



NCI FLEETWOOD TRAINING MANUAL

PART 3

KEEPING WATCH

Table of Contents

	Page Number
INTRODUCTION	1
EFFECTIVE VISUAL SCANNING	2
PRIORITIES	2
HIERARCHY OF OBSERVATION	2
HIERARCHY OF VULNERABILITY.	3
OPTICAL EQUIPMENT	4
INCIDENTS	4
SUMMARY	5



National Coastwatch Fleetwood

EYES ALONG THE COAST



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KEEPING WATCH

Introduction

The primary purpose of the watchkeepers of National Coastwatch Institution is to provide a professional, visual lookout. Effective monitoring of what can be observed from the watchstation is a skill that needs to be learned and maintained. There are various strategies that can be employed to achieve this.

It is important that watchkeepers remain constantly vigilant and are not distracted from their task. It is generally recognised that four hours is the maximum time before concentration begins to wane.

Watchkeepers should ensure regular 'panorama' changes are made between themselves, so an effective watch can be maintained.

By remaining vigilant during the watch, it is possible to build up a mental map of what is happening within the watch sector:

- what vulnerable people and craft are present and where
- what they are doing
- who is at risk
- the state of the weather and tide
- what changes can be anticipated

All this information could be of value in both handling incidents effectively should they happen, and in helping to prevent them before they arise. It is information that should, as far as is practicable, be passed on to the next watch at handover.



Effective visual scanning

Watchkeepers must be able to use their eyes in an effective manner, as well as the optical and electronic equipment within the station,

The following general principles can assist in maintaining a good visual lookout:

- **Move the Head not the Eyes**

Always turn the head not the eyes. It is possible to keep the head still and move only the eyes, but they will soon tire and the lookout will be less effective.

- **Use Peripheral Vision.**

Peripheral vision is more acute. Placing a target slightly off the centre line of vision can sometimes improve the view.

- **Fleeting Glimpse**

Always go back and pause long enough to check if a fleeting contact was imagined or real.

- **Be Methodical.**

Surveillance patterns must be methodical. They can be from 'out' to 'in' e.g. from horizon to station, or from 'in' to 'out'. Sectors should be overlapped to avoid gaps.

- **Sweep Slowly.**

The view should be swept from left to right (or vice versa) and in an unhurried manner. This is particularly important when waves are high, as something small in the water may be hidden by them.

Priorities

Whilst keeping a visual watch it is essential to keep in mind the priorities of both how the observation takes place, and the activities you are observing.



'Hierarchy of Observation'

- Eyes
- Optical
- Electronic

The eyes give a greater width and depth of vision to make the first observation of a contact. Optical, including CCTV (if available) and electronic aids, can then be used to gain and record further information.

Hierarchy of Vulnerability

This is the priority that should be given to the various potential targets around the watchstation.

All incidents occurring within the watch sector:

- Casualty spotted at sea - vessels/people in difficulty
- Mayday, Pan-Pan – distress and urgency signals seen or heard
- Beach incidents –injuries, missing persons, people in difficulty, munitions, containers with hazardous contents, at sea or on the beach
- Suspicious Activities – drug/people smuggling.

Vulnerable craft and people

- Swimmers
- small inflatables

Vulnerable children and adults, disabled persons.

- rowing boats
- divers
- canoeists/kayakers, wind/kite surfers, water skiers
- RIBs, small open boats, jet skis.



National Coastwatch Fleetwood

EYES ALONG THE COAST



- Any craft/person acting strangely
- Leisure craft e.g. yachts, motor cruisers, day boats (line fishermen)
- Dive boats and associated activity
- Commercial fishing vessels and wind farm work boats
- Large Merchant and Naval vessels
- Injured marine mammals, birds etc
- Significant floating debris/life rafts or equipment
- Deceased marine mammals and sea birds (5 or more)

Optical Equipment

Watchkeepers should become familiar with the binoculars and telescopes in use at the station. They should seek advice to ensure they can make all necessary adjustments to gain maximum benefit from each individual piece of equipment.

When there is eye contact with a small target and there is a need to use binoculars to see more detail, the eyes should be fixed on the target whilst the binoculars are brought up to the eyes. This will help to put the binoculars in the line of sight.

Always note the position of the sun in relation to the field of view and do not 'pan' into its glare. Damage can be caused if the binoculars are dropped or knocked over. Always place the strap around the neck when in use and never stand them down on end.

Incidents

When an incident is spotted by a watchkeeper it is vitally important that the target remains in constant view. The watchkeeper should inform any other watchkeepers in the station of the incident and they in turn should confirm that they also have visual contact.

To minimize the possibility of losing the target, it should be kept under constant surveillance whilst a colleague takes notes in the log book and passes the details to the coastguard or other necessary authority. Should a CCTV camera be available directing it onto the incident could record valuable evidence for any later enquiry.



National Coastwatch Fleetwood

EYES ALONG THE COAST



Lining up the target with a known feature such as a particular wind turbine or buoy can assist in maintaining contact providing the watchkeeper's body position remains constant. Similarly, making a mark with a marker pen on the window in line with the target can assist.

The use of the pelorus and more in-depth instructions regarding the action to be taken in the event of an incident are set out later in this manual.

Summary

This part of the training manual is only an introduction to the knowledge required whilst keeping watch. Further and more detailed instructions are contained in later sections.