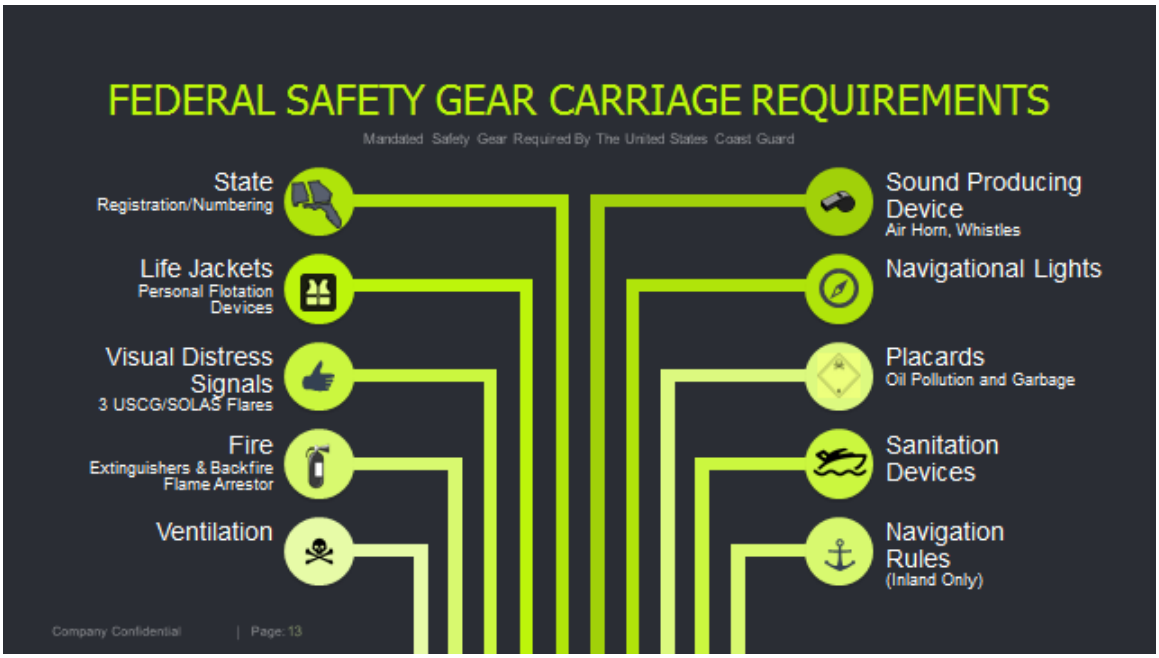
1. COMMENSE A FEDERAL STUDY TO EVALUATE THE BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH MANDATORY CARRIAGE OF ELECTRONIC DISTRESS ALERT DEVICES.

The Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber depends upon its unique marine environment to support the economic health of our region. Whether supporting the operation of the commercial vessels working in or around Port Everglades or ensuring visitors to our area are able to enjoy the many recreational opportunities (fishing, diving, boating, yachting, etc.) we have to offer, the promotion of Boating Safety is a key element of ensuring all who use our causeways and open ocean return again and again.

The US Federal Government, via the US Coast Guard requires boat owners and operators to maintain and carry certain mandatory equipment whenever operating the vessel. Beyond fire extinguishers and life jackets, this list includes safety equipment effective only if a rescue crew knows where the vessel is. A key element leading to successful rescue is the ability of rescuers to know the specific location of a vessel in distress, thereby reducing the amount of time searching. The use of Emergency Position Indicating Rescue Beacons (EPIRBs) or Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) can provide the vessel's GPS coordinates to the local Rescue Coordination Center via satellite regardless of local weather conditions.



The Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce requests that a federal study be conducted to evaluate the benefits associated with mandatory carriage of electronic distress alert devices vs. other types of required safety gear.

2. THE CHALLENGE

The current Federal Safety Gear Carriage Requirement includes a variety of safety technologies that have been in use for decades. As important as each of them are to survival in a boating incident, none of them can call for help when Line of Sight (LOS) detection with potential rescuers is not possible. Worse is the performance of these devices for aiding a rescue during adverse weather, where survival of those in need is

critical to the success of the rescue itself. Also important is the risk of putting first responders in harm's way for an extended period of time.

The effectiveness of each piece of required safety gear toward achieving a successful outcome is dependent upon the ability of the rescuers to detect the signaling devices, ultimately reducing the amount of time that rescue personnel are at risk during search operations in adverse weather. The hourly cost of performing USCG search operations prior to the actual USCG rescue operation varies significantly depending upon the notification method used.

A study of the available data and interpretation of the results is critical to understanding and maximizing the US Government's use of limited Search and Rescue (SAR) resources. By applying some rescue funding toward education and awareness of more effective safety products and methods, lower loss of life is expected due to the improved probability of survival with increased use of such products.

3. THE SOLUTION

The objective of the requested study is to provide a data-based assessment of the effectiveness of the current methods of maritime rescues performed by the USCG. With concurrence that the data obtained is complete and relevant, the panel would then analyze the data combined and determine variables that affect effectiveness of rescue processes and methodology, including the use of various safety equipment available to operators of various boat types, sizes and purposes.

USCG SAR STATISTICS

Source: USCG Report from 2011

Means of Notification	Cases	Sorties	Lives Lost	Lives at Risk	Average Cost Per Case
Telephone	252	400	4	88	$349,063
VHF/FM	390	514	4	207	$105,360
Satellite Phone	5	7	0	4	$47,954
Misc.	19	32	2	14	$938,258
Unspecified	60	99	0	45	$177,466
Subtotal	726	1,052	10	358	$218,466
EPIRB	11	21	0	12	$26,682

Company Confidential | Page: 16

Such analysis would serve the known uses of the Greater Fort Lauderdale region, and would be scalable to other categories / regions once the study has generated its hypotheses.

Greater Fort Lauderdale continues to lead the country in forward planning associated with maritime environmental change. It is the Chamber's desire to additionally lead the country in adoption of mandated distress alert devices for all boats. In addition, the development of incentive programs in lieu of mandates will ensure that informed boat owners and operators will make their own decision to carry based upon understanding relevant data, safety awareness and financial benefit.

4. SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATE TO DESIRED STATE

For the state of Florida, the latest data indicates that for ocean-going vessels traveling more than 3 NM from the coast-line, approximately 85% of such vessels do not carry an electronic distress device onboard. USCG data determines that rescue calls initiated with EPIRBs are completed with 1/10th on average of the cost of other methods of search and rescue operations. The desired state is that Greater Fort Lauderdale will lead the state of Florida and the rest of the United State is percentage of carriage of such electronic distress alert devices.

5. DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS

TBD

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