

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 24, 2013
To: Harbor Commission
From: Scott Riedman, Waterfront Director
Subject: Review of Harbor Patrol Activities

RECOMMENDATION:

That Harbor Commission receive and consider a report on Harbor Patrol's role and responsibilities.

BACKGROUND

Though its activities are often described in monthly Harbor Operations Reports, a comprehensive review of Harbor Patrol's role and responsibilities further explains how this unique unit serves our community.

Harbor Patrol's mission is to enforce state and local laws, educate the public and provide emergency fire, medical and ocean response services to facilitate the safe and orderly use of the Waterfront. As circumstances warrant, Patrol coordinates operations with City Police and Fire departments, Cal Fish and Game, County Sheriffs and agencies of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security like the Coast Guard and Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Patrol's functions reside in the Harbor Operations Division of the Waterfront Department. It executes its mission 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, employing 10 peace officers and a supervisor who holds the rank of captain. Each uniformed patrol officer is a sworn peace officer who wears a duty belt with phone, multi-agency radios, collapsible baton, taser, pepper spray, handcuffs and sidearm. Each officer also has access to a patrol truck, fire-fighting equipment, vessel dewatering equipment, medical response equipment, oil spill response equipment and public education materials.

Besides foot and motor patrols, officers patrol local waters in a 20' fiberglass Radon (Patrol Boat #1), a 32' fiberglass Radon (Patrol Boat #2) and a 33' aluminum Norsco (Patrol Boat #3). They also use a 13' rigid-hull inflatable (Patrol Boat #4) for surf rescues, search-and-recovery operations and special duty like the 2011 tsunami response. Patrol Boats #2 and #3 are designated fire boats, each able to pump 950 gallons of water per minute. Officers respond on patrol boats to calls in the harbor and up to a mile at sea from the Andree Clark Bird Refuge to Arroyo Burro Beach, though they occasionally undertake rescues beyond those waters when lives are in danger and other rescue resources are unavailable.

DISCUSSION

Like all City Divisions, Harbor Patrol participates in the City's "P3" performance measurement program that establishes measurable objectives in some areas while simply tracking annual performance in others. Patrol's measurable objectives include the percentage of emergency responses completed in less than five minutes, average training hours per officer per year and the annual number of public relations events. Tracked measures range from the number of calls for service to the number of enforcement contacts, emergency vessel tows and bird rescues. Harbor Patrol's P3 annual report for FY '12 is included as Attachment 1.

1. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

a. Response Time To In-Harbor Emergencies

Patrol's response time to in-harbor emergencies is critical to successful outcomes, thus a goal has been set at five minutes or less. Examples of emergency responses include medical calls, sinking boats, vessel accidents, oil spills, drunk driving, drunk boating, burglary, assaults, trespassing and fires. Fire calls usually result from trash can fires, smoldering cigarettes between deck boards on piers and Stearns Wharf, and dock box fires caused by faulty electrical cords. (Periodically, Stearns Wharf has suffered major fires, the two latest in 1998 and 2001). Medical calls, which average 100 per year (Attachment 2), include falls, broken bones, bicycle accidents, choking on food, seizures, heart attacks, strokes, alcohol poisoning, attempted suicides, stingray stings, allergic or diabetic reactions and more.

As indicated in Attachment 3, Patrol averaged a response time of five minutes or less for at least 95% of calls every year since 2008, having increased its target from 90% to 95% during that time. These rapid responses have saved many lives.

b. Training

It's been said that "excellence is an art won by training and habituation." For Harbor Patrol, training remains the cornerstone of its readiness to accomplish a range of tasks.

In addition to maintaining a Coast Guard Master's license with towing endorsement, and passing a firearms course before being hired, Patrol Officers earn "Core Training Certification" through courses provided primarily by the Department of Boating and Waterways. Those courses include Boating Safety and Enforcement, Marine Firefighting, Rescue Boat Operations, Vessel Accident Investigation and (Accident) Reconstruction, Piloting and Navigation and Boating Under the Influence (BUI).

Additional training is extensive and recurring. At the California Specialized Training Institute in San Luis Obispo, for example, officers train in live-fire and "simunition" exercises in real-life scenarios. Locally, they qualify with firearms at the City Police Department range every 90 days, in scenarios like low-light, firing, shooting from the ground and clearing gun jams. They also train jointly with PD's SWAT Team,

City firefighters, Clean Seas and the Coast Guard personnel on everything from hostage scenarios to marina fires, emergency medical response, at-sea rescues and oil-spill response. For oil spill response, Patrol has 1,600 feet of small, absorbent boom to contain small spills (which it has done several times) and 1,000 feet of hard boom for booming off the harbor mouth in case of a major spill in the Santa Barbara Channel.

Officers maintain Emergency Medical Technician and Red Cross Lifeguard Certifications, and attend specialized training such as Beach Driving, Best Management Practices for Underwater Hull Cleaning and Police Response to People with Mental Illness or Developmental Disabilities. Finally, Harbor Patrol designates an in-house Defensive Tactics training instructor who takes specialized “train the trainer” classes, then trains Patrol Officers in areas like defense against edged weapons, ground fighting, controlled force, weapons retention, water survival and martial arts.

Each officer aims to complete a minimum of 50 hours of training per year. As reflected in Attachment 4, budgets constrained by the 2008 economic downturn have limited training hours, though they remain above the target goal.

c. Public Relations

Informing the public about Harbor Patrol’s mission remains a Departmental priority. Patrol Officers conduct at least 35 class tours or other public-relations events per year (Attachment 5). These typically include school tours on the patrol boats, plus orientations and ride-alongs for citizens, public officials, rookie firefighters and police officers. Patrol also participates in the City’s annual Safety Fair, during which the public interacts with officers and gets a close-up look at PB #4. Officers also rely heavily on foot patrols (discussed later in this report) to engage the public on a personal level.

2. OTHER PERFORMANCE MEASURES

In addition to these measurable objectives, several performance measures offer a broad view of the types of activities, calls, rescues and responses Harbor Patrol undertakes.

a. Calls For Service

Calls for service, that is, response to requests generated from “the outside” via phone, City PD Dispatch or VHF marine radio, range from checking Waterfront facilities to boating emergencies, medical calls, enforcement calls, fires, public complaints, response to shark sightings and more. Response to these is known as “running calls.” As depicted in Attachment 6, Patrol responds to over 1,800 calls for service per year.

b. Emergency Responses Outside the Harbor

Emergency responses outside the harbor, which number near 100 each year and comprise some of Patrol’s most dangerous calls, include vessels either capsized, taking on water or sinking in storms, plus kite surfers down or lost in the fog, boats dragging anchor in the East Beach anchorage, surfer assists (40 in one day in February, 2008)

and medical emergencies aboard ship (Attachment 7). Many of these calls result in emergency vessel tows, which also number around 100 per year (Attachment 8). Owing to sheer proximity, Patrol also responds to medical calls at Waterfront hotels, traffic accidents on or near Cabrillo Boulevard/Shoreline Drive and emergency calls at Santa Barbara City College (e.g. sports injuries at the SBCC field).

c. Non-Emergency Vessel Tows

Harbor Patrol typically conducts over 350 non-emergency (or “courtesy”) vessel tows per year (Attachment 9). These typically include towing boats to their slips, towing boats to the Harbor Marine Works Travel Lift for haul out or moving boats during storms or construction projects.

d. Enforcement Contacts

Patrol averages about 1,400 enforcement contacts per year (Attachment 10). Contacts are typically made for infractions such as improper boating equipment (life jackets, lights, signaling devices), operating boats in swim areas, operating boats without proper registration, unauthorized entry into marinas or restrooms, public disturbance, open alcohol containers in public, illegal camping, (minor) ocean pollution and illegal berthing. More serious contacts include major ocean pollution, BUI, trespass aboard boats in the marina, domestic violence, assaults (usually fistfights), possession of illegal drugs and warrant arrests. These often involve agency backup from PD, Sheriffs or Coast Guard. Most enforcement contacts result in warnings, though some result in citations (officially considered cite-and-release “arrests”) and fewer still result in a suspect being taken to jail. Though down in FY '12, arrests still average over 100 per year (Attachment 11).

e. Parking Citations

Logged separately from arrests, Waterfront parking citations average over 400 per year. They are typically issued for 72-hour violations, red-zone violations, time-restricted violations (i.e. 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. parking prohibitions), expired registration and parking in handicapped stalls, City PD’s Parking Enforcement Officers, meanwhile, enforce 90-minute regulations in designated areas of Waterfront Parking Lots such as Harbor West and the Leadbetter Lot, plus 90-minute zones in Harbor Way.

f. Motor Patrols

Motor patrols, undertaken in a Ford F-250 truck, average over 2,500 per year (Attachment 12). Motor patrols are used to monitor all landside areas of the Waterfront for parking violations, physical disturbances, illegal camping, vandalism, facilities safety checks and general safety hazards. Officers also patrol Waterfront beaches, looking for debris and safety hazards like broken glass, as well as illegal drinking or drug use. From Labor Day to Memorial Day, when City Lifeguard towers are not manned, officers on motor patrol keep an extra keen eye on the surf, looking out for emergencies.

g. Foot Patrols

Averaging over 3,500 per year, foot patrols are an important facet of community relations. They give officers a chance to meet directly with boaters to personalize relations and hear any complaints or issues of concern. Foot patrols also allow officers to better address marina-related enforcement issues not easily addressed by boat or truck, such as dogs off leash, dock obstructions, vessel overhangs, inadequate shore-power cords and illegal liveaboards. Officers also use this opportunity to check Waterfront facilities, ensuring restrooms, fire alarms, marina gates, vessel storage areas on West Beach and Leadbetter Beach and local businesses are secured.

h. Bird Rescues

The protection of avian life is a stated goal of the Waterfront's Clean Marina Program. Harbor Patrol rescued 81 birds in FY '12, working with Stearns Wharf Bait and Tackle to help educate Wharf fishermen and with the Wildlife Care Network (WCN) to save ailing birds whenever possible. Patrol keeps "carry cages" stored and ready for transport to the WCN, and officers have become well acquainted with capture techniques, often successfully extracting fish hooks or marine debris from fouled birds.

i. Marine Mammal Rescues

Harbor Patrol typically rescues about 50 seals and sea lions a year (Attachment 13), ensuring their safe transport to the Marine Mammal Center (MMC). Rescuing marine mammals can be dangerous, work as the animals often weigh several hundred pounds apiece. Twice Patrol has been asked to help protect a wayward gray whale that swam into the harbor, working in cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Patrol also works closely with the MMC and the City Parks and Recreation Department to verify shark sightings and facilitate the posting of City beaches, as necessary. Finally, Patrol is sometimes—albeit rarely—asked to rescue other animals, like dogs, or, in the rarest case of all, a show horse that swam nearly four miles to sea last year, only to be gently towed back by Harbor Patrol aboard PB #1.

CONCLUSION

Harbor Patrol often operates out of the public view—on the ocean where its duties and accomplishments go largely unnoticed. Staff hopes this report has shed light not only on Patrol Officers' day-to-day responsibilities, but on their commitment to the City and Waterfront community alike.

- Attachments:
1. FY '12 Performance Management Annual Report
 2. Emergency Medical Responses
 3. Percent of five-minute emergency responses
 4. Average training hours per officer
 5. Class Tours and other public relations events
 6. Calls for service
 7. Emergency responses outside the harbor
 8. Emergency vessel tows
 9. Non-emergency vessel tows
 10. Enforcement contacts
 11. Arrests
 12. Motor patrols
 13. Marine mammal rescues

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