



Technology Overload & The Private Boater - Talking Cell Phones

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY



Last week, we talked about cell phones aboard boats and the issues thereto. But they are fantastic devices - and therein lay another issue. As the functionality of cell phones starts to rival computers (did I say "rival" - I should have said "outpaces!"), we are right at the cusp of technology overload. This can't be good for safety of life at sea. This column is about that.

US Coast Guard Advisory

On October 29, 2010, Rear Admiral Paul Zukunft, Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security, and Stewardship issued a maritime advisory on the use of cell phones aboard. In part, Marine Safety Advisory 01-10 said, "The potential risk associated with improper use of cellular telephones and other devices in the marine environment while navigating or performing other vessel functions should be apparent to vessel owners and operators. Consequently, the Coast Guard strongly recommends vessel owners and operators to develop and implement effective operational policies outlining when the use of cellular telephones and other devices is appropriate or prohibited."

This is true across all jurisdictions, land, sea and air. And cell phones can certainly be game-changers (good and bad) for the mariner. This situation has created a new class of problem: Distracted Operations.



Information Overload vs Expanded Awareness

Even in my own operational facility, CGAUX 251384, I have 2 "desk mounted" radios (USCG requirement for an operational facility), and a spare handheld radio for mobile operations. All three are mounted overhead. In the "dashboard", there is a multi-function screen through which is filtered real time GPS information, AIS, radar (overlaid on top of each other in a layered, color-coded fashion) and a forward-looking-infrared camera in an adjacent window. I will admit this is right at the edge of my "comprehensibility." If a crewman is asking questions, or more importantly passing information, while something critical is being presented either over the radio or on the screen, it

is imperative to have the ability to parse information and/or the authority to delegate - and quickly. Now, with that said, the resultant river of data can, in the right hands, provide a heightened "situational awareness" that adds up to a safer vessel. This is in fact why I installed the gear. But the US Coast Guard's Marine Safety Advisory 01-10 is a wake-up call to call mariners, this one included.

Head's Up

Let's think this through a bit. First, technology is neither a panacea nor a substitute for seamanship skills. Technology is there to make what was time-consuming (e.g., GPS charting versus pencil-and-parallel-rulers) easier and/or faster or to provide a quantum leap beyond human capabilities (e.g.,

radar.) But all these tools are not worth their weight as ballast if the skipper doesn't know what basic seamanship skills to employ with them.

Secondly, you have to get - and keep - your priorities straight. When the cell phone rings, why answer it while underway? There is voice-mail, you know. And, it would be a simple procedure to implement within your family household that if there was something urgent, call twice - if the same tel# comes up twice, you know to answer it now. And give someone the helm while you do.

Thirdly, when was the last time you took a boating safety class? There are plenty of good ones out there that can be taken right up to the level of an experienced skipper. No one knows what they don't know - and the advanced classes are full of fellow skippers. Not everything worth learning is in the manuals. Passing time while accumulating the latest scuttlebutt is an ancient, honored and useful maritime tradition... From long before there was anything remotely called a cell phone...

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR and we will help you "get in this thing."



County Clerk Update

by SUFFOLK COUNTY CLERK

JUDY PASCALE

DON'T FALL VICTIM TO NEEDLESS SOLICITATION

Several years ago, the Suffolk County Clerk's Office informed the public about a variety of companies offering to sell certified copies of deeds to homeowners at a cost of up to 1,200% more than what a person would pay to receive the same copy through the Clerk's Office.

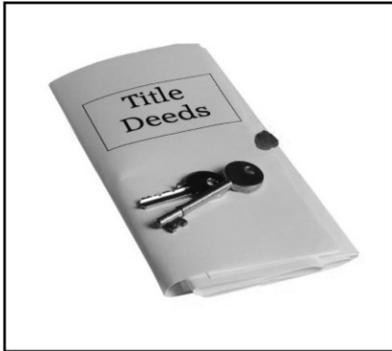
As a result of the publicity, State law was passed regulating the practice of companies which offer to sell you a copy of your deed. The

law requires exact language to ensure that consumers are able to make informed decisions regarding the purchase of certified copies of property deeds that clearly delineates the fact that such copies are readily available for a much smaller fee from your County Clerk's Office.

However, these record retrieval services companies continue to seek new customers and often canvass entire neighborhoods with solicitations offering to sell homeowners a certified copy of the deed to their home for a significantly higher cost than is available from our Office.

As a result of these mailings, a good number of people have contacted my Office to question the legitimacy of these letters. Some of the most common questions can be summed up in the following statements; first there is no general sense of urgency to have a copy of your deed on hand at all times. Second, if you should ever need a certified copy of your deed, my office stands ready to provide you with a certified copy for a small fee that is usually five dollars.

Should you need any further information, or wish to purchase a certified copy of your deed, you may contact the Suffolk County Clerk's Office at 631-852-2000 ext. 800 or visit us online at www.SuffolkCountyNY.gov/Clerk.



Janice Harkins Dog Talk

Now that spring is just around the corner or I am just wishful thinking! A common thing people get irritated about is their dog's pee burning the grass. I feel it is a big misconception that people believe girl's pee burns the grass more than boys. I have found this to be very untrue. People have the idea because girls pee low to the ground and in one spot that is the reason why girls burn the grass where as boys more "mark" I have found this to be incorrect with my dealings with dogs. Males by far burn the grass more. The truth behind dog's pee is their urine is naturally high in nitrogen and alone this can burn grass. Salts and other compounds in dog urine may also contribute to grass burn. In addition, highly acidic or alkaline urine may alter pH of the soil in that area of your yard, adversely affecting the grass there. Never attempt to alter your dog's urine pH unless specifically recommended by your vet. There are many

items in pet stores that state they will fix this issue. You really do not want to alter your dog just to "save" your grass. I highly suggest that you train your dog to go in a specific area that you are okay if they burn the grass. Another idea is to immediately after your dog urinates, use a garden hose to rinse off the area. You might also consider switching to a low-nitrogen fertilizer for your lawn. When using any product on your lawn make sure it is safe for your dog. Most chemicals used on a lawn are poisonous to your dog. If you are ever unsure if something is safe for your dog I strongly suggest consulting your vet. Medication is another thing that can alter your dog's system and in return they could "burn" the grass while on this medicine. So as the snow melts pre think about your spring plans for your yard. Consider your dog in the plans and please make sure whatever choices you make they are safe for your family and your dog.

