

NASBLA Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee Meeting Synopsis

The NASBLA **Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee (ERAC)**, chaired by **Charlie Sledd**, Virginia BLA, met March 14-15, 2008, in Lexington, Ky. Over 30 BLAs, state staff, associates, and USCG representatives attended¹ over the course of the day-and-a-half event that included opening and closing discussion sessions with the full Committee, and three separate work meetings of the **ERAC Subcommittees – Accident Reporting & Analysis, Boats & Associated Equipment, and Special Risks.**

Subcommittee Work

The 2008 **ERAC Subcommittees** represent an evolution of NASBLA's former Boating Accident Investigation, Reporting & Analysis (BAIRAC), Boats & Associated Equipment, and Paddlesports committees. While the Subcommittees have kept some elements of their predecessors' jurisdiction – such as an ongoing liaison or monitoring assignment or an unfinished, vital charge from 2007 – each has taken on at least one new charge requiring members to bring their collective expertise to bear on a critical recreational boating safety issue and do it by systematically examining boating accident and other relevant data and resources.²

Accident Reporting & Analysis Subcommittee

The afternoon of March 14, the **Accident Reporting & Analysis (ARA) Subcommittee**, chaired by **Gary Haupt**, Missouri State Water Patrol, spent the bulk of its meeting time on one of these new assignments – **the challenge of separating out human and boat-related factors from other external factors that could be contributing to boating accidents and trends (Charge One)**. In the weeks before the meeting, Subcommittee members had examined their respective states' data to try to discern patterns in types of accidents. This was done with the intent of getting a better handle on the broad charge and focusing attention on a couple of areas of specific concern before seeking out national data. Initially focused on drownings and nighttime speed issues, members spent additional time in session brainstorming about the types of accidents that have lead to fatalities and the possible contributing factors. The attendees ultimately developed a data query tree (regarding drowning deaths, or what was termed “involuntarily leaving the vessel” – capsizing, falls overboard, flooding/swamping, sinking, ejected) as guidance for drilling into the national data with the assistance of USCG personnel. This is a longer-term assignment, with anticipated carryover of the charge into 2009. However, the Subcommittee expects that an interim report on initial findings and analytic challenges will be released summer 2008.

Also during its session, the **ARA Subcommittee** addressed two other major charges for 2008 – one, a project on **minimizing the gaps in boat accident reporting (Charge Three**, an extension of a 2007 BAIRAC charge and directly linked to an objective in the National RBS Strategic Plan), and the other, a **final content review of a proposed “Paddlesports Accident Training**

¹ Attendees are listed on pages 4-5 of this synopsis.

² All charges are listed beginning on page 6 of this synopsis

Module” (Charge Two) that had been developed by the 2007 Paddlesports Committee to supplement accident investigators' knowledge of and training on issues associated with these vessels.

For the **accident reporting gap charge**, the **ARA Subcommittee** reviewed the findings generated from a survey of the states regarding their accident report collection practices for 1) accidents required to be reported, but which the USCG has not been enforcing or encouraging collection; and 2) accident situations outside of the federal reporting requirements. NASBLA Committee staff was asked to receive and review the survey instrument from the Subcommittee task members and to follow up with the few remaining non-responding states. However, the Subcommittee also agreed and reported to the full Committee that the survey results from 41 jurisdictions and the summary of issues were substantial enough to begin packaging as an informational briefing and for developing a policy recommendation for a change in Title 33, Part 17 of the Code of Federal Regulations to allow for uniform collection of accident reports. Intent is to move this item to the full Committee and the NASBLA Executive Board in 2008.

On the **draft Paddlesports module**, citing the thoroughness of the document, the **ARA Subcommittee** made a preliminary recommendation to **ERAC** that the Module, in its entirety and unchanged from the 2007 draft, be passed on to **NASBLA's Training & Certification Subcommittee** for lesson plan and PowerPoint development, to supplement, but not be integrated into the existing training; that it be given consideration as a separate, standalone PowerPoint course; that it supersede the four-page piece in the appendix of the student manual; and, after exploring forms that might already be in use, that the Subcommittee develop an accompanying "suggested" supplemental report form for an accident investigator to capture the additional information. Intent is to develop the final recommendation and package and move this item to the full Committee in June and to the NASBLA Executive Board for final consideration in July 2008.

Boats & Associated Equipment Subcommittee

Also meeting the afternoon of March 14, the **Boats & Associated Equipment (BAE) Subcommittee**, chaired by **Toby Velasquez**, New Mexico BLA, received updates on two monitoring charges carried over from 2007 – one on the **Underwriters' Laboratories PFD Reclassification and PFD Labeling task groups** (February 2008), and the other on the **American Boat and Yacht Council's (ABYC's) Product Interface Committee** (meeting April 2008).

However, as with the **ARA Subcommittee**, members of **BAE** spent the bulk of their separate meeting time on the best approaches to answering their primary analysis charge for 2008, in this case to **analyze incidents and identify potential trends and problem areas associated with non-compliance of safety equipment carriage requirements (Charge One)**. The Subcommittee's pre-meeting conference calls and in-person session focused on data identified in the related strategies of the National RBS Strategic Plan -- those being the boating accident data in **BARD**, vessel safety check data from **MISLE** (Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement), and safety equipment carriage requirement citations, arrests and warnings from **Performance Report Part II** data.

With the assistance of USCG personnel, the **BAE Subcommittee** members learned more about the merits and limitations of these data, the time frames for which they are available, and the troublesome aspects of trying to draw interrelationships between very different datasets (e.g., the limited ability to link boating accidents with non-compliance). Their discussions – and ultimately, the **BAE Subcommittee’s** report out to the full Committee – raised interesting issues regarding the primary reasons for which these data are collected; the hazards of drawing conclusions from limited data or of trying to answer certain safety questions with data not collected or intended for those purposes; and the need for some data that are not currently collected or adequately collected. As the **BAE Subcommittee** continues its analysis, with the assistance of USCG personnel and their customized data runs, it expects not only to make headway toward addressing some of the trends questions associated with non-compliance, but also to make recommendations regarding data applicability to the strategy in question and to future data needs. The Subcommittee anticipates an interim report on initial findings and analytic challenges to be released summer 2008. Depending on progress, a portion of this charge may be carried over into 2009.

Special Risks Subcommittee

The third **ERAC Subcommittee** -- **Special Risks (SR)**, chaired by Eleanor Mariani, Connecticut BLA -- also met in an intensive working session the afternoon of March 14. Members spent time presenting data spreadsheets and summaries and raising questions associated with the Subcommittee’s primary charges – **Charge One, to analyze “high-risk” vessel type accident and fatality rates in the states** (and possible correlations between those rates and safety awareness campaigns) **with the intent of identifying best practices that states could implement to minimize participant risk;** and **Charge Two, to analyze accident data for factors specific to injuries and fatalities among certain boater populations, with a special focus on children and youth.** Both charges are expected to result in research/issue briefs on the findings.

As a result of pre-meeting and in-person discussions, coupled with preliminary data runs by USCG personnel, the **SR** subgroup assigned to the first charge was able to settle in on an approach that will let the data define what the “high risk” issues are (rather than artificially defining what a “high risk” vessel is) and separate accident types into groupings that should facilitate targeted education (e.g., toward stability issues or navigation rules). Similarly, the **SR Subcommittee** subgroup focusing on accidents and fatalities associated with the 13 and under and 13-17 year age groups, reviewed and flagged areas – such as life jacket wear and the roles of participants -- that would get additional investigation in coming weeks. Notably, though, they also cited significant constraints within the existing boat accident data for answering critical safety questions related to youth. For example, in reporting out to the full Committee, the **SR Subcommittee** members noted several “missing” pieces in the **BARD** data, such as incomplete information on the activities in which the youth were engaged at the time of the incidents and the lack of gender data for the affected youth (unless the youth was the boat operator). As a result, the Subcommittee will be requesting the narratives associated with the accidents to glean as much information as possible to supplement the data analyses. The Subcommittee anticipates at minimum an interim report on initial findings and analytic challenges to be released summer 2008. Depending on progress, some portion of these charges may be carried over into 2009.

Full Committee Sessions

One of the expectations in implementing the new NASBLA Committee structure for 2008 was that it would create a new synergy between groups dealing with related aspects of recreational boating. On that front, the **ERAC** meeting demonstrated the benefit of having an opening session where members shared reports on their respective Subcommittee work conducted to date; a first day late-afternoon wrap/“pulse check” session in which members not only received a presentation on a new stern light concept developed by Andy Nichols and Stanley Cofield of Alabama, but also reported out on work progress and their determination that they did not need to meet separately the second day; and that final, Saturday (March 15) morning session in which the full Committee reconvened for a group discussion.

During that morning discussion, the Subcommittee Chairs reported out on what was accomplished the prior day, and then fielded reactions, insights and input from the members of the other Subcommittees on both the content and processes of their work. Members identified common points in their work, learned about other data that might be applicable or inappropriate to their charges, considered different approaches to the work based on feedback from their colleagues, and surfaced many of the data issues discussed in their individual sessions.

As work continues on the 2008 charges, the charts, data spreadsheets and summary analyses generated by the individual Subcommittees, as well as resources of general interest will be posted in a centralized online holding place for use by all three **ERAC** Subcommittees.

In Attendance (for all or some portion of sessions)

John Fetterman, Maine (coastal) BLA, NASBLA President
Richard Moore, Florida BLA, NASBLA Vice President
Charlie Sledd, Virginia BLA, ERAC Chair
Eleanor Mariani, Connecticut BLA, SR Subcommittee Chair
Gary Haupt, Missouri State Water Patrol, ARA Subcommittee Chair
Toby Velasquez, New Mexico BLA, BAE Subcommittee Chair

Chuck Barbee, USCG
Nancy Boldt, North Dakota BLA, ARA Subcommittee
Virgil Chambers, National Safe Boating Council
Pam Dillon, Ohio BLA, SR Subcommittee
Paul Donheffner, Oregon BLA, BAE Subcommittee
Randy Edwards, Iowa BLA, SR Subcommittee
Bill Griswold, USBI, BAE Subcommittee
Dave Harris, Utah BLA, SR Subcommittee
Maureen Healey, PWIA, BAE and SR Subcommittees
Holly Henderson, Oklahoma, ARA Subcommittee
Brad Hokanson, Guam BLA, ARA Subcommittee
Kim Jackson, Idaho, SR Subcommittee
Ron Jendro, Montana BLA, BAE Subcommittee

Mike Jendrossek, USCG
Jim Law, USCG
Jeff Ludwig, USCG
Eric Lundin, Connecticut, ARA Subcommittee
Jack Mason, Massachusetts, BAE Subcommittee
Ken Ripley, Tennessee, ARA Subcommittee
Amy Rigby, California, ARA Subcommittee (on conference call, for portion session)
Dick Snyder, Mercury Marine (ret.), ARA, BAE and SR Subcommittees
Karen Steely, Aaron Foundation, ARA, BAE and SR Subcommittees
Susan Tomczuk, USCG
Stephanie Weatherington, Arkansas BLA, ARA Subcommittee

Guests (presenters): Andy Nichols (Alabama), Stanley Cofield (Alabama)

NASBLA staff

Deborah Gona, ERAC Committee staff
Kim Jenkins
John Johnson
Gail Kulp
Chris Moore
Ron Sarver

Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee Accident Reporting & Analysis Subcommittee

2008 Charges

1. Analyze boating accident and other related available data to begin separating out human (operator-controllable) and boat-related factors from potential external influences, factors or predictors that may significantly contribute to and affect boating accidents and accident trends. Consider potential contributors such as economic conditions, climatic patterns, and other external trends. Develop an issue brief on findings. (New charge submitted)

Related to NASBLA Strategic Plan Objective 1.4 (Conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers); and National RBS Strategic Plan Performance Goal and Sub-tier Goals (Reduce casualties; Reduce five-year average annual deaths and annual injuries); input to RBS 2.3.1 (social-causal marketing re: awareness of safe boating practices); input to RBS 6.1 (boating under the influence); and input to RBS 9.7 (study human factors in boating accidents).

2. Based on the current content of accident investigation reporting and assessments of possible data gaps, review the “Paddlesports Accident Training Module” that was developed and proposed by the 2007 Paddlesports Committee to supplement accident investigators’ knowledge of paddlesport issues. Expand the review of data to include a range of high-risk vessel types, consider elements lacking in investigator reporting, and determine what content or other changes would need to be made to the 2007 product to make it course-ready. (Follow-up on and possible expansion of vessel types covered in the 2007 charge product)

Related to NASBLA Strategic Plan Objective 3.3 (Develop, maintain and implement national level training and certification programs for marine enforcement officers and other agency professionals); and 1.4 (Conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers); and National RBS Strategic Plan Objective 9 (boating accident reporting).

3. Strive to improve the reliability of boating accident reporting and data analysis by seeking solutions that will minimize gaps in reporting incidents.

Related directly to National RBS Strategic Plan Objective 9.2 (Increase the reliability of boating accident reporting and data analysis through gap analysis. Issue updated formal policy guidance to determine if an accident is reportable)

4. Liaison with USCG in its efforts to initiate changes to the Code of Federal Regulations toward the adoption of the Boating Accident Decision Matrix approved by NASBLA membership in 2006. Coordinate next steps with NASBLA Governmental Affairs. (Carryover)

Related to National RBS Strategic Plan Objective 9 (boating accident reporting)

5. Monitor and report to the Committee on the progress of USCG efforts to determine exposure hours (through the National Recreational Boating Survey, when implemented) and the development of improved denominators for measuring recreational boating injury and fatality rates. Make recommendations to USCG on measurements as developed.

Related to National RBS Strategic Plan Objective 10 (Determine a participation denominator of recreational boaters on the water to allow USCG to determine levels of risk for death, injury, or property damage)

Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee Boats & Associated Equipment Subcommittee

2008 Charges

1. In coordination with the USCG, analyze boating accident and other relevant data for incidents of and potential trends associated with non-compliance with safety equipment carriage requirements. Determine problem areas. Develop issue brief on findings. Coordinate next steps with other appropriate NASBLA Committees.

Related to NASBLA Objective 1.4 (conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers); and to the National RBS Strategy 8.1 (Evaluate Incidents of Non-Compliance with Required Safety Equipment -- Identify the number of incidents of non-compliance with safety equipment carriage requirements to determine trends. Using risk based decision making, analyze accident data, compliance reports, and vessel safety check data from MISLE and the Performance Report Part II. Provide a report on the results to the States) and Strategy 8.2 (Target Problem Compliance Areas - target problem compliance areas as reported in strategy 8.1 through increased enforcement, education, and public awareness campaigns).

2. Monitor the work of the Underwriters Laboratories' PFD Reclassification and PFD Labeling working groups, and assess any changes for their impacts on boating laws and safety programs. Determine potential Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee products as warranted. (Continuing)

Related to NASBLA Objective 1.4 (conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers); and to National RBS Strategic Plan Objective 4 (Life Jacket Wear)

3. Continue to participate with and monitor the work of the American Boat and Yacht Council's (ABCY's) Product Interface Committee. Determine potential Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee products as warranted. (Continuing)

Related to NASBLA Objective 1.3 (build and maintain strong coalitions of partners to advocate for resources, effective policies and responsible practices) and Objective 1.4 (conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers).

Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee Special Risks Subcommittee

2008 Charges

1. Analyze high-risk vessel type accident and fatality rates in states. Assess the possible correlations between those rates and safety awareness campaigns. Identify and recommend best practices that states can implement to minimize risk to participants. (Expansion of carryover charge from 2007)

Related to NASBLA Objective 1.4 (conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers) and Objective 2.3 (identify effective program innovations and best practices and establish methods for disseminating to members); and to the National RBS Performance Goal – To Reduce Casualties, and Objective 2 (awareness of safe boating practices).

2. Analyze boating accident data to identify factors specific to injuries and fatalities among high-risk boater populations, with a special focus on children and youth ages 17 and under. Consider frequency and severity of injuries, accident scenarios, roles of participants, exposure hours (when data become available) and other variables. Develop an issue brief on findings. (New charge submitted)

Related to NASBLA Objective 1.4 (conduct research and analysis that supports policy positions and informs decision makers) and Objective 2.3 (identify effective program innovations and best practices and establish methods for disseminating to members); and to the National RBS Performance Goal – To Reduce Casualties, and Objective 4 (life jacket wear) and Strategy 4.2.1 (identify and prioritize at-risk populations using a variety of sources including drowning data captured by the BARD system).