

AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB OF NORTH ALABAMA
THE HUNTSVILLE SAIL AND POWER SQUADRON

"JOIN FOR THE EDUCATION – STAY FOR THE FRIENDS"



Member Handbook
2021

<https://www.abcnorthalabama.org/>

AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB OF NORTH ALABAMA

Organized in 1914, America's Boating Club (ABC) (formerly United States Power Squadron® (USPS)) is the world's largest private boating group. Nationwide, ABC is comprised of over 30,000 members in more than 400 Clubs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. ABC is a private, non-profit, non-governmental, and non-military organization of men and women who are dedicated to high standards of seamanship and have a common love and appreciation for pleasure boating, power, sail, or paddle. Boat ownership is not a requirement for membership. Objectives of the organization are self-education, civic service, and social activities. There are no barriers to membership on grounds of race, religion, or ethnic background.

AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB OF NORTH ALABAMA

The America's Boating Club of North Alabama (ABCNA) (formerly Huntsville Sail and Power Squadron (HSPS)) was founded in 1965 as an offshoot of the Oak Ridge Power Squadron and currently has ~50 members dedicated to self-education, civic service, and social activities. Member education is highly encouraged. Eleven nautical courses are available to ABCNA members, as are over 30 informative seminars. We also offer on-water instruction and certification along with various hands-on skills demonstrations.

Regular membership meetings include programs and presentations making them fun, interesting and informative. These casual get-togethers provide a chance to socialize with other members. Other social activities are regularly scheduled, including a mix of on - the - water and off - the - water events.

CLUB BYLAWS

The ABCNA maintains a complete set of Club Bylaws. The Bylaws are reviewed periodically and if a change or update is

required, a committee of Club members will develop a new draft of the Bylaws for approval by ABCNA. Every Club member is encouraged to have and to read the Club Bylaws. For a set of current Bylaws, contact the Club Secretary or Commander. Much of what is described in this Member Handbook is covered in the Club Bylaws.

CIVIC SERVICE

ABCNA members take pride in promoting boating safety and providing other benefits to the local community and surrounding areas, including the following.

America's Boating Course – This professionally developed boating class is offered by our Club at least twice a year, taught by members of the Club who have met the requirements of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and are thereby considered "Certified Instructors". Other members can voluntarily participate by "proctoring" the classes and visiting with the students, by providing refreshments, and/or by helping to grade the exams and interview the students for membership. To learn more about America's Boating Course, or to become a Certified Instructor, contact your Club Educational Officer or visit the ABC website.

Huntsville Boat Show - A three-day boat show is normally held at Huntsville's Von Braun Civic Center in January or February each year. The ABCNA sets up a booth there to meet and interact with the Boat Show visitors and exhibitors, tell them about our organization, distribute boating safety information, and invite the public to our America's Boating Course and other classes. Club members are asked to volunteer to "man" the booth for a short period of time – usually two hours at a time of their choosing during the Boat Show. This is an enjoyable time to talk to the public about boating, answer their questions, describe our organization to them, and ask them to sign up for an America's

Boating Course. Admission to the boat show is usually free for those manning the ABCNA booth!

Cooperative Charting - The Cooperative Charting program consists of the contribution of correction data for nautical and aeronautical charts, reports on marine facilities, and condition and status of geodetic survey markers (bench marks) to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Many ABC members across the country find this an important, fun and rewarding activity. All members, even those who do not have boats, can participate in the program by reporting the land-based geodetic survey markers positioned in locations all over the country. For further information, contact the Club Executive Officer or visit the ABC website.

Vessel Safety Check (VSC) - A Vessel Safety Check is a courtesy examination of a boat to verify the presence and condition of certain safety equipment required by State and Federal regulations. The Vessel Examiner, a specially trained ABC volunteer, may also make certain recommendations and discuss certain safety issues that will make the vessel owner a safer boater. Our Club has the capability to conduct VSCs and to provide the required training for Vessel Examiners. For more information on the Vessel Safety Check program, how to get a free VSC for your boat, or how to become a Vessel Examiner, contact our Club Commander or visit the ABC website.

MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

Each member is assigned a unique “Certificate number” by ABC which can be found on the membership card that is mailed to every member each year following membership renewal. Every new member is presented a Certificate of Membership soon after joining ABC.

HOW THE CLUB FUNCTIONS

The Bridge – The ABCNA is managed by an elected group of officers called the Bridge. Members of the Bridge include:

- Commander (CDR) – Chairperson for the Bridge
- Executive Officer (XO) – Responsible for Boat Show
- Administrative Officer (AO) – Determines Club events
- Educational Officer – Training and Instructors
- Secretary – Meetings and Minutes, Membership, Roster
- Treasurer – Club Treasury and Ship’s Store

In addition, the Club is authorized up to 3 “Members-At-Large.” These are members of the Club who volunteer to attend Bridge meetings and assist the Bridge in managing the Club. Members-At-Large are elected along with the Bridge members each year and each one has a vote during Bridge meetings. Together, the Bridge plus the Members-At-Large make up the Club Executive Committee or “EXCOM”, as we refer to it. The EXCOM meets approximately once a month, per the Club Bylaws. Refer to the Bylaws for details related to the EXCOM.

Committees are established within the Club to help us accomplish our goals. Each committee is responsible to a Club Officer and also to all of our members.

Chairmen and members of committees are volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and expertise to help the Club achieve its goals of self-education, civic service and fellowship with boating-oriented people. Most of us have an area of interest or capability which can help the Club achieve those goals. Volunteering is optional and is not a requirement of membership in ABCNA.

There are opportunities for all. Some committees are active at specific times of the year – for example, the Merit Mark Committee which is active only in late September and October.

Other committees are active during different parts of the year, or all year.

Long-time active members often cite the following as their reasons for volunteering for the Club:

- ⇒ A good way to get to know fellow members
- ⇒ Personal satisfaction in helping others
- ⇒ Satisfaction of knowing our goals are worthwhile
- ⇒ Learning from the experience of other members
- ⇒ Teaching as the ultimate form of learning

Members who wish to volunteer are urged to contact the Club Commander or any of the Bridge members or committee chairmen listed in the ABCNA Roster. Members are encouraged to take the “Operations Training” class to learn the details of how the ABC Clubs are organized and how they function. Talk to your Club Administrative Officer or Educational Officer for details on Operations Training.

COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

Communication between the Club and its members is accomplished by any of several means, including; direct mailings, electronic mail, our Club website, and through our Club’s newsletter publication which we call the *Scuttlebutt*. Members are encouraged to respond when notified of an event, since many of our events, dinners, and other activities are based on a “head count” of attendees. Response should be “yes” or “no” as to your intent to attend the event or activity. Members are not required to attend Club functions, but are encouraged to do so if possible.

The *Scuttlebutt* newsletter is published at least ten times per year and contains messages from the Bridge, announcements of upcoming social and educational events, and articles of general

interest. Members are encouraged to submit articles to the *Scuttlebutt* editor.

CLUB ROSTER

An ABCNA roster is published at least once per year and distributed to all members, usually during the month of February and, if necessary due to changes, in July or August. It contains the name, grade, address, spouse's name, phone number, email address, boat information, and educational accomplishments for each Club member. Also included is a listing of current Club Officers and Committees.

Use of the roster for other than Club business or personal use is strictly prohibited. Any abuse of this policy should be called to the attention of the Club Commander as soon as possible.

Member information is maintained by the National Headquarters and must be updated by the member. Members should log on to the National Website to make roster changes. You will receive a PIN with your Membership Card. Your Certification Number and PIN allow you to access your data on the National Website and make changes as necessary. That information is the source of data for our roster. If you have difficulty, contact the Club Secretary.

The annual dues notice, which is sent to each member, contains an area for updating roster information.

ABC TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATION STATUS

ABC and its Districts and Clubs have been granted tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code because of its nationwide educational activities. This status is very important to the organization; preservation of the exemption is the responsibility of all of its members.

One part of the code states that, as an organization, we must avoid attempting to influence legislation or intervene in a political campaign on behalf of a candidate for public office. As

individuals, we can participate as much as we wish in trying to influence political or legislative matters; however, mentioning membership in ABC or a District or Club is not permitted and could cause revocation of our status.

PERSONAL DEDUCTIONS

Annual Membership dues (including Club, National and District dues) are tax deductible. Also, members who participate in the functions of ABC in an official capacity may deduct on their tax return certain additional expenses as charitable contributions. These expenses include transportation, parking fees and tolls, reasonable expenditures for meals and lodging while away from home, uniforms, postage, telephone bills, supplies, and other miscellaneous cash expenditures. Check with your Tax Advisor for specifics.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

ABC educational courses and seminars are available to anyone, whether they are a member or non-member of ABC. The advantage of membership is the significant savings as compared to non-members. On average, a member is charged about one half the non-member cost to take the same course or seminar.

It is the intent of the ABCNA to maintain a cadre of qualified and certified Instructors capable of presenting any course or seminar available through ABC. To take a course, a member should contact the Club's Educational Officer and inform him/her of your desire to take a particular course or set of courses.

The Educational Officer will determine if other members or non-members are interested in taking the same course, arrange a suitable location for the course, identify the Instructor(s) for the course, and schedule the course. ABCNA will strive, to the extent feasible, to hold classes as often as possible and at locations convenient to its members. A member of ABCNA can take a course with any Club. Members are notified of course schedules

by email and articles in the *Scuttlebutt*. There is a fee for each course which includes course material, processing, and examination costs. Fees are due at registration, by cash or check made to America's Boating Club of North Alabama. All final examinations are sent to the national ABC organization for grading. In the case of examination failure, re-examinations can be easily arranged, normally at no additional charge to the member.

ABC courses fall into two categories, Advanced Grades courses, which are cumulative in nature – each course building upon what was learned in the previous courses – and Elective courses.

ADVANCED GRADES COURSES

Seamanship (S) covers types of power and sail boats, construction materials, and handling characteristics. It also includes boat handling under sail and power, maintenance and cleaning, trailering, safety, adverse conditions, required equipment, rules of the road, aids to navigation, and nautical customs and courtesies.

Piloting (P) gives practical instruction in position determination based on dead reckoning. The concept of latitude and longitude is described and used. Students learn how to read a chart, and how to use a ship's compass and GPS. Students use plotting tools and arithmetic means to determine lines of position, bearings, fixes, and other important tasks.

Advanced Piloting (AP) expands upon what was learned in Piloting and in the use of the tools of piloting – the compass, correcting the compass, use of charts, determining position by bearings, angles and soundings. Radar is introduced and advanced use of GPS is covered. Students also learn how to handle the effects of tides and currents.

Junior Navigation (JN) involves the basic techniques of celestial navigation – the earth as a sphere and how this is reflected on various types of charts, time, time zones, celestial bodies and

locating them, the nautical almanac, the sextant and its use, and plotting “sights” taken by the student.

Navigation (N) is a continuation of JN with more emphasis on finding one’s position through the use of celestial bodies. Fundamental principles are expanded, computations and methods are practiced, and the day’s work of the navigator is performed. A paper cruise is made which includes all aspects of JN and N.

ELECTIVE COURSES

Engine Maintenance (EM) deals with basic design and construction, operating principles, maintenance and repair of gasoline and diesel engines. Various systems (fuel, electrical, cooling and lubrication) are studied. The purpose is to make the student more resourceful, not a mechanic.

Sail (SA) teaches terminology, types of rigs and hulls, signals and rules of the road, theory of sailing, balance of hull and sails, stability, true and apparent wind, point of sail, handling, anchoring, mooring, docking, laying up and fitting out.

Marine Electronics (ME) includes two separate short courses: **Marine Electrical Systems** and **Marine Communication Systems**. Together, they contain essential knowledge about a boat’s electrical and electronic systems, including wiring, grounding, electrolysis, lighting, and batteries. Also covered are depth finders, marine radio telephones, radar, SATNAV, GPS and various advanced systems used for electronic navigation.

Weather (W) teaches an awareness of weather phenomena, how to read a weather map and the sky, and how to understand and anticipate weather developments. The atmosphere and its characteristics, global weather and other factors that affect forecasting are studied, as well as clouds, air masses and storms.

Cruise Planning (CP) prepares the student to tackle the task of planning a lengthy cruise. The course discusses what to plan for,

how to plan, what to expect and what to do if things go wrong during a voyage. Material is provided to assist the boater with practical approaches to long-range cruising.

Instructor Development (ID) prepares a member to become an Instructor by teaching many of the necessary skills. The course includes practical assignments in preparing outlines, lesson plans, and presentations, including use of visual and other teaching aids.

Educational Awards

After passing Seamanship, Piloting, Advanced Piloting, and any three of the six elective courses, a member receives the Educational Proficiency Award. ABC issues a certificate to the member who is then authorized to wear a special insignia either on their ABC uniform or blazer.

When a member has completed all of the courses that the ABC offers, he or she is awarded a Certificate of Educational Achievement, also known as a Full Certificate. This is the highest Educational award and entitles the member to wear a special grade insignia on his uniform. The designation after the member's name is SN (Senior Navigator).

ABC SEMINARS



ABC offers a number of specially developed seminars for use by clubs. Each seminar covers a different topic in detail. ABC seminars are designed to be presented in 2 hours or less and none of them require an examination to complete. Some of the ABC seminars are considered required material for the Boat Operator Certification program, providing an alternative to a complete course, depending on the topic. ABCNA has Instructors qualified to present seminars. For more information on ABC seminars, talk with your Club Educational Officer or visit the ABC website.

ABC BOAT OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

ABC has created the Boat Operator's Certification Program (BOC) which certifies members at various levels of boating proficiency as established by the US Coast Guard. The certification is recognized in the boating community, both domestically and internationally. Certification is accomplished by a combination of classes, from those listed above, certain Seminars, and specific hands-on and on-water boat handling and related skills. There are 4 levels of certification available to ABC members. For more information on the BOC program, becoming

involved in the program, or becoming a BOC Certifier, please contact your Club Educational Officer or visit the ABC website.

ABC ENSIGN AND ABCNC BURGEE



The ABC ensign was designed by one of the founders of ABC. Members may fly it in place of the US ensign on the stern flag staff. If the US ensign is flown from the flag staff (or gaff or leech on sailboats), the ABC ensign may be flown from the starboard spreader of the foremost mast. ABC ensigns are available from most large boating equipment stores and from the ABC Ships Store. Each clubin ABC has a unique burgee which may be

flown from the bow staff of a power boat and from the foremost masthead of a sailing vessel. The ABCNA burgee may be purchased from the Club Treasurer. They come in different sizes, and the Treasurer can help you select the proper size based on your boat's length.

Fly Your Ensign and Club Burgee Proudly!

ON - THE - WATER ACTIVITIES

ABCNA normally has on - the - water gatherings during the boating season, from May through October. A fall rendezvous is normally held at a local marina each year. Raft ups are a tradition in ABCNA. Poker Runs and Cardboard boat races have also been held. Members are notified in the *Scuttlebutt* as to the time and location. Impromptu arrangements may be made during the season by phoning or emailing other interested members. These events are a great time to get together as a group for social and educational purposes. There are gatherings on one boat or another, and the practical aspects of boating are usually a big topic

of conversation. There is no obligation to stay for the whole event. Normally, events are planned so that those who do not currently have boats can participate.

MEMBER BENEFITS AND AFFILIATIONS

One of the many ABC membership benefits is access to the official **ABC Boat Insurance Program**. This program is available exclusively to ABC members based on the premise that ABC members are “preferred risk” boaters by virtue of their education in the care and operation of boats. Since 1988, the ABC Boat Insurance Program has provided ABC members some of the best service, reliability and coverage in the industry. It is administered by McGriff, Seibels, & Williams, Inc. and underwritten by the Travelers Companies, Inc. The program is open to boats of almost any type, size, construction and age, including antique boats. Premiums take into account such things as educational achievement in ABC courses and claims history. To inquire or apply, call 1-800-763-8777 or online at <https://www.abcboatinsurance.com/>.

(It should be noted that other insurance companies may also provide discounted premiums for ABC courses completed.)



Promoting boating safety is a shared mission of the ABC and Boat U.S. - Boat Owners

Association of The United States. To recognize that partnership, ABC members are eligible for a 50% discount on your Boat U.S. membership and a 10% discount on all water towing service levels. Premium discounts are also available for ABC members on Boat U.S. marine insurance policies. Join online at www.boatus.com/join or call 800-395-2628. If requested, mention the code GA80000P.

Various Commercial Discounts ABC constantly seeks discounts and special considerations from commercial vendors and service

providers. Discounts and preferred service is available on magazines, electronic equipment, software, marine charts and maps, books, boat parts and maintenance, to name a few. To view the current listing of available discounts for ABC membership, visit the Member Benefits page on the ABC website:

<https://americasboatingclub.org/benefits>

Merit Marks ABC member services do not go unrecognized. A member who “performs substantial effort in furthering the interests, programs and objectives of ABC, its Districts and Clubs” may be awarded a merit mark by the ABC Chief Commander. Each year, the ABCNA Bridge submits a comprehensive merit marks list to an Area Merit Mark Monitor and forwards to the ABC Chief Commander for review and approval. Merit marks are usually reviewed and approved in time to be awarded in the month of January of the following year.

A member can earn merit marks for many different things, such as helping at the Boat Show, serving on the Bridge or Executive Committee, teaching classes, etc. Only one merit mark can be awarded to a member in a given year, no matter how large the service contribution. When a member has received five merit marks, he or she receives the status and the right to wear the Senior Member insignia on his uniform or blazer. With the award of a member’s 25th merit mark comes a status known as Life Membership – a plaque awarded by the Chief Commander, a permanent membership card printed in silver, and the member will enjoy exemption from ABC and Club dues from then on.

A member who receives his or her 50th merit mark receives a special award from the Chief Commander and the status of ABC Governing Board Member Emeritus.

UNIFORMS, NAMETAGS, AND RANK

ABCNA has adopted a casual approach to its club meetings, social events, and educational affairs. Members are encouraged to wear

shirts or tops that include the ABC logo and a club nametag. Occasionally, some members may be seen in uniform, particularly at District and National level conferences and meetings. Members are not required to own or to wear the ABC uniform, but they may. ABC has adopted a modified Navy style uniform to add dignity and uniformity to appearances at more formal and official occasions. Insignia on the uniform reflect the member's rank, educational achievements, and merit marks. Members may optionally choose to wear a blazer with nametag and an ABC emblem or rank insignia on, or in, the breast pocket. Emblems and rank insignia are available online from the ABC Ships Store. ABCNA club nametags can be ordered through the Club Treasurer or online.

CLUB MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Executive Committee and General Membership Meetings

There are two main types of Club meetings, Executive Committee (EXCOM) meetings and General Membership meetings. All Club meetings are open to all members. Guests are welcome too!

EXCOM meetings are held to allow the EXCOM to conduct committee business and are normally held on the last Monday of the month. The location of EXCOM meetings is at the pleasure of the Commander, and can be found in the *Scuttlebutt* and the Club website or can be obtained by calling any ABCNA officer. Members who are not on the EXCOM are welcome and may participate in any discussion, but only the elected EXCOM members may vote at these meetings.

General Membership meetings are held according to the Club Bylaws. Dates, times, and locations of all meetings will be provided both by email (or telephone for those members without email) and in the *Scuttlebutt*. The meetings usually run from 6:00 to 8:30 PM and are preceded by some time to socialize

followed by a dinner. Members are always welcome to attend just the meeting and need not feel obliged to attend the dinner portion.

Annual Events Our Club enjoys several annual events including the Annual Meeting and Election of Officers, the Club Change of Watch, and the Holiday Brunch. Details of all planned events are announced in the *Scuttlebutt* and provided on the Club website.

The Annual Meeting and Election of Officers is usually a casual dinner meeting held in January. The purpose of this meeting is to allow the members to vote on the Club officers and EXCOM members who will serve during the term to begin the following month (February).

The Change of Watch is a meeting, normally including a brunch or dinner, held each year in February, which ends the watch of one Bridge and starts the next. It is attended by the District Commander or other member of the District Bridge. The Change of Watch is the one event each year when members are encouraged to dress a bit more formally than at other meetings and get-togethers throughout the year. Awards are presented, presentations are made, and the District Commander or other District officer conducts the Installation ceremony for the new Club Bridge. This is a special event and represents the official beginning of a new year for our Club's leadership group.

A Holiday Brunch is usually held early in December and provides an opportunity for members, spouses, and guests to get together for a fun social gathering.

Welcome to Alabama's Boating Club of North Alabama!

THE ABC PLEDGE

I do solemnly pledge
to abide by the bylaws
of American's Boating Club;
promote high standards of
navigation and seamanship;
maintain my boat and operate it legally;
render assistance whenever possible;
and conduct myself in a manner
that will add prestige, honor, and respect
to America's Boating Clubs.