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United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 5224.13

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 5224.13

Subj: COAST GUARD INNOVATION PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction formally establishes the Coast Guard Innovation Program and Commandant’s Innovation Council, including policy and guidelines for the Innovation Database, Innovation Account, Captain Niels P. Thomsen Innovation Awards, and annual Innovation Expo.
2. ACTION. Area, district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commander deployable operations group, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Judge Advocate General and special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure that the provisions of this Instruction are followed. Internet release is authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. Captain Niels P. Thomsen Innovation Award, COMDTINST 1650.8, is hereby cancelled.
4. BACKGROUND. The Coast Guard initially established the Innovation Program when the Commandant’s Innovation Council was created in November 2000. The Innovation Council was established to leverage the creative potential of our talented workforce, facilitate full enterprise implementation of worthy innovations, and nurture a culture where innovative thinking and risk-taking are encouraged throughout the Coast Guard.
5. DISCUSSION.
 - a. Innovation Council Philosophy. Innovation is not a new concept; across commercial and government sectors, leaders continuously search for new ways to obtain better results. The Coast Guard Innovation Program aids Coast Guard leaders in promoting innovation by:
 - (1) Providing a testing ground for innovative solutions to existing challenges;
 - (2) Prioritizing and championing Coast Guard innovation projects; and
 - (3) Encouraging, recognizing, and rewarding innovative people and teams.

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

- b. Innovation Council Composition. Council membership is open to federal employees and non-federal persons. For the purpose of the Council, federal employees are active duty members of the armed forces (Regular and Reserve), federal civil service employees, federal non-appropriated fund employees, and uniformed Public Health Service members. Non-federal persons include military Reservists not on active duty, Coast Guard Auxiliary members, retired federal employees, and ordinary citizens. Non-federal persons will be required to disclose their financial interests before their initial appointment and annually thereafter to ensure no conflicts exist. Council members, who are non-federal persons, will not participate in recommending Captain Niels P. Thomsen Innovation Award recipients.
- (1) The Commandant's Innovation Council implements the Innovation Program throughout the Coast Guard, including coordination with Headquarters and Field Innovation Councils, as well as Coast Guard Headquarters program managers to ensure enterprise-wide alignment. The Commandant's Innovation Council is composed of the Headquarters Innovation Council and the Chairs of the Area Field Innovation Councils.
 - (a) The Commandant's Innovation Council is charged with balancing the advantages of standardization with the opportunities for evolutionary change within the Coast Guard. The Council includes representatives from each directorate who will link Coast Guard innovators to related program efforts; help ensure Council supported initiatives are not duplicating formal projects already underway; and to ensure the Council does not support initiatives that violate any regulation, law, act, or statute. In the spirit of innovation, they will also champion and facilitate Council supported initiatives to prototype innovative solutions to organizational challenges.
 - (2) The Headquarters Innovation Council is responsible for implementing the Coast Guard Innovation Program for Headquarters and all Headquarters units. This Council is the process improvement communication and collaboration conduit in its area of responsibility, as well promoter of local initiatives with enterprise-wide application to the Commandant's Innovation Council. Additionally, the Headquarters Innovation Council may fund local initiatives from distributions from the AFC-30 Innovation Account in accordance with the criteria outlined in paragraph 5.c.(2).
 - (3) Atlantic and Pacific Area Field Innovation Councils are responsible for implementing the Coast Guard Innovation Program in the field. They are the process improvement communication and collaboration conduit in their area of responsibility, as well promoter of local initiatives with enterprise-wide application to the Commandant's Innovation Council. Additionally, each Field Innovation Council may fund local initiatives from its distribution of the AFC-30 Innovation Account in accordance with the criteria outlined in paragraph 5.c.(2).
- c. Innovation Program Elements. The Innovation Councils, with funding from the Innovation Account, promote organizational excellence through four distinct program elements:
- (1) Innovation Database. The Innovation Database serves as the collection point for Coast Guard innovation ideas and best practices. Every innovation that is entered into the database should be reviewed by the appropriate Innovation Council. The Innovation Database also serves as a source of ideas and best practices for Coast Guard wide

improvements and should be reviewed periodically by Coast Guard program managers. All entries into the Innovation Database should be labeled with a current disposition by a designated Innovation Council member or assigned champion. The Innovation Database can be found at: <http://cgweb.mlcpac.uscg.mil/PAIC/>.

- (2) Innovation Account. Innovation Councils award start-up or prototype funding for innovative solutions to organizational challenges. Funding requests can be submitted anytime during the year via the Innovation Database. To receive funding, an innovation must receive support from 75% of the awarding Innovation Council's membership. These funds shall not be used to sustain previously funded innovation initiatives, replace existing equipment or systems, or pay for military billets or civilian positions. The Council will use the following criteria to evaluate requests:
- (a) Potential for platform or program-wide impact;
 - (b) The innovation has tangible future potential;
 - (c) Sufficient potential is projected to warrant short-term funding to jump start the innovation until permanent funding is established;
 - (d) Although not included in the formal budget submission, the initiative should be explored further to validate and better justify inclusion in future budget submissions; and/or
 - (e) The initiative provides an innovative solution for an existing or projected challenge.
- (3) Captain Niels P. Thomsen Innovation Awards. This annual award program recognizes the exemplary efforts of Coast Guard individuals or teams who have created and implemented innovative solutions to Coast Guard challenges. The award's namesake, Captain Niels P. Thomsen was recognized for inventing the chain-stopper, which is used by Coast Guard buoy tenders to secure and safely release the chain and sinker for buoys. This innovative device has prevented countless accidents and serious injuries, as well as dramatically reduced the amount of time required to conduct aids to navigation operations.
- (a) One award to an individual or team will be given in each of four categories: 1) Science or Technology; 2) Operations or Readiness; 3) Administration, Training or Support; and 4) the Commander Joel Magnussen Innovation Award for Management. Nominees must be Coast Guard active duty, reserve, auxiliary, civilian, or retired personnel. All nominations must be directly tied to a current initiative in the Innovation Database. The Commandant's Innovation Council may choose to select more than one winner in any of the four award categories.
 - (b) Formal solicitation for nominations and specific information regarding the nomination process will be promulgated each year via ALCOAST; however, nominations may be submitted year round. All nominations must be submitted via the Innovation Database and must be endorsed by their command.
 - (c) Headquarters, Atlantic and Pacific Area Innovation Councils will review nominations that originate within their respective areas of responsibility. Each council will forward

the top nomination from each category that best meets the selection criteria to the Commandant's Innovation Council. The Commandant's Innovation Council will review the nominations and make award recommendations to the Commandant. Each nomination package competes directly with other nominations in the same category and will be judged by the innovation's projected impact against the following criteria:

1. An innovative approach to solving a specific Coast Guard challenge;
2. Successfully implemented at the local, District/Area, or national level; and/or
3. Increases efficiency (reduced cost in personnel hours or resources), productivity (greater capability or effectiveness), information sharing or resource coordination, or provides other tangible or intangible process improvements.

(d) Award recipients will be announced via ALCOAST and recognized at the annual Innovation Expo. The Commandant's Innovation Council funds Expo attendance for individual award recipients and up to two representatives from each team award recipient. Each award recipient will receive a commemorative memento and each originating command will receive an AFC-30 award, to be used at command discretion, to recognize and further promote an environment that drives innovation.

(4) Innovation Expo. This annual event is privately sponsored and promotes innovation by bringing together Coast Guard technology users, innovators, operational and support elements, other Government agencies, industry, and academia. The Expo is typically focused on major Coast Guard challenges. Innovation Expo information will be promulgated via ALCOAST and posted in CG Central.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. Commandant (CG-0931) will manage the Coast Guard Innovation Program and serve as the Chair of the Commandant's and Headquarters Innovation Councils.
- b. The Atlantic and Pacific Area Commanders shall each establish and sustain a Field Innovation Council and promote the Coast Guard Innovation Program, including Area Field participation in the Commandant's Innovation Council.
- c. Assistant Commandants will provide representatives to the Commandant's and Headquarters Innovation Councils.

7. QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS. Direct questions or comments to Commandant (CG-0931) at 202-372-4579 or innovation@uscg.mil.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this Instruction and have been determined to be not applicable.
9. FORMS/REPORT. None.

R. J. PAPP, Jr./s/
Chief of Staff