



US Army Corps of Engineers

Norfolk District

News Release

Contact: Megan Nelson
Phone: (757) 201-7606

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
05-13

Coast Guard repeatedly rescues Corps for training purposes

It's not unusual to see Norfolk District's ACOE vessel MOBJACK being rescued by the Coast Guard. It's not that the MOBJACK is in trouble; it's that they are committed to providing a training platform to Coast Guard Station Portsmouth.

On April 6, 2005, the Captain and crew of the MOBJACK were recognized for their support of Coast Guard Station Portsmouth's ongoing Homeland Security efforts.

Since June 2001, MOBJACK Captain Norman Harris and crew member Paul Salib have provided hundreds of hours of assistance to the crews of Coast Guard Station Portsmouth in their training to respond to critical incidents where they are called upon to tow a vessel that has become disabled.

Coast Guard Station Portsmouth is tasked with many missions and is constantly training to respond. Although the station frequently tows its other boat for training, locating a heavier vessel near the boat's maximum tow capacity is often challenging. The weight of the MOBJACK is ideal to provide this type of training.

The Captain and crew of the MOBJACK recognized the Coast Guards need and offered assistance. The Officer in Charge of the station felt the experience was so valuable that he now requires that his crews experience this type of training before they are certified.

Captain Harris said, "Being out on the water is hazardous at its best. Training in a controlled environment allows them to learn and make corrections. This is when to make mistakes and learn from them."

The MOBJACK crew has seen new Coast Guard crewmembers learn valuable lessons over the years. One lesson frequently learned is that MOBJACK's weight will keep moving for a significant distance, even when the towing vessel has stopped.

According to Coast Guard officials, thanks to the MOBJACK, crews gain valuable hands on experience. Coast Guard Master Chief Boatswains Mate Mark Rieger said, "By providing MOBJACK as a training platform, they have ensured that dozens of rescue crews have hands on experience and acquire the specific skills needed to tow a vessel of that weight and size. This training is all the more critical because the station is only rarely called upon to assist large vessels and the time that the crew responds may be the first time they have had to use their skills. Without the time and assistance of the Captain and crew of MOBJACK the rescue crews would go out there with little practical experience towing heavier vessels."

The MOBJACK was built in 1951 and was acquired by loan agreement from US Army Aviation and Materiel Command on June 24, 1963. The MOBJACK's mission is the collection and removal of floating debris in Hampton Roads as well as coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Justice and other Federal and State agencies, to conduct a program for the prevention, detection and prosecution of the deposit of waste, refuse and other injurious materials into navigable waters.

Due to Corps budget cuts, the MOBJACK could go into retirement as early as next fiscal year. The USACOE Vessel HARRELL, a much lighter ship, will become the primary vessel for debris removal and Coast Guard training missions. As for now, Harris and Salib as well as back up crew members Claude "Stan" Caldwell, Rick Bruton, Dennis Barnes and Glen Boykin are continuing to assist the Coast Guard in their ongoing training efforts while carrying out the MOBJACK's main mission of keeping the channels free of navigational hazards.

###