

Wednesday, December 26, 2007

Coast Guard seeks citizen help

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The U.S. Coast Guard is looking for volunteers to assist in keeping Pacific Northwest waters safe and clean.

Citizen's Action Network, also known as Northwest Watch, assists the agency in protecting waterways and communities throughout the region. While the program has been successful over the past year, more volunteers are needed to provide extra sets of eyes and ears along the Columbia River and the Oregon and Washington coasts, according to the Coast Guard.

"This program was highly successful during 2007, and our leadership would like to see its ranks grow during 2008," said Lt. j.g. Adam Davenport, a pilot and the public affairs officer at Coast Guard Air Station Astoria. "The importance of this program was only emphasized during the recent record-breaking storms we all endured."

The Coast Guard calls on Citizen's Action Network members to assist with a variety of missions, including search and rescue, pollution incidents and aids to navigation. The only requirements for participating are having access to a phone and a view of the water.

Citizen's Action Network not only helps the Coast Guard, it saves taxpayers thousands of dollars in support of the federal agency.

That's because while operating one of the Coast Guard's 47-foot motor lifeboats costs about \$1,200 per hour and responding with a helicopter or large cutter costs \$9,000 to \$12,000 hourly, network volunteers can reduce search times by providing on-scene information when called by operation centers.

Individuals interested in becoming Citizen's Action Network volunteers or who would like more information on the program should contact the 13th Coast Guard District Public Affairs Office at (206) 220-7237, or visit the Citizen's Action Network Web site, (www.uscg.mil/d13/can/default.htm)

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