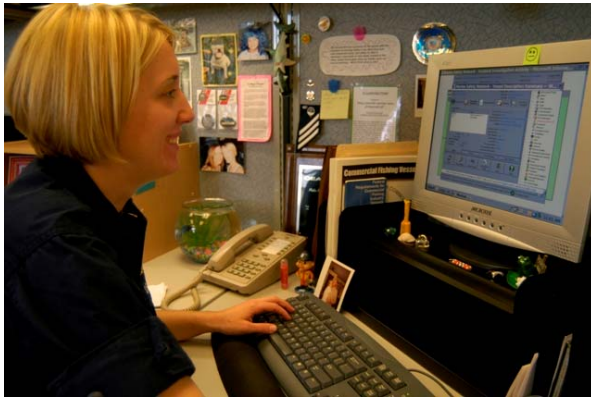


Getting MISLE on Course

Story and photo by Lt. Cmdr. C. T. O'Neil, D7 Public Affairs

MIAMI -- It is the database upon which so much depends. From resource allocation, to unit staffing levels, to boarding officer safety, the accuracy of the information logged in this database is critical to Coast Guard commands. Yet since its inception, errors, duplications and a lack of emphasis on complete data entry have all combined to vex users of the information contained within the Coast Guard's Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) database.



MST2 Joanne E. Sierra, an investigating officer assigned to Coast Guard Sector Miami, reviews information contained in the Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) database. Sierra has been a MISLE user since Oct. 2003 and has been working at Sector Miami for three years. Coast Guard photograph by Lt. Cmdr. C. T. O'Neil, D7 Public Affairs.

control effort, that would eventually become a model for the Coast Guard, didn't begin in the processing center or with MISLE users in the field. It began instead in a non-descript, windowless office on the eighth floor of the district headquarters building in Miami.

"It all started with fisheries," said Lt. Chad Brick, project leader for District Seven MISLE Compliance.

According to Brick, analysis of living marine resource compliance rates was skewed due to a lack of data entry into MISLE. "We increased our enforcement however the compliance rate didn't drop, and this was because all of our efforts weren't being entered in MISLE," said Brick.

"I started pulling up the other numbers for search and rescue, counter-drug and alien migrant interdiction operations and realized that this was an issue for every mission, not just fisheries," he said, "and the experts for each of these missions were addressing the MISLE issue differently.

MISLE is the Coast Guard's only comprehensive and official, law-enforcement information database. MISLE entries are used for documentation of a range of activities including marine inspections, recreational boating safety, search and rescue operations and marine casualty investigations to name a few.

The problems with MSILE data reached critical mass in the Seventh District when units were receiving credit for less than 50 percent of their actual work and violation cases couldn't be processed by the district's processing center within the same year. But the genesis of the Seventh District's quality

Recognizing the need for a coordinated plan that would span program boundaries, Brick briefed Capt. Michael Jett, chief of the District Seven enforcement branch, who supported Brick's initiative.

The district's program relies upon a three-pronged approach to quality control that includes a comprehensive process to ensure units receive 100 percent credit for all law enforcement efforts within the district, an in-depth MISLE guidance and training program that reaches all levels of command and a constructive feedback mechanism that also holds units accountable for performance.

According to Brick, the MISLE Performance Evaluation (MPE) was created to provide units with constructive feedback on MISLE data entry compliance rates. "The MPE comes out monthly via message traffic, lists every unit by sector and shows the gap between activities performed by units versus what is entered in MISLE," said Brick.

Along with the creation of the MPE, a Maritime Law Enforcement Bulletin provided an easy to follow checklist and data entry examples as a guide for MISLE users. Both tools were well received in the field because, in part, Brick ensured that users and managers at the sector level were included in the creation of both the MPE and the MLEB guide.

"Units are always very motivated to do a good job, no matter what the job is," said Brick. "Our success in the process thus far is only due to the hard work from the field and we look forward to adjusting this process in order to meet future challenges."

As good as the process is the real measure of the project's success can be seen through analysis of MISLE data.

According to Brick, the District Seven MISLE Compliance Project has resulted in:

- A decrease of missing/incorrect MISLE entries from more than 50 percent in fiscal year 2005 to just 14 percent thus far in fiscal year 2007.
- An increase of more than 450 law enforcement activity entries per quarter.
- A district processing center that is caught up for the first time in five years.
- A district processing center that processes most cases within one month of the violation.

Another indicator of the success of the project is recognition from headquarters that District Seven's process is the model for all other districts to emulate. The Eighth District recently received training in the process from the District Seven Law Enforcement Branch and is currently adopting the program.

While Brick is responsible for beginning the project, he is quick to point out he couldn't have done it on his own.

"The MISLE program manager at headquarters, Lt. Cmdr. Jon Smithers really put in a lot of time with me in creating this process," said Brick. "He kept this project moving in the

right direction and Capt. Jett allowed me to work on this and really pushed its importance which helped a lot.”

Now, because of Brick’s efforts, those of his project team and MISLE users throughout District Seven, the Coast Guard has a system that is, as Brick says, “very effective” in solving MISLE data entry problems.

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