

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
FIFTH DISTRICT – NORTHERN REGION
AUXILIARY POLICY MANUAL

CHANGE OF WATCH (COW) CUSTOMS AND
PROTOCOL



DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY

**United States
Coast Guard
Auxiliary**



U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard

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United States Coast Guard
Fifth District



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MMS-PR-AUX (D5NR 16791)-A-CHAPTER 16-(01)
22SEP2021

FIFTH DISTRICT INSTRUCTION MMS-PR-AUX (D5NR 16791)-A-CHAPTER 16-(01)

Subj: FIFTH DISTRICT NORTHERN REGION (D5NR) AUXILIARY POLICY MANUAL –
CHANGE OF WATCH (COW) CUSTOMS AND PROTOCOL

Ref: (a) Coast Guard Fifth District Northern Region Auxiliary Policy Manual, MMS-PR-AUX
(D5NR 16791)-A-(series)
(b) Coast Guard Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series)
(c) Coast Guard Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual, COMDTINST M16798.3 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This manual outlines policies and procedures for the Coast Guard Auxiliary within Fifth District Northern Region (D5NR) per reference (a). The Auxiliary D5NR is comprised of Auxiliary units and the District Auxiliary staff in the state of Delaware, in areas of Pennsylvania and New Jersey that are within the Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay area of responsibility. This manual supplements national level guidance provided by reference (b) and (c).
2. ACTION. Commanders, Commanding Officers, Officers in Charge, Director of Auxiliary and Auxiliarists within D5NR shall comply with the provisions of this instruction.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The previous edition of the D5NR Policy Manual Chapter 16 (D5NRINST M16790.1d of 13 Mar 2012) is cancelled.
4. DISCUSSION. This manual has been revised due to recent changes in Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary. The D5NR Policy Manual (POLMAN) addresses policies and programs locally. It should be reviewed by regional Auxiliary leadership and referred to frequently for clarification and guidance, particularly in the support and execution of references (b) thru (c).
5. CHANGES. Recommendations for changes to this instruction are encouraged and forwarded to the Director of Auxiliary via the chain of leadership and management. A list of recent changes are included.
6. PROCEDURES. Official distribution of this manual will be via electronic copy to the Auxiliary Executive Committee (EXCOM) and e-mailed for distribution. An electronic version will be located at: <https://5nr.org/diraux-guidelines-policies-and-manuals/>

7. PRIVACY COMPLIANCE. When completed, the numerous forms identified or referred to in this instruction contain Personally Identifiable Information (PII). The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 522a, mandates that agencies establish administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to ensure the integrity of records maintained on individuals. The Privacy Act also requires the protection against any anticipated threats which could result in substantial harm, embarrassment, or compromise to an individual. In order to maintain the public's trust and prevent privacy breaches, the Coast Guard has a duty to safeguard all types of PII in its possession. Unintended disclosure or compromise of an individual's PII constitutes a Privacy Incident and must be reported in accordance with COMDTINST 5260.5 (series), Privacy Incident Response, Notification, and Reporting Procedures for Personally Identifiable Information.
8. RESPONSIBILITY. Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District, Director of Auxiliary (dpa-n), is responsible for the content and upkeep of this instruction. Questions or concerns about this material contained in manual should be emailed to Director of Auxiliary (D5NR) at D05-SMB-NRDIRAUX@USCG.MIL
9. DISCLAIMER. This instruction is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational direction for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.
10. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. All data and documents created for Coast Guard use and delivered to, or falling under the legal control of the Coast Guard are Federal records. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes described in this directive are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Coast Guard Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series).
11. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. This directive will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from general policies in this Manual must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Policy NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, DHS and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.
12. FORMS AVAILABILITY. Most if not all required forms can be downloaded from the D5NR website. <https://5nr.org/member-links/d5nr-forms>, or may be ordered from the Auxiliary National Supply Center.

Victoria L Taylor-Davies, CDE

V.L.TAYLOR-DAVIES
Commander, U.S. Coast Guard
Fifth Coast Guard District Northern Region
Director of Auxiliary

22 SEP 2021

Significant changes to the D5NR Policy Manual made in this revision:

Chapter 16 – CHANGE OF WATCH (COW) CUSTOMS AND PROTOCOL

1. Updated per MMS-PR-AUX(D5NR 16791)-A-03
2. Spelled out acronyms for first time use
3. Updated outdated systems to currently used systems
4. Wordsmith for more understanding

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 16	CHANGE OF WATCH (COW) CUSTOMS AND PROTOCOL	Page
A.	General	1
B.	Change of Watch (COW) Elements	1
	Sample Invitation to Non Paying Guests	8

CHAPTER 16

CHANGE OF WATCH (COW) CUSTOMS AND PROTOCOL

- A. General. When planning a Change of Watch (COW), Auxiliarists can find helpful information in several publications. However, none of them provide the answers to many questions that arise regarding the proper conduct of a Division COW. This chapter provides that guidance. The sole purpose of this document is to assist divisions in planning and executing their COW so it results in a successful event.
- B. Change of Watch (COW) Elements.
1. The 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.
 2. The ceremony itself is patterned after the Coast Guard's formal, time honored, Change-of-Command ceremony. 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 everyone else a positive impression of your unit. However, when the COW is done without the proper planning, or when it lacks basic courtesy and protocol, people will leave with a negative impression of the unit, especially its leadership, regardless of what the unit did right during the previous year.
 3. Planning. All successful COW's are preceded by good planning. Since most suitable restaurants/catering halls are booked many months in advance, a COW Committee needs to be established as early in the year as possible. A COW Chairman should be appointed for the next COW by the Division Commander (DCDR) (Elect) as soon as possible after the election. This way the Chair can attend the current COW and become familiar with the current COW procedures.
 4. Scheduling Division COWs. Divisions shall strive to hold their COWs so as not to conflict with other Divisions and other high-level Auxiliary events such as National Training (N-TRAIN), in order for senior Coast Guard and Auxiliary members to attend as many events as possible. **As soon as the date has been selected for the COW, the District Chief of Staff (DCOS) should be notified as well as the Division elected officers.** This can be done informally. This will ensure District staff do not double/triple book attendance for different COWs scheduled for the same time and date. District officers in particular have very busy schedules during the typical COW season. The more advance notice you can give them, the better chance they have of attending your function.

5. COW Committee. Some Divisions like to rotate the COW committee among the Flotillas, others keep the same committee members each year, and some select the committee members from volunteers each year. A combination of these methods has the best odds for achieving success if the committee:
 - a. Has at least one member who was intimately involved in the previous COW;
 - b. Rotates to a new Flotilla each year and/or has several different Flotillas represented; and
 - c. Consists of volunteers who are committed to the task.

6. Master of Ceremonies. The Master of Ceremonies should be selected by the COW Committee, based primarily on the person's comfort level with public speaking. It is also helpful if this person is knowledgeable with Coast Guard ranks and Auxiliary titles. It could be the committee chair, but often it is not. Preferably, the Master of Ceremonies should not be the incoming or outgoing DCDR, Vice Commander (VCDR) or Immediate Past Division Commander (IPDCDR). The Master of Ceremonies, in conjunction with the DCDR and the COW Chair, should prepare a detailed agenda that will be followed during the event. This agenda is not the same as the written guest program (if utilized), and is intended only for those in charge of the event.

7. Location. Some of the best efforts go to naught if you find out too late that a noisy wedding reception is going on in the room next to yours, the rooms separated only by a thin folding wall. The dignity of your event is surely spoiled if the Bunny Hop is going on during your pledge to the flag or invocation. Try to find a hall where yours is the only event going on at the time. Even if the facility has no policy regarding smoking, it should be prohibited in the room where your event is taking place.

8. Contract. The authorization to sign a COW contract is given only to the DCDR and cannot be extended to committee members. Committee members can scout out locations, make preliminary negotiations and discuss prices. Once the facility has been selected, the contract must be approved by the District Staff Officer – Legal Parliamentarian (DSO-LP) before it can be signed by the DCDR and given to the facility. There are no exceptions to this requirement.

9. Invitations. Usually, the Division Board decides upon the number of and identity of those who are to be invited as guests of the Division. This list is subject to change each year depending on the finances of the unit, but the number of guests usually doesn't vary much from year to year. If you are inviting someone as a guest of the Division, you should always include their spouse in the invitation. It is best for Flotillas to wait until the Division list of guests has been finalized, and then the Flotillas should be free to invite any guests of their choice. Once the details of the affair have been decided upon, the formal invitations should be mailed to your "honored guests." This invitation should be in the form of a letter signed by the Division Commander or the Chair of the COW Committee (see sample invitation at the end of the chapter). Specific information regarding the event should be included within the letter, unless it is specified on the registration form itself. Please provide the full address

including zip-code of the COW location (for GPS directions) and, if possible, written directions. If you will be using a reservation form, do not include the prices in the form you will be sending to those you do not expect to pay — guests of the Division.

Important:

- It is highly recommended that all Divisions extend an invitation to the Sector Commander of Sector Delaware Bay as the senior operational commander and order-issuing authority within D5NR. The Sector Commander will strive to attend whenever possible or will ensure a representative attends in his or her stead, operations permitting.
- The Director of Auxiliary (or his/her designee for events that the Director is unable to attend) will represent the Fifth District Commander at all Division Changes of Watch.
- Unfortunately, the Director of Auxiliary and other senior Coast Guard leaders will not ordinarily be able to attend Flotilla events. Flotillas should refrain from sending invites unless there is exceptional circumstances (e.g. 50 year anniversary recognized during the C.O.W.).

10. Reservation Form. All prospective attendees should receive a registration form at least two months in advance of the event. The form should include all details of the event, including cost, time, location and uniform required. It should also include that “appropriate civilian attire” is also acceptable. There have been too many times when prospective attendees did not attend solely because they did not have the required uniform, and were not aware that civilian attire was acceptable. Always specify “Please respond by ***Date*** to: _____” and list the name and address of the person to receive the reservations. If your form has a “tear-off” that is to be filled out and returned, make sure that important information needed by the attendee, such as uniform, location, time, etc. is not on the part of the form they are asked to return to you.

11. Uniform. Service Dress Blue Bravo is the prescribed uniform for Changes of Watch in D5NR. A standardized uniform is necessary as members of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) and senior Coast Guard leaders sometimes attend more than one event on a given day; and should not have the need to change uniforms between them.

12. Timing.

- a. The optimal time to hold your COW depends on the date of your elections and the expected weather in your area. It is not necessary to wait until after January 1 to hold the event. In actuality, if a printed program is used, the committee will need some time after the conclusion of Division and Flotilla elections to compile the names of the incoming officers for inclusion in the program.

- b. You should allow approximately four hours for the event. Normally, the formal activities are preceded by a cocktail hour. Even if no alcohol is served, this informal time is important to the success of the affair. This is the time that people who have not seen each other for some time have an opportunity to socialize. In addition, this is the time that visiting dignitaries can be introduced to the local members, and the only time they will have to mingle with others. It is important to have someone assigned to accompany VIP's, to prevent them from being cornered by a well-meaning member who might monopolize their time, leaving others with no opportunity to meet them.
 - c. At the conclusion of the cocktail hour, the Master of Ceremonies should welcome everyone to the COW, announce the Flag Salute, then the Invocation and then ask everyone to take their seats. At this time, the honored guests should be introduced to the group.
 - d. It is 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. However, it is perfectly acceptable to continue with the ceremonies and then eat if the restaurant/hall cannot accommodate the affair any other way. Remember to announce the ceremony about 5- 10 minutes in advance to give individuals time to visit the facilities or conclude other business before it starts.
 - e. The dinner will take about an hour, the COW ceremony another 1-1 ½ hours, leaving half an hour for people to say their goodbyes before the hall needs to be cleared. If there will be dancing after the conclusion of the ceremony, the time frame should be adjusted to accommodate this.
13. Covers and Awards Tables. A small table should be available as people enter the dining area where combination caps can be placed. It costs nothing, yet adds a nice touch to the COW. Another table should be placed near the podium to hold awards, gifts, etc.
 14. Greeters. Greeters should be stationed near the door to welcome attendees and to ensure everyone knows where they will be seated. It is always helpful if the greeters are familiar with the arriving guests.
 15. Flags and Banners. Your unit will need to bring an Auxiliary Ensign and flag stand. Most catering halls have an American flag; however you should not rely on its acceptability. If you intend to utilize theirs, the committee must inspect it beforehand to make sure it is not smaller than the Auxiliary Ensign. The American flag should be placed behind and to the right of the podium (i.e., on the left 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.

16. Program. A printed program is not required, but does add a nice touch to the occasion. If you have a printed program, keep it small enough that it doesn't take up too much room on the dinner table. A folded 8.5x11 cardstock program is the most popular, but rolled up parchment type paper tied with a ribbon, or some other design can also be used.
17. Seating. VIP's prefer sitting at regular tables, where they can meet new people and are not "on display." One or more regular tables can be set aside as "honors" tables, usually those situated closest to the center front of the room. Table seating should always be assigned by the committee. It is optional whether you want to assign seats or just assign tables. For the "honors" table(s), this option should be discussed with the Division leaders beforehand, as the leaders may wish to decide who will be seated with whom. Note that by seating invited dignitaries at different tables, the various members of the Division or Flotilla may have an increased opportunity to interact with your guests (versus putting all the guests at one table, for example). If a Flotilla invites someone as their non-paying guest, it is appropriate to seat that person with the Flotilla, regardless of their "rank."
18. Place Cards. Whenever seats are assigned, place cards are required. The greeters should advise attendees of their table number, and the place card should be easily readable for guests to find their seats. Place cards can be written or typed, but should be legible and utilize proper titles.
19. Coast Guard Personnel. Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX); or the Operations Training Officer (OTO) in his/her absence, regardless of rank, should be recognized as the direct representative of the District Commander. This person shall be accorded a seating position and speaking order recognizing that precedence even though a higher ranking officer, such as a Sector Commander, may be present.
20. Introductions. Because it may be difficult to rank the importance of your guests (i.e., does an Auxiliary DCOS get introduced before a Commander who is a CG Sector Branch Chief?), you may wish to make the introductions by service (i.e., "From the United States Coast Guard," "From the Fifth Northern Auxiliary District," and "Some Very Good Friends of our Division" (e.g., neighboring DCDR or VCDR)). **It is important that proper titles be used when introducing your honored guests.** Coast Guard personnel should be introduced by their proper rank (i.e., "Senior Chief Yeoman, Joseph T. Jones," not "Chief Jones"), and Auxiliary Commodores (anyone eligible to wear one or more stars on their collar — with or without a Past Officer Device), should be referred to as "Commodore Smith." Other members of the Auxiliary, including District Captains (DCAPT)'s and District Commodores (DCOS)'s should be addressed as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. as appropriate (i.e., "Mrs. Bonita Allen, District Chief of Staff, Fifth District Northern Region").
21. Music and Color Guards. Some Division COW's include a band (or recorded military march type music) and a Color Guard. This is certainly appropriate **if done correctly**. If used, both should be thoroughly rehearsed in advance, so that the Color Guard knows the proper steps in their procedure. If there is a band, it will most likely incorporate the National Anthem into

the ceremony. When in uniform and indoors (i.e., uncovered), it is appropriate to stand at attention during the anthem and the passing of colors with hands at the side. If covered, the hand salute should be rendered. Members should not turn and follow (face) the Color Guard when they enter and leave the room/area.

22. Flag Salute. When the Pledge of Allegiance is given, auxiliaries, whether in uniform or not, should stand, face the flag, place their right hand over their heart and recite the Pledge. This assumes everyone is indoors and not wearing a hat at the time. If covered, the hand salute should be rendered. Military in uniform (inside) will stand at attention, not salute, and will not recite the Pledge.
23. Invocation. An invocation is optional. If it is given, it must be non-denominational.
24. Installation of Officers. Although there is no official order for this portion of the ceremony, a time-tested order follows:
 - a. Begin by having one of the VIPs read the Prologue for all new officers; then
 - b. Another VIP calls up the incoming DCDR and VCDR and administers the pledge; then
 - c. Another VIP calls up the FC's and VFC's and administers the pledge; then
 - d. The new DCDR administers the pledge to the incoming staff, assisted by the new VCDR who hands out their Certificates of Appointment, if desired.
25. Speaking Order and Presentations of Awards. In order to keep speeches to a reasonable length of time, only the most senior officers of each unit should be asked to speak (i.e., DIRAUX/OTO, DCO, Sector Commander, Station Commander, DCDR). Other officers such as the DCOS, DCAPT, and Station Executive Officer can be utilized during the pledge to the flag, the invocation, awards and/or installation of officers, if desired. If you do not have Coast Guard facilities in your area, you may wish to ask the DCAPT and DCOS to speak also. The number of speakers is not set in stone, but should be controlled for the sake of your audience. The speakers should be notified that they will be asked to speak, and be advised how much time has been allotted to them in the program. Speakers should be called up in order of rank or office, from lowest to highest. A suggested order follows:
 - a. The Station Commander (or his/her representative) comes up to say a few words and present any unit awards; then
 - b. The Sector Commander (or his/her representative) comes up to say a few words and present any unit awards; then
 - c. The DCO comes up to say a few words and present the Division Auxiliarist Of The Year award; and lastly,
 - d. DIRAUX (or his/her representative) says a few words and presents any Coxswain, AUXOP or Coast Guard awards as may be appropriate.
26. Remarks by Guests. In the interest of time, dignitaries can be asked to make their remarks upon the conclusion of their portion of the awards ceremony, when they are already at the

podium. As an alternative, the remarks can be held until the conclusion of the awards, and the dignitaries are then called up again. Whichever method you decide upon, it is incumbent that your speakers be advised of the selected method before they are called up. In addition, there may be occasions when you want to give time to someone that was not involved in the official program to make brief remarks to those in attendance.

27. 50/50 Raffle. Any Raffle shall be conducted in accordance to reference (b), Section H, Raffles, Lotteries, and Door Prizes. If 50/50 tickets will be sold at the event, they should be sold only during cocktails, dinner and breaks. Tickets should never be sold during the ceremonies or speeches. Keep the drawing short. Please see additional information on gambling activities in reference (b), Section H.
28. Closing Remarks. This is the opportunity for the outgoing DCDR to thank the COW committee for their work and to say a short farewell. Certificates of Appreciation and/or small mementos can be given to the staff at this time; however, as tempting as it may be, the DCDR should not try to thank every individual by name that helped the Division during the term of office. A private note is a more appropriate way to express your appreciation to specific individuals. The Master of Ceremonies should then announce that this concludes the activities, thank everyone for attending and wish them a safe journey home.
29. Post Change of Watch Reports. At the conclusion of the COW, while the events are still fresh in their minds, a wrap up meeting to discuss the pros and deltas of the affair should be held between the incoming DCDR/VCDR and the incoming and outgoing COW Chairs. At the next Division meeting, the COW Committee should make a report on the event. Feedback should be solicited from the Division members and considered when planning the next year's event. A COW folder should be established and two copies should be maintained, one passed from DCDR to DCDR, the other from COW Chair to the next COW Chair. Included in the folder should be remarks from previous events, copies of invitations and programs, a list of previous honored guests, and this guide. The utilization of this folder will help ensure that your COW will be better each year.

(SAMPLE INVITATION TO NON-PAYING GUEST)

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY**

ADDRESS

Phone # (and fax # & e-mail address, if available) of the person extending the invitation

DATE

COMO John Q. Public, DCO (D5NR)
Street
City & State

Dear Commodore Public,

The officers and members of Coast Guard Auxiliary Division XX are pleased to extend an invitation to you and Mrs. Public to attend our annual Change of Watch luncheon on Sunday, 2 December 2008. We would be pleased if you could join us, as our guests.

The luncheon will be held at the Crystal Point Yacht Club, Route 70 and River Road, Point Pleasant, NJ 08742. Details and uniform information are enclosed. For your convenience in responding, we have enclosed a pre-addressed envelope for your dinner reservations.

We sincerely hope you will be able to join us for this occasion.

Very truly yours,
Harriet Q. Jones
Harriet Q. Jones
Division Commander

Enclosure: Reservation Form/Reply Envelope