



SQUADRON EMERGENCY RESPONSE ASSISTANCE TEAM (SERAT)

## Experienced Boaters Sought for Emergency Response Assistance

Whidbey Island residents have grown accustomed to, and some actually appreciate, the limited access to their island. It's a bit of a journey to the mainland, either via the south end by ferry, the Coupeville ferry to Port Townsend or north through neighboring Fidalgo Island and the famed Deception Pass Bridge, but that just seems to add to the charm and perception of Whidbey as a get-away. But that charm could quickly fade in the event of a manmade or natural disaster such as high winds, or an earthquake that may damage the island's bridge or highways, limiting ability to get off or on the island, transport food, fuel and supplies to the island, or get people to the medical attention they need.

It's a problem unique to islands and other places adjacent to water with limited roads or access, but the Deception Pass Sail and Power Squadron (DPSPS) has

established a [Squadron Emergency Response Assistance Team](#) (SERAT) to work with Island County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) in case of such situations to move materials, supplies and possibly personnel off and on Whidbey Island if needed.

SERAT volunteers are highly trained and experienced boaters with knowledge of local waters. In addition to moving supplies and personnel, they have the capability to provide assistance for water emergencies. All SERAT volunteers have completed the necessary marine skills training courses as well as other requirements associated with the DEM. They are now awaiting receipt of their volunteer credentials from the DEM, who will activate and direct SERAT as needed.

According to Bill Coltrin, SERAT team leader, there are currently six volunteer captains and their boats, and

eleven volunteer crew persons. One of the crew is designated as "land crew" who would assist in land operations in the event of an emergency activation. The call to activate would be given by and under the direction of the DEM only, and in general, the situation would require a need for water access.

Coltrin explained that the SERAT Team is in need of additional boats and volunteers, and outlined the requirements for volunteering:

**\* All Volunteers** - must have a desire to help fellow citizens on Whidbey Island in the event of a catastrophic emergency.

**\* All Volunteers** - must be members of the DPSPS.

**\* All Volunteers**- must have up-to-date CPR//FIRST AID/AED Certification, which must be renewed every two years.

\* **All Volunteers**- must obtain DEM Volunteer Credentials with digital self photograph. Applications will be supplied by DPSPS.

\* **All Volunteers** must have the ALERT SENSE Emergency Communication App, which requires a cell- phone and email information. ALERT SENSE gives communication capability between emergency volunteers (instructions are provided)

\* **Captains** - must have at least the Pilot grade from the USPS, or a Captain's license from the USCG.

\* **Marine Crew** - must have at least the Boat Handling grade (formerly called Seamanship) from the USPS.

\* **Land Crew/auxiliary** - No USPS grade required, however, the America's Boating Course (ABC) and Boat Handling classes are recommended. Land crew would not participate in water activities, only ground transportation and communication.

Coltrin emphasized that crew positions don't require owning a boat.

He also listed a few guidelines for SERAT boat

requirements and capabilities:

\* **Trailerable boats** are great, in fact desirable, because they can be moved to relatively remote locations on the island faster than boats moored in a marina.

\* **Size** — No specific size is required but the boat should be able to carry at least two people (captain and one crew) and approximately 200 lbs. of equipment, supplies, and/or material. Larger boats, with a dinghy, are desirable for on and off loading of equipment, supplies and personnel in shallow waters.

\* **Vessel Safety Check**—Every boat is required to have an up-to-date Vessel Safety Check decal from either USPS or the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Personal flotation devices for all passengers are needed. A good, working VHF radio with DSC (digital selective calling) is mandatory. A GPS is also highly recommended, along with charts of local waters.

\* Every volunteer captain/boat owner is required to supply a complete description of their vessel, plus a water level profile color digital photograph of their boat. A

complete list of required information will be given at the time of volunteering.

For more information on SERAT and volunteering, please contact Bill Coltrin, SERAT team leader, at [bjcoltrin@gmail.com](mailto:bjcoltrin@gmail.com).

Information regarding local SERAT:

<https://www.deceptionpasssailandpowersquadron.com/serat.html>

Information on SERAT from America's Boating Club/USPS:

<https://www.usps.org/index.php/serat>

*The Deception Pass Sail and Power Squadron (DPSPS) is a 44-year-old nonprofit organization. It is a member of the United States Power Squadrons, the world's largest boating education organization. DPSPS has over 75 members from Whidbey and Fidalgo islands. We are part of America's Boating Club, a squadron of the United States Power Squadrons, a non-profit boating organization dedicated to education & training of safe boating activities.*



Bill Coltrin, SERAT Team Leader