

# K E V O ' S

# Boating Tips



## Rear Admiral Castillo

I was late for my meeting with the Admiral on Coast Guard Island in Alameda. Mind you... I gave myself 20 extra minutes for a 25-minute journey. Needless to say, the traffic was snarled the entire route. I HATE BEING LATE! Especially for a meeting with the admiral, Commander of the 11th Coast Guard District.

When I got to the overpass to the Island, I started hauling butt trying to make up time. These stupid blue (strobe) lights started flashing in my face. I didn't care... I had a meeting with THE ADMIRAL. Damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead!

I forgot the United States Coast Guard (USCG) was now part of the Department of Homeland Security and here I am speeding up to the front gate of a military base where three admirals' headquarters are located and where command centers coordinate everything from drug smuggling interceptions off the coast of Central America to international fisheries enforcement up in Alaska. Hello!

When I got to the gate I was not in the mood to be reprimanded for speeding up to the entrance. (Strike one.) Some guy half my age

was reading me the "riot act" and I was snipping back if he wanted the Admiral to hear about this encounter... (Strike two.)

Next I could not locate my proof of insurance and insisted on being let on the base. Now I'm that close to being hauled off to The Brig. It

and the consequences of my actions, it all came into focus. But I digress... I got in. HA!

Rear Admiral Castillo assumed his duties as Commander, 11th Coast Guard District, in July 2009. The 11th Coast Guard District encompasses the states of California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah and covers 3.3 million square miles of coastal and offshore waters extending 1,000 nautical miles off of California and south to the Colombian/Ecuadorian border in South America.

Prior to this assignment, he served as the Director of Response Policy (CG-53) in Coast Guard Headquarters. There he oversaw the development of strategic doctrine and policy guidance for Coast Guard forces to effectively and efficiently accomplish operational maritime missions in the areas of law enforcement, search and rescue, counterterrorism and defense operations, incident management and

preparedness, and the contingency exercises program.

Rear Admiral Castillo previously served as Chief of Staff for



Rear Admiral Joseph "Pepe" Castillo, Commander, 11th District Coast Guard.

would be an odd place for an interview, but what the heck! After he pulled me aside and told me the "clear meaning" of the blue lights



the 9th Coast Guard District in Cleveland, Ohio, where he oversaw the daily activities of more than 7,000 personnel and auxiliaries operating in the Great Lakes region. He commanded Group New Orleans, Louisiana, and as the 8th District Chief of Operations in New Orleans, he was instrumental in leading the Coast Guard's efforts to rescue and evacuate more than 33,500 people from New Orleans and the Mississippi and Alabama coasts following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Rear Admiral Castillo has spent the majority of his career in operational assignments ashore, alternating with staff tours at the District and Area levels. Special duty assignments included Officer in Charge of Forward Operating Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during Operation Able Manner and Coast Guard Liaison Officer on the Multi-National Force in Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy.

Rear Admiral Castillo earned a Bachelor of Science in Management from the Coast Guard Academy in 1978, and a Masters of Science in Industrial Relations as well as a Professional Certificate in Human Resources Management from the University of New Haven in Connecticut. He is also a Distinguished Graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

His personal military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit (three awards), the Meritorious Service Medal with "O" Device (two awards), the Coast Guard Commendation Medal with "O" Device (six awards), the Army Commendation Medal, the 9-11 Medal, and numerous other awards including the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, the Boat Forces Insignia, and the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge. He has also been recognized with selection as a Kentucky Colonel, and the Secretary Hidalgo Award from the Association of Naval Service Officers.

Admiral Castillo is the second highest-ranking Hispanic officer in the USCG and the first to become a District Commander.

### The Admiral's Concerns

He said that one of his major priorities is to communicate better with the recreational boating community. One of the challenges he sees in this area is that, al-



though it is highly recommended that boaters have an operational VHF radio onboard because that's what the Coast Guard and others actively monitor for distress calls, many boaters rely on cell phones, texting and even Twitter™ to communicate. He feels strongly that the CG needs to be ahead of this curve, not catching up.

Another area of interest to the Admiral is personal flotation devices and getting boaters to wear them. We talked about the "fashion" aspect of motivating boaters to wear them. I couldn't agree more and told him I'd written a column on that very subject.

Alcohol consumption is another concern. We all know that the combination of boating and drinking does not mix. This is especially true when you factor in heat, sun, wind and, most of all, water.

Paddle Smart™ is a new program designed to help the CG determine if it is necessary to launch a search



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and rescue (SAR) mission. It involves a sticker placed on kayaks, rowboats, canoes and dinghies informing those who find them floating unmanned who owns them and how to contact them.

I can tell you from personal experience how important this is: One day on Lake Tahoe I spotted a rowboat unmanned in the middle of the lake. I immediately contacted the CG and gave the coordinates of the vessel. If there was a person on that boat, they were probably in deep (water), experiencing hypothermia and possibly dead.

Had I had a phone number to call I could have passed that info to the Coast Guard so they could determine if the boat simply floated off on its own with no one on it. Can you see how this would help the CG determine to launch SAR actions or not?

### **Kevo's Tip:**

Improving communication between the recreational boating community and the USCG is a top priority of Admiral Castillo. An example of this is the Paddle Smart program. Several organizations are involved; you can search the web for "Operation Paddle Smart" or go to [www.paddlesmart.com](http://www.paddlesmart.com).

For great info on all types of boating safety programs, see [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org).

Be safe & happy boating!

**As always, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or [kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com](mailto:kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com).** 🚤