Squadrons at Risk ... A Guide to Revitalization

D.10 Introduction. All squadrons experience some ups and downs throughout the years of their existence. Some squadrons are able to weather these storms, while others cannot.

The National Membership Committee (MEMCOM) is available to assist squadrons whether they participate in the program or not. Contact the chairman; the name, address, phone number and email address are listed in the inside back cover of The Ensign under the Administrative Department.

D.11 Characteristics of a Squadron at Risk.
There are many varied factors that can describe a Squadron at Risk. The size of a squadron is not necessarily a factor. If a squadron has sufficient willing and capable members to perform all required functions, and it also meets the needs and expectations of its membership and community, the squadron is not at risk.

The main characteristic of a squadron that appears to be “At Risk” is a general lack of interest by its members. This is evident in the following areas:

• No strong leaders
• Not able to fill bridge/chairman positions with “new” members, requiring the recycling of “veteran” members in these positions
• Decline in membership and no gain in new members
• Not able to conduct educational courses
• Very poor attendance at meetings
• Strong cliques
• No social activities, due to lack of attendance or interest
• Not able to participate in civic service projects due to lack of volunteers - that is, vessel safety check, cooperative charting, community service, et cetera
• Completed forms required by district and national are not submitted
• Lack of communication with district personnel - including attending district meetings.

D.12 Support Available.
The National Membership Committee representative will:

• Help determine problem areas
• Monitor the squadron's progress
• Notify the Chair of the National Membership Committee (ChMEMCOM) if other areas require assistance.

The National Membership Committee chairman will:

• Notify the district and the respective national committee chairmen of the need for assistance
• Provide contact information for the national and district personnel assigned to assist the squadron
• Obtain additional assistance, if needed.

The national committees and your district will provide:

• Guidance
• Resources
• Leadership training
• Available manpower in the area.

Neighboring squadrons may also be a source of support by providing instructors for the classes, and including the membership in their boating activities and socials. Members may also participate in their educational program.

It doesn't matter if the squadron has Squadron at Risk status or not, there is a lot of help out there. JUST ASK!

D.13 How to Function as a Squadron at Risk.
The squadron may need to change its organizational structure and limit committees and activities to those that are essential.

Primary Goals
• Leadership Training
• Member Recruitment
• Member Involvement
Combining Duties

There is no limit to the amount of appointed positions a member may hold, unless it creates a conflict of interest. Officers may also hold appointed positions.

A vessel safety check committee chairman can be safety officer. A cooperative charting committee chairman can be boating activities committee chairman. A commander can be public relations officer. An educational officer can be membership committee chairman and operations training committee chairman. A secretary/treasurer can be editor. Many combinations are possible, but only members who are interested in a particular area should be appointed to that area.

The vital committees for a Squadron at Risk are operations training (to develop new leaders), public relations (to attract students to public boating courses), and membership recruitment/involvement (to gain new members and to provide any activities that will keep the membership involved).

REMEMBER! The National Membership Committee representative and the district are available to assist.

D.14 Tips for Recovery

Maintain a positive attitude.
Be willing to accept change.

Accepting the fact that the squadron is “At Risk” is the most critical issue for the squadron's recovery. Identifying specific problems is also necessary.

Schedule an executive committee meeting to develop a plan:

- List areas needing improvement in order of priority
- List possible manpower resources
- Select specific short term goals
- Select specific long term goals
- Determine required time-frames to meet each of the goals.

Then, put the plan into action.

Select committee chairmen and workers wisely. Only appoint members who are capable and willing to do the assigned task. There will be more than enough different tasks requiring varied skills and time commitments to accommodate every member of the squadron - from creating ads to making phone calls. A deficiency in any assigned task can cause a chain reaction. For example, inadequate publicity for public courses will cause smaller classes, and, as a result, fewer new members.

The important thing to remember is that goals implemented by capable and willing members are essential for the squadron's recovery.

D.15 Common Problems and Solutions

Each Squadron at Risk will have some problems to deal with that are unique to its own unit. However, there are problems that are common to most Squadrons at Risk. The following highlights some of those problems and solutions that have worked for other squadrons:

Insufficient number of members willing to assume leadership positions

- Accept the fact that almost no one will volunteer. Contact all members. They may cooperate, if they know they are really needed
- Provide training
- Lower qualifications, request waiver of grade and/or merit mark
- Actively seek possible candidates, and groom them for specific future positions.

Committee chairman is not doing job or members are not willing to work with the chairman

- Give the chairman a “promotion”, with a prestigious title for a created position that is not really essential, and appoint a new chairman
- Appoint a co-chairman who works well with others.

Lack of students for public boating courses

- Publicity
Options for a Squadron at Risk. There are many people and programs available to assist squadrons upon request. Contact the National Membership Committee representative and the district commander for help and suggestions for improving the squadron. Some suggestions are:

- Take advantage of programs offered by USPS such as Leadership Development and New Member Orientation
- Request borrowing a strong leader from a nearby squadron
- Contact members who have not renewed
- Request help from a person who has enthusiasm and is a strong leader. (This may be a new member)
- Try to get co-chairmen for important committees to avoid overwhelming someone when serving as chairman (membership, social functions, newsletter, etc.)
- Inform officers and committee chairmen of their specific duties. (See Squadron Job Descriptions Manual)
- Contact members who are retired or semi-retired who now may have time to help the squadron
- Instead of preparing a formal newsletter, send out a monthly note with just basic information. This will be easier and less costly
- Work with a nearby squadron to share the teaching of classes
- Strongly discourage cliques
- Show committees how they can work with other committees to achieve a common goal with the least amount of effort.
A periodic review of the squadron's performance in each department will reveal any areas that may not be meeting the needs of the membership or the community. Act promptly to correct any deficiencies as soon as they are known. A problem left unresolved may cause many others.

Contact the National Membership Committee representative or the district commander at the first sign of any problem. They are available willing and able to assist the squadron avoiding being a squadron at risk!
**Appendix A**

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**SQUADRON SELF-EVALUATION**

Each squadron is different and what works for one squadron may or may not work in another. Experience teaches us that there are certain measurements that will help you to perform a self-evaluation of your squadron’s “health.”

Listed below is a series of questions based upon “last watch year.” Mark (X) the most appropriate response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Squadron Name</th>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Need To Improve *</th>
<th>Need Help *</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A squadron newsletter was/is published regularly.</td>
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<td>2. General meetings were held regularly.</td>
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<td>3. General meetings frequently had guest speakers or programs.</td>
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<td>4. General meetings were well attended.</td>
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<td>5. The squadron had an active public relations program</td>
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<td>6. The squadron filled each Bridge position without “recycling”.</td>
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<td>7. Squadron membership increased 3% or more.</td>
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<td>8. The squadron retained 85% or more of its members.</td>
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<td>9. The squadron conducted two or more Boating or Boat Smart Courses.</td>
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<td>10. More members took an Advanced Grade course than the previous year.</td>
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<td>11. More members took an Elective Course than the previous year.</td>
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<td>12. At least 5% of the members attended a district function.</td>
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<td>13. Reports to the district and national were submitted on time.</td>
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<td>14. The squadron scheduled at least two on-the-water activities.</td>
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<td>15. The squadron had an active Cooperative Charting program</td>
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<td>16. The squadron was involved in community activities.</td>
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<td>17. The squadron holds informal social events (picnics, dinners, etc.).</td>
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<td>18. Projects are assigned to bridge officers and Committee Chairs and completed.</td>
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<td>19. At least 35% of squadron members earned a merit mark.</td>
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*Place extended comments on a separate sheet, keyed to line number.:

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Commander | Date
Appendix B

A HELP LIST FOR SQUADRONS AT RISK

1) Complete the Self Evaluation Form to identify problems (forms available from Squadron Development Committee).

2) Communicate with Membership Committee.

3) Develop a three-year plan to include but not limited to:
   • Membership Growth is Top Priority
   • Use National Membership Committee's Current Recruitment Techniques
   • Increase the number of Public Boating Courses
   • Aggressive Publicity of Public Courses, Technique and Frequency
   • Aggressive Community Awareness Effort
   • Identify and Use the Best Instructors
   • Review the Number and Type of Squadron Meetings
   • Review the Number of Committee Chairs Needed
   • Number of Bridge Positions, that is, Combine Sec/Treas, XO/AO, et cetera
   • Revise Job Descriptions
   • Frequency of Member Courses
   • Review and Update Community Service Projects

4) Obtain Assistance from nearby Squadrons and/or District who:
   • Open their Advance and Elective Courses to Squadron Members
   • Provide Mentoring
   • Assign Aides
   • Loan a Leader or Instructors

5) Recruit or Appoint New Squadron Leadership, Bridge, Executive Committee and Committees.

6) Utilize Current National Committees' Techniques and/or Procedures for All Squadron Activities.

7) Understand the minimal USPS Requirements to be a Squadron and Request Your District to accept these minimal requirements from your squadron at this time.
Appendix C

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SQUADRON INTERNAL REVIEW

Each squadron is different and what works for one squadron may or may not work for another. Experience teaches that there are many ways for a squadron to be successful. The list below includes some of those items. Review this form with your Executive Committee to determine which items are relevant to your squadron, and then ignore any non-relevant items. Use this form as an internal review of your squadron’s overall strengths and weaknesses. Your progress should be reviewed with the Executive Committee at 4 or 6-month intervals to make the most of this tool.

If you wish help with any problem areas, please contact your District or National counterpart and District Support Committee.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Squadron Name</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Need To Improve</th>
<th>Need Help</th>
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</table>

**Squadron Management**

1. Did the squadron fill each Bridge position without “recycling”?
2. Is an agenda distributed to the bridge prior to each meeting?
3. Are the squadron’s Bylaws up to date?
4. Does your squadron have an up to date list of Policies and Practices?
5. Are your Policies and Practices reviewed each year?
6. Does each Bridge Officer have a squadron manual outlining their duties and containing tools to help with their jobs?
7. Does your Nominating Committee have written operating procedures?
8. Has each Bridge Officer completed Operations Training?
9. Has each Bridge Officer attended an Officer Training program? (District or Squadron)
10. Does the squadron have a Planning Committee?
11. Do you use the Planning Committee for long range planning or brainstorming?
12. Are projects assigned to Bridge Officers and Committee Chairs completed?
13. Are reports to District and National submitted on time?

**Squadron Finances**

1. Did the squadron develop and implement a realistic budget?
2. Does the squadron have a reserve equaling 2 to 3 times the annual budget or better?
3. Does your squadron have an effective renewal program with checks to National and District and membership cards mailed on time?
4. Does the squadron have a system of vouchers to track disbursements?
5. Does your squadron have a tax-exempt form from your state for squadron purchases?
6. Does your Treasurer have the National Treasurer’s Manual

**Meetings**

1. Are General Membership Meetings held regularly?
2. Do General Membership Meetings frequently have guest speakers or programs?
3. Do General Membership Meetings have refreshments of some type?
4. Are General Membership Meetings well attended?
5. Do General Membership Meetings allow time for members to socialize?
6. Are Executive Committee meetings held regularly?
7. Is most squadron business conducted at Executive Committee Meetings?
**Squadron Name**  ________________________________

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Are meetings held in a professional manner i.e. with a written agenda, Roberts Rules?</td>
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<td>9. Is the <strong>USPS Operations Manual</strong> used?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Are <em>Roberts Rules of Order</em> followed?</td>
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**Public Relations**
1. Does the squadron have an active public relations program?
2. Do you advertise the **Public Boating Courses**?
3. Do you advertise **VSC** (Vessel Safety Checks)?
4. Do you post flyers, hang banners or post notices in another way?
5. Do you advertise in the local papers or the cable channel?
6. Have you used the resources of the **National PR website**?

**Communication**
1. Is a squadron newsletter published regularly?
2. Has a squadron website been created and updated regularly?
3. Is a squadron e-mail list used for communication with members and bridge members?
4. Is a Telephone Committee used for communication with members?

**Membership and Retention**
1. Has squadron membership increased moving toward or surpassing our 3% goal?
2. Has the squadron retention rate increased moving toward our goal of 85% or more?
3. Has the squadron conducted two or more **Boating or Boat Smart Courses**?
4. Have you used the **USPS Membership** website for ideas?

**Education**
1. Have more members taken an Advanced Grade course than the previous year?
2. Have more members taken an Elective Course than the previous year?
3. Do you have an **Instructor Development** program?
4. Does the SEO visit all of the classes conducted by your squadron?
5. Have you used the **USPS Education Dept Website**?

**Squadron Activities**
1. Does the squadron schedule at least two on-the-water activities each year?
2. Does the squadron have an active **Cooperative Charting** program?
3. Is the squadron involved in community activities?
4. Does the squadron hold informal social events (picnics, dinners, etc.).
5. Do at least 35% of squadron members earn a merit mark?
6. Do all the committee chairs and officers earn MM?
7. Do at least 5% of the members attend each District Conference?

* Place extended comments on a separate sheet, keyed to line number:

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Commander ___________________________ Date ____________