



Float Plans - Nothing but Upside...

by VINCENT T. PICA, II

Chief of Staff, First District, Southern Region (D1SR) United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



As we pine for warmer weather with a deck beneath our feet, we might even feel compelled to venture out in the next 60 days to catch the first hints of the incoming spring. If so, the float plan, often spoken of and more often ignored, can be key for you and those closest to you.

The float plan is nominally known as a mechanism for ensuring that missing vessels are indeed missed in time for action to be taken that might otherwise lead to the rescue of the crew rather than the recovery of their bodies. "Boat-A is supposed to be at Payne's Marina in the Great Salt Pond on Block Island at this time and date. Is it there?"

So, in a nutshell, float plans are all about SOLAS - Safety Of Life At Sea. However, as the title infers, the development of a float plan delivers nothing but upside to the boat's master and thus to the crew who are fully the master's responsibility.

Charting

The ideal float plan involves the detailed analysis of getting to your destination and returning safely. The float plan provides the opportunity for the skipper to sit with his or her charts, in the calm of a kitchen, den or study, and literally walk through the passage with parallel rulers and dividers.

What is the goal of such detailed analysis? The net effect is to create your own pilot guide for the entire passage and to be able to assign predicted times to each leg. Deviation from predicted times is an early warning to the skipper that something is up - working against (or with!) a current, crosswinds creating additional work effort for the engines to hold course, etc. All of this translates into fuel consumption "deltas" which ultimately leads directly to SOLAS issues - Safety Of Life At Sea...

If you have made an error in the development of your pilot guide, the rest of the guide is likely to be suspect and you'll have to do what every skipper has done for centuries untold - improvise carefully... If the chart is generally consistent but winds and tides have done the inevitable, then the overall pilot guide is likely to still have integrity but, once again, you'll have to do what every skipper has done for centuries untold - improvise carefully...

Weather

With respect to predicting the weather, I use the Weather.com website - www.weather.com - and the reason I do is because I can get weather prediction by the hour. If the chance of precipitation for a particular day is 50%, but it is 10% in the morning and 90% in the afternoon, I want to know that. Put in your zip code or city name and click go... Click on "More Details" and see how the hourly details add to the weather analysis...

Tides

Nothing is more likely to surprise you and more potentially perilous to happen than running aground - and understanding the tide is all about that. There are several good services to use, but there is something very subtle about tide analysis that no chart gives you. Tides change at different rates at different places (watch for a column here soon where we'll talk Time and Tides.) Knowing the tides at an inlet while spending the next six hours transiting from cove to bay "on the inside" could require major mental gymnastics in order to keep pace with the pace of the tide as it works its way through that inlet and across the bays and into the coves...

Why do that if the internet can do it for you?

Local Notice to Mariners

As of April 1, 2004, the United States Coast Guard stopped mailing the Local Notice to Mariners. Instead, it is accessible on the Internet - and they will even email you a link to the updates each week as they "go to press."

The electronic versions of LNM appear on the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center's Website at <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/lnm/default.htm>.

Why go out upon the briny deep with less information than there is available to you? What's the upside in that? Go on their website, click around until you find the area for you to put your email address in - and from then on get, direct from the United States Coast Guard forevermore, the latest they know about what is happening "out there..." For free...

Battening Down the Hatches

So, in summary, a complete float plan - left with someone responsible and capable of checking on you over the course of your passageway - encompasses all of these components... And a prayer...

Dear Lord,
Your Sea is so wide...
And my boat is so small...
Protect me.
Amen!

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..."

The Best Bargain in Town

By MARK SMOTHERGILL,
MSC BASEBALL COMMISSIONER

The Mastic Sports Club is holding registration for Little League baseball, softball and soccer at the Mastic Moriches Shirley Library and I wanted to let everyone know what a good deal it is.

The cost of registration for our Little League baseball program is \$80. Included in that cost is a uniform. All of our coaches are background checked by Little League. The goal of our program is to provide a positive experience for every child to learn and play the game. The best teams advance with the best of the best appearing on ESPN at Williamsport.

We want to make children, regardless of their skill level, into the best ballplayer and teammate as possible. We are governed by Little League rules that mandate that every child must play.

Our games are played at the Robert E. Miller (Legion Field) Park and the Chuck Ziegler (airport fields named after the founder of the Mastic Sports Club) Fields. The Town of Brookhaven owns the fields, so we pay a fee to use them but it is worth it because we have bathrooms, playgrounds and concession stands. I know, as a parent of four children,

how valuable being able to purchase food or use a bathroom is.

Every non-profit sports organization needs fundraisers to survive. Over the years, I have had to get involved in many of these different fundraisers. This year, Mastic Sports Club baseball is trying something new. I want to make every child feel like a Major League ballplayer, so for a fee of \$15 your child can have his or her last name printed on the back of their uniform and pick their uniform number.

The goal of the fundraiser is, with the help of sponsorship money, to purchase a pitching machine so that our children can practice hitting without leaving our community.

So, for \$80 you get to play ball, get a uniform, be a member of little league, a worldwide organization and play at a field that your entire family can be comfortable. We also have fields with lights, so maybe like the big leaguers; you might play a night game just like the players you watch on TV.

If you want to play softball or soccer instead, you still get the great fields and uniforms and it's less expensive. Please come out and play.

To contact Mastic Sports Club, call 399-1550 or for baseball, email marksmothergill@masticsportsclub.com





Caring for the people of Long Island's East End . . .

"You were a tremendous help to my family. May God bless you all." - Riverhead

"Your care was so affectionate and personal that our beloved father felt as if it was us ministering to him." - Moriches

. . . pain and symptom control in a familiar and loving environment at home . . . individualized plan of care and comfort under direction of the primary physician, with short term hospitalization when needed . . . bereavement care for families.
Please call us - 631-288-8400

East End Hospice

A New York State Certified Hospice • East End Hospice, Box 1048, Westhampton Beach, NY 11978 • www.eeh.org
Certified by Blue Cross, Medicare/Medicaid and private insurance accepted. No one will be denied care because of inability to pay. • East End Hospice does not discriminate on any basis in admission to its programs or activities.