



Coast Guard rescue crews worked together, Nov. 8, 2009, to help an injured crewmember aboard a sailboat near Matinicus Island, Maine. A 47-foot boatcrew from Coast Guard Station Rockland launched to the scene and escorted the *Shiela*, a 27-foot sailboat, to meet an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew from Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod, who would airlift the patient.

District 1: From Maine to Shrewsbury River, N.J.

Focused on mission excellence and managing the risk

By J.R. Wilson

The U.S. Coast Guard's 1st District covers most of New England, from New York to Maine, an area that calls into play all 11 of the service's primary missions, including an expanding international role. The district also is home to – but does not administer – the Coast Guard Academy, Research and Development Center, six cutters managed by Coast Guard Atlantic Area, and two Maritime Safety and Security Teams.

It is responsible, however, for the Coast Guard's role in the International Ice Patrol Operations Center, created in 1914 in response to the 1912 sinking of the *Titanic*, and participates with the 20 countries that formed the collaborative North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum in 2007.

"Search and rescue [SAR], marine safety, fisheries enforcement, and ports, waterways and coastal security are our major efforts," District Commander Rear Adm. Daniel A. Neptun said. "We do some drug interdiction and migrant interdiction whenever people attempt to illegally cross the northern border; we safely escort ships loaded with military hardware and materiel heading for Southwest Asia; and we partner with state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies to make sure large regattas and other maritime events go well, including fireworks displays in New York City.

"Other missions include domestic ice breaking during the winter on the Hudson River and approaches to different harbors, particularly from Boston north; maintaining thousands of aids to navigation [ATON] wherever there are U.S. navigable waters; and providing prompt disaster response. A large focus for New England is living marine resources, so we also partner with other federal entities, such as NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] and its National Marine Fisheries Service, to work the invaluable near and far offshore fisheries. We also cooperate with Canadian enforcement agencies in that regard."

The district comprises 2,800 active-duty, 940 Reserve, 246 civilian, and 5,600 Auxiliary personnel (one of the largest Auxiliary contingents in the Coast Guard), operating in all or part of eight northeastern states. Covering 2,000 miles of shoreline, it is home to 10 of the busiest ports (by tonnage) in the country, including Boston; New York City; Portland, Maine; New Haven, Conn.; and Providence, R.I.

"We have two very large Auxiliary regions that do many things for us, including daily flights for pollution surveillance and ports, waterways, and coastal security to look for any anomalies along the navigable waterways. They cover the ports in New York, sometimes Maine, and the Hudson River, where we have few resources along



Left: The boathouse at Coast Guard Station Menemsha, Mass., burns, July 12, 2010. Coast Guard crews and local responders worked throughout the afternoon and into the night to extinguish the fire. **Bottom:** The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter *Morro Bay* work to maintain a navigable track through the water while approaching the Hudson Lighthouse near Hudson, N.Y., on the Hudson River, Jan. 6, 2010. The *Morro Bay* is a 140-foot Bay-class cutter used for ice breaking operations and ports, waterways, and coastal security missions. The cutter is one of five Coast Guard assets assigned to break ice on the Hudson River throughout the season.



(including utility, response, ATON, and special-purpose law enforcement craft), and eight aircraft at Air Station Cape Cod: four Falcon HU-25C Guardian jets and four Sikorsky MH-60J Jayhawk twin-engine recovery helicopters.

Many of the district's resources in recent years have been devoted to marine safety issues related to what Neptun termed a "phenomenal growth" in New England of people buying inexpensive – but potentially dangerous – canoes and kayaks.

"With support from the Auxiliary and others, including retailers that sell these paddle craft, we began having open houses to teach kayak and canoe owners and would-be owners how to enjoy that kind of boating activity in a safe manner," he said. "The statistic I find most shocking is about half the fatalities involving recreational boats happen with non-motorized smallboats, including sailboats, and 80 percent of those fatalities involve people falling overboard or the vessel capsizing.

"Of the number who fell overboard, 90 percent of the fatalities involved people not wearing personal flotation devices. So one thing Operation Paddle Smart focuses on is making sure people understand the importance of wearing floatation gear. Even in the summer, the water in Maine and New Hampshire is cold and it doesn't take long to lose the motor skills that boaters need to save themselves."

There also are occasions when 1st District boats and aircraft may be called upon to use deadly force to combat smugglers and suspected terrorists.

"We have trained all five of our sectors in the proper use of airborne use of force [AUF], to include Air Station Cape Cod, which is our only district air station; we also get support from Air Station Atlantic City to cover New York City. Whenever big national events are scheduled or

that important waterway," Neptun said. "Auxiliarists also are involved in vessel exams, public education, safety patrols, and a variety of other important tasks. They provide continuity as people move through our stations and bring a wonderful training capability to each unit, teaching new members the unique nomenclature, hazardous areas for boaters, and high-volume/seasonal habits of the regional boating population.

"We benefit from [auxiliarists] who have filled in as chefs when unit cooks go on leave. One notable example was in July,

when the boathouse at Station Menemsha on Martha's Vineyard [Mass.] caught fire. A married couple of Auxiliary chefs were serving at that station at the time and fed the crew and federal, state, and local investigators, helping keep up morale for a number of days after the fire."

Subdivided into five sectors – Northern New England, Boston, Southeastern New England, Long Island Sound, and New York – the district is home to six medium endurance cutters (210-270 feet), 12 patrol boats (87-110 feet), six buoy tenders, 12 tugs (140 feet and 65 feet), 197 smallboats



Rear Adm. Daniel Neptun, commander, 1st Coast Guard District, and Nancy Hurlburt, assistant commissioner Maritimes Region, Canadian Coast Guard, sign the Atlantic Geographic Annex on June 29, 2010. The Annex is part of a regional response plan that covers the marine boundary between the United States and Canada and defines the Joint Response Team.

the president is in the district for a day or longer, we have AUF capabilities at the ready," Neptun said.

"Later this year, Air Station Cape Cod will switch to the MH-60T [medium-range recovery helicopter], a much more capable AUF platform. And in the next year, the Falcon jets will begin replacement by the fixed-wing CASA HC-144 Ocean Sentry turboprop, which doesn't have the speed of the Falcon jet, but has increased sensor capabilities and can stay aloft for longer sorties."

In March 2010, Sector Northern New England partnered with Shell Oil Co. to conduct a Spills Of National Significance (SONS) exercise that included the first test of using a national incident commander (NIC) to manage a large, multi-jurisdictional oil spill. Although the simulation off the coast of Portland, Maine, had oil drifting down the East Coast, Canada also was involved, determining how to respond should such a spill move in their direction.

One month later, the SONS exercise became reality, many times over, when BP's Deepwater Horizon oil platform exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, creating the largest oil spill in U.S. history. It also was the first real implementation of the NIC, a role filled by Coast Guard Adm. Thad W. Allen, who retired as commandant, but stayed on as the NIC. He was supported by responders from local, state, and federal agencies, industry, and the services; at one point at the peak of the spill response, 20 percent of 1st District personnel were deployed in the Gulf.

"One reason we sent so many people to Deepwater Horizon was that we had just completed training a month earlier on the NIC and unified area command incident command structures," Neptun

said. "The SONS was a great test of that concept and gave us tools that helped us be more effective in the Gulf - which was much larger than the exercise had conceived - and so we sent a lot of SONS exercise trained people into the response in the early days."

With the arrival of new aircraft and the new 45-foot response boat-medium, replacing the venerable 41-foot utility boat, Neptun plans to reorganize his district's smallboat assets to best meet its missions and prepare for contingencies.

"We'll probably move some of our larger boats to optimize the complement at different stations. For example, some stations have three or four different types of boats, which creates a bigger training challenge. So to the degree I'm able, we will streamline the standard boat types to two or at most three so that our crews will be knowledgeable and current on the boat types that best support the requirements of each station's unique AOR [area of responsibility]," he concluded. "We also are trying to lean forward and find ways to use green energy; so, as funding allows, we are experimenting with solar, wind, and tidal current-driven systems at some of our units.

"I want to make sure we continue to be able to focus on mission excellence and manage the risk that goes with working in an often-challenging maritime environment, where it can be cold, where you can have high seas, where we have to be ready for major storms. In the Coast Guard, you never know what is going to happen tomorrow, but I want to make sure we are optimally trained, the risk is managed, and our people are taken care of, always. These are my focus areas."