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Western Pacific Marine Academy helps prepare students for a career at sea

Text & photos by Andrew Roberto – Variety News Staff
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Kagman High School students use immersion suits while demonstrating survival skills during an assessment event Monday at Club.

AT a personal survival training assessment activity on Monday, the Western Pacific Maritime Academy helped Kagman High School students come one step closer to having a basic training endorsement for their merchant mariner credential or MMC.

An MMC is a required certification that allows mariners to work on merchant vessels greater than 100 gross tons, according to the website of the U.S. Coast Guard's National Maritime Center.

Captain David Johansen, an academy instructor, said the training could help students find work after they leave KHS.

“This group has completed personal safety, social responsibilities and personal survival training. Next, they go into first aid and CPR,” Johansen said.

“The end goal is to have the basic training endorsement in their MMC. When they receive an endorsement they can go on foreign voyages,” he added.

On Monday, students had to don an immersion suit in under two minutes; right an inverted life raft; and swim while using a life jacket.

Student Michael Tomokane said when he put the immersion suit on and jumped in the water, he was surprised by how buoyant he was. But because the day was so hot, the suit was sweltering, he added.

Still, he said it’s important for him to rack up training time, because he wants to have skills after high school.

“The career path in the maritime industry is a good opportunity,” Tomokane said, adding that he wants “to explore the world.”

Another student, Jace Taitano Celis, called the assessment “challenging.” Like Tomokane, she also believes it is an investment in her future career.

“I want to be a part of the marine academy because I think it would be a good field to go into,” Celis said.

After high school, she might pursue a career in commercial shipping.