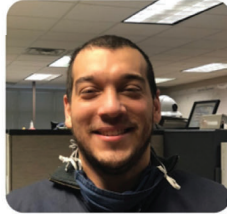




2020

Marine Safety Unit Chicago Year in Review



Commander's Letter

2020 proved to be an unprecedented year for Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Chicago. Through perseverance and resiliency, MSU Chicago's dedicated crew was able to adapt and innovate to safely and effectively perform our missions. The Coast Guard's core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty continue to serve as our True North in an ever-changing world. We are deeply humbled and honored to serve the American public and lead through fairness, dignity, and compassion. Through our extraordinary federal, state, local, and industry partnerships, MSU Chicago remains committed to executing our missions with resolve and professionalism.

MSU Chicago successfully reached the national 50% phase-in goal for towing vessel certification under Subchapter M. In 2020, we issued 14 initial Certificates of Inspection to towing vessels, placing the unit ahead of schedule towards reaching the 75% goal by July 2021.

Between July and October 2020, MSU Chicago implemented a Marine Transportation System Recovery Unit (MTSRU) with the Illinois River Carriers' Association (IRCA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to execute the long-scheduled lock maintenance and repair projects on the Illinois Waterway. This included close communication with IRCA, USACE, and local stakeholders and active monitoring of vessel queues at each lock with visibility of priority lockage requests.

Additionally, MSU Chicago implemented a MTSRU with the USACE, City of Chicago, Chicago Harbor Safety Committee, and other local stakeholders for the Chicago Harbor Lock closure and partial reconstruction of the south chamber wall. The MTSRU provided all stakeholders and partners the opportunity to discuss issues and impacts along with keeping up on the latest developments.

Overall, these efforts demonstrate the value of multi-agency and industry partnerships. Through close coordination and collaboration, we were able to make a positive impact on the Maritime Transportation System. As we move forward, MSU Chicago will continue to be Ready, Relevant, and Responsive in service to the nation.

Please enjoy reading some of the accomplishments and highlights from the past year. We look forward to working alongside you this upcoming year.

Sincerely,



Randy L. Preston
Commander, U.S. Coast Guard



*CDR Randy Preston
Commanding Officer
MSU Chicago*

Waterways Management Division

2020 was a distinctive year for the Waterways Management Division (WWM) for the usual reasons, but also for the unique obstacles that COVID-19 presented. The WWM's major accomplishments included close coordination with industry, state, local, and governmental partners to manage closures to several locks on the Illinois Waterway, responding to significant pollution cases, and working to ensure industry's full compliance with federal regulations governing the health, safety, and well-being of mariners working on Lake Michigan. While we saw a significant drop in the number of scheduled marine events and activities during the year, we successfully accomplished all of these missions while navigating the ever-changing pandemic landscape.

The Waterways Management Division worked hand-in-hand with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Rock Island District and the Illinois River Carriers' Association to execute the long-planned closure of multiple locks along the Illinois River. Completed during the high traffic summer months, WWM was responsible for communicating the closures, to include any changes to the project timeline to ensure industry could plan accordingly. The 2020 leg of the project was completed on-time and commerce was able to resume on the river before winter weather moved into the area. We also worked with the USACE Chicago District to facilitate closing the navigation channel in Romeoville, IL to test the newest segment of the Electric Dispersal Barrier System, a state of the art project whose sole purpose is to prevent Asian carp, a highly invasive species, from entering the waters of Lake Michigan.

Early in 2020, our Facilities Branch guided industry partners through updating plans to ensure seafarers are able to transit through their facilities in a timely manner and at no cost to the individual. This regulation is important because mariners may be at sea for days, weeks, or even months as part of their employment on a ship, and shore leave is a critical part of maintaining their health, welfare, morale, and overall quality of life. In total, MSU Chicago oversaw updates to 76 facility plans in the region.

Our Pollution Branch was hard at work responding to spills across the Chicagoland area as well. In October, we oversaw the cleanup operations of a discharge of 500 gallons of asphalt, a sticky, highly viscous liquid form of petroleum, of which 10 gallons were released into the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Channel. Additionally, we responded to multiple pollution incidents involving recreational vessels occurring on Lake Michigan and the Illinois Waterway during the summer months.

Division Activities

- Safety Activities 66
- MTSA Exams 70
- Security Checks 71
- Security Breaches 7
- Marine Notices 86
- Safety Zones 6
- Marine Permits 0
- Pollution Responses 110



Crewmembers cleaning up asphalt following a spill onboard their barge



2020 Illinois River lock closure project

Inspections Division

Despite the numerous challenges COVID-19 posed to the local maritime industry and to daily Coast Guard activities, the Inspections Division had a highly productive year. Innovation, flexibility, and improvement were the cornerstones that allowed MSU Chicago's Marine Inspectors to successfully meet the needs of this unique area of responsibility. Covering the nation's third largest city, the southern end of Lake Michigan, and Illinois Waterway system, this area is a vital hub for the Great Lakes and the Western Rivers maritime industry.

This year, the Inspections Division placed significant effort towards two important initiatives. The first one was completing a large number of towing vessel inspections to reach the national goal of certifying 75% of the Subchapter M vessel fleet by July 2021. The second one was reinforcing safety in small passenger vessel (SPV) operations.

In 2020, MSU Chicago issued 14 initial Certificates of Inspection to towing vessels, placing the unit ahead of schedule towards reaching the 75% goal this summer. In December, MSU Chicago performed an extensive SPV Safety Stand Down for Inspections and Investigations unit personnel. The purpose of the stand down was to facilitate unit discussions, review SPV regulations and new program initiatives, and focus on lessons learned from significant SPV marine casualties throughout the nation from the past few years.

Vessel Inspection Activities



CWO Johnson climbs onboard a free fall lifeboat to examine its propulsion and steering system during a Canadian Vessel Safety Examination



MSU Chicago's Commanding Officer prepares to conduct a man overboard drill with marine industry at Navy Pier

Investigations Division

The Investigation Division's marine casualty caseload decreased by 51% in 2020. This reduction could be attributed to an extended period of lock closures and reduction in small passenger vessel operations. One Major Marine Casualty investigation was performed in collaboration with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). We also investigated two separate Serious Marine Incidents. These two incidents stemmed from accidents onboard an inspected towing vessel and a small passenger vessel. Overall, Investigating Officers responded to 41 reportable marine casualties.

The Major Marine Casualty was the result of a bridge allision by an inspected towing vessel transiting southbound on the Des Plaines River while pushing a 676-foot towing arrangement with six loaded dry cargo barges. The vessel allided with the Rock Island Railroad Bridge protection cell, resulting in over \$500K of property damages.

The Investigations Division also published two Safety Alerts that were released nationwide to impress the importance of ensuring proper bonding during cargo tank cleaning/gas freeing operations and the inherent dangers of static discharges. These findings came from a tank barge explosion in 2019 in hopes that this information will raise awareness and prompt companies to review and update their procedures to prevent similar casualties from occurring.

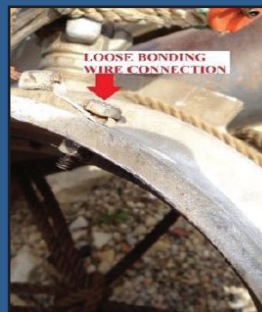
Lastly, the Investigations Division continued its extensive outreach efforts to educate operators and the boating public on the passenger vessel safety laws and enforcement of those intent to violate the law. We collaborated with Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS) and Sector Lake Michigan in successfully identifying and suspending voyages on five vessels suspected of illegal charter boat operations.

Investigation Activities

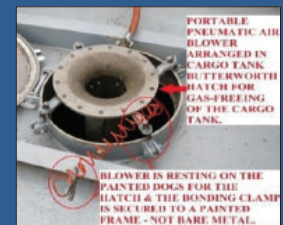
- Preliminary Investigations 52
- Incident Investigations 38
- Enforcement 16



LT Ortega-Pérez and CWO Lovelace alongside members of Sector Lake Michigan Enforcement Division and Station Chicago performing targeted outreach and enforcement operations to combat illegal charter boats



Pneumatic blowers recovered onboard a tank barge explosion had either missing or improperly maintained bonding wires



Not installing "point of use" air dryers at hose connection points for pneumatic air blowers (left photo) and attaching air blower bonding clamps to painted surfaces instead of bare metal (right photo) can lead to dangerous static build up

Auxiliary Division 37

2020 was a year of many challenges, to include COVID-19. The last few years have been exercises in perseverance, but Division 37 has successfully met these challenges.

COVID-19 kept the Division from doing as it would have desired in the way of operational and public affairs missions, but we continued to live up to the ideals of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. The Division skillfully adapted to comply with restrictions to remain Ready, Relevant, and Responsive.

Division 37 started 2020 on a high note participating in the Chicago Boat, RV, and Strictly Sail events. After COVID hit; operational missions were restricted but the Division worked to remain relevant by maintaining readiness. Auxiliarists worked diligently online to fulfill readiness and certification requirements, actively seeking ways to train in new disciplines and procedures.

In 2020, Division 37 obtained three prestigious National Awards. Flotilla 25 member Jeff Bedore was awarded the National Public Affairs Photography Award. In addition, for the second consecutive year both Flotilla 25 and Division 37 earned the coveted National Commodore's Three Star Award for Diversity Excellence. Throughout 2020, Division 37 was able to maintain a strong online social media presence, and obtained outstanding results in terms of popularity metrics nationwide. The keys to online success were the educational and public affairs programs established by the Division.

Division 37 is looking forward to returning to our regular Recreational Boating Safety missions, and to augmenting the Coast Guard active duty personnel performing marine safety missions at MSU Chicago.

This Auxiliary Division continues to be "Semper Paratus" for MSU Chicago and the citizens of the Chicago Rivers area of responsibility.



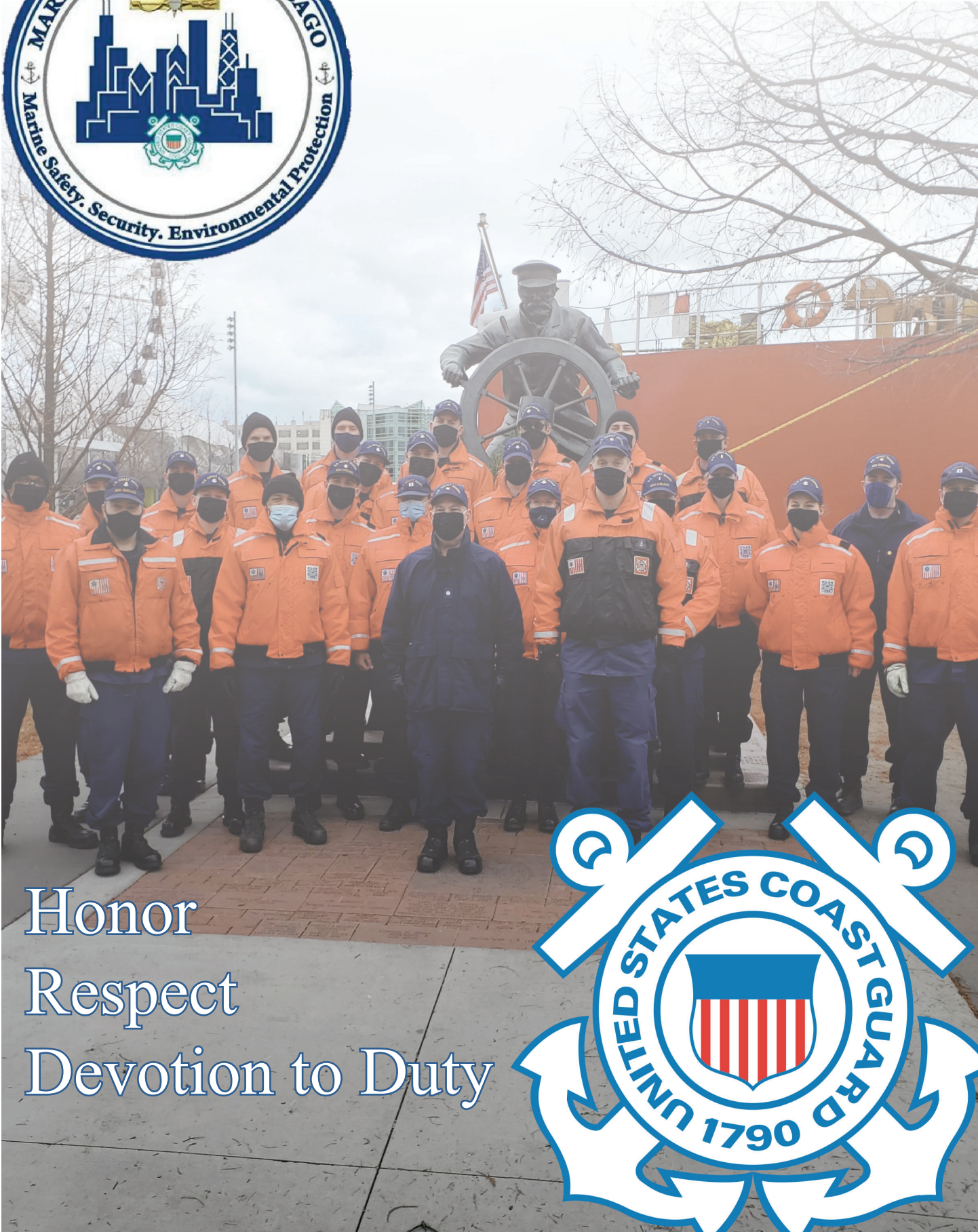
Members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Color Guard lead the Auxiliary contingent for the annual Coast Guard Day's Parade in Grand Haven, MI



Coast Guard Auxiliarist Tim Hudson standing watch onboard USCGC MACKINAW while docked at Navy Pier during the ship's annual Christmas Tree Ship event



Two Auxiliary members available to answer questions and provide information at the Bedford Marine Sales Boat Show



Honor
Respect
Devotion to Duty

