

## U.S. Coast Guard Purchases Response Boat — Medium Test Boats

By Mike Osenga

Prompted at least in part by increased Homeland Security concerns, the U. S. Coast Guard has announced the purchase of three Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) test boats. These are the first of a class of diesel-powered boats that will replace the Coast Guard's fleet of 41 ft. utility boats, which have been the workhorse of the coastal stations for the past 25+ years. The RB-M are expected to be the primary non-heavy weather multi-mission capability boats for the Coast Guard.

This is the first step in the Coast Guard's two-phased competitive process for the RB-Ms. Three manufacturers were selected from written proposals to produce a test boat of their design.

Contracts for the three test boats were awarded to Ocean Technical Services Inc. (OTECH), Harvey, La; Manitowoc Marine Group/Marinette Marine, Marinette, Wis.; and Textron Systems, Marine and Land Operations, New Orleans, La. Each test boat will cost approximately \$2.5 million, including logistics support. The test boats were delivered in late 2003.

The RB-Ms are one of two new boat programs being pursued by the G-OCS, the Coast Guard Headquarters Office of Boat Forces. The G-OCS will acquire approximately 180 RB-Ms, as well as the 700 Response Boat-Small (RB-S).

The RB-S boats are expected to provide the secondary multi-mission capability at Coast Guard units. They are expected to provide a shallow water and trailerable capability that is not



**U.S. Coast Guard has announced the first step in a program to develop a new fleet of Response Boat-Medium (RB-M). These are the first of an expected class of diesel-powered boats that will replace the Coast Guard's fleet of 41 ft. utility boats, which have been the workhorse of the coastal station fleet.**

available from the rest of the shore-based response boat system. The Coast Guard's transition strategy for this capability is to establish a service-wide commercial contract for RB-S boats and to replace nonstandard boats that would come out of service with introduction of standard boats from this contract.

On Sept. 30, 2002, the Coast Guard awarded contracts to build RB-S test boats to Safe Boats International, Port Orchard, Wash., Sea Ark Marine, Monticello, Ark., and Zodiac of North America, Stevensville, Md. The three test boats are currently being tested prior to a decision being made as to

which boat will be produced over the next seven years.

These two new classes of boats, along with the current fleet of 47 ft. motor lifeboats, will comprise the Coast Guard's shore-based response boat fleet of the future.

The RB-S boats will replace an existing mix of nonstandard small boats, while the RB-Ms will replace the 41 ft. utility boats. Typical USCG missions for these type of boats include search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime homeland security, as well as general boat capability.

The Coast Guard said the RB-M will perform the many missions typically performed by the Coast Guard small boat fleet, including Homeland Security and search and rescue. Additionally, the Coast Guard said standardization of the RB-M fleet will "generate greater operational effectiveness and safety due to standard training

and operations; improved maintenance and logistics support; and lower total ownership costs."

According to the Federal Register: "The Coast Guard's current fleet of 41 ft. utility boats is aging and technologically obsolete. In addition, the current fleet of small utility boats is an assorted mix of various makes and models that have been acquired with more attention to the immediate mission requirement rather than the long-term supportability of the vessel or training considerations. Few of the existing fleet of boats meet emerging requirements for homeland security, such as higher intercept speeds and endurance. As a result, the current fleet of Coast Guard boat assets lacks the technology, full mission capability and standardized training and maintenance necessary for efficient and effective mission performance."

The Coast Guard said RB-Ms will

have increased maneuverability and be capable of speeds in excess of 40 knots (46 mph) with twin high output in-board diesel engines. A full cabin will provide crew protection from the elements and will be equipped with a robust navigation system, heating and air conditioning, shock mitigating seats and a communication system capable of communicating with other federal, state and local Homeland Security organizations.

While design specifics are sketchy at this point in the process, Textron said its RB-M design is an all-aluminum 45 ft. monohull design. Driven by twin waterjets, Textron said it is designed to travel at speeds of up to 45 knots and is based on the 123, 47 ft. motor lifeboats Textron has built for the USCG. ★

 **diesel Weblink**

[www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)