

Frequently Asked Questions about Electronic Public Education (ePE) Products

What's going on with these new electronic PE things?

Recognizing that, as times change the Auxiliary has to adapt, the Auxiliary has developed some new electronic public education products. These new products will allow us to enter the on-line marketplace for the first time. However, they will require some new thinking about our methods of delivering RBS public education.

Why are we doing this?

Educating the boating public is a vital part of our RBS mission, a vital part of reducing recreational boating casualties. Public education is one of our core missions, so we need to be effective at it. Public Education is also a source of income for the Auxiliary.

However, in recent years, we've seen a reduction in the number of students attending and graduating from our traditional Public Education classes. That means that we're being less effective at getting out the RBS message. It also means that we're earning less income.

When the course you are on will take you into the rocks, what do you do? You change course. Well, the Auxiliary has to change course, too. We have to do something to change our course to maintain relevance in recreational boating safety education. That means that we have to try something new in Public Education.

Our traditional classroom model still has an important place, but we need to recognize that the market for boating education is changing. Our potential student market is a diverse group. Many are younger boaters, who are the future of recreational boating and a target demographic for our educational efforts. Most of them work and have families, so their lifestyles may not permit classroom attendance. They are looking for convenient, on-line training and on-line courses offer that flexibility. They are probably used to on-line training already from school or work experiences. We need to have products to meet this need, or our potential customers will go elsewhere.

Traditionally, we have not offered an electronically deliverable instructional product, so we have bypassed that market completely. These new products will give us an entry into the electronic marketplace for the first time. Internet courses and electronic products can offer us a gateway to new students, promoting RBS and enticing them to learn more about the other courses we offer, including those taught in face-to-face settings.

But what if I'm not comfortable with computers and electronic stuff?

That's not a problem. Remember, we need to meet the needs of our customers and our customer base is comfortable with today's technology. Think about it this way – most Auxiliarists are old enough to be Grandparents. However, the people getting into boating, the folks we need to target for RBS education are the age of our kids (or grand kids). They are comfortable with on-line learning and they are looking for products to meet their expectations. So, we need to shift our thinking. We need to think not of how we might want to learn, but rather, of how our customers want to learn. And we don't necessarily need to understand all about computers in order to promote RBS and promote these products.

What Are These New Products?

We have developed two new electronic products, both in cooperation with industry leading partners who have considerable experience in the electronic marketplace. Both of these products will be deliverable via the Internet.

One product, developed in cooperation with Boat Ed, is an Enhanced e-Book, called Basic Boat Handling (BBH). It's a simple guide to boat operation and handling for the novice boater. This is an Enhanced eBook, which means that it includes explanatory video segments, explaining and demonstrating the techniques explained in the various chapters. These video segments really set this product apart from other ordinary eBooks. BBH is not a course, it's an Enhanced eBook. It's sold on line, but the customer downloads it to their computer or tablet, where they can read and view it at any time. They can even take it along on their boat to practice the techniques shown in the product.

The other new product is a course, called Modern Marine Navigation (MMN). Developed in cooperation with the Boat US Foundation, MMN is a first class, in-depth course covering traditional and electronic navigation, including coastal navigation, plotting positions, dead reckoning, visual fixes, ATONS, charts, GPS, chart plotters and trip planning. The course covers navigation techniques as well as safe behaviors such as voyage planning techniques and use of float plans. The course is amply illustrated, and features links to download Navigational Charts and relevant publications like the Nav. Rules, Light Lists, Coast Pilot, etc. and includes an extensive glossary linked to the text. A key feature is a downloadable workbook with explanations that expand on the on-screen content, including exercises and many links to other resources.

Because MMN is an extensive course, it's unlikely that a student will complete it in one sitting. Once enrolled, students can return to the course again and again and will be able to pick up where they left off, anytime, for up to two years.

Both of these products will carry the USCG Auxiliary name. Both are of high quality, worthy of our name.

For questions about the products, please take a look at FAQs about MMN and FAQs about BBH.

Are these NASBLA approved and will students get a certificate?

Neither of these products is a boating safety course that leads to certificate issuance. Accordingly there is no need for NASBLA approval.

Do Our Instructors Teach These?

Well, they don't teach them, in the usual sense, but they certainly can add value to them. Here's how that works.

Students purchase the products from the Boat Ed or the Boat US Foundation on-line store, and either download the material (for BBH) or enroll and take the course on-line (for MMN). There needs to be no face-to-face instructor involvement.

For many people, that's the advantage of electronic education products. Students can study in their PJs, at any time of the day or night, at home, in an airport lobby or at the beach. Moreover, students can repeat sessions or review particularly difficult points.

However, Flotillas can add value to these courses by offering a variety of face-to-face instructional opportunities. For example, A Flotilla could offer a follow up review to folks who took MMN. Such a review could include a chart clinic, where students could practice the chart work they learned about in the course, on charts of their local area. Or the review could focus on the exercises in the workbook, answering questions, and reviewing the course subject matter. Of course, Flotillas may charge for such follow on courses.

If We Don't Teach The Course, What's In It For Our Flotilla?

We're better accomplishing our mission of Recreational Boating Safety, that's what! RBS and boating education is what we're all about, so we all need to pitch in to do better. But there are some more tangible benefits, too.

Flotillas can share in the revenue stream generated by the MMN course. For each enrollment in MMN that a Flotilla is responsible for, they will receive a five-dollar revenue share. Here's how it works.

When a student enrolls in the MMN course, they will have the opportunity to input a "Promo Code" when completing the on-line sale. Each Flotilla

has its own “Promo Code”, the Flotilla number! When a student enters a Flotilla Number (in AUXDATA format, with no hyphens) as a Promo Code, that Flotilla will receive credit for that enrollment. A portion of each purchase, \$5.00, will be passed to the Flotilla. So, every Flotilla can receive a revenue share from their efforts promoting this product.

In addition, we will gain new contacts from the enrollments in this course. We can offer those people follow on courses or invite them to take one of our legacy classroom courses.

Remember, neither of these products competes with our traditional classroom products. These are new products for a market that we have never served. Although it's possible that we may never see the students, we still have an income stream that goes back to the Flotilla. And these products may give us an opportunity to bring some of these new students into our classrooms for the first time.

Can My Flotilla / I Get A Free Copy?

Unfortunately, it's not possible to provide members or flotillas with free copies of these products. Just as with printed materials, there are costs involved with distributing or enrolling in these products.

However, Flotillas can recover the costs of purchasing BBH or enrolling in MMN by means of the Promo Code revenue share. If a Flotilla markets the MMN course to just eight people who sign up using that Flotilla's Promo Code, the Flotilla will receive \$5 for each of those individuals, or \$40. That will cover the cost of one enrollment in the MMN course, with enough left over to buy BBH (less 99¢).

Who Should Promote These Products?

Everyone! Every member can help to promote these products. We should promote these:

- To students of our traditional classroom courses.
- To boat owners when we do VSCs.
- To the public at PA events.
- To other boaters we encounter while on patrol
- To our marine dealer partners and their customers.
- To ourselves! Every member is also a potential customer.

Bottom line, Flotillas are encouraged to use creativity and ingenuity to promote the products at every opportunity. Every member has a stake in the success of these products. Accordingly, every member has the opportunity to promote them.

But We've Never Done Anything Like This Before!

No, we haven't. But we have to adapt to today's reality. We know that we're not reaching as many recreational boaters as we did in the past, so we need to find new ways to reach the boating public. Recreational Boating Safety is our core mission. Boating Safety Education is a critical part of that. We have to do better.

As well, we need to look for new ways to earn revenue. These electronic education products are our first step in a new direction to address those issues.

As an organization, we're just beginning to learn how to do this on-line and electronic education stuff, so we may make some mistakes along the way. But the biggest mistakes we could make would be to ignore the need for these kinds of products and to not try our best to make these a success.

We will need the best efforts of members to make the most of these new products. This opens new opportunities for members to contribute to our RBS education mission, even if they aren't PE instructors.

Flotillas will have new opportunities, too. The Auxiliary will receive the contact information for some of the people who enroll in the MMN course. Flotillas will be able to follow up with the on-line students to offer further educational opportunities and to promote in-class offerings. Flotillas can offer follow up sessions, such as review classes with "Ask the Expert" question and answer sessions, hands-on chart work, etc. Students could earn a flotilla-designed certificate of completion for a modest extra fee. Opportunities will exist to advertise other classes offered by the Flotilla, as well. Offering the on-line course will provide an opportunity to promote all of the other PE activities that the Flotilla offers. It can serve as a recruitment tool, as well.

Will our existing courses go away?

No! We will still offer the spectrum of in-class, face-to-face courses that we have now. In fact, we will continue to look for ways to improve those courses to keep them up to date and relevant. We will add new courses as necessary, such as the new "What You Should Know Before You Go: A Paddler's Guide to Safety", course for new paddle craft operators.

These electronic course offerings will complement our traditional courses and will serve a market that we don't serve at all now. It is anticipated that Flotillas will leverage the electronic courses to raise interest in their traditional courses.

What's The Bottom Line?

Our message to the deck plate includes these points:

- Electronic education products are coming.
- These first products are our first steps into this new world of electronic PE.
- The electronic products will get us into an important new market that we are currently not serving.
- They are vital to the success of our RBS mission and they are important to the financial health of the Auxiliary.
- Every member has a stake in their success and every member can contribute to their success.
- Every member is a part of our promotion force.
- Every Flotilla has an opportunity for a revenue share on each enrollment in MMN.
- Flotillas can leverage these electronic products to promote our traditional classroom courses.
- We need an “All hands” effort to make these initial products a success.