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**U.S. Coast Guard**

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# Press Release

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## **Coast Guard Announces 1,109,310 Lives Saved Since 1790**

**\*Interviews and video available\***

Washington- The U.S. Coast Guard announced during a ceremony today in Grand Haven, Mich., for its 217<sup>th</sup> birthday that 1,109,310 lives have been saved since its establishment in 1790.

Since 1924, the residents of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, Mich., have recognized the Coast Guard, the smallest of the armed forces, with an annual celebration. The festivities include Coast Guard cutter tours, a children's parade, a downtown carnival, nightly entertainment, a parade, a family picnic, and fireworks.

"When things are at their worst, America's Coast Guard is at its best," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "What began as a revenue enforcement agency with a fleet of ten cutters established by Alexander Hamilton more than 200 years ago has evolved into the world's premiere multi-mission, maritime and military service. It's fitting that we celebrate the Coast Guard's 217th birthday this August 4th as we recognize its brave men and women for saving more than 1 million lives over the course of its long and storied history."

"As America's lifesavers and guardians of the seas, Coast Guard men and women commit themselves every day to serving our nation and its people with selfless courage and unflinching determination," said Adm. Thad Allen, commandant of the Coast Guard. "This year we celebrate a remarkable milestone in our history as more than one million lives have been saved by the Coast Guard since 1790. What began as America's only lifesaving service charged with the dangerous duty of saving sailors

from shipwrecks along our coasts has evolved into a modern-day, multi-mission Coast Guard that demonstrates the same commitment to saving lives that it did more than 200 years ago."

The Coast Guard is one of America's five armed forces and traces its founding to Aug. 4, 1790, when the first Congress authorized the construction of ten vessels to enforce tariff and trade laws, prevent smuggling, and protect the collection of the federal revenue. Responsibilities added over the years included humanitarian duties such as aiding mariners in distress and the service received its present name in 1915 when the Revenue Cutter Service merged with the US Life-Saving Service to form a single maritime service dedicated to saving life at sea and enforcing the nation's maritime laws.

"The saying 'A life lived for others is a life worth while' truly summarizes being a member of the Coast Guard," said Capt. Jim McPherson, a Coast Guard spokesman. "For 217 years our brave members rowed through the surf to save lives or flew through storms to make daring rescues. Although the technology has advanced the common theme through the years is the heroism of Coast Guard women and men."

The number of lives saved was calculated by the Coast Guard historian's office through research of logs and records from the Coast Guard, the Revenue Cutter Service, the US Life-Saving Service, the Lighthouse Service and other agencies that eventually became the modern Coast Guard. In addition to tallying the total number of lives saved, the historian's office has compiled a list of the top ten rescues in the Coast Guard's history. The list shows the breadth of the Coast Guard's efforts to save lives in peril on the seas for over 217 years.

"While this top-ten list is subjective, it certainly conveys the heroism of our people conducting this vital mission," said Rear Adm. Mary Landry, director of governmental and public affairs.