



CHATHAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP # OPS-035

EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/01/20

MARINE PATROL OPERATIONS

REVISION DATE: 02/27/25

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the operation of the Marine Patrol unit.

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the CCPD Marine Patrol Unit to promote boating and water safety and provide fair and equitable enforcement of federal, state and local marine laws.

DISCUSSION:

The Chatham County Marine Patrol (CCMP), a division within the Chatham County Police Department (CCPD) is committed to providing a safe environment to the residents and guests of Chatham County. The geography of Chatham County and its water-based activities requires the use of marine law enforcement assets and officers to complete missions and answer calls for service associated with a coastal community.

I. MARINE UNIT ORGANIZATION AND SUPERVISION

- A. The Marine Patrol Unit shall be commanded by a supervisor who is appointed by and reports directly to the Chief of Police or his designee.
- B. The Marine Patrol Unit supervisor shall:
 - 1. Ensure that vessels are always adequately staffed for daily operation given the mission and weather conditions;
 - 2. Ensure that officers assigned to the unit are properly trained in vessel operations, unit duties and responsibilities, and various aspects of marine law enforcement through:
 - a. Specialized basic marine unit training;
 - b. Advanced marine unit training; and
 - c. Mandatory in-service training.
 - 3. Coordinate daily unit operations and missions to promote boating safety and enforcement of applicable laws;
 - 4. Ensure vessels are routinely cleaned and maintained by unit personnel;
 - 5. Ensure vessel motors and hull undergo regular maintenance, inspection and repair by unit personnel or contract vendors; and

6. Review and approve reports generated by officers assigned to the unit.
- C. The Marine Patrol Unit's hours of operation generally vary seven days a week.
- D. The unit supervisor shall adjust work hours and schedules to accommodate special events, holidays or enforcement activity.

II. MARINE UNIT OFFICER QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

- A. Whenever there is a vacancy, an Officer may submit a transfer request to the Chief of Police with the following criteria:
 1. Minimum of one(1) year uniform law enforcement experience.
 2. Good standing with current Law Enforcement Agency or CCPD.
 3. No disciplinary action for the last 6 months.
 4. No sustained use of force complaints.
 5. Pass IADRS Watermanship test. ([see Addendum 1](#))
 6. Enter all of the police vessels from the water unassisted.
 7. With the assistance of another officer, pull a 180-pound training weight onto a police vessel.
 8. Ability to respond to any area of Chatham County within thirty-five (35) minutes of call out.
 9. Work towards USCG Captains Licensing. Begin within one year.
 10. Work towards Mercury Technician Certification. One Year(1).
- B. Officers must successfully :
 1. Complete a 4-6 week in-house basic marine unit training with an experienced Marine Patrol officer and successfully complete the Georgia DNR boating safety course; and
 2. Demonstrate proficiency in the operation of all department vessels.

III. VESSEL MARKINGS AND EQUIPMENT

- A. Department watercraft shall be marked with a sufficient number of decals that identifies them as "LAW ENFORCEMENT" vessels.
- B. At a minimum, department vessels shall be equipped with the following items:
 1. Lights;
 2. Sirens;
 3. Two-way police radio;
 4. Two-way VHF radio;
 5. Public address (PA) system;
 6. USCG approved, non-toxic, dry chemical fire extinguisher;
 7. First aid kit;

8. USCG approved spare infant, child, and adult personal flotation devices (PFD);
9. Rescue rope and throw bag;
10. Tool kit;
11. Sufficient dock lines;
12. Sufficient fenders;
13. Distress/flare kit;
14. Whistle/audible signal device; and
15. Anchor.

IV. UNIFORMS AND PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- A. Marine Unit officers shall wear the uniform of the day, approved by the Chief of Police and determined by the unit supervisor.
- B. In addition to standard issued equipment such as firearms, ammunition, handcuffs, gun belts and portable radios, unit officers shall be issued additional department approved uniform items to include:
 1. USCG approved PFD with attached whistle;
 2. Dark colored non-marking footwear suitable for use on the water;
 3. One or two piece yellow rain gear;
 4. Proper eyewear shall be worn when operating a vessel;
 5. One or two piece black, blue, or orange Gore-Tex rain gear;
 6. Cold weather patrol jacket or two-piece long sleeve fleece jacket with embroidered department badge; and
 7. Black baseball cap or khaki "boonie" military style hat with embroidered Marine Patrol.

V. VESSEL MISSIONS AND OPERATION

- A. The department operates several different vessels to include:
 1. Eight Standard patrol boats ranging from 20' to 26' in length;
 2. Two Enclosed all-weather boats, 27' and 35' in length;
 3. One 15' call-out boat, Five 14' Jon boats
- B. Department vessels shall be used only for official business and shall be operated in a safe manner at all times.
- C. The unit supervisor shall determine which vessel will be assigned to the Marine Patrol officers. Each officer shall be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of their assigned vessel. An officer will not use another assigned vessel without first getting approval from the Unit Commander or his designee.
- D. The vessel operator is solely responsible for the safety of his/her vessel and/or crew.
- E. Other officers/crew members shall obey all instructions and orders issued by the

operator in charge of the police vessel. No officer other than those assigned to the Unit shall operate the vessel unless in an emergency and at the direction of the officer-in-charge of the vessel.

- F. When vessels are underway, all persons on board shall wear a USCG approved PFD.
- G. During severe weather or sea conditions and when conducting rescue operations, officers shall wear non-inflatable USCG approved PFDs.
- H. The vessel operator shall have the authority to refuse or delay a mission that may unnecessarily endanger the operator, crew, passengers or vessel:
 - 1. Due to adverse weather conditions;
 - 2. When the scope of the mission is beyond the capabilities of the crew and vessel; and
 - 3. When the risks outweigh the likelihood of success.
- I. Whenever the vessel operator refuses or delays a mission, the vessel operator shall immediately consult with the unit supervisor to determine the best course of action to accomplish the objective.
- J. Requests for Marine Unit assistance by outside agencies shall be immediately forwarded to the unit supervisor or his designee for approval.
- K. When responding to inherently dangerous situations that are manpower intensive, the vessel operator shall, whenever possible, pick up an additional officer(s) prior to responding to the situation.
- L. Persons in need of assistance may be transported onboard department vessels to a safe place as the need arises.
- M. Prior to embarking on a department vessel, guests, visitors or media personnel must:
 - 1. Obtain permission from the Unit Supervisor; or his designee
 - 2. Receive a safety briefing; and
 - 3. Wear a USCG approved PFD.
- N. When securing a department vessel to a dock, vessel operators shall use:
 - 1. At least two (2) dock lines and two (2) fenders during normal weather conditions; and
 - 2. Multiple spring lines in inclement weather.
- O. The vessel operator prior to his/her shift conduct a vessel inspection to check for damage and to assess the condition and status of equipment to include:
 - 1. Motors;
 - 2. Hull;
 - 3. Fuel;
 - 4. Electrical system;
 - 5. Radios and electronics;

6. Mooring lines and fenders;
 7. Water in the bilge;
 8. Safety equipment; and
 9. USCG approved PFDs
- P. The vessel operator shall:
1. Perform routine vessel maintenance as needed and wash the vessel with a brush, soap, and water periodically.
 2. When trailering a vessel, the officer shall ensure:
 - a. The trailer is properly secured to the tow vehicle;
 - b. The vessel is properly secured to the trailer; and
 - c. The trailer lights are operational.

VI. VESSEL STOPS AND BOARDINGS

- A. Marine Patrol officers shall conduct vessel stops and boardings to:
1. Promote boating safety;
 2. Educate the public on boating rules and regulations;
 3. Conduct safety inspections; and
 4. Enforce violations of state statutes
- B. During a vessel stop or boarding, officers shall:
1. Take precautions to prevent damage to either vessel;
 2. If weather or sea conditions warrant, the stopped vessel shall be directed to the nearest dock; and
 3. Absent exigent circumstances, people onboard the stopped vessel shall remain on their vessel.

VII. BOATING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

- A. Boating accidents shall be investigated pursuant to Title 52 OCGA.
- B. Pursuant to Title 52 OCGA, a written report of a boating accident is required within 48 hours if:
1. A person dies within 24 hours of the accident;
 2. A person is disabled for more than 24 hours
 3. A person requires medical treatment for injuries;
 4. A person disappears from a vessel
- C. Reports of reportable boating accidents must be made within five (5) days if not earlier.

VIII. EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND VESSEL PURSUITS

- A. When deciding to engage in a vessel pursuit, the marine patrol officer shall

continuously balance the seriousness of the offense and the potential danger to life and property against the likelihood of apprehension.

B. Officers shall also consider the following factors when deciding to initiate or continue a vessel pursuit:

1. The officer's training and experience conducting vessel pursuits;
2. The police vessel's condition and performance capabilities;
3. The pursued vessel's condition and performance capabilities;
4. The officer's familiarity with the area;
5. The police vessel's electronic communications and navigation capabilities;
6. The number of occupants onboard the pursued vessel;
7. Sea and weather conditions;
8. Visibility and lighting conditions;
9. Other vessel and swimmer traffic in the area;
10. The possibility of operator identification and apprehension at a later date / time and
11. The posted regulatory and navigation signage, waterway obstructions and dangers.

C. At the commencement of a vessel pursuit, officers shall notify the communications center dispatch and an on-duty supervisor via radio of:

1. The fleeing vessel's location, speed and direction of travel;
2. The reason for the pursuit;
3. A description of the vessel, including registration number;
4. The number of occupants onboard the vessel; and
5. The vessel's entry into another jurisdiction.

D. During a vessel pursuit, officers shall:

1. Activate emergency lights, sirens and other signal devices for the duration of the pursuit; and
2. Request air support whenever possible.

E. During a vessel pursuit, officers shall not:

1. Exhaust the police vessel's fuel supply;
2. Engage in a pursuit if transporting civilians or prisoners.

F. When police vessels are engaged in a pursuit:

1. No more than two (2) police vessels shall actively pursue at any given time;
2. The police vessel closest to the suspect vessel shall concentrate on following the violator;

3. The second police vessel shall handle radio communications and relay the pursuit conditions and direction of travel; and
 4. Additional police vessels shall not actively engage in the pursuit but shall act as perimeter or support vessels.
- G. Officers may pursue a fleeing vessel outside of the Chatham County's jurisdiction when in fresh and continuous pursuit of a felon.
- H. Unless deadly force is authorized, officers shall not:
1. Set up a vessel roadblock;
 2. Use the box-in technique on another vessel;
 3. Intentionally ram another vessel;
 4. Force another vessel to run aground; and
 5. Force another vessel into a fixed object.
- I. If another agency pursues a vessel into Chatham County Jurisdiction, CCMP officers shall:
1. Not enter the pursuit unless specifically requested by the other agency; and
 2. Terminate the pursuit as soon as the suspect vessel leaves the Chatham County jurisdiction.
- J. Officers shall consider the following factors when deciding to terminate a pursuit:
1. The seriousness of the offense and the potential danger to life and property against the likelihood of apprehension;
 2. The distance between the police vessel and the suspect vessel is so great that continued pursuit is futile;
 3. The suspect vessel's performance and capabilities are superior to those of the police vessel;
 4. Visual contact with the suspect vessel is lost for a sustained or significant time period;
 5. The police vessel loses continuous or satisfactory radio contact with the communications center;
 6. The suspect vessel cease to be a public threat; and
 7. The suspect vessel or operator can be identified or apprehend at a later date *I* time.
- K. The ranking Marine Patrol officer may order a pursuit termination at any time.
- L. During an emergency vessel response, officers shall:
1. Activate emergency lights, sirens and other signal devices for the duration of the response.

IX. ARREST AND PRISONER TRANSPORT

- A. Prisoners shall wear a USCG approved PFD at all times while on a police vessel.
- B. Prisoners shall be handcuffed in front or behind the back at the discretion of the vessel operator.
- C. Prisoners shall never be handcuffed to the vessel or another object on the vessel.
- D. Officer safety shall be the primary consideration when deciding to handcuff a prisoner on a police vessel.
- E. All prisoner shall be thoroughly searched for weapons and contraband prior to transport on a police vessel.
- F. A prisoner should not normally be transported on a police vessel unless a second officer is available to guard that prisoner.
- G. The second officer shall situate the prisoner to prevent:
 - 1. An attack on the vessel operator; and
 - 2. The prisoner from injury or falling overboard.
- H. In the event a single officer must transport a prisoner; the vessel operator shall place the prisoner where he / she can be observed and in a position where he / she cannot:
 - 1. Attack the operator ;
 - 2. Obtain an object that could be used as a weapon; and
 - 3. Get injured or fall overboard.
- I. In some situations, an officer may order a suspect to take their vessel to a dock and secure it prior.
- J. An officer may also elect to delay an arrest until additional officers are available to assist.
- K. Officers shall be mindful that a justified use of force on a suspect onboard a vessel may cause the suspect to:
 - 1. Accidentally fall into the water due to the effects of the applied force; or
 - 2. Intentionally jump into the water to avoid the effects of the applied force.
- L. Officers shall learn and understand the effects of a use of force applied to a suspect in a marine environment.

X. VESSEL IMPOUND, TOW ING, AND STORAGE

- A. Whenever a vessel owner/operator is arrested and impoundment is not required, the arresting officer shall make every reasonable attempt to handle, release or store the vessel pursuant to the owner's/operator's directions.
- B. If a vessel is evidence, it shall be seized and impounded pursuant to department property and evidence policy.
- C. If a vessel owner/operator is arrested and he/she cannot provide a reasonable alternative to impoundment, the officer shall contact the nearest commercial vessel

tow service to secure the vessel.

- D. If a vessel is legally moored or anchored at the time the vessel owner/operator is arrested, and impoundment is not required, the vessel:
 - 1. May be left at the location with the arrestee's consent; or
 - 2. Released to a third party at the arrestee's request.
- E. Unsafe or unseaworthy vessels shall:
 - 1. Not be left at the scene:
 - 2. Not be released to a third party other than a commercial vessel towing company; or
 - 3. Shall be impounded.
- F. Police vessels shall not generally tow disabled vessels except:
 - 1. In those cases, in which a human life is in imminent danger; or
 - 2. When there is no practical way to safely remove persons from the disabled vessel.
- G. If a police vessel does tow a disabled vessel, persons onboard the vessel shall:
 - 1. Wear PFDs; and
 - 2. Stay clear of the towropes and cleats.
- H. Police vessels:
 - 1. Shall not attempt to remove grounded vessels; and
 - 2. May tow disabled public safety vessels in emergency situations.
- I. The following procedures shall be followed if a commercial marine towing and salvage company is needed:
 - 1. Officers shall first ask if the owner/operator has a preference on which tow company to be used. If no preference then marine patrol will use a call-out list and contact the tow company next up to respond;
 - 2. If the disabled vessel operator is a member of a specific towing association, service, or club, the officer shall summon the appropriate company at the owner's direction; and
 - 3. Officers shall not recommend a specific commercial marine towing or salvage company.

XI. 24-HOUR COVERAGE

- A. The Marine Patrol will provide a list of on-call Marine Patrol Officers for emergencies or calls for service on the waterways of Chatham County.
 - 1. This may include calls for services not accessible by the patrol division.
- B. The Marine Patrol Supervisor will ensure the on-call list is published and furnished to the Communication Center and the Uniform Patrol Division.

- C. The on-call officer will have an after-hours call-out phone with them. This number will be available through dispatch.
 - 1. The on-call officer will ensure that they are available to respond as soon as possible when called out. Their response time should not exceed an hour.
 - a. If there is no response, contact the Marine Patrol Sergeant or Lieutenant.
 - 2. Employees shall not be permitted to report to work while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription or non-prescription drugs that impair mobility, judgment, or safe job performance (Chatham County Ordinances, Chapter 5, County Employees and Officers, 5-505 Working Conditions, Section 5 c).
- D. Requests for the on-call Marine Patrol Officer will be made by dispatch or the on-duty supervisor.
- E. The on-call Marine Patrol Officer should respond to the following:
 - 1. Boating Accidents,
 - 2. Search and Rescue/Drowning,
 - 3. Injured or deceased persons on the waterways,
 - 4. Overdue vessels and kayaks/missing person in the water,
 - 5. Suicidal persons involving bridges or water,
 - 6. Reported criminal incidents on the waterways,
 - 7. Boat fires, and
 - 8. Calls for service that need an immediate response and occur in locations that require a response by boat or other specialized Marine Patrol equipment.

This Standard Operating Procedure supersedes all written directives pursuant to Marine Patrol Operations

BY ORDER OF:

Electronically Signed in PowerDMS on 02/27/2025

Julie Tolbert
Interim Chief of Police

I.A.D.R.S. ANNUAL WATERMANSHIP TEST



Evaluation Parameters

There are five exercises that evaluate stamina and comfort in the water, each rated by points. The diver must successfully complete all stations and score a minimum of 12 points to pass the test. The test should be completed with not more than 15 minutes between exercises.

Exercise 1: 500 Yard Swim

The diver must swim 500 yards without stopping using a forward stroke and without using any swim aids such as a dive mask, fins, snorkel, or flotation device. Stopping or standing up in the shallow end of the pool at any point during this exercise will constitute a failure of this evaluation station.

<u>Time to Complete</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>	
Under 10 minutes	5	
10-13 minutes	4	
13-16 minutes	3	
16-19 minutes	2	
More than 19 minutes	1	
Stopped or incomplete	Incomplete	Score <input type="text"/>

Exercise 2: 15 Minute Tread

Using no swim aids and wearing only a swimsuit the diver will stay afloat by treading water, drown proofing, bobbing or floating for 15 minutes with hands only out of the water for the last 2 minutes.

<u>Performance Criteria</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>	
Performed satisfactorily	5	
Stayed afloat, hands not out of water for 2 minutes	3	
Used side or bottom for support at any time	1	
Used side or bottom for support >twice	Incomplete	Score <input type="text"/>

Exercise 3: 800 Yard Snorkel Swim

Using a dive mask, fins, snorkel, and a swimsuit (no BCD or other flotation aid) and swimming the entire time with the face in the water, the diver must swim non stop for 800 yards. The diver must not use arms to swim at any time.

<u>Performance Criteria</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>	
Under 15 minutes	5	
15-17 minutes	4	
17-19 minutes	3	
19-21 minutes	2	
More than 21 minutes	1	
Stopped at any time	Incomplete	Score <input type="text"/>

Exercise 4: 100 Yard Inert Rescue Tow

The swimmer must push or tow an inert victim wearing appropriate PPE on the surface 100 yards non stop and without assistance.

<u>Performance Criteria</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>	
Under 2 minutes	5	
2-3 minutes	4	
3-4 minutes	3	
4-5 minutes	2	
More than 5 minutes	1	
Stopped at any time	Incomplete	Score <input type="text"/>

Exercise 5: Free Dive to a depth of nine feet and retrieve an object

<u>Performance Criteria</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>	
Performed satisfactorily	Pass	
Stopped or incomplete	Incomplete	Score <input type="text"/>

Additional copies available at no charge via the International Association of Dive Rescue Specialists webpage. Visit www.IADRS.org