

Surface Operations Qualification/Certification/Currency

The Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual (COMDTINST M16794.51A series, ABCTM for short) defines the training, qualification, and certification **process** used in surface operations. Many Auxiliary members nationwide commonly misuse terms and concepts, and do not refer to the Commandant policy described in the ABCTM. (Don't confuse the ABCTM with the enormous size Boat Crew Seamanship Manual; the entire ABCTM is only 82 pages in length including cover letters and appendices.) **Every member active in surface operations should keep a current copy of the ABCTM for reference.**

From the ABCTM:

Qualification: *The process of initial entry into the program, in which the member learns and demonstrates the knowledge and skills required to perform missions which may be assigned.*

Certification: *Initial command verification that the member has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills, and then annual verification that the member retains those skills.*

Currency Maintenance: *The annual completion of minimum activities required to maintain and demonstrate proficiency. A member's certification remains valid or "current" by completion of annual minimums.*

Also from the ABCTM:

A series of qualification tasks defines the knowledge and skills required for each boat crew position. Each task describes a certain job skill and states performance criteria for that skill. For example, a qualification task for the coxswain position is to take a vessel in stern tow. The trainee completes the task by reading the reference material listed, reviewing the skills with a mentor, then practicing the task. When the trainee demonstrates mastery of the task, the task is signed off by the mentor.

After all tasks are signed off by a mentor, the trainee then completes a dockside oral examination and an underway check ride with a qualification examiner, or QE. The QE is an experienced Auxiliary coxswain appointed by the Director of Auxiliary to verify that the trainee meets the performance standards for qualification. Upon completion of the oral exam and check ride, the QE submits a recommendation to the Director, who then certifies the member. The member is then eligible to be assigned to duty under Auxiliary patrol orders.

The member maintains currency of certification by periodically meeting annual minimum standards. When a member is certified, they are eligible to receive orders and to actively participate in surface operations at a particular level (crew, coxswain, PWC operator).

If the member does not maintain the annual minimum standards, the member's certification will lapse and the member will no longer be eligible to receive orders or be authorized to participate in the surface operations program. Certification can also be suspended by the DIRAUX because of disciplinary action, dangerous or inappropriate action under orders, and certain other reasons spelled out in the ABCTM. Suspension of certification must always be accompanied by a plan of corrective action. The Auxiliary Manual M16790.1F has discussion of certification suspension as well.

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The process of regaining certification is called recertification. Many Auxiliary members, leaders, and even districts call this (incorrectly) requalification.

If certification was suspended for cause, DIRAUX will have specified a corrective plan, which might include particular task retraining and/or other operations training. Normally, such a plan would also require an underway check ride with Auxiliary QEs and possibly active duty representatives before recertification would be granted.

If certification lapsed due to lack of required annual tasks or training, the ABCTM describes the action needed for regaining certification.

A member who has lapsed in certification for 5 or more consecutive years (so they have been ineligible to participate in operations for that time period) will actually lose their initial qualification. It is these members that must re-qualify by going through exactly the same process that a brand new candidate goes through – the entire task list with a mentor, followed by dockside and underway checks with QEs. This is “re-qualification”, and is rare. For coxswains that have lapsed for 5 or more consecutive years, this means starting over at crewmember level.

Certification is only valid within the Auxiliary district/region that authorized the certification. If a member wishes to participate in surface operations in other Auxiliary districts, they must be certified by the DIRAUX of that other Auxiliary district. The ABCTM covers this case as well.

One common confusion point: when a coxswain loses certification (either lapsed or suspended), they may no longer participate in surface operations at any level except as a trainee. They cannot count as crew, in particular. A coxswain that wishes to drop to crewmember status must explicitly request that change from the DIRAUX, and then also perform any required crew currency for that year. The ABCTM provides instruction on doing this. If **currently certified** as coxswain, a coxswain **is** eligible to participate on missions as a crewmember. Once certification is lost, all surface operations eligibility ends and the member can only be a trainee.

The Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual is available online through:

<http://www.d1nr-bcqp.us/downloads.htm#BoatCrewTrainingManual>