



ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE SEARCH & RESCUE

Awards and Recognition Guide

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Introduction

In the Fall of 2016, RCMSAR initiated a review of the organization's practices to recognize the actions of its members in fulfilling the goal of "saving lives on the water."

A small committee was established to undertake that review. This committee provided a number of recommendations which were subsequently endorsed by RCSMAR leadership. Those recommendations:

- Strong endorsement for station-based awards and recognition
- Support for managing awards external to the station by RCMSAR Headquarters
- The development of a committee to receive, review and recommend to the Board of Governors for the nomination of members for external awards and recognition
- To identify and select a manageable number of awards
- The development of a reference guide to assist stations in putting forward nominees

With regard to the last recommendation on the list, this guide has been prepared as a reference for awards and recognition that a member can receive as a volunteer with RCMSAR. It is important to note that, with the exception of service medals, these honours in the main are designed to recognize those members who have gone beyond the call of duty or surpassed the dedication and purpose of RCMSAR.

Awards and recognition come in many forms, starting at informal station acknowledgement to formal RCMSAR support for recognizing contributions in the Governments of Canada and British Columbia honours systems. For all types of awards, member recognition begins at the station level.

This guide is intended to provide additional direction to stations and staff regarding RCMSAR policy HR-111 Member Recognition and Awards and to standardize the nomination process through the Recognition Committee that will be established annually with volunteers from stations and RCMSAR staff. Standardization and clear procedures are designed to ensure nominees for various external awards are deserving, meet the criteria for nomination, have the endorsement and sponsorship of the organization and the Board of Governors, but are not so onerous as to limit nominations.

This guide will provide support to determine the appropriate level when considering a member for formal recognition and the process for nominating a member for:

- Station Level Awards and Recognition
- Corporate Awards and Recognition
- Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Awards
- International Awards and Recognition for Search and Rescue
- Provincial Honours
- Canadian Honours

The Award and Recognition Program will evolve. As the program matures or new opportunities for recognition become available, this guide will be updated. As part of their

duties, the Recognition Committee will also provide advice to RCMSAR on updating the guide to reflect station, corporate or other options and opportunities to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the organization, stations, crews and individuals.

Canadian and provincial nominations can be made by any individual. For individuals that are being nominated for RCMSAR activity or actions, the Board of Governors support is critical for success. If RCMSAR has been requested to provide a letter of reference or endorsement from another organization or individual to aid in their nomination, the Recognition Committee will review the request and seek the advice of the Board of Governors.

1. Station Based Recognition

Stations are strongly encouraged to develop and maintain member recognition programs that foster engagement, promote recruitment and highlight the achievements and dedication of station members.

Recognition at the station level is local and therefore not required to be submitted to the Recognition Committee for review and entry into the approval process. However, station level awards and recognition for deserving volunteers do support nominations that are in the Recognition Committee's scope.

In addition, RCMSAR is a member of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (CCGA) and is encouraged to participate in the service pin program. Station Leaders can award service pins to acknowledge years of service in five-year increments starting at year five. These lapel pins have the Coast Guard Auxiliary crest and not the RCMSAR branding. RCMSAR Headquarters has supply and will provide stations with service pins upon request.

Other station-based honours could include but are not limited to: volunteer of the year and appreciation for fundraising or for organizing events. Appreciation for service as a Station Leader or other positions within stations where volunteerism is preeminent is worthy of celebration.

Station Leaders should ensure that missions are "flagged" in SMS to alert headquarters of outstanding efforts that are worthy of consideration for the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre's (JRCC's) top three missions of the year. The Top Three Mission Awards are presented at the RCMSAR Annual General Meeting.

2. RCMSAR Regional Level Awards

Each year, stations may submit nominations to recognize individuals, crews or stations for outstanding contributions. Headquarters or the Board of Governors can also contribute nominations for RCMSAR Regional Level Awards.

The following recognition awards are not limited in number and may not be awarded annually. Please note that this award level is not intended to compete with Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Level Medals for service or merit.

Volunteer of the Year

The Volunteer of the Year is an award that acknowledges an individual volunteer who has made an outstanding contribution to their station or the organization. The recipient will be selected from nominees put forward by stations or Headquarters. Ideally, the rationale for this award will be supported by statistics such as number of missions or hours of volunteering, as examples.

The award will be presented at the Annual General Meeting and will take the form of a personalized plaque or a similar form or recognition.

CEO Commendation

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of RCMSAR can issue a CEO Commendation at his/her discretion. This is a distinctive award that may be issued when an individual displays extraordinary dedication to duty and strength of purpose in furthering RCMSAR's mandate. Please note that both volunteers and employees are eligible.

Although the number awards and their recipients are issued at the CEO's discretion, these will be vetted by the Recognition Committee for consistency.

The award will take the form of a personalized plaque or a similar form or recognition.

Board of Governors' Station Commendation

The Board of Governors' Station Commendation is designed as recognition for an entire station that has performed a task with exceptional professionalism in difficult circumstances. An example would be an incident where a task was completed over the course of multiple days, during which a very high standard of completion was ensured that brought honour and recognition to the station and its members. Please note that danger does not factor into the consideration for this recognition, and moreover, program development/training etc. that engages the whole station is just as eligible as rescue operations. The main requirement to fulfill is that a minimum of 50% of the station or society was involved in the effort and that this took an extended period of time to complete.

This award takes the form of a plaque issued to the station and certificates unique to recipients of the Commendation, i.e., all members of the station who were enrolled at the time of the action. Information on the act, when it occurred, who was involved, and the associated results and impact are requested.

3. Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Level Awards

RCMSAR's roles and responsibilities and its history are strongly linked to the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (CCGA); therefore, RCMSAR members are eligible for CCGA awards. Criteria for receiving CCGA awards are provided at the CCGA main website and use a specific form. The Recognition Committee will receive nominations from stations and, if endorsed, will recommend to the CEO and Board of Governors that a nomination be supported on behalf of RCMSAR and submitted to CCGA National.

SERVICE:

Long Service Medal

The CCGA Long Service Medal is given to all volunteer members in good standing having cumulated 25 years of service with the Auxiliary and/or RCMSAR.

Administrative Excellence Medal

The Medal of Administrative Excellence is given to members and non-members of the CCGA or RCMSAR in recognition of outstanding administrative achievement or service to the Auxiliary or RCMSAR. This requires services that were accomplished in a manner which is worthy of special recognition.

Subsequent awards of the Administrative Excellence Medal shall be denoted with a silver bar with a maple leaf in the center. This medal, though an Auxiliary award, may be awarded to civilians outside the RCMSAR organization. This medal does not include acts maintenance or physical improvements of stations, boats or other material items. Candidates who have made a significant national impact may also be considered for the Meritorious Service Medal or Meritorious Service Cross awarded under the national honours system.

Examples of Administrative Excellence include fundraising and event coordination, committee participation and leadership or Station society activities that greatly contribute to the wellbeing of the Station.

Humanitarian Service Medal

The CCGA Humanitarian Service Medal is presented to members of the Auxiliary, RCMSAR as well as non-members who distinguish themselves by meritorious, direct participation in a significant act or operation of a humanitarian nature. Direct participation is defined as being physically present at the designated location and having directly contributed and influenced the action.

Service rendered in the act or operation being considered must meet the following criteria:

- Must be above and beyond normal duties;
- Must have major significance;
- Must have provided immediate relief;
- Must have affected the outcome of the situation.

Subsequent awards of the Humanitarian Service Medal shall be denoted with a silver bar with a maple leaf in the center. This medal, though an Auxiliary award, may be awarded to civilians outside the RCMSAR organization. Operational humanitarian aid rendered internationally may be considered for other national level awards.

Exemplary Service Medal

The CCGA Exemplary Service Medal was created to honour the lifetime achievements of members whose contribution have been outstanding for the organization. The medal recognizes excellence in those individuals who distinguish themselves by contributing significantly to the CCGA as a national organization and in enabling the Auxiliary or RCMSAR to achieve its goals and objectives in the saving of lives, prevention of accidents and provision of safer boating practices, all over an extended period of time.

The requirement to justify this award is exceptional performance of duty that benefits the Auxiliary or RCMSAR as a whole. This performance must have a measurable, positive effect on the entire organization.

The Exemplary Service Medal is the highest award available for non-heroic actions within RCMSAR and CCGA. This medal can only be issued once to each individual; therefore, no repeat bars should be worn on this decoration.

MERIT:

Leadership Medal

The CCGA Leadership Medal is given to members of RCMSAR in recognition of sustained professional and/or leadership achievements in operations or administration. More specifically, it is for members who have maintained an outstanding level of performance and/or achievement over a period of time to further authorized activities of RCMSAR.

Though rather all-encompassing as an award, most recipients have been awarded this medal through hard work and dedication to a particular effort concerning RCMSAR. Any subsequent awards will be denoted with a silver bar affixed to the ribbon with a silver maple leaf embossed upon it.

This medal is reserved for serving members of RCMSAR. Furthermore, it cannot be awarded to full stations or groups of people; it must be awarded to one individual at a time.

Operational Merit Medal

The Medal of Operational Merit is awarded to RCMSAR members in recognition of superior skill in performing an assist, rescue or other meritorious operational service. The award recognizes deeds or activities performed in an outstanding, professional manner and/or of an uncommonly high standard that brings considerable benefit to the accomplishment of the RCMSAR mission.

To receive the Medal of Operational Merit, superior skill is required, not extreme skill, and does not have to be a risk to the member's life. From the skill involved in removing a sailboat from a reef to that of pulling someone out of the water in rough seas, this medal

is to be considered for operational tasks only. Subsequent awards will be denoted by a silver bar affixed to the ribbon of the decoration, and this bar will be embossed with a silver maple leaf.

This medal is reserved for serving members of RCMSAR and can be awarded to full vessel crews if the situation warrants. Under exceptional circumstances, this award can be considered for outside personnel such as a vessel of opportunity that happened upon a scene.

BRAVERY:

Heroism Medal

The Heroism Medal is the CCGA's highest honour for which RCMSAR members are eligible. It is given to members in recognition of extreme skill in performing an assist or rescue that involves moderate to elevated risk to the member's life. This award recognizes heroism in the face of grave personal risk and which clearly stands out as above normal expectations. With this, the individual must have exercised extreme skill, as opposed to superior skill required for the Operational Merit Medal. Neither the assist nor the rescue need be successful, only that the action required extreme skill and was performed or attempted at risk to the member's life.

All nominations will be investigated internally; if it is deemed the act was in fact more perilous or in keeping with the highest Canadian values of valour, the recommendation will be made to upgrade the nomination to a national decoration. There are very few circumstances in which a member will qualify for this award and not qualify for a Canadian honour. Therefore, every effort will be made to ensure that the member receive the award to which he or she is entitled. The opposite will also hold true where the investigation shows that this was not necessarily an act that merits a Heroism Medal but could very likely merit an operational service medal.

Though this award has never been awarded twice, in the event it does, it will be denoted with a silver bar embossed with a maple leaf affixed to the ribbon. This medal can only be awarded to individuals and not groups. In the case that two or more members put their lives at risk during an assist or rescue, separate nominations must be put forward for each individual.

For awarding a medal of this significance, please review Canadian honours as an alternative.

4. Provincial Level Awards

The Province of British Columbia has a number of prestigious forms of recognition for outstanding contributions to society by its citizens. If a member wishes to recognize another member for a provincial level award based primarily on RCMSAR activities, the recommended process would be to propose that to the Recognition Committee who will then provide guidance and support or recommend other options if appropriate. If RCMSAR receives a request for additional support from a primary nominator (another organization or individual), RCMSAR Headquarters can provide support, initially through the Manager of HR, depending on alignment with annual RCMSAR review process.

British Columbia Medal of Good Citizenship

A good nomination candidate for the medal is someone who has served their community with great humility without expectation of reward or recognition. Citizens can be nominated by a peer, colleague, friend or even family member for their dedication to making their community a better place. Any Canadian citizen who is a current or former long-term resident of British Columbia is eligible for nomination for the B.C. Medal of Good Citizenship. Individuals and couples can be nominated — in exceptional circumstances, nominations of organizations or groups of three or more individuals may be considered. Any individual or group may submit nominations. The Recognition Committee recommends medal recipients based entirely on the information submitted with the nomination.

The Order of British Columbia

Any Canadian citizen who is a current or former long-term resident of British Columbia is eligible for nomination for the Order of British Columbia. This award can only be given to individuals. The individual must have demonstrated exceptional distinction in their field that has brought significant benefit to the province of British Columbia. For RCMSAR members to qualify, an internal review must be completed before the nomination is passed on. It is appropriate for RCMSAR members to nominate individuals outside as well as inside the organization.

5. International Level Awards

International awards can be considered for RCMSAR members and teams. RCMSAR Headquarters will accept proposals from stations through the Recognition Committee that will review nominations and to make recommendations to the CEO and the Board of Governors.

IMRF Lifeboat Exchange Program

RCMSAR, as a member of the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF), is able to participate in their international Lifeboat Exchange program. This is a wonderful opportunity for deserving crew members to participate in and learn about overseas SAR organizations and operations. The program guide is updated annually and is not available online. The 2019 version is:



Guidelines for an
IMRF Lifeboat Crew

International Maritime Rescue Federation Awards

Open to all RCMSAR members or partners that are involved with saving lives at sea. With a deadline usually at the end of June, IMRF annually recognizes individuals and organizations with a goal to raise awareness of search and rescue techniques, technologies and equipment used in maritime operations. There are four categories of awards:

1. Individual: For Outstanding Individual Contribution to Maritime SAR Operations
2. Team: For Outstanding Team Contribution to Maritime SAR Operations
3. Innovation & Technology: For Innovation and Technology in the field of Maritime SAR
4. Lifetime Achievement: The Vladimir Maksimov Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Maritime SAR Sector

6. Canadian Honours and Awards

Like British Columbia, Canada has several honours and awards that recognize a significant contribution to Canada or internationally. If a member wishes to nominate another member for a national award as a result of RCMSAR activities or service, the nomination proposal should be submitted to the Recognition Committee who will then provide advice and support to craft a nomination in the prescribed format.

Awards available include recognition of service, merit and bravery. The approval process is lengthy, so successful nominations will be announced and celebrated when confirmation from the Governor General's office is received.

SERVICE:

Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers

Any person who is a Canadian citizen and who has made significant, sustained and unpaid contributions to their community in Canada or abroad is eligible. Candidates must have demonstrated an exemplary commitment through their dedicated volunteerism. The Medal is awarded to individuals only, not to groups or couples. Non-Canadians are also eligible if their contributions have brought benefit or honour to Canadians or to Canada.

The Chancellery of Honours, part of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, administers the program and receives all nominations. Each one is carefully researched and then reviewed by an advisory committee, which makes recommendations to the Governor General. The selection process is non-partisan and merit-based. Presentation ceremonies are held throughout the year in communities across Canada.

RCMSAR has established a "trusted partner" relationship with the Governor General's office to ensure that these medals are issued out in a timely manner.

MERIT:

The Order of Canada (Companion, Officer, Member)

The Order of Canada is Canada's highest civilian honour, with membership awarded to those who exemplify the Order's Latin motto *Desiderantes meliorem patriam*, which means "(those) desiring a better country." Created in 1967, the Order was established to recognize the lifetime contributions made by Canadians who made a major difference to Canada. The different levels of this order are designed to recognize different amounts of contribution. Though there is no definitive eligibility for this award it will be up to RCMSAR's nomination process to determine whether the individual who has been nominated is eligible for recommendation for the award. Individuals who have been nominated for this order may be considered for other awards if it is determined that the order is not appropriate.

Nominations for the Order of Canada will require a great deal of work. Successful submission will generally require letters of support from numerous sources, including highly influential Canadians. The Recognition Committee requests early notice of intention for Order of Canada nominations in order to seek preliminary support of the Board of Governors and to assist with submission preparation.

Meritorious Service Cross

The Civil Division Cross recognizes a deed or an activity that has been performed in an outstandingly professional manner or with uncommonly high standards; the activity is often innovative, sets an example for others to follow, improves the quality of life of a community and brings considerable benefit or honour to Canada. Individuals who have been nominated for this award may be considered for other awards if it is determined that the order is not appropriate.

Meritorious Service Medal

The Civil Division of the Governor General's Office recognizes a deed or an activity that has been performed in a highly professional manner, or according to a very high standard; often innovative, this deed or activity sets an example for others to follow, improves the quality of life of a community and brings benefit or honour to Canada. Individuals who have been nominated for this order may be considered for other awards if it is determined that the order is not appropriate.

RCMSAR has established a "trusted partner" relationship with the Governor General's office to ensure that these medals are issued out in a timely manner.

DECORATIONS FOR BRAVERY:

Cross of Valour

The Cross of Valour recognizes acts of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme peril. This must also include people who risked their lives to try to save or protect another. From entering burning buildings to calming gunmen to plunging into icy waters, the recipients put their lives on the line to help another person.

Saving a life is not, in itself, the most important consideration in being nominated for a Decoration. Often, rescuers are not exposed to any danger and, despite the value and importance of their actions, they do not qualify for a Decoration for Bravery. However, they may qualify for a special commendation by the Governor General.

The degree of risk faced and persistence despite the risk are important in the evaluation. In addition, perception of risk is a factor – people who try to help, even though they know they might be severely injured or killed, display bravery of a very high order. Eligibility for this award is not restricted by standard operating guidelines. All acts of bravery will be investigated by RCMSAR personnel with assistance from local police services.

Star of Courage

The Star of Courage recognizes acts of conspicuous courage in circumstances of great peril. This level of award is given to those who perceive a risk to life or limb where the chances of injury are high. The individual that is being rescued does not have to survive for the award to be issued. The saving of property is not considered for this award. Eligibility for this medal is not restricted by standard operating guidelines; all acts of bravery will be investigated by RCMSAR personnel with assistance from local police services.

Medal of Bravery

The Medal of Bravery recognizes acts of bravery in hazardous circumstances. This medal is given to individuals who have an elevated risk of injury while performing a lifesaving attempt. The act does not need to be successful in order to qualify for this award. This award is not restricted by standard operating guidelines; all acts of bravery will be investigated by RCMSAR personnel with assistance from local police services.

RCMSAR has established a “trusted partner” relationship with the Governor General’s office to ensure that these medals are issued out in a timely manner.

7. External Agency or Association Recognition

Royal Canadian Humane Association Medal of Bravery

The Royal Canadian Humane Association Medal for Bravery has two levels. The Bronze level is for recognizing the individuals who have risked their lives in the face of danger in order to save or attempt to save a life. The Silver level is awarded to those individuals who, in face of grievous bodily harm or death attempt to render assistance to others without regard for their life or chance of survival. This medal is routinely awarded posthumously. Though many decorations at the national level can be awarded posthumously, this award can be issued in a timely manner, is internationally recognized and is most suitable to civilians who have lost their lives when exposed to dangers not associated with hostile forces.

Though RCMSAR prays that this medal never be awarded posthumously, the fact is that marine search and rescue is one of the most dangerous rescue activities that must be done to save lives. In order for this medal to be considered for members of RCMSAR, the individual must meet the following criteria:

The individual must have been a serving member of RCMSAR or a person on a vessel of opportunity attempting to render aid.

Silver: The individual must have perished during an operational mission where aid is being rendered to individuals in need.

Bronze: The individual must have faced dangerous circumstances and continued their efforts despite probable loss of life.

Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award

The Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award is a prestigious recognition for exceptional service and achievement. This award, a partnership between provincial, territorial and federal governments, recognizes recipients who have achieved excellence in their respective fields.

Examples of these achievements applicable to SAR volunteers include excellence in:

- outstanding contribution to the development, delivery or advancement of search and rescue;
- operational and non-operational activities such as prevention, fundraising and administrative support;
- development or delivery of search and rescue education, exercise and training activities;
- contributing to the body of knowledge that informs search and rescue response and prevention activities;
- research, development of new technology or application of new innovations;
- preventing or mitigating the severity and duration of search and rescue incidents;

- developing effective campaigns for public awareness and education and/or delivering prevention messaging to reduce the frequency, severity and duration of search and rescue incidents;
- innovation in developing and implementing regulations and enforcement activities to change behavior;
- search and rescue operations; and
- exemplary effort in the service to a community, in the provision of search and rescue.

RCMSAR nominations for SAR volunteers are submitted directly to Public Safety Canada using their specific forms.

Note that the nomination period is fixed and therefore nominations and evaluation timing may need to depart from the RCMSAR annual intake and evaluation cycle.

Nomination Process

Each year a 'Call for Nominations' will be issued with sufficient time for stations to prepare well-crafted submissions, for the Recognition Committee to evaluate and make recommendations and finally for the Board of Governors to deliberate and select successful nominees.

Stations will have approximately eight weeks to prepare and submit their nominations to the Recognition Committeeⁱ at awards@rcmsar.com. A cover sheet for each nomination is provided in Annex A. Please use this form in addition to any forms and supporting documentation required by issuing agencies. Where external links are available, they have been included in Annex B. In the absence of links that set out the criteria for consideration, each nomination must, at a minimum, include the following (which are included the RCMSAR cover sheet):

All nominations in addition to basic information should, at a minimum, include:

- Rationale for the nomination complete with any witness statements/endorsements
- A letter of support from the station leader and/or deputy station leader in the case where the station leader is nominated)
- External evidence, if available, to demonstrate local, regional or national recognition in support of the nominee's actions.

Based on the evidence received the Recognition Committee will:

- support the nomination and recommend approval by the CEO and the Board of Governors, **or**
- request additional information to support the nomination (this may include the Nomination Committee making recommendations for an alternative award), **or**
- not support the recommendation and provide rationale to the nominator/station for that decision.

Conclusion

The Board of Governors, CEO and the management team of RCMSAR recognize and support the need and value of an Awards and Recognition program, particularly in a volunteer-based organization. To that end, all stations are strongly encouraged to participate and assist in the further development of member recognition both internal and external to a station.

Annex A – Nomination Cover Sheet

Please fill out the boxes below with all requested award and nominee information.

Please be sure to include this as the cover sheet to your nomination package, including any additional forms and supporting documentation required by issuing agencies.

The forms must be submitted to the Recognition Committee by mail to the address at the bottom of this sheet or by email to awards@rcmsar.com.

Award:

Name of Nominee:

Nominee's ID Number:

The Nominee's

• **Station:**

• **Years of Service:**

• **Phone Number:**

• **Address:**

Annex B – External Nomination Links and Forms

[Long Service Medal](#)

[Administrative Excellence Medal](#)

[Humanitarian Service Medal](#)

[Exemplary Service Medal](#)

[Operational Merit Medal](#)

[Heroism Medal](#)

[British Columbia Medal of Good Citizenship](#)

[The Order of British Columbia](#)

[H.E.R.O. Award](#)

[IMRF Lifeboat exchange program](#)

[Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers](#)

[The Order of Canada](#)

[Meritorious Service Cross](#)

[Meritorious Service Medal](#)

[Royal Canadian Humane Association Medal of Bravery](#)

[Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award](#)

ⁱ The size and composition of the Recognition Committee will be determined by headquarters in accordance with policy. Participants can be comprised of staff, board members, RCMSAR volunteers, and external partners as appropriate.