

# Boating Tips

## Admiral Zukunft

**M**y wife Susan (the other Admiral) and I met Rear Admiral Paul Zukunft at the Pacific Inter-Club Yacht Association (PICYA) Change of Watch (COW) banquet held at the St. Francis Yacht Club on Jan. 31, 2009. It was a very nice affair. We exchanged e-mail addresses and I subsequently contacted him to inquire as to whether or not he would agree to be the subject of an interview for my column in *Bay & Delta Yachtsman* magazine. He agreed. Hey, we all make mistakes! HA!

Since May is National Boating Safety Month we agreed to “wrap” the interview around the all-important issue of safety. I sat down with RDML Zukunft, Commander David Chareonsuphiphat, Director of District 11 Auxiliary North, and Public Affairs Specialist Third Class Erik Swanson on Tuesday, Feb. 10, in the Admiral’s office on Coast Guard Island in Alameda.

## So Who Is This Guy?

As Eleventh District Commander, Rear Admiral Zukunft is responsible for all Coast Guard missions in the 3.3 million square miles of coastal and offshore waters extending 1,000 nautical miles off of California and south to the Colombian and Ecuadorian border in South America. His previous flag assignment was as Director, Joint Interagency Task Force West

in Hawaii. Rear Admiral Zukunft’s past staff assignments include Chief of Staff and Chief of Operations for the Fourteenth Coast Guard District, Chief of Operations for Pacific Area and Chief of Operations Oversight at Atlantic Area.

A 1977 graduate of the U.S.



Rear Admiral Paul Zukunft, Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District.



Coast Guard Academy with masters degrees from Webster University and the U.S. Naval War College, Rear Admiral Zukunft served extensively in the Atlantic and Pacific cutter fleets, commanding cutters *Cape Upright*, *Harriet Lane* and *Rush*. His shore assignments have included Operations Officer at Vessel Traffic Service New Orleans, Chief of Port Operations at Marine Safety Office Corpus Christi and Commanding Officer of the Training Quota Management Center in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Rear Admiral Zukunft is a native of North Branford, Connecticut. He wears the permanent Coast Guard Cutterman pin and his personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit and Meritorious Service Medal with “O” device (five awards), Coast Guard Commendation Medal (two awards) and Coast Guard Achievement medal with “O” device (two awards).

Whoa... That’s some resume!

## Rear Admiral’s Safety Advice For Boaters

**Kevo:** *What are the three most important aspects of recreational boating you would like boaters in NorCal to be aware of this year?*

Rear Admiral Zukunft:

1. Nobody ever expects to have a boating accident or have engine trouble, but taking a few minutes to make sure all of your equipment is in order can save your life.

2. Make sure you have a means of communication, preferably waterproof, to call for help if necessary. VHF radio preferred.

3. Wear your lifejacket. There's often no time to search for a lifejacket when an accident happens. Northern California waters are cold and even if you can swim, the cold water will cause you to gasp and panic and you'll drown long before hypothermia kicks in. New inflatable lifejackets could be the answer for adults (over 16 years of age), because they are much more comfortable and allow greater freedom of movement.

**Kevo: What are some of your challenges to accomplishing your mission?**

Rear Admiral Zukunft:

1. An ongoing challenge is public education. There are new boaters joining the recreational fleet every day and we all know they come with varying levels of experience and training. We ask more experienced boaters to help educate newcomers. (Kevo: I have a cousin whose uncle has a brother who actually does on-board powerboat training. HA!)

2. In addition to the comment above, many "experienced" boaters have never had any boating education and have poor habits or don't know the NAVRULES. Trying to get their attention and teach them the right way is a challenge because they (think) they know it already.

3. Getting states to pass mandatory boater education laws. California has been trying to get this done for years, but legislation was vetoed in 1999 by Governor Gray Davis. Efforts in the last three

years to introduce similar legislation finally were successful, but the bill died in committee. I applaud the efforts of the Recreational Boaters of California (RBOC) for sponsoring the latest legislation. We need to keep this up until it is signed into law. Mandatory boater education is the key to improved safety and reduced accidents.

**Kevo: What opportunities do you see to make boating safer this year?**

Rear Admiral Zukunft: Reaching boaters of diverse cultural backgrounds. We have large populations of Asian and Latino boaters who speak languages other than English and we need to reach them with our boating safety messages. In addition to having multi-lingual brochures, we have to find ways to effectively reach out to those communities.

**Kevo: What are some of District 11's long-term goals?**

Rear Admiral Zukunft:

1. Reduce the number of boating while intoxicated cases and subsequent accidents and deaths. I'm impressed by the interagency cooperation I see in the four states of the Eleventh District (CA, NV, AZ and UT). Sheriffs, state wildlife and fish and game officers, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service have been cooperating on joint boating under the influence (BUI) checkpoints on busy waterways. This has led to greater use of designated drivers, particularly on the Colorado River. The statistics on alcohol-related accidents and deaths are too varied to get a trend analysis for the 11th District, but anecdotal evidence does point to more designated drivers and that's encouraging.

District 11 alcohol-related boating accidents:

2003: 35, 2004: 48, 2005: 62, 2006: 43, 2007: 50.

District 11 alcohol-related boating deaths:

2003: 9, 2004: 15, 2005: 16, 2006: 10, 2007: 14.

2. Increase the number of people taking Coast Guard Auxiliary safety courses and increase membership in the Auxiliary.

3. Involve the boating community not only in safety on the water, but also in security through America's Waterway Watch (AWW). For more info on this valuable program, visit [www.americaswaterwayswatch.org/](http://www.americaswaterwayswatch.org/).

### Kevo's Tips:

In light of May being National Boating Safety Month, I defer to a higher authority to offer some very important tips to our readers. Rear Admiral Paul Zukunft advises boaters:

1. Before going out, check all of your safety equipment: fire extinguishers, lifejackets, horn, navigation lights, bailing device, etc. The middle of an accident is not the time to realize these things aren't working or are missing.

2. File a "float plan" with a friend or family member showing where you'll be boating or fishing. If you get in trouble this helps rescuers know where to start looking. Visit [www.floatplancentral.org/](http://www.floatplancentral.org/) to download a blank float plan.

3. Use technology to help. New devices with GPS capability (including cell phones) have aided in the quick rescue of people who needed assistance.

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).**