



**Homeland
Security**

**U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
District 11 Northern Region**

Serving Northern California, Nevada, Utah



CHANGE OF WATCH PLANNING

This guide has been compiled to help our Divisions and Flotillas plan and carry out successful **Changes of Watch (COW)** with attention to proper **Courtesy and Protocol**.

It is based on information available in:

- **The Auxiliary Manual, Chap 12: Guide to Courtesy and Protocol for Auxiliary Units and Auxiliarists**
- **Division Procedures Guide, Chap 3: Courtesy and Protocol**
- **Practical Protocol for the Military and Government (15th Ed., JAN 2001)**
- **District and Host Division Conference and COW Guide (Fall 2002)**
- **Chief Director's Web Site: Customs and Courtesy**

I. COW PURPOSE AND PLANNING

WHY A CHANGE-OF-WATCH?

The main purpose of an Auxiliary COW is to install the newly elected officers and to recognize the accomplishments and service of the outgoing officers. The annual COW is often the only formal gathering of division and flotilla members during the year, and can offer the opportunity for Gold and Silver Team CG members to meet in a social setting. It is also an opportunity to award your top performers.

When done successfully, the COW can have an energizing effect on the incoming officers, give the outgoing officers a sense of accomplishment and appreciation, and give all attendees a positive impression of your unit.

However, when the COW is done without the proper planning, or when it lacks basic courtesy and protocol, guests will leave with a negative impression of the unit, and especially its leadership, regardless of the accomplishments the unit has achieved during the previous year.

- Good planning precedes all successful COWs. Since most suitable facilities are booked many months in advance, a COW Committee should be established as early in the year as possible.

COW COMMITTEE

Some things are common to all successful COWs: pick the right people to carry out your COW; plan early with attention to detail; ensure all coordination is done well in advance of the event; and do not let things wait until the last moment.

Your chances of success will be increased if the committee:

- Consists of at least one member who was intimately involved in the previous COW.
- Is made up of volunteers who are willing to do the work needed.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The COW Committee should select the Master of Ceremonies, based primarily on the person's organizational skills and comfort level with public speaking. Normally, the unit leader is the host. It is also helpful if this person is knowledgeable regarding Coast Guard protocol. The host should arrive early and help greet the guests.

SETTING THE COW DATE

There are several items to take into consideration prior to selecting a tentative COW date. Check the Calendar posted on the D11N Web Site to make sure there are no conflicts. Avoid holiday weekends and other events like N-TRAIN. Keep in mind the convenience of your Honored Guests by avoiding scheduling COWs on the same weekend a great distance apart.

Once you have selected a desired COW date, submit your request to the DCO or the DCO's delegate to get final approval. It is wise to schedule your COW date at least one or two years in advance, and request that it be displayed on the district calendar. It is also a good idea to keep the same approximate date every year (e.g., Third SUN in JAN), in order to simplify it for your members.

INVITATIONS and RESERVATIONS

Your unit board decides upon the number of and specifics of those who are to be invited as Honored Guests. Keep in mind that USCG Active Duty and Auxiliary EXCOM Guests are usually funded for attending COWs. Depending on your unit budget, you have the option of inviting them as Paying or Non-Paying Guests (see below).

- When you are inviting an Honored Guest, always include their spouse or guest in the invitation.

- Once the details of the event have been decided upon, invitations should be sent to your Honored Guests at least two months in advance. Invitations should be either printed or in letter format. Specific information regarding the event should be included within the invitation, including date, place, time, cost (if paying), uniform and directions to the COW. You should also inform your guests if you are requesting them to speak or perform any other function at the COW.
- Specify a RSVP date and list the name and address of the individual to receive the reservations and act as contact person.
- Invitations sent to **Non-Paying Guests** should be worded: “It is our pleasure to extend an invitation to you and your guest to attend our Change of Watch Dinner **as our guests**...” No information on cost is included. The invitee should assume that payment is not required (See Appendix Example 1).
- Invitations sent to **Paying Guests** should read “It is our pleasure to ask you and your guest **to join us** at our Change of Watch Dinner...”. In this case, include information as to the cost of the event and RSVP information (See Appendix Example 2).

II. COW BASICS & MATERIALS

PRINTED PROGRAM

A printed program is not absolutely necessary, but does add a formal touch to the occasion. Keep it concise. Make sure that all Honored Guests’ names are spelled properly with proper rank and title.

UNIFORM

The unit leader prescribes the COW uniform, consistent with district policy. **Service Dress Blue, Bravo** is the most common uniform assigned for an evening COW. The Dinner Dress Jacket is another formal option, although few members have this uniform.

If there is room on the registration form, it is suggested that you specify exactly what the uniform consists of for both men and women.

- Include the fact that the Auxiliary Blazer or Appropriate Civilian Attire are also acceptable.
- Tropical Blue Long uniform may be appropriate for COW luncheons and where few members have the Service Dress Blue uniform.

COVER / AWARDS TABLE

- A small table should be available as people enter the dining area where Combination Caps can be placed.
- Another table should be placed near the podium to hold awards, gifts, etc.

GREETER

Greeter(s) should be stationed near the entrance to welcome attendees and to facilitate guest's orientation to the event. Provide information for hats and coats. All Honored Guests at your formal function should be informed prior to seating as to where they will be sitting. Meal tickets can also be distributed at this time.

RAFFLE/DOOR PRIZES

If raffle or door prize tickets will be sold at the event, they should be sold only during informal parts of the program. Tickets should never be sold during the ceremonies or speeches. Keep the drawing short and fun.

PLACE CARDS

Place cards should be provided for all Honored Guests. Place cards can be written or typed. Pay attention to detail, including proper spelling, legibility and use of proper titles.

FLAGS / BANNERS

Always provide an American Flag and an Auxiliary Ensign behind the speaker's podium or head table.

- The American flag should be placed behind and to the right of podium, or in other words, on the left side of the audience. All other flags, including the Auxiliary ensign, should be placed on the left of the podium, to the audience's right.
- If your unit has a banner, it can be hung at the entrance to the room, hung behind the podium, draped over the awards table, or draped over the hat table, wherever it would look best.

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS

Decide early on what is needed. The most common aids used are notebook computers, LCD projectors, screens, overhead and video projectors, laser pointers and public address systems. Make sure you know what your speakers need and have a specific person assigned during the program to help out with equipment. Consider backup equipment in case something fails.

SEATING

There are many options on seating. Formal seating is discussed in detail in the AUXMAN and division procedures guides. The goal should be twofold: follow proper protocol and accommodate the wishes of your Honored Guests. Some of this will depend upon the table arrangements at your event.

For instance, seating arrangements can be much easier if you do not have a head table. In fact, many Honored Guests prefer to be seated among other

members, so that they are not “on display”, and can meet new people. One or more regular tables can be set aside as VIP tables, usually those situated closest to the center front of the room.

III. COW PROGRAM OPENING

Approximately three or four hours are typical for this event.

INFORMAL REFRESHMENTS

Normally, the formal activities are preceded by a cocktail hour; this informal time can be important to the success of the affair. It is the time that people who have not seen each other for some time have an opportunity to mingle. In addition, this is a good opportunity for Honored Guests to be introduced to members, and the only time they’ll have to mingle with others.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

After the cocktail hour, the Master of Ceremonies should:

- Ask the guests to be seated
- Make some introductory remarks
- Announce Color Guard (if included)
- Announce the Pledge of Allegiance (if indicated)
- Introduce the person giving the Invocation (if included)
- Introduce the Honored Guests (see below)

MUSIC and/or COLOR GUARD

This can be appropriate – *if done well* and not too time consuming. If used, both should be thoroughly rehearsed in advance, testing the PA system, making sure that the music can be heard at the proper level throughout the hall, and that the Color Guard follows the proper uniform and protocol in their procedure.

FLAG SALUTE

When the Pledge of Allegiance is given, everyone, whether in uniform or not, should stand and place their right hand over their heart. Ask a prominent unit member to lead the Pledge.

INVOCATION

An invocation is not required, but if it is given, it should always be non-denominational.

INTRODUCTIONS

Keep your introductions concise and always use proper titles. Auxiliary COWs should follow established protocol regarding the introduction of Honored Guests. One simple way to do this is to make introductions by service and/or office:

- **“From the United States Coast Guard”** for Gold Side Honored Guests such as District Commander, Sector Commander, DIRAUX, OTO, OICs from the CG Stations. Guests are introduced by rank in descending order.
- **“From the USCG Auxiliary National Staff”** for Silver Side Honored Guests such as ARCO, AUX Director or National Department Chief.
- **“From the USCG Auxiliary District 11 North”** for Silver Side Honored Guests such as DCO, VCO, RCOs, and DSOs in attendance. Guests are introduced by current office held in descending order following the Auxiliary chain of management.
- **“Other Guests of our Division”** for DCPs and VCPs in attendance.
- It is important to refer to all USCG personnel by their proper rank and title, followed by their guest’s name: e.g., CAPT John J Jones, Sector Commander and his wife Mary Jones.
- Auxiliary District Commodores, National Staff Commodores or Past DCOs are introduced as Commodores: e.g., COMO Mary Jones and her husband John Jones
- Other Auxiliary Officers are introduced by their name followed by current office held: e.g., John Jones, Vice Commodore and his wife Mary Jones or Mary Jones, Rear Commodore and her husband John Jones.

DINNER

It is usually preferable to have the meal served at this time, and wait until the meal has been concluded to resume the official portion of the COW. The dinner will take usually take about an hour.

IV. FORMAL PROGRAM

MEMORIAL CEREMONY

Optional brief memorial tribute may be appropriate for unit members who have recently passed over the bar.

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING OFFICERS

Outgoing DCP and VCP can recognize the outgoing unit staff officers with a Certificate of Appreciation and/or appropriate memento.

INSTALLATION OF INCOMING OFFICERS

Although there is no “official” order for this portion of the ceremony, a common procedure is as follows:

- Have one of the Honored Guests read the Prologue for all new Elected and Unit Staff Officers.
- Another Honored Guest administers the Oath of Office to DCP, VCP (and possibly FCs and VFCs).
- The Incoming DCP swears in the incoming Unit staff, assisted by the Incoming VCP who distributes their Certificates of Appointment.
- Consider administering Prologue and Oath of Office to all Elected and Staff Officers together to promote team spirit and unity.

PROGRAM SPEAKING ORDER

In order to keep program to a reasonable length of time, only the most senior officers should be asked to speak, e.g., Sector Commander or Deputy Commander, DIRAUX, DCO, DCP.

Other officers such as the VCO, RCO, and CGSTA OICs can be asked to participate in other parts of the program, if desired. The number of speakers should be limited for the sake of your audience.

The speakers should be notified in advance that they are requested to speak and for how long. Speakers should be introduced in order by rank or office, from lowest to highest. For instance: COMO Mary Jones, DCO 11N; CDR John Jones, DIRAUX; and CAPT Mary Smith, Sector Commander.

AWARDS

Top performers over the past year can be recognized. For example, this could include recognition of the Auxiliarists with most Operations Hours, Vessel Exams, Program Visitations, and Instructor Hours, also including the Top Flotilla and Top Auxiliarist. Any special awards such as AUXOP or Coxswain Qualifications can also be given.

REMARKS BY GUESTS

If time permits, special guests can be asked to make brief comments “For the Good of the Auxiliary”. This is the opportunity to give time for someone special who was not involved in the formal program to make brief remarks to those in attendance.

CLOSING REMARKS and ADJOURN

This is the opportunity for the Outgoing DCP to thank the COW committee for their work, and to make some final comments. Keep it brief.

When flag officers are present, it is considered proper to delay leaving until they have paid their respects and departed.

IV. DEBRIEF

At the next unit meeting, the COW Committee should make a report on the event. Feedback should be solicited from the unit members and considered when planning the next year's affair. It would be helpful to archive a folder with COW materials for use by the next year's COW Committee.

V. APPENDIX

Example Invitation #1 (Non-Paying Guest)

Dear Commodore,

The officers and members of USCG Auxiliary Division 5 are pleased to extend an invitation to you and your guest to attend, as our guests, our annual Change-of-Watch dinner on Saturday, 07 JAN 2006.

The dinner and program will be held at Jonesy's Restaurant @ Napa County Airport (see map). RSVP Details and uniform information are enclosed.

We sincerely hope you will be able to join us for this occasion. I plan on introducing you as one of our honored guests near the beginning of our program.

Sincerely,

John Jones
USCG Auxiliary
Captain, Division 5

Example Invitation #2 (Paying Guest)

Dear Commodore,

The officers and members of US Coast Guard Auxiliary Division 5 are pleased to ask you and your guest to join us at our annual Change-of-Watch dinner on Saturday, 07 JAN 2006.

The dinner and program will be held at Jonesy's Restaurant @ Napa County Airport (see map). Details as to cost, uniform and RSVP information are enclosed.

We sincerely hope you will be able to join us for this occasion. I plan on introducing you as one of our honored guests near the beginning of our program.

Sincerely,

John Jones
USCG Auxiliary
Captain, Division 5

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