



SPECIALTY OPERATIONS AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS			916.00	
<div><div></div><div>MARINE OPERATIONS</div><div></div></div>				
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to promote boating safety and education, enforcement of marine-related laws and ordinances, and to provide police services to waterfront areas, citizens and other governmental agencies.

SCOPE

This procedure shall apply to all Punta Gorda Police Department personnel.

DISCUSSION

It is the intent of the Punta Gorda Police Department to provide the services of a Marine Unit to the citizens of the City of Punta Gorda in a manner that is effective. The Marine Unit will enforce state statutes, local ordinances, and ensure a safe and pleasurable boating experience to the general public. Not all circumstances and events can be outlined. Therefore, this procedure should be viewed only as a guide for the operation of the Marine Unit. The officer(s) assigned to

marine duties should exercise common sense, discretion, and judgment.

PROCEDURE

I. SELECTION, QUALIFICATIONS, AND TRAINING

- A. The Marine Officer shall serve at the pleasure of the Chief of Police and shall have, at a minimum, the following entry-level qualifications:
 - 1. A minimum of two (2) years of general police experience unless otherwise designated by the Chief of Police;
 - 2. A personal interest in boats, diving and other water-related activities;
 - 3. Pass a basic swimming test as administered by the department's Dive Instructor or designee. The swim test shall include a 200-yard swim without stopping. There will be no time limit placed on this swim; and
 - 4. New members will receive a minimum of five (5) weeks on-the-job training in all aspects of the Marine Unit (one week will be trailer-specific training) and other training, to include an approved boater safety course, as deemed necessary. One week of 'on the job' training shall be with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
 - 5. Officers may operate department vessels in emergency situations, with supervisor approval, after completing eighty (80) hours of marine training and an approved boater safety course.

II. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

- A. The Marine Officer and Marine Volunteers shall be mindful of state and local marine laws and will operate the patrol vessels in a manner providing a good example for the citizens of this community. The patrol vessels shall be operated only by officers or Volunteers In Policing (VIPs) assigned to the Marine Unit (as authorized by the Chief of Police) who have received in-service or recognized training in marine law and vessel operation, as determined by the Chief of Police.
- B. Non-Emergency Operation
 - 1. The Marine Officer and Marine VIPs will obey all local and state laws, including no wake/idle zones in city canals, when operating the patrol vessel in the normal course of duty.

2. The patrol vessel will be operated in compliance with international, federal, state and local authority where appropriate.
 3. The patrol vessel will be operated at reasonable engine speeds consistent with conditions of the sea.
 4. Excessive pounding on the hull should be avoided.
- C. The ignition kill switch shall be attached to the vessel operator at all times during operation.
- D. Emergency Response/Pursuits
1. If it becomes necessary for an officer to operate a patrol vessel under emergency conditions, including heavy seas, the operator will operate the vessel in a manner using due regard for the safety of persons and property, utilizing emergency lights and siren when necessary.
 2. During a pursuit, the Marine Officer shall immediately activate their emergency lights and siren and shall maintain radio contact with the Communications Section. The Marine Officer will make every effort to obtain the registration numbers, boat description, number of occupants and direction of travel of the vessel being pursued.
 3. The Watch Commander is responsible for monitoring any pursuit and shall solicit all information available and decide to continue or disengage the pursuit
 4. In the event of a vessel pursuit, a "Vehicle Pursuit Report" shall be completed prior to the end of their tour of duty as specified in [Standard Operating Procedure 1105.01 – Vehicle Operation](#).
- E. Communications Section Responsibilities: Public Safety Dispatchers, upon the request of the pursuing officer, will immediately notify outside agencies (e.g., Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, US Customs Service, US Coast Guard) for assistance and to keep those agencies apprised of the situation/pursuit.
- F. Stopping Vessels for Inspections/Violations
1. Officers are prohibited from performing a vessel stop or boarding a vessel for the sole purpose of making a safety or marine equipment inspection.
 2. Officers must have probable cause that a violation of vessel safety laws has occurred or is occurring to stop or board a vessel.

3. When stopping a vessel for violation or other similar related matters, the Marine Officer will notify the Communications Section of the location of the vessel being stopped, vessel description, number of occupants and registration number.
4. The Marine Officer shall not allow the operator or other occupants of the stopped vessel aboard the patrol vessel except when emergency conditions exist.
5. The Marine Officer shall, at all times, attempt to prevent damage to either of the vessels. If weather conditions are such that the stop may cause damage to either boat, the Marine Officer will direct the violator's vessel to the nearest dock or calm waters. If such areas are not available, the vessels should remain clear to avoid damage.

G. Marine Patrol Duties

1. Provide routine boat patrol of the public waterways within the City of Punta Gorda;
2. Provide high visibility patrol for deterring violations of Florida law;
3. Enforce boating laws and ordinances;
4. Promote boating safety through direct contact with boaters;
5. Provide public education of boating safety through personal contacts and vessel safety inspections;
6. Assist disabled or distressed boats;
7. Seek out and remove, or report to appropriate authority, any obstructions and hazards which interfere with safe boating;
8. Assist other governmental agencies in marine matters, when requested through a supervisor, if time and conditions permit;
9. Respond to marine-related incidents and accidents. If Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) cannot respond, officers are requested to take a report. In addition, the Marine Officer shall provide a Florida Marine Exchange form if the damage is estimated to be under \$2000.00;
10. Render special assistance during tropical storms, as well as other marine-related disasters;
11. Assist in the performance of underwater search, recovery and rescue missions, as required and requested by appropriate authority;
12. Conduct safety inspections, provide safety information to boaters and be observant of marine hazards; and

13. Provide environmental protection where necessary for endangered plants and wildlife.
- H. Accident Investigation: When an officer responds to, or locates a boating accident, the following shall apply:
1. Render first aid to injured parties, request assistance from EMS, other outside agencies, and fellow boaters, if necessary;
 2. Assist/remove other occupants of the vessels involved to prevent injury or death; and
 3. Protect the scene and stand by until the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission arrives to handle the incident.
- I. Assisting Outside Agencies: If, during the tour of duty, the Punta Gorda Police Department Marine Unit is requested for assistance by an outside agency, the Watch Commander shall be notified of our response.
- J. Prisoners: Special concerns must be taken into consideration while transporting and/or handcuffing a prisoner in the patrol vessel. If the Marine Officer makes a physical arrest while on the water, if no impairment is suspected, they should first attempt to get the operator to transport their vessel to the nearest dock area and, once ashore, make the arrest. In the event of a physical arrest while on the water, the following shall apply:
1. Determine if there are others aboard who are capable and qualified to pilot the vessel ashore. If so, obtain permission from the boat owner to permit the qualified person to do so.
 2. If there are two (2) officers on board and there is little or no risk of incident, the prisoner will be transported to shore, and then handcuffed. If the prisoner presents a risk, they shall be handcuffed prior to reaching land. Whether the prisoner is handcuffed or not, they shall wear a personal flotation device and be seated on the floor of the patrol vessel in a location observable by the officer.
 3. If the Marine Officer deems necessary, they may summon additional assistance and stand by until help arrives.
- K. Towing Vessels: It shall be the policy of the Punta Gorda Police Department to avoid towing vessels if possible. When it does become necessary to tow a disabled or confiscated vessel, the size, length, distance of tow, time of day and other circumstances must be taken into consideration. If the Marine Officer is unable to tow a vessel upon request, they will assist the disabled boater in whatever way possible to ensure the safety of the occupants of such vessel and to prevent damage to same.

1. Towing by the Marine Officer shall be done only as a last resort due to:
2. Unavailability of a professional tow company;
3. Impending severe weather conditions;
4. Impending darkness; or
5. Possibility of sinking of distressed vessel.
6. Grounded vessels should not be towed if the possibility of damage to the towed vessel exists.
7. If a vessel is taking on water, the occupants should put on PFDs and be transferred to the patrol vessel.
8. If the decision is made to tow, it should be done according to accepted US Coast Guard procedures and only to the nearest safe haven.
9. Marine VIPs may tow, or attempt to tow, another vessel only under exigent circumstances with approval from the Marine Officer.
10. [Florida State Statute 327.4107\(5\)](#) states that officers shall be held harmless for all damages to vessels resulting from relocation unless the damage results from gross negligence or willful misconduct.

L. Personal Flotation Devices

1. Department members, while operating departmental watercraft, are required to wear personal flotation devices approved and provided by the department at all times.
2. Civilian personnel taken onboard any departmental vessel shall be required to wear a personal flotation device at all times while on board.
3. The Marine Officer will be held accountable for the safety of all persons under their control.

M. Calls for Service When Marine Patrol is Off-Duty

1. If there is a qualified Marine Officer on duty as a patrol officer the qualified patrol officer will launch the patrol vessel and respond as a Marine Officer to the call for service.
2. If no qualified Marine Officer is on duty as a patrol officer:

- a. The watch commander will be contacted and they will determine an immediate response by directing dispatch to contact the appropriate entity to respond, i.e. fire department, Marine VIP, etc.
 - b. In a serious or emergency situation, the watch commander or their designee shall contact the Operations Commander to determine the appropriate course of action. In the absence of the Operations Commander, the chain of command shall be followed.
 - c. Since the patrol vessel may be operated by other than the primary marine patrol officer in case of emergency, it is vital that the boat be stored in a ready to launch status.
3. Any problems with a patrol vessel, communications, or equipment will be noted by the officer in writing and placed aboard the vessel in such a manner that it will be easily noticed by another officer.
 4. Patrol vessels will always have enough fuel aboard for at least two (2) hours of high speed operation.
- N. If the marine officer does not launch their vessel due to inclement weather, mechanical issues or any other reason, they shall report to the on-duty watch commander for assignment.

III. MAINTENANCE AND CARE

A. Marine Officer Responsibility

1. The Marine Officer shall be responsible for the proper use and care of the patrol vessels. Prior to the beginning of each tour of duty, the officer will inspect the primary patrol vessel for safety equipment, damage and operation of police equipment.
2. The Marine Officer will, at a minimum, check the following prior to going into service:
 - a. Trailer tires;
 - b. Trailer lights and hitch;
 - c. Tow vehicle;
 - d. Radios, siren and emergency lights, antennas, and public address system;
 - e. Fluid levels (fuel and oil);

- f. Prop; and
 - g. Fire extinguisher and personal flotation devices (one for each member on board), distress signals, oar, anchor, fenders and other equipment. Personal flotation devices shall be worn at all times by all personnel on board.
3. The operator of a patrol vessel will inspect it for damage at the beginning and end of each tour of duty. Should damage be found, the officer will notify a supervisor and submit a written report detailing the damage.
 4. The Marine Officer will be responsible for the general appearance of the patrol vessels. The interior and compartments will be kept free and clear of litter. After each use, the operator(s) will make sure that the vessels and trailers are washed down and the engine flushed with fresh water. After the vessels have been washed, they shall be properly stored at their assigned locations.
 5. At the end of each tour of duty, patrol vessel fuel tanks and oil reservoirs shall be refilled to a minimum half tank level.

B. Preventative Maintenance

1. The Marine Officer or assigned Marine VIP will inspect the vessels on a periodic basis, keeping them in presentable condition and free from corrosion.
2. Light maintenance, such as tightening of screws and bolts and replacing burnt light bulbs will be the operator's responsibility on a daily basis.
3. Periodic hull cleaning and waxing will be the responsibility of the Marine Officer.
4. The boat trailer will be maintained and ready for immediate use.
5. General repairs and preventative maintenance shall be performed by the approved marine repair facility. A preventative maintenance schedule shall include regular engine service at approximately 100 hours, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
6. Repairs shall be made as needed to minimize down time.
7. The Marine Patrol Officer or assigned Marine VIP will notify their supervisor when a vessel is in need of repair or regular maintenance prior to initiating maintenance or repairs.

C. Damage to Patrol Vessel

1. All damage will be reported to the Administrative Services Section Supervisor immediately.

2. The Watch Commander will proceed to the scene of a patrol vessel accident and make an inspection at their discretion.
3. In the event of a patrol vessel accident, appropriate office reports shall be completed as well as a Florida boating accident report, if applicable.
4. In the event of a patrol vessel accident with more than \$2,000 in damage, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and US Coast Guard must be contacted.

IV. OTHER MARINE OFFICER DUTIES

- A. The Marine Officer is the operational liaison to the Marine VIPs that augment the Marine Unit.
- B. Other responsibilities of the Marine Officer shall include attendance at meetings.

V. JURISDICTION

- A. Florida Statutes allow the enforcement of Chapters 327 and 328 by law enforcement agencies in their territorial waters.
- B. The Punta Gorda Police Department Marine Officer shall conduct marine operations within the incorporated city limits of Punta Gorda unless otherwise authorized by the Chief of Police or their designee.

VI. INCLEMENT WEATHER: The Marine Officer shall exercise their discretion when determining whether to launch the patrol vessels during inclement weather.

APPROVED



PAMELA R. SMITH, CHIEF OF POLICE

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