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## Coast Guard goes even higher tech

New system designed to find distressed boaters faster

By **SEAN KINNEY**

Posted - Wednesday, October 08, 2008 07:01 AM EDT

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Top Coast Guard brass along with Key West notables were on hand Monday morning as Coast Guard Sector Key West unveiled its new Rescue 21 command, control and communications system and deployed a newly acquired 45-foot response boat.

Sector commander Capt. Scott Buschman said, "Today is a really excellent day. Today I'm adding significant resources. The Coast Guard is going to be able to respond quicker, with more efficiency. The Coast Guard personnel in the Florida Keys are going to be better guardians. We will make a difference using these new tools."

Rescue 21 is a state-of-the-art system designed to help the Coast Guard find distressed boaters by using more exacting communications technology than the former National Distress System.

With the old system, the Coast Guard received a distress call over the VHF band and used a single line of bearing to locate the boater -- which often leaves a large area to search.

The new Rescue 21 system will use multiple lines of bearing to reduce search areas and, in turn, response times. The system is also integrated into the Coast Guard's satellite communications so various state and federal agencies can coordinate more readily.



### See the Coast Guard in action



[Click to see the Coast Guard's new utility boat used for rescue and patrol operations](#)

You need a video player or browser plugin that supports QuickTime movie files (.mov), such as QuickTime Player.

Rear Adm. Robert S. Branham said, "We'll have a better capability to respond. We will make a difference using these new tools. They'll increase our vigilance."

The response boat that was unveiled Monday is one of only three such boats active in U.S. waters. The other two are on duty in Station Little Creek, Va., and Cape Disappointment, Wash. The new utility boat will be used for rescue and patrol operations as well as cruise ship security.

"It's a magnificent vessel," Branham said.

It has a top speed of 42.5 knots, or almost 50 mph. The older utility boats have a top speed of 26 knots, or almost 30 mph. The boat is equipped with fore and aft weapons mounts, a twin diesel waterjet propulsion engine and three rescue/recovery platforms.

By 2015, the Coast Guard is planning to add 177 more of the vessels to patrol and provide rescue capabilities in the 1.8 million square miles of coastline and seaways charged to its care.



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