Harbor Patrol Operations during major storms and disasters

PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to re-introduce procedures for Harbor Patrol Operations during emergencies such as a major storm, tsunami, or other natural disasters. In every situation stated within this order, the Harbor Master and/or Assistant Harbor Master shall be contacted by the Watch Commander and briefed regarding the situation.

SCOPE

This order shall apply to all station personnel assigned to Marina del Rey Station.

ORDER

Earthquakes

The Station operations during and after an earthquake are covered in the Station's Emergency Operation Plan.

Depending on the intensity of an earthquake in the Marina or nearby area, damage may range from slight to total devastation. After the shockwaves have subsided and required assessments of injuries and damage have been completed, movement of personnel and civilian victims by water may be the only available alternative. After the safety of people and other Station commitments have been attended to, considerations should be made for the safety, security, and possible movement of vessels from damaged docks to a safer location.

Tsunami

A tsunami, commonly, although incorrectly referred to as a tidal wave, is a sea wave caused by an undersea earthquake, volcanic eruption, or by an earthquake close to shore. Although a tsunami may be no more than a slight rise in the sea, it cannot be discounted since it has the potential of destroying the entire Marina area. Any major Pacific Coast earthquake, other than one in the vicinity of Marina del Rey, would cause a tsunami warning/watch to be initiated. Once generated, the wave course, speed, and intensity can be accurately projected and a tsunami warning/watch would be issued by the West Coast & Alaska Tsunami Warning Center, the National Weather Service and the California State Office of Emergency Services.

A tsunami warning could be cause to activate the Stations' Emergency Operations Center. Tsunami warnings, issued periodically, will advise the last known location, size, speed, and direction of travel. Depending on where it started, the "wave" could arrive at the Marina within minutes or many hours. Indications of the "wave's" severity can be monitored from bulletins broadcast by the WCATWC or may be obtained by attempting to contact locations that are closer to the point of origin.

Time permitting, and if warranted by potential severity, the following shall be accomplished:

* A determination must be made, by the Watch Commander, utilizing all available information, if the Station EOC is to be activated.

* If an tsunami wave is anticipated will an evacuation be necessary.

* As soon as possible after the initial warning is received, and an evacuation is imminent and/or the safety of Harbor Patrol boats are threatened, begin a phased call-out of additional boat crews.

* Other agencies mooring their vessels at the Station docks must be notified of any impending danger to their vessels.

* Marina apartment managers, Dockmasters, Yacht Clubs and businesses in the area must be advised, as soon as possible, either by phone, or in person, by units in the field.

* Boat crews must warn persons on the jetties to evacuate.

* Move inactive Station boats to a safer location, such as the Maintenance Yard dock or Launch Ramp docks in Basin-H.

Since tsunamis gain force and speed when they reach the continental shelf, the Coast Guard will usually order their vessels to sea to minimize the danger to their boats. It can be expected that inquires will be received from boat owners if they too should move their vessels to sea to ride out the wave. Because of liabilities involved, no recommendations should be given.

If the Stations' Emergency Operations Center determines that the "wave" will cause major damage to the marina, all Department boats that can get underway will be ordered to sea. They should proceed to approximately seven (7) miles offshore, the one hundred fathom curve. This will help to ensure their survival and availability after the "wave" has struck.

Major Storms

Storms in the Marina area are normally moderate in nature and cause only minor damage. On occasion, a major storm or series of storms may hit the area and cause havoc. Rain, heavy seas, high tides, and strong winds can create conditions that may break vessels free from their moorings, damage or destroy docks, and flood or sink other vessels.

The National Weather Service will issue notices well in advance of major storms. Since the Marina Station is a designated weather observation station, appropriate storm warning flags/lights shall be displayed.

Indicators of a major storm or potential damage to vessels and docks are:

* Sustaining or increasing winds in excess of 25 knots. Waters of the main and entrance channel will become confused with wind waves and white caps.

* Tides around six feet coupled with large swells from the sea. White water will usually be seen coming across the top of the detached breakwater. This will cause a surge down the entrance channel.

* Heavy rainfall over an extended period of time flooding or sinking smaller vessels.

* Storm/Sea Advisories form the National Weather Service.

* Any combination of the above described elements.

During a storm, Station boats and docks must be continually monitored for safety. Mooring lines should be doubled when possible, boats should be secured to the lee (downwind) side of docks. Boats must be pumped as necessary to prevent them from sinking. If time permits, vessels at the Station docks may have to be moved to safer locations as indicated in the tsunami section. They must then be checked at specific intervals dependent upon current conditions.

Boat patrol checks of all anchorages will be continually conducted to insure that vessels are properly secured. Boat crews will re-secure lines as necessary, pump sinking vessels, and advise the anchorages, via the desk, of any damage observed to docks. All activities will need to be logged and a report of assistance written for all boats pumped, excluding dinghies. Desk personnel shall monitor the VHF Marina Radio, Channel 16, at all times.

Movement of Privately Owned Vessels

As in any major catastrophe, damage assessments will take precedent over the movement of vessels.

Whenever it becomes necessary to move privately owned vessels to protect them or the docks from further damage, an attempt to contact the concerned dockmaster should be made. We will assist dockmasters with vessels in danger at their anchorages.

Before any vessel is moved, all utility hook-ups must be disconnected. All dock lines shall be moved with the vessel to be used at the new location.

Consideration should be given to open slips within the same anchorage, the County Transient Docks or other protected anchorages in that order. Landside units, time permitting, may be used to assist in finding alternative berthing locations. Personnel should recognize that fact that because of the very nature of the disaster, there may be no place to move said vessels.

Supervision of Harbor Patrol Units

In the event of a major operation or disaster, the Harbormaster and/or Assistant Harbormaster shall be notified. It is imperative that either the Harbormaster or Assistant Harbormaster respond to the major operation or disaster to direct the activities of the boat crews and assisting personnel in moving vessels, transporting people and conducting waterborne emergency operations. Upon their arrival, they must be fully briefed by the field supervisor or handling unit, whereupon they will assume command of the incident.

Reports

During major disasters, boating accident reports are not required unless the vessel is actually underway and involved in an accident. However, a Report of Assistance shall be completed on every vessel moved or assisted. Any damage observed prior to the movement of the vessels, the old and new berthing location, will be included in the report. Notes may be kept and reports completed when time permits, however they should

be completed prior to going off shift unless deferred by the Watch Sergeant, Harbormaster or Assistant Harbormaster.