

**MayorandCouncillors**

TO CS - Oct. 10 2012

**From:** gmiller@goodfellowinc.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 25 September 2012 10:55  
**To:** MayorandCouncillors  
**Subject:** Coast Guard Base Closure  
**Attachments:** RCM-SAR Fact Sheet.docx

**Categories:** 01-0140-20-NDEF1 - National Defence

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

As a resident of Richmond and a member of the local station for over 18 years, I am contacting you to provide some brief information on the Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue (RCM-SAR) to aid in any discussion regarding the proposed closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard base. To confirm, RCM-SAR has been referenced in some of these discussions and media reports and in some instances non factual information has been presented.

To be certain, RCM-SAR does not have a position on the base closure and is very supportive of Coast Guard staff and management and simply want to ensure those involved in any discussion have the correct information with regard to our organization. We are happy to answer any questions you may have and/or provide a tour of one of our facilities if you wish.

Regards,

Greg Miller,  
Vice President,  
Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue  
[greg.miller@rcmsar.com](mailto:greg.miller@rcmsar.com)

## **ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE SEARCH AND RESCUE**

### **FOR THE RECORD**

Recent media reports regarding the announced closure of the Canadian Coast Guard base at Kitsilano have made reference to Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue.

Here are the facts about RCM-SAR.

#### **WHAT RCM-SAR DOES**

- Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue is the primary volunteer marine rescue agency in B.C. It operates 36 rescue stations with the objective of providing year-round 24/7 coverage. All of the rescue crews are volunteers.
- RCM-SAR (formerly the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – Pacific) has been serving the west coast for more than 30 years.
- RCM-SAR is often the primary marine search and rescue responder in coastal communities. It receives its taskings from the Department of National Defense Joint Rescue Coordination Centre in Victoria, and works with other public safety agencies such as the Canadian Coast Guard, police, and fire departments.
- Every year RCM-SAR conducts more than 800 rescue missions, assists more than 750 people, and is credited with saving more than 150 lives annually. For most missions RCM-SAR is the only responder tasked to the emergency. RCM-SAR has an excellent record of success and a proven ability to deal with a wide range of marine emergencies.

#### **TRAINING STANDARDS**

- All RCM-SAR crews are well trained and must meet prescribed standards before participating in missions. These standards are set in RCM-SAR's own rigorous training program and by outside agencies such as Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard.
- Training standards include:
  - Transport Canada certification in Marine Emergency Duties A3, Small Vessel Operator (SVOP), Electronic Navigation (SEN-L), and Master Limited 60 ton qualification.
  - Canadian Coast Guard certification in rigid hull inflatable rescue vessel operation (a week-long course at the Coast Guard station in Bamfield).
  - RCM-SAR certifications including Crew, Advanced Crew, and Coxswain levels and navigation training using RCM-SAR's own state-of-the-art Vessel Simulator in Victoria.

## TRAINING HOURS

- Media have reported that only 25 hours of service per year are required for coxswains (crew leaders). In fact, most RCM-SAR coxswains have hundreds of hours of sea time and are highly experienced on the water.
- For example, the 20 coxswains who serve the three RCM-SAR stations in the immediate Vancouver Harbour area:
  - Have an average 12 years experience, with several coxswains having more than 20 years experience.
  - Have an average of 383 hours sea time each in the past 5 years.
  - Conducted an average 47 missions each in the past 5 years.
  - Include professional mariners, a police officer, a commercial vessel instructor, a former firefighter, an emergency medical responder, an offshore racer, and a crew leader trained at the US Coast Guard school in Alaska, the Maritime Rescue Institute in Scotland, and the Dutch national lifeboat service.

## RESPONSE TIMES

- When paged, RCM-SAR crews are expected to arrive at their vessels from home or work within 20 minutes.
- The reaction time paged missions for the Vancouver-area stations is an average 14 minutes.
- The actual average response time to incidents in the Lower Mainland is only four minutes, as a significant number of calls are received when crews are already on the water training or conducting other activities.

## VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE

- Some reports and comments have questioned the ability of volunteers to conduct this work. In truth, volunteer marine rescue is the predominant model worldwide.
- There has been a tradition of volunteer marine rescue on the British Columbia coast for more than 150 years.
- Internationally, the busiest waterways in the world are protected by volunteer-based search and rescue agencies, including the U.K, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. We would encourage the media and others to research some of these organizations and models as they are truly effective, capable, and professional rescue agencies.
  - RNLI (UK) – [www.rnli.org](http://www.rnli.org)
  - KNRM (Holland) – [www.knrm.nl](http://www.knrm.nl)
  - Swedish Sea Rescue Society - [www.sjoraddning.se](http://www.sjoraddning.se)
  - Norwegian Sea Rescue - [www.redningsselskapet.no/Om+oss/English](http://www.redningsselskapet.no/Om+oss/English)
  - German Maritime Search and Rescue - [www.seenotretter.de/english.html](http://www.seenotretter.de/english.html)
  - Australian Volunteer Coast Guard – [www.coastguard.com.au](http://www.coastguard.com.au)
  - New Zealand Coast Guard - [www.coastguard.co.nz](http://www.coastguard.co.nz)
- Outside the marine community, many Canadians are protected by well-trained volunteer firefighters, ambulance crews, ground search and rescue teams, and others. The model of volunteer rescue professionals is recognized across Canada and around the world.

## KITSILANO BASE

- RCM-SAR is not part of the Canadian Coast Guard and was not involved in decisions regarding the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard Base.
- RCM-SAR has taken no position on the Kitsilano Base closure. We recognize that the Coast Guard is solely responsible for decisions about the deployment of its resources.
- RCM-SAR has been asked to examine ways it can support public safety in the Vancouver Harbour area as the Coast Guard makes changes to the way it provides coverage in the region. In keeping with our mission, we have agreed to discuss how we can expand our service in the harbour area if required, but – contrary to some media reports – are not “taking over” the Coast Guard service or seeking to displace any Coast Guard staff.
- RCM-SAR has an excellent working relationship with the Coast Guard, and recognizes the extraordinary dedication of Coast Guard staff and their commitment to our common mission of saving lives on the water.

Contact:

Randy Strandt

President

Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue

[Randy.strandt@rcmsar.com](mailto:Randy.strandt@rcmsar.com)

604-319-5774