



United States Power Squadrons Educational Department

Date: 12 February 2010

Subject: Guidelines: Squadrons/Districts Offering Educational Programs

Effective with the Annual Meeting on 6 February 2010, the restriction against squadrons instructing courses to the public has been removed from the National By-Laws. I believe it is a good time to summarize where we are and where we are going to assist squadrons and districts in planning and offering educational programs.

Any squadron, or district, can offer any USPS educational program to the public as well as members. That is not a requirement, it is an opportunity and choice left to the individual squadron. As I am sure you can all appreciate, many changes have taken place in the boating world over the past few years and newer and younger boaters are looking for different ways to learn. We must and will adapt.

However, you are asked to charge near market price for our courses to the public attendees with a deep discount to members, and discounts to USPS partner organizations. That is the public's inducement to join. We all recognize that commercial programs are available in many of our subjects at \$200 to \$500, and well attended – we believe ours are better. The additional proceeds from public attendees belong to the squadron or district that offered the course. We ask that you consider applying them to marketing efforts to attract more attendees to your courses and seminars. We will accommodate non-members taking exams and will make provisions for recording their results as soon as practical.

You can offer any course, seminar, or Boat Operator Certification to anyone. There is no specific order or prerequisites for taking courses. However to earn BOC certification, a boater must complete the prescribed curriculum and demonstrate the defined skills. For a member to achieve the grade of Advanced Piloting or higher, he or she must have first completed Seamanship and Piloting but they can be completed after other courses. To achieve the grade of Senior Navigator (SN) (formerly known as a “full certificate”) a member must successfully complete all five Advanced Grade courses and any six Elective Courses. Shortly, we will have eight electives and we are in the process of adding an extra equivalent elective that can be achieved by completing any 6 or more seminars. We expect squadrons to support USPS and purchase the program materials from USPS rather than using third party materials or offering other programs.

There is a clear trend with newer and younger boaters to want programs offered for home study or over the internet. We are moving in that direction. Seamanship is already offered as an internet course as is America's Boating Course. The on-line price of ABC has recently been raised to \$49.95 and it includes 6-months membership in the Cyber Squadron.



V/C Robert J. Sweet, SN • National Educational Officer
54 Cash's Trail, Waquoit, MA 02536 • 508-495-4300 • aep@mindspring.com

Our objective with on-line and internet programs is to drive boaters to squadrons. Each individual taking one of these programs is provided with contacts in local squadrons and the local squadrons are given the individual's contact information. This is the same as for those joining the Cyber Squadron directly from the usps.org web site.

We will be packaging more of our materials to be offered directly to the public through our web site, partners and selected outlets. Our retail pricing strategy is intended to be high enough to minimize competing with our squadrons. Most boaters also recognize a premium value for classroom instruction. Our mission is to engage a broader cross section of boaters with our programs and find ways to induce them to connect with a local squadron.

To counter trends away from the classroom, we are emphasizing hands-on, skills-based training and on the water training – you can't do that on the internet. We all must adapt. USPS' greatest strengths are our quality programs and our extensive base of experienced, instructor-members located wherever people boat. That is how we function and it is how we get and retain members – direct interaction.

On the marketing front, we are working closely with the marine trades and marine manufacturers to foster close bonds that support our programs. Marine dealers are looking for ways to attract and train boaters and most welcome USPS to come and offer seminars, courses, and materials for their customers and prospects. To be effective, we must be there when needed and ready to offer the programs they want. On-line and internet offerings are gap-fillers that you can offer as alternatives between sessions of your classroom programs.

We are emphasizing on the water training and are in the process of training hundreds of certifiers across the country. We are well into "Practical On The Water Training" program sponsored by a grant from the Coast Guard. We will purchase tools to support hands-on training and are in the process of renewing the teaching aids program which is vital to hands-on training. Let's return to what we do best – train boaters. We've removed the shackles making it easier to offer programs and recruit members. We will continue to make connections with the boating industry that can help you, and continue to provide the best materials and tools to train with.

We are also asking districts to step up to the plate and coordinate activities across squadrons so we can present a comprehensive and coherent slate of programs in each part of the country. We want boaters to know we are there, where we are, and what they can get from us.

Share your successes and ideas. You are all members of the USPS Educational Department.

Best regards,

