

CCGA Unit 35 Recruiting FAQ's...

NOTE! Please place an easily identified 'Subject' line with all emails. Junk mail filters often weed out those that don't... Sorry!

If I missed the last Recruitment Information Session do I have to wait for the next one to get started with Unit 35?

No. Although Recruitment Sessions happen several times a year, you are never more than a month away from being able to join us at our classroom training. (Details in the next Q&A.)

What do I need to become a member of Unit 35?

We are looking for competent, capable and committed people to join us in our effort to save lives at sea. We are currently looking for persons willing and able to join duty crews. We expect you to stay with our unit for a minimum of 2 years. You need no previous training, but there are certificates that you must obtain before becoming a full member. Exams for these certificates are given after our Classroom Training Sessions held at 7pm on the 4th Wednesday of every month at Esquimalt Anglers (map and address available on our web site). Classroom Training is open to the general public and covers the theory of our 'on the water' rescue work. Please bring your own writing materials, as these are not provided. Sessions typically last 60-90 minutes with exams for certificates afterwards (demand dependent).

Pleasure Craft Operator Competency (PCOC) – Study from 'The Safe Boating Guide' booklet available from us at the training session or at the Coast Guard Office, 25 Huron St., Victoria (480-2600) free of charge. It is also available at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/tp/tp511/menu.htm>. Exams take approx. 30 minutes to write and will be marked immediately upon completion. There is no cost for writing this with Unit 35.

Restricted Radio Operator's Certificate (RROC) – The exam takes approx. 45 minutes to complete and is marked immediately upon completion. You will need to give our RROC examiner (radio@unit35.org) several weeks' notice of your intention to write the exam. There is no cost for writing this with Unit 35.

Can I get these certifications myself?

Yes you can.

PCOC: Various online resources are available for attaining your PCOC – perform an internet search on "PCOC" or "Pleasure Craft Operator Certificate". Prices are in the \$40-\$50 range

RROC: Local Canadian Power & Sail Squadron offers the RROC exam. The study manual and exam cost somewhere in the range of \$80-\$90. <http://www.cps-ecp.ca/> for more info.

What happens after I have my PCOC and RROC?

Once your membership application forms have been processed by the CCGA-Pacific you will be issued a membership number for insurance purposes. At this point you are eligible to do 'on the water training' with duty crews but will not be active on rescues until you have a valid First Aid Certificate. You can get this independently from various local providers or wait until such a course is offered by the unit. This usually happens quarterly. There is often a waiting list to get on a weekend (Friday, 5pm-Sunday, 5pm) crew as opposed to weekday (Sunday, 5pm-Friday, 5pm) crew who are always in demand.

How often will I have to be on crew?

Regardless of whether you are on a weekday or weekend crew, your crew rotation will come up every 4th week. Once you have been placed on a crew it is your responsibility to find a replacement if for any reason you are unable to respond. There is a list of 'spares', and people often swap shifts, so this is seldom a problem – just remember to give plenty of notice.

Where is the rescue boat and how close do I need to be to respond to a rescue call?

Our ready room is located at The Pacific Pilotage Building - 211 Dallas Rd., and our 31' rigid hull inflatable rescue vessel is docked beside the 2 red Pilot boats inside the Ogden Point Breakwater. You must be able to get to the ready room or rescue vessel within 15 minutes of being paged by Rescue Centre. You are issued a pager at the start of your shift and unless otherwise arranged with your Coxswain (person in charge of the rescue vessel) **you absolutely must respond**. Lives often depend on your response time! Many employers are sympathetic to leaving the workplace for such a noble cause. Since rescues happen with no set time schedule, such departure arrangements can often be set up on a trial basis with your employer.

How often does Unit 35 get paged for rescues?

Last year Unit 35 did just over 60 calls. This averages out to around 1 call per week, but the reality of these statistics is that there tends to be more rescue calls on weekends during the summer when there are far more people on the water. Crews sometimes go for months without a call when others may have a couple of calls within a 24 hr. period. Frequency is unpredictable.

How much 'gear' do I need?

Unit 35 provides a helmet, a 'cruiser/floatie' suit (similar to those worn on whale watching zodiacs) and an equipment vest containing most of the more expensive items (strobe light, knife, radio, etc.) that you will need. You will provide your own footwear, hat, gloves and a few other items recommended for your 'dry bag'.

What kind of training do I get?

The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary is considered a world leader in rescue training. The CCGA Search and Rescue Crew Manual is designed to provide the core information which, when combined with classroom teaching and on the water practice, will give you the tools to be an effective crewmember on a CCGA rescue boat. Your training will be closely documented and is consistent throughout every unit of our organization. You'll get first class training as well as an exciting opportunity to help save lives. It is an amazing way to give back to your community. (A fairly sound item to have on any resume as well!)

ONE LAST REMINDER... Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary is a volunteer organization. None of us are paid to do any of the tasks described above. We do it all in addition to our "day jobs". So if things don't move ahead as quickly as you would like, please, just have patience. You can join us and hopefully help us out with speeding things up! Thanks for your interest in Unit 35 and our ongoing dedication to Saving Lives at Sea! Jump on Board!