



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Law Enforcement

OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL OPERATIONS

GENERAL ORDER	EFFECTIVE DATE	RESCINDS/AMENDS	APPLICABILITY
30	May 7, 2018	July 21, 2008	All Sworn Members

References
General Order 16
CFA 14.02

1 POLICY

- A** This General Order applies to *Heavy Endurance*, *Endurance* and *Intermediate* Class vessels assigned to the Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) program.
- B** It is the policy of the Division to establish procedures for securing Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) during inclement weather.
- C** It is the policy of the Division to establish procedures and provide guidance to members on the safe operation of Offshore Patrol Vessels to provide for effective public safety, fisheries and domestic security patrols.
 - (1)** To command a *Heavy Endurance* or *Endurance* class Offshore Patrol Vessel, except in emergency situations, members must hold at least a United States Coast Guard (USCG) Captain's License (OUPV/ 6-pack).
 - (2)** The standard crew for an *Endurance* class OPV is two sworn members and the vessel Operator in Charge (OIC). The minimum crew required for operation is one sworn member and the vessel OIC, however, additional crew members are preferred when available.
 - (3)** OPVs may be equipped with a Division approved automatic weapon.
 - (4)** Boarding teams should have at least two members.
 - (5)** Vessel OICs are Alternate Evidence Custodians.
 - (6)** The vessel OIC shall have the final decision for all actions regarding crew and vessel safety.
 - (7)** Crew members shall adhere to the Division's Offshore Patrol Vessel Manual.
 - (8)** All safety, navigation equipment, and vessel systems shall meet Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) standards, federal and state laws.
 - (9)** All OPV occupants shall wear an approved floatation device with an attached man-overboard (MOB) light when outside the enclosed cabin area when vessel is not moored.
 - (10)** All Offshore Patrol Vessels shall be equipped with the following equipment at a minimum:

- (a) Communications equipment to include; FWC radios, VHF radio, cellular phone, satellite phone or other long-range communications systems.
- (b) Functioning navigational equipment to include, compass, charts (paper and/or electronic), GPS and radar. Endurance Class vessels should have a minimum of two independent radar, GPS, and compass systems (one magnetic compass and one flux gate compass is permissible). The minimum requirement for underway operations is one of each system.
- (c) Emergency lights and siren.
- (d) Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB).
- (e) Inflatable offshore life raft capable of supporting Vessel OIC and crew.
- (f) "Emergency Ditch Box" to include USCG approved Visual Distress Signals (VDS), waterproof handheld VHF Marine Radio, first aid kit, and an emergency manual water desalination and filtration system.
- (g) A current copy of USCG Navigational Rules.
- (h) First aid and first responder equipment.
- (i) Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) (Heavy Endurance and Endurance Classes only).
- (j) Bilge dewatering capabilities
 1. A minimum of two (2) automatic bilge pumps positioned to allow pump out of all spaces. These pumps must be wired to function when the vessel's power is turned off.
 2. A minimum of one additional method (portable gasoline, 12-volt portable or genset driven/ powered pump) capable of pump out of all spaces.
 3. Endurance Class vessels shall be equipped with audible and visual bilge alarms capable of dock-side alert when vessel is moored and unoccupied.
 4. Vessels that, by design, have inaccessible sealed hull spaces may be exempt from some dewatering requirements on a case-by-case basis as approved by the OPV program coordinator.

D Definitions

- (1) **Heavy Endurance Class Offshore Patrol Vessels** are those capable of extended patrol in offshore areas during varying weather conditions. The Heavy Endurance class fleet contains vessels 50 feet or greater in length. These vessels have berthing and support facilities and equipment to enable them to operate on multi-day missions without returning to port.
- (2) **Endurance Class Offshore Patrol Vessels** contains vessels 38 feet or greater in length. These vessels have enclosed cabins and accommodations to support extended patrols in offshore waters during varying weather conditions. They do not have berthing for each crew member.
- (3) **Intermediate Class Offshore Patrol Vessels are designated as such by the OPV Program Coordinator or designee.** These vessels are capable of short-duration day patrols of offshore areas in varying weather conditions. Intermediate Vessels are larger than standard near shore patrol vessels and are less than 38 feet in length. They do not have berthing for crew members.

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

A Division

- (1) Ensure that the OPV OIC and crew are trained in the proper operation and care of the Offshore Patrol Vessel and associated equipment.
- (2) Ensure that all required equipment is procured for and assigned to OPVs.

B Regional Commanders

- (1) Approve the storage locations for OPVs during hurricanes and other emergencies.
- (2) Ensure that Offshore Patrol Vessels are provided with required crew.

C Area Captains

- (1) Establish and maintain alternate boarding teams to conduct boarding operations from OPVs.
- (2) Resolve issues regarding a vessel's OIC request for alternate crew members versus patrol supervisor needs.

D OPV Program Coordinator

- (1) Ensure all OPV safety policies are adhered to by the program.
- (2) Assist in the development of OPV policies and procedures.
- (3) Coordinate and standardize equipment and operations between various offshore patrol vessels.
- (4) Plan and provide incident command and control for multi-vessel or extended deployment special details.
- (5) Review all OPV accident investigations.
- (6) Manage operator-training program development.
- (7) Develop and implement the budget for the OPV program.
- (8) Coordinate, schedule, and conduct vessel inspections of OPVs.
- (9) Provide recommendations and consulting services to command staff and vessel OICs related to offshore fleet planning, operations, staffing, and maintenance.

E OPV Operator-in-Charge (OIC)

- (1) Ensure the safe operation, readiness, and maintenance of the assigned Offshore Patrol Vessel and associated equipment.
- (2) Direct OPV activities of the assigned crew.
- (3) Ensure that all laws, policies, and procedures are followed.
- (4) Ensure that evidence is properly handled and stored in accordance with General Order 16 - *Collection, Preservation and Documentation of Evidence and Property*.
- (5) Maintain required logs and documents patrol activities.
- (6) Determine when approved automatic weapon should be mounted.
- (7) Ensure adequate supplies of food, fresh water, fuel, clothing, lines and other necessary supplies are on board prior to each mission.
- (8) Ensure all required equipment is checked for operational status prior to leaving the dock. All non-operational equipment shall be repaired or replaced as soon as practical.
- (9) Identify locations to secure OPV during hurricanes and other emergencies, and forwards a written recommendation to the statewide offshore patrol fleet coordinator for comments, and the Regional Commander for approval. Original plans shall be maintained in the Regional Office and a copy maintained aboard the Offshore Patrol Vessel.
- (10) Determine whether to conduct, postpone, or cancel operations based on weather, status of the OPV, availability of personnel or any other pertinent factors which could result in an unacceptable level of risk.

F Offshore Patrol Vessel crew and boarding teams

- (1) Follow procedures outlined in the Offshore Patrol Vessel Manual.
- (2) Perform basic vessel maintenance and upkeep.
- (3) Operate auxiliary equipment and perform duties as an able seaman.
- (4) Stand watch.
- (5) Conduct search and rescue operations.
- (6) Enforce all applicable federal and state laws.
- (7) Assist federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.
- (8) Board vessels and complete boarding reports and other documentation as required.

3 PROCEDURES

A Boarding procedures

- (1) Notify the Communications Center of the location as well as the identity of the vessel to be boarded.
- (2) The boarding crew shall wear Division-approved personal flotation devices.
- (3) Boarding crew members shall always be in uniform and carry functioning portable radios for communication.
- (4) The boarding crew should immediately identify themselves as law enforcement officers to the boarded vessel's occupants and state the reason for boarding.
- (5) The boarding crew shall maintain communications with the OPV OIC and apprise the OIC of their status during the boarding.
- (6) The boarding crew shall conduct a complete written inspection prior to concluding the boarding.

B Securing large vessels during storm events

- (1) All circumstances must be considered when preparing to secure vessels in the path of a storm. Plans should be based on reasonable prudent mariner principles.
- (2) Possible short routes for escaping the storm's path shall be identified and updated routinely based on forecasted track of the storm.
- (3) Long distance evacuation plans shall include crew transportation back to residence.
- (4) The OIC shall have a contingency plan for checking the condition of the vessel as soon as weather conditions permit.
- (5) The OIC has the authority and ability to make sound maritime risk management decisions based on prevailing conditions.
- (6) Each OIC should coordinate a telephone conference call at least 72 hours prior to an anticipated storm landfall with the statewide OPV program coordinator, Regional Commander, and appropriate Deputy Director for a final decision on where to secure the vessel.
- (7) Safe mooring locations in protected waters should be identified in advance, and agreements with entities that control these safe locations should be in place.
- (8) Basic mooring standards are prudent and should include, double line moorings, redundant safety lines for each mooring point, double/triple anchoring, and mooring point clean up.
- (9) A minimum of a 1" - 1.5" Double Braid, or Triple Twist nylon line is required for use in securing vessels. Line shall be vessel specific, double braid is preferred.
- (10) Each OIC shall determine the line that is best suited for securing their assigned vessel.

- (11) The required line shall be properly stored to protect the line from the elements.
- (12) Properly secured chaffing gear is mandatory.
- (13) The haul-out of a vessel should be considered a **LAST OPTION**, and contractual arrangements shall be made well in advance of a storm. If possible, and preferably by contract, the vendor performing the haul-out shall be obligated to return the vessel to the water as soon as possible after the storm.

4 FORMS

FORM NUMBER	FORM TITLE
	Incident Summary Report
	Incident Summary Report Narrative