

U.S. Coast Guard
Light Station Boston

Boston Light Auxiliary Assistant Keeper - Watchstander

Task Description

an on-the-job training-qualifying program

as of 12 February 2016

Overview

Auxiliary Assistant Keepers are volunteers of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary who wear the ODU properly, are Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualified, and Boston Light Historical Interpreter Qualified that having successfully completed the advanced training qualifying. Auxiliarists participate in this program being fully cognizant of the issuing of **non-reimbursable** orders for travel and food. Training occurs from Wed-Sun or Sun-Wed, 24-hours a day, staying overnight on the island. Once qualified, scheduling options are Wed-Sun, Sun-Wed, Sun-Sun, or Wed-Wed. The program is governed by a Coast Guard Sector Boston Instruction.

This is a very unique Auxiliary activity with the only remaining U.S. Coast Guard Light Station staffed in the United States. It has been mandated by a 1989 Congressional Law to remain “manned” due to its historical significance in being the first light station to be established in colonial America in 1716. Auxiliarists meeting specified standards are offered the privilege of having the opportunity to be stewards of this national landmark as Assistant Keepers.

Little Brewster Island is located approximately 10-miles east of down-town Boston and 1-mile from the Town of Hull, MA. Transportation to the island is from Coast Guard Station Point Allerton in Hull. (Note: Driving from Boston to Hull takes approximately 60 minutes).

Objective for Training Auxiliary Assistant Keepers

To establish a cadre of trained/qualified volunteers to stand watches (Assistant Lighthouse Keeping) with the Keeper or another qualified Auxiliarist: Wed-Sun, Sun-Wed, Wed-Wed, or Sun-Sun.

Expectations of Assistant Keepers

The primary responsibility of the Auxiliary Assistant Keepers is to provide a Coast Guard “presence,” ensuring the safe operation of Little Brewster Island, remaining “situationally aware” throughout the watch. Little Brewster Island is one of the 34-island/peninsulas that comprise the Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park. The Park Service provides tours to the island for a 16-week season during the summer in which Assistant Keepers need to be keenly aware of visitor safety. Routine of the day includes such tasks as making daily rounds, maintaining the grounds to ensure the safety of visitors, recording on-scene weather, and on occasion, “trouble shoot” a problem when something goes array. Two important considerations are: (1) the ability to coherently describe the situation to the Keeper for her to notify appropriate Coast Guard authority, and (2) refraining from attempting to “fix” the problem without permission. The **Watchstander Guide** that is maintained on the island provides instructions and discussion of duties and responsibilities. The Keeper is ultimately responsible for whatever occurs on everybody's watch, and therefore, it is critical for Auxiliarists to be able to get along with Keeper.

Requisites to be a candidate as an Auxiliary Assistant Keeper - Watchstander

- a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in good standing.
- wear the ODU properly and proudly in representing the Coast Guard with sew-on or Velcro **member** collar devices.
- qualified Boston Light Historical Interpreter (tour guide) for Little Brewster Island.
- qualified crew member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and maintaining the qualification for as many years as participating in the program.
- be in good physical condition for: climbing the 100 ft tower twice a day, ability to lift 50 lb spring water bottles and fire extinguishers, mowing the lawn, painting, and the like; exposure to mold/mildew and other environmental conditions that may trigger allergic reactions.
- submit an application to the Keeper followed-up by a phone interview.
- willingness to be mentored and work cooperatively with the Keeper.

Requisites to be a candidate as an Auxiliary Assistant Keeper – Watchstander Continued

- dependable and committed to fulfilling scheduled Watchstander duty knowing this commitment determines the success of the program.
- willingness to participate in the program without reimbursement for transportation or food (i.e., bringing your own food).
- available for training for a minimum of two training duties (Sun-Wed or Wed-Sun) (overnight, 24-hours a day).
- once qualified, available for a minimum of one Watchstander duty per year (with two welcome).
- being flexible when the duty is delayed or extended due to adverse weather conditions.
- committed to developing appropriate/effective interpersonal skills for interacting with the cadre of Auxiliary Assistant Keepers, Historical Interpreters from AUX, FBHI, and NPS, active duty, and for the diverse population that visits the island.
- possessing good judgment abilities, such as:
 - decision making with the Keeper and co-Assistant Keepers (i.e., refraining from taking action outside of routine tasks and operations without consulting the Keeper and other Assist Keeper(s) on duty).
 - knowing personal limitations and seeking appropriate advise and consultations.
 - communicating pertinent information to the Keeper and updates of situations.
 - providing clearly written summary of what transpired during the watch to be left for the on-coming Assistant Keepers and/or Keeper.
- ability to access the island via climbing the vertical ladder affixed to the face of the concrete pier (10 foot height at low tide) when the seasonal dock is not in place.
- willingness to be transported to Boston Light via an Auxiliary vessel from Hull, MA (an approximate 60 minute car drive from Boston).
- ability and willingness to take pride in keeping the interior of the house consistently in “presentable” (“ready for inspection”) for unanticipated visits from the Coast Guard, media, and special guests.
- scheduling Assistant Keeper duty at least one month (4 weeks) ahead of time, if not earlier.
- willingness to attend Boston Light Augmentation’s annual required “*Update*” (workshop).

Qualification Process

An application is to be submitted to the Keeper followed by a phone interview to provide the opportunity for prospective candidates and the Keeper to discuss the *Watchstander Program* expectations to ensure all are on the “same page”.

A *Check-list* similar to that of the Boat Crew Qualification Program is used for qualifying Assistant Keepers. The *two* on-the-job training sessions (Wed-Sun or Sun-Wed) are to be scheduled with a minimum of 14-days between the two. During the training, the candidate works with an assigned mentor, practicing the task on the check-list. Generally, the second session is not scheduled until the first has been completed to ensure the candidate’s compatibility with the Keeper, Assistant Keepers, and the program.

Upon completion of all the items on the *Qualifying Checklist*, the candidate and Keeper perform a final review as an opportunity to clarify any concerns, issues, or questions. There may be instances where the candidate or Keeper requests a third or more training sessions to build competency levels. The candidate has two years to qualify once the process has begun. Competency of skill level, ability to get along with the Keeper, “people skills”, and commitment to the program are important qualities.

At the conclusion of the review process, if competency levels are deemed sufficient by the candidate and Keeper, both sign the *Qualifying Checklist* signifying the successful completion of the program. The *Assistant Keeper Qualifying Certificate* will be presented at the annual “Boston Light Appreciation Day” usually held in October.

Keeper’s House Amenities

Kitchen: pots, pans, silverware, 4 burner stove with oven, microwave, toaster oven, refrigerator, coffee maker, water cooler. *Living Room:* entertainment center with satellite TV. *Reading materials:* lighthouse books, paperback books and magazines. *Second floor:* a full bath and three bedrooms with double beds. *Provisions:* sheets, blankets, towels, and pillows, spring water for drinking, paper towels, trash bags, and toilet paper.

Interested? Contact: Keeper Sally Snowman Phone: 617-833-0603 Email: sally@bostonlightkeeper.com