadron within the district. Two squadron coordinators are recommended since America's Boating Course is "open for business" 365 days per year and we cannot expect one member to be available all the time. Messages are forwarded by the District **Coordinators** to both squadron coordinators and the squadron coordinator with the "watch" is the one who should respond and take action. How the "squadron watch" is changed is left up to the squadron. The key is to ensure that there is at least one squadron coordinator interfacing with each ABC online student.

- **District Coordinator Qualifications.** When choosing a district coordinator, the DEO should look for the following:
  1. A member with e-mail access.
  2. A member who reads their e-mail on a regular basis (at minimum every other day).
  3. A member with knowledge of district geography.
  4. A member with good communication skills.

- **District Coordinator Responsibilities**
  A district coordinator's primary responsibility is routing messages. The ABC Server network routes messages to a district coordinator based upon the zip code of a student or someone making an inquiry about America's Boating Course. It is up to the district coordinator to decide which squadron within the district should ultimately handle that message. Once that determination has been made, the district coordinator simply forwards the message to the squadron contact. A district coordinator also has a responsibility to work with the DEO and the other district coordinator to coordinate changing the "district watch" so that there is continuous coverage.

  While the primary duty of the district coordinator is routing messages to the proper squadron, a coordinator should also be aware of the squadron contacts role. To be most effective, a district coordinator should be able to provide guidance and answer questions of the local contact. The district coordinator should:
  1. Ensure that the squadron contacts understand when **they are to update the contact database (as soon as they receive notification).**
  2. Be certain that the squadron contacts know how to access the contact update page on the web and perform the update.
  3. Be aware of the fact that all of the various messages are being sent by a computer system. "Replying" to one of these messages results in the response being sent back to the system. When responding to a request, use the e-mail address contained in the message body.

4. Verify that all of the squadron contact e-mail addresses are valid.
5. Ask the squadron contacts to notify them when they have updated the contact database.

- **Message Routing**

The key piece of information in the new student message is the zip code. Use this to assign the message to a squadron within your district. If you determine that the message does not belong in your district, forward the message to the chairman of the Basic Public Education Committee at BPECom@usps.org. If you are not familiar with which squadron is in which zip code, the best tool available is Dan Bartell's class locator on the USPS web site. Simply enter the zip code and it will return the closest classes AND the squadron offering them. Once the squadron has been determined simply forward the message to the squadron point of contact.

- **Message Types**

There are several different messages which the district coordinator may receive. The subject of the message indicates the type of message.

[**PIN: 30024 New Student - America's Boating Course**] - this messages is sent when a (new) student registers.

[**Student Reminder- America's Boating Course**] - this message is sent when 10 days have passed since the student registered and the student has not been contacted.

[**Student Alert - America's Boating Course**] - this message is sent when 15 days have passed since the student registered and the student has not been contacted (example below).

[**Request State Specific Info**] - this message is sent to the district coordinator when a student asks for state specific information and there is no local contact.

[**Request Exam**] - this message is sent to the district coordinator when a student asks for information on taking the exam and there is no local contact.

[**Request for Course Information**] - this message is sent to the district coordinator when a non-student asks for information about America's Boating Course.

All of these messages should be routed to a squadron. The reminder and alert messages indicate that the district coordinator has not passed the original "New Student" message along to a squadron or that the squadron has not taken action on the message. Receipt of an alert message may well warrant a phone call to determine whether messages are getting thru or if the squadron is having problems. Communicate any student problems to contactme@hq.usps.org and any technical issues to BPECom@usps.org.

- **Message Content**

The message content is similar for all message types. They will contain the date and time when the message was sent, information on the student or person making a request and information regarding the request itself. Example new student and Student Exam Completion massages follow.

=============QUOTE===

PIN: 40923 New Student - America's Boating Course

This message was sent on 05-Dec-16 05:01 PM

Come for the Boating Education...Stay for the Friends

With the advent of online testing your role will change somewhat.

- If your state does not allow an online course there will be no change in how we handle ABC 3 online students. You will just receive this notice. Please contact the student and offer assistance as before. The following states **have not approved** the on line version of Americas Boating Course with online final exam; AK, AR, CO, CT, GU, ID, KS, MA, LA, MT, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, OR, PA, RI, SD, TX, UT, VA, VI, VT and WY.
- If your state allows students to take a home study course but requires a proctored exam the student will receive a certificate saying they have completed the course and are eligible to take the final proctored exam. Please arrange for them to do so as soon as possible. You will not receive a second notice so it is important that you contact the student to offer assistance and tell them that you, or your designee, are the person to contact after they complete the course. The following states allow an online course with a proctored exam; NH, VA and RI.
- If your state allows an online course you will be notified when the student purchases the course, this notice, and again when they complete the final exam.

Please offer your, or a local squadron members, assistance to the student listed below. That assistance can include answering questions about state specific information or technical questions about the course. If your state does not allow online testing, inform the student on how to arrange for a proctored exam when they have completed the course.

Once you have made contact with this new student, Enter their Pin Number in the field on the link provided below and update their contact record with your:

- Name
- E-mail address
- Phone Number
- https://americasboatingcourse.com/database/ABC_USPSContact.cfm

This information is used to provide the student with a means to
contact you if he/she should lose the information you provided.
It will not be used in any other way.
Pin Number : 40923
First Name : ▮▮
Last Name : ▮▮▮
Address : 103 Blue Sage Rd
Address2 :

City : Panama City Beach
County : Florida
State : FL
Zip : 32413
CountryCode: US
Country : United States
E-Mail : bigjakewahoo@gmail.com
Phone ███████████
District : 15
E-Mail of the Coordinator : (D15 ABC 1) padipro@gulftel.com
Zip Code area : 324**

_____

PIN:40933 ABC Student Exam Completion

Come for the Boating Education…Stay for the Friends

The following student has completed the Americas Boating Course on line.
Please forward this information to the local squadron so they can invite
the graduate to a meeting and inform them of any upcoming classes or events.

Pin Number : 40933
First Name : ███████
Last Name : ██████
Address : 26643 BREN CT S
Address2 :
City : Daphne
State : AL
Zip : 36526
CountryCode: US
Country :
E-Mail : gzdjones@mediacombb.net
Phone : 2515101742

Group : United States Power Squadrons
District : (D15 ABC 2)
E-Mail of : padipro@gulftel.com
Contact
Zip Code : 36526
Area

=========================UNQUOTE===

Squadron Guide

The ideal "ABC Student Contact" knows all about the specifics of the state boating laws, likes people, wants to help, and knows how to "sell their squadron". Lacking all these capabilities, probably the most important skills are those involving people. If the student feels that the contact is someone who wants to help and is capable of providing that help, your squadron will be viewed as an attractive resource.

While we normally encounter state specific questions within the classroom, in the case of America's Boating Course, we need to provide the student with information so that they are prepared for the unique requirements of the state where they do their boating. This information may take the form of a state-supplied booklet or the web address for state boating regulations. It is important that the Student Contact have access to this information.

Since the Student Contact is probably the first USPS member the student will meet, it is important that the first impression be a good one. To make that first impression the best one possible, each Student Contact should have a "script" for that first contact. Emphasize the fact that the Student Contact is there to help and be sure to offer more information about squadron activities and education opportunities.

Establishing Contact with the New Student

The process of establishing contact between an America's Boating Course student and a local squadron requires a network. The network comprises the ABC Server, District Coordinators in each of our 32 districts, and Student Contacts in near 400 squadrons.

The squadron Student Contact is charged with sending the new student a **welcome** e-mail message. A suggested **welcome** note is provided in the appendix of this document. As soon as the initial **welcome** e-mail note has been sent to the new student it is important that the **online "contact" report** be completed. This online "contact" report is used by the system to turn off the reminder notices. The "new student" message contains the student's name, address, phone number, e-mail address, student PIN, and a website address (URL).

To make the online "contact" report:
1) go to website*: http://www.americasboatingcourse.com/database/ABC_USPSContact.cfm
2) enter the student PIN & retrieve the student's record
3) enter the contact's name, e-mail address, phone number, and date of contact
4) indicate USPS contact

* Note: the above URL does not include a blank space. The character that may appear as a blank is actually the "underscore or underline" character; same comment for all following URLs that seem to appear with a blank.

The online "contact" report is used to provide the student with a means to reach the local contact if he/she should lose the information provided. It will not be used in any other way. When you log on to the URL the "contact" report fields will be blank for a new student. Just fill in the fields with the requested info. The overall ABC network will send out two reminder messages to the District Coordinators if those fields remain blank. After the 2nd reminder, the system just gives up.

Student Exams

In-person, proctored examinations for online ABC students should be administered in much the same manner as any public boating course (refer to Exam Instructions in the appendix section). NASBLA

certification requires that we include state specific questions, when provided by the state, for public boating courses. The ABC internet student should be tested with the same state specific questions used when examining classroom students.

When the exam is given is a matter of scheduling between the squadron and the student. If the squadron has a class which will be taking their final exam in the near term, the squadron may ask the student to come and be tested with the class. If there are no classes underway, the examiner may ask the student to come to an agreed upon location for the exam. Or, if it is convenient, the examiner may choose to administer the exam at the student's home. Flexibility is the key. There are two exams for ABC, referred to as *ABC3 Exam 1A* and *ABC3 Exam 1B*. If the student fails the first exam, conduct remedial education then administer the second, retake exam. ABC exams and the answer key are imbedded in the ABC3 Instructor Manual CD or the exams may be ordered from the USPS material Catalog on the Educational Department homepage. The exam should be graded and the results provided as soon as the student completes answering the questions. A grade of 80% or greater is passing and the success recognized by presenting the Course Completion diploma and wallet card.

Examination process and reporting: it is very important to log the results of all successful examinations into the USPS student database using HQ800 software. The process is summarized below.

1. Have the student fill out the ED46 Class Registration Form. Minor-aged students (under 18) must have parent / guardian approval which is signified by the adult's signature on the ED46 before exam. The signed document is retained for 6 years. Complete appropriate state education.

Note: the ED46 Class Registration Form (04/14) is available for download from the Education Department home web page, "FORMS" tab in the right margin of the home page. It is a 2-page form that presents the data in sequence for data HQ800 data entry, review material on use of student data, and a place for adult signature of approval.

2. Fill in the ED26 examination answer sheet and administer the exam.

3. If possible, while the student is taking the examination, enter the course and student data into the ED26 form for transmission to HQ800. Also, if possible, print the wallet card and the Course Completion Certificate.

Note: this assumes (a) the examiner has an internet connection; (b) the examiner has a printer at the exam location; and (c) has the stock card forms.

4. Complete the administration of the examination and, when done, grade the exam using the answer key in the ABC3 Instructor Manual.

5. If 80% or more correct answers, then enter the passing grade in the ED26 student data. If not, re-educate and review before re-examining with the second examination.

6. If the proctored exam is satisfactorily completed, graduate the student and present the certificates created in step 3, above. Otherwise, complete the certificates manually and present. Mail to the student only as a last resort.

7. If membership is desired complete the application in the back of the student manual or use the on-line membership link at:
   http://www.usps.org/newpublic2/join.html

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will USPS HQ accept credit cards for ABC orders?
A: Yes, for individual orders.

Q: Must an individual purchase the course material in order to take an exam?
A: National has no requirement that a student purchase course material in order to take an exam. Squadrons may set whatever rules they wish — squadron option.

Q: Is there a fee for additional Proctored Examinations for family members using a single manual or for those retaking the test?
A: That is a decision for the squadron to make, as noted earlier.

Q: Does passing the USPS ABC examination meet the educational requirements for USPS membership?
A: YES. Although USPS has no education requirement for membership, certain squadrons may require the passing of a NASBLA "approved" basic boating knowledge course as a requirement for membership.

Q. What portion of the student manual addresses the NASBLA required material?
A. Chapters 1 – 4 cover all of the NASBLA requirements. Chapter 5 is optional, but highly recommended.

Q: Since ABC is NASBLA approved, can we tout reduced insurance rates?
A: Insurance companies individually decide on what basis discounts are provided. Companies may specify NASBLA approved courses, organizations, e.g., USPS, USCGAux, or a specific course. For any company that accepts NASBLA approved courses, ABC should qualify for reduced rates. Check with the insurance company involved.

APPENDIX

Welcome Aboard Template

The initial contact is important and we want to be sure that we convey a consistent message. Opportunities to influence the online student to join your squadron include:

      1. When the student enrolls for the online course, offering assistance to successful completion, especially state rules and laws information.

      2. Membership features and benefits upon successful course completion.

      3. If proctored exam required, discuss the logistics of scheduling and completion. It is important that the communication be accurate for the location where it is delivered.

      The following template can serve as the starting point for your squadron's Welcome Aboard message. The red text highlights space to provide for your location and course unique items. Many students will complete the course, final examination and diploma on-line. Some states require proctored examinations, and a few permit only class room courses. The latter would not be processed as internet students. If your squadron is located in a state which requires state specific questions on the exam, then your squadron would include the supplemental assessment examination approved by the state and available for download from the EdDept home web page. The template is a tool, modify it to compose your squadron's message. Just be sure it's accurate.

CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME ABOARD

Congratulations on your purchase of America's Boating Course 3rd Edition (ABC3), sponsored by the United States Power Squadrons (USPS).

My name is <squadron contact name> and I am a member of <squadron name> Power Squadron, a unit of United States Power Squadrons. I will be your Squadron Contact for the online America's Boating Course. I am available to answer any questions you may have regarding the course material and if you are required to complete the course with a proctored final examination, I will also refresh you on specific boating laws before the examination. We want you to feel confident and ready for the exam. When that time comes, we will schedule your exam.

"Welcome Aboard" to what we hope is only the beginning of enhancing your recreational boating skills. America's Boating Course provides the foundation, which is essential to making your boating experience enjoyable and safer. Upon this foundation, you will add knowledge and skills through our continuum of education. When conducting cross-border boating, you should remember to review the Navigation Rules and Regulations and those specific to your state.

<if state questions: This exam will cover all material covered in the course as well as the state specific information.>

<if no state questions: This exam will cover all material covered in the course.>

The course has been approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and is recognized by the U. S. Coast Guard. Access to your online course is gained by use of your last name and PIN at the ABC home page: http:americasboatingcourse.com and then clicking the 'Course Log In' button.

<if pre-registration indicates the student is a minor (under 18), include: I have attached a copy of the ED46 Course Registration Form (04/14) for review by your parent or guardian. After their review, please have them

sign the ED46 in the space provided on the front of the form and print their name below the signature. Their approval is required before we may administer the examination. If no further contact is desired from USPS after the course, they should check the "OPT-OUT" box on the form. The original copy of the ED46 Form is to be presented to the examining officer at time of examination.>

When you pass the online examination, you will be able to download the America's Boating Course Certificate of Completion and a wallet card showing that you have successfully completed this NASBLA approved course.
<state recognition: Successful completion of ABC3 meets most state's basic boating education requirements for state operating certificates and licenses.

Continuation of your boating education is encouraged and readily available from any United States Power Squadrons units in your area. Courses for members include: Seamanship, Piloting, Advanced Piloting, Junior Navigation, Navigation, Weather, Sail, Marine Electronics, Engine Maintenance, Cruise Planning and Instructor Qualification.

For more information about the United States Power Squadrons, please log on to our National web site at: http://www.usps.org.

<district web site: For more information about District <district number>, USPS, please log onto our District web site at: < district web site URL>.>

<squadron web site: To learn more about my local squadron, the <squadron name> Power Squadron, visit our web site at: <squadron web site URL>.>

Please save this Email note for future reference.

<squadron contact name> <squadron contact e-mail address>