

Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons Debuts Virtual Trainer at Boat Shows

Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons (CPS-ECP) has acquired a Boating Skills Virtual Trainer (BSVT), which you may have seen in the group's booth at the Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax boat shows.

The United States Power Squadrons and Virtual Driver Interactive jointly developed the simulator model. The unit allows boaters to practice the basics of recreational small boat handling.

"Consumers love it," says John Gullick, CPS-ECP's Manager of Government and Special Programmes. "It allows them to try out a number of scenarios and gives them a realistic feel as to how a boat of this type will respond without having to go on the water. It is a way of simulating an on-the-water experience without having to wait for good conditions and all the required resources to carry out on-the-water training."

Currently CSP-ECP only has one unit, however, the group anticipates acquiring additional BSVTs

over the next year.

Presently, the BSVT simulates a centre console, single engine runabout. The program consists of nine preplanned lessons that cover basic manoeuvres and safe boating practices: docking, slalom course, crossing/overtaking other vessels, departing dock, manoeuvring in fairways, pivot turn, mooring, emergency stop, trim control in throttle, night manoeuvres with crossing/overtaking lights, and controls to change wind and current direction and strength.

The BSVT features three computer screens with a selective rotating field of vision close to 360 degrees. It has a responsive steering wheel with console switches for horn and navigation lights and a Mercury Marine throttle. It reacts to variable settings for trim, current and wind. On the dashboard you see your compass, tach and speedometer. Students may manoeuvre through simulated exercises in a virtual

environment, without the risks of a real boat on the water. The helm seat can be set up on a regular desk or conference table.

Although developed in the United States as a single language trainer, CPS-ECP funded the development of the first multi-lingual BSVT and the trainer can be switched between English and French. The introduction of the BSVT by CPS-ECP was made possible through a grant from the CPS Foundation.

According to Gullick, there are plans to improve BSVT in the near future. "I don't anticipate the immediate addition of other classes of vessels but twin inboards and sailing vessels would make some sense to me for the future. Right now the focus is on adding other languages like Chinese and Spanish."

CPS-ECP is a national volunteer driven organization that specializes in boater educational courses. The organization has a membership of over 24,000.

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