

DSAR 2010

What is a DSAR? Why are we having one? How do I prepare for it?

DSAR stands for “District Search and Rescue” competition. This year, we will bring together four teams from the 8th Eastern Region and four teams from the 8th Western Rivers Region to demonstrate their boat crew skills in a friendly competition. The purpose of the competition is to give Auxiliary boat crews an opportunity to refresh and improve their skill levels. Prior to the competition, the teams need to review the tasks they needed to learn to become boat crew qualified.

So, what are the events, and how can I prepare during the Winter?

Almost all of the events, except the underway mission, can be studied or practiced indoors. The chart work will be tested indoors. Grab a chart and have your team practice reading the chart and plotting courses. If you have someone in your area who has been through the Navigation or AUXSCE courses, they will know exactly what you need to work on.

The Communications Event can be simulated indoors. Practice the phonetic alphabet, pro-words, and the communications you would do before, during and after a patrol. Don’t forget to check in with “Sector” and give information to commence a patrol (including your GAR number) and terminate a patrol.

Marlinspike is easily practiced indoors. Study and practice the knots you find in the Boat Crew manual.

The written Seamanship Test will be given indoors. It will be based on the Boat Crew Manual, the Navrules, and the SAR manual. Nothing tricky – just the things you should already know.

Line heaving will measure your accuracy heaving a line. The heaving line will be 50 feet long, with a ball at the end. Practice throwing at a target about 25 feet away. You can practice in a long hallway, or a fairly large room, such as a gymnasium or meeting area. Even though this event is entirely on land, you will need to throw the line over the side of a “ship.”

The Pump Event is a little more difficult to practice indoors. However, you can become familiar with the P-6 pump: how to unpack it, the starting instructions, and how to repack it. (You may be able to practice operating the pump before all the ice is off the water.)

The SAR Execution (underway) event will require some practice time on the water. This event will simulate a patrol. You need to consider the pre-underway briefing, the pre-underway checklist, commencing a patrol, comms reports while underway, and terminating a patrol. However, during this “patrol” you can expect to have a “Man Overboard” situation. You will probably be asked to find a disabled vessel. (Review your search patterns.) Once you find the disabled vessel, you can expect to take it in tow. Nothing here that you don’t already do!

The Operational Facility (OPFAC) you will use comes fully equipped with a Coxswain and crew. They will submit orders for the patrol and that’s one less thing you have to worry about. The Coxswain of record will act as helmsman and steer the boat. The Team Coxswain will give instructions to the helmsman. The Team Coxswain will

operate the radio. The provided crew will follow your directions, but they won't handle lines or provide any advice.

You can also expect to encounter a couple of "mystery events." I can't tell you what these will be, but you can't practice for them. Everybody will have the same disadvantage.

You might also want to take a look at the "Operational Excellence" program. Most of the events in the competition are based on this program. You will have some "inside" information if you check this out.

Did I mention the fellowship? You will meet other Auxiliarists and Coast Guard regulars from around the country, learn how they do things, and get acquainted over dinner. The DSAR should be a fun event, and one you will want to repeat next year.

Review, learn, improve

Bill McGonigal
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