Vessel Safety Check Manual



COMDTINST M16796.8

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Subj: VESSEL SAFETY CHECK MANUAL

Ref: (a) Auxiliary Vessel Examiner Manual, COMDTINST M16796.2E
(b) Vessel Safety Check Program, COMDTINST 16796.7

1. PURPOSE. This Manual prescribes policies and standards for the administration of the Vessel Safety Check Program (VSCP). It is intended for use by members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the United States Power Squadrons, and other authorized organizations, who desire to become qualified and serve as Vessel Examiners.

2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, and commanding officers of headquarters units shall ensure that the units and Auxiliarists under their command adhere to the provisions of this Manual.

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. With respect to conducting Vessel Safety Checks (VSCs) on recreational boats and certain classes of commercial vessels, this Manual supersedes the relevant sections of the Auxiliary Vessel Examiner Manual, COMDTINST M16796.2E, reference (a). The Auxiliary Vessel Examiner Manual remains in effect with respect to the inspection and acceptance of Auxiliary facilities.

4. DISCUSSION.

   a. Reference (b), implemented the VSCP and contains a detailed background discussion. In summary, the intent of this program is to update and broaden the former Courtesy Marine Examination Program, in effect for over 50 years, to be responsive to the current safety needs of the recreational boating community. The most significant change is the inclusion of other boating safety organizations, under the leadership of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, in providing voluntary dockside safety examinations of recreational boats. To date, the United States Power Squadrons have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement

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with the Auxiliary to participate in the VSCP by having their members serve as vessel examiners. It is expected that other organizations will join the partnership in the near future.

b. This Manual provides the guidance necessary to train and qualify members of participating organizations as vessel examiners, and serves as a technical and policy reference for certified examiners.

5. ORDERING INFORMATION.

a. Auxiliary members, through the Flotilla Materials Officers, may order this Manual from the Auxiliary National Supply Center.

b. United States Power Squadrons members may order this manual from the United States Power Squadrons Headquarters.

6. CHANGES AND CORRECTIONS. Information regarding recommended changes or corrections to this Manual may be forwarded to the Auxiliary Department of Vessel Examination (DC-V) or to Commandant (G-OCX-2).

7. FORMS AVAILABILITY. Form CG-5232, Vessel Safety Check Action Information Notification (Rev. 5/00) and Form 204 VSC (Rev. 1/2000) may be ordered from the sources listed in paragraph 5.



Terry M. Cross
Assistant Commandant for Operations

Foreword

Thanks for your forthcoming participation in the *Vessel Safety Check Program* (VSCP). After you have mastered the material in this text and completed the required "practice" *Vessel Safety Checks (VSCs)*, you will be qualified as a vessel examiner. This qualification enables you to participate fully in this valuable safety, outreach and education program. The VSCP provides a great opportunity to learn more about boating safety, characteristics of different boats, and have fun at the same time.

This training manual has been completely rewritten by a dedicated team of volunteers– it is designed to be more "user friendly", with less use of jargon and contains greatly improved graphics. It is designed for use by members of the *United States Coast Guard Auxiliary* (USCGAUX) and our new partners, the *United States Power Squadrons* (USPS®) and others to be named.

This manual covers the requirements for award of the VSC decal and additional equipment recommended to be carried aboard recreational boats. It is certainly important that you learn the details of the program. The public looks to you to be an expert in this field– an important responsibility. As you have the opportunity to conduct VSCs you will gain knowledge, both practical and theoretical. Be open, receptive, and learn from your experiences.

The VSC is much more than a compliance-oriented certification examination. First and foremost, the VSC offers a one-on-one educational opportunity for the boater. You have the opportunity *and the responsibility* to share your knowledge with the boater about the benefits of safety equipment and how to use that equipment properly, and communicate opportunities to attend boating safety classes in your area offered by the USCGAUX, USPS®, the State, and other organizations with similar missions. You should also share "local knowledge" relative to the area where the safety check is conducted.

The VSC decal attests to the fact that the boat is in compliance with Federal and State requirements. The importance of the additional recommended equipment should be emphasized. A minimum requirement is just that– operations in potentially challenging waters or hazardous conditions may justify knowledge, skills, and additional safety equipment that far exceeds these minimum legal requirements.

Be informed, prepared, and courteous to your clients. In short, be professional. If the vessel meets all the safety check requirements, compliment the boater on a fine vessel and affix the decal with pride. If not, explain carefully the reasons why the decal cannot be awarded and what corrective action is necessary. The boater may actually learn more from a check that reveals discrepancies. Make it clear that you and other examiners are available to redo the safety check and urge the boater to remedy the discrepancies as soon as possible– safety may be at stake. Don't forget to compliment boaters who have corrected discrepancies– they have shown by their actions that they are responsible and conscientious boaters.

The VSC provides an opportunity to recruit new members. Take the time to explain the benefits of membership.

By all means, provide safety checks to boats in your marina, your yacht club, and your launch ramp. But remember that this is an outreach program. Operators of small boats, *personal watercraft* (PWCs) and boats used as platforms for other activities such as hunting and fishing, have statistically higher accident, injury, and fatality rates. Make a special effort to provide safety checks for these craft.

Boaters are people; they come in all sizes, shapes, ages, levels of experience and knowledge– and attitudes. Some boaters will know more than you do; most less so. Most will be pleasant and appreciative; some rude. Many will be delighted at your offer of a VSC and eager to display their well equipped boats; others reluctant, preoccupied, or concerned that their vessel will not meet the requirements. Remember that you have taken the time to gain this expertise and are providing the boater—*and their families and guests*—with a valuable and potentially life-saving service.

Accept compliments– you deserve them– learn from constructive (and not so constructive) criticism, and realize that you can be a better vessel examiner each day!

My thanks to all our dedicated volunteers, and those of the United States Coast Guard, who support us in this important endeavor.

L. Daniel Maxim,
National Directorate Commodore
for Recreational Boating Safety,
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

Note: Some illustrations in this book were provided by safety equipment manufacturers, including ACR® Electronics, Fireboy®-Xintex®, Mustang® Survival, Orion® Safety Products, and Raytheon Marine Company. The publisher wishes to thank these companies for their support of safe boating and for providing these for our use; however, use of these illustrations does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement of their products by Coast Guard Auxiliary National Board, Inc.

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Chapter 1
The Vessel Safety Check Program

Purpose:

This manual is intended for training of new Vessel Examiners and for the continued use as a reference guide for qualified Vessel Examiners. This chapter, along with chapter 5, gives the Vessel Examiner administrative guidance while chapters 3 and 4 give the details of items found on the Vessel Safety Check (Form 204).

The mission of the Coast Guard Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) program is to minimize the loss of life, personal injury, property damage and environmental impact associated with the use of recreational boats, through preventive means, in order to maximize safe use and enjoyment of U.S. waterways by the public. The Vessel Safety Check program fully supports this mission.

The VSC program helps to achieve voluntary compliance with federal and state recreational boating safety laws, particularly regarding the carriage of safety equipment. It also raises boaters' awareness of safety issues through one-on-one contact by volunteer vessel examiners.

Using the information in this manual, vessel examiners will educate boaters through direct, face-to-face boating-safety information exchanges. With this knowledge, it is hoped that recreational boaters will become more involved in maintaining and operating their boats in a safe manner, taking boating safety courses to increase their knowledge and skills in boating, and promoting safe boating to others.

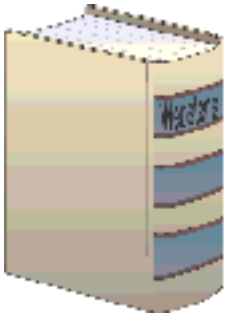
The Vessel Safety Check is intended to serve as a "prevention through education, outreach and volunteer compliance" activity and to help recreational boaters gain a respect for the boating environment as a result of the Vessel Safety Check encounter.

For Coast Guard Auxiliary members, the program also includes Auxiliary Facility Inspections and examinations of certain classes of commercial vessels.

Scope:

Vessel Safety Checks are generally performed on recreational boats under 65 feet. Vessel Safety Check requirements parallel federal and individual state regulations regarding equipment and safety conditions of the vessel. A VSC is not a law enforcement action. No official report is made to any law enforcement authority. A Vessel Safety Check is performed only with the consent of the owner or operator, who must be present at the time of the examination. A Vessel Safety Check does not circumvent the right of any federal, state or local law enforcement officer to verify the presence and condition of safety equipment.

Definitions:



Boat. A vessel propelled by hand, sail, or engine (other than steam), under 65 feet. (In this Manual references to boat length are in feet only.) Metric conversions are available in the Navigation Rules.

Boat Operator. (either the owner or the operator). The person operating the boat at the time that a VSC is being conducted.

Certification. The manufacturer's statement that the boat complies with applicable Coast Guard safety or manufacturing standards in effect on the date of manufacture.

Coast Guard. Also United States Coast Guard, a part of the armed forces of the United States, is the principal federal agency for maritime law enforcement and maritime safety. All references in this manual read Coast Guard or Coast Guard approval.

Coast Guard Auxiliary. Civilian volunteer component of the Coast Guard whose primary mission is boating safety.

Coastal Waters. The waters of the Great Lakes on the U.S. side of the International Boundary, the territorial seas of the United States, and the internal waters of the U. S. directly connected to the Great Lakes and the territorial seas (bays, sounds, harbors, rivers, etc.) where the entrance exceeds two nautical miles between opposite shorelines, to the first point in those bodies of water where the distance between shorelines (including islands) narrows to less than two nautical miles, as measured on a nautical chart.

Commandant. Senior Officer of the United States Coast Guard.

Commercial Fishing Vessel/Boat. A vessel or boat licensed and/or operated to harvest fish and other sea life for sale.

Commercial Vessel/Boat. Any vessel or boat used by its owner or operator to earn money by carrying freight or passengers.

Defect Notification. Requirement for manufacturers of boats and associated equipment to notify owners when their products fail to comply with applicable regulations or contain a defect creating a substantial risk of personal injury to the public.

Director. The Director of Auxiliary is charged with the active promotion and administration of Auxiliary affairs in a specific Coast Guard District.

Immediately Available. Close at hand, so as to be instantly ready (without delay) for easy use.

Inland Waters. The navigable waters of the United States shoreward of COLREGS Demarcation Lines, as defined in Navigation Rules - International and Inland, and as represented on nautical charts by dashed magenta lines; and the waters of the Great Lakes on the U. S. side of the International Boundary.

Inspected Vessel. A vessel that is required to be inspected by the Coast Guard to operate on navigable waters of the United States. This includes vessels that carry seven or more passengers for hire.

Manufacturer. Any entity engaged in the manufacture, construction, or assembly of boats or associated equipment.

Monohull Boat. A boat on which a line at the intersection of the water surface and the boat, at any operating draft, forms a single closed curve (catamarans, trimarans and pontoon boats are not monohull boats).

Navigable Waters of the United States. The territorial seas of the United States, the internal waters of the United States that are subject to tidal influence, and the internal waters of the United States that are NOT subject to tidal influence but are used as highways for substantial interstate or foreign commerce (such as rivers, canals, and the Great Lakes).

Operational Vessel Facility. A Coast Guard Auxiliary member's vessel or Auxiliary Unit vessel meeting additional Coast Guard requirements. An operational facility has been offered for use and accepted by the Director.

Personal Watercraft (PWC). An inboard vessel, usually driven by a jet-pump, that carries one to three persons, and is operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the boat, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting below the gunwale of the boat.

Readily Accessible. A safety item that can be obtained quickly and used easily.

Registration Number. Coast Guard or state number used to identify a vessel. Sometimes referred to as a Certificate of Number. In this manual the term "registration number" includes all types of registration documentation except for documented vessels.

Regulation. An agency statement of general or particular applicability designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe policy to carry out the purpose of a law, and having the force of law.

Rental Boat. Any vessel offered for rent, bare boat charter, or belonging to a club in which members do not own a percentage of a specific vessel.

Requirement. Used in this manual to mean Federal Regulations.

Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). In some cases this approval designation is accepted in place of Coast Guard approval.

Sole State Waters. Those waters that are located entirely within the confines of a single one of the 50 U.S. states, and that fall neither under the category of Navigable Waters of the United States, nor Waters Subject to the Jurisdiction of the United States.

Underwriters Laboratory (UL). In some cases this approval designation is accepted in place of Coast Guard approval.

Uninspected Passenger Vessel (UPV). An uninspected steam vessel less than 65 feet in length, a motorboat or motor vessel of less than 300 gross tons (except for yachts), or a sail vessel of less than 700 gross tons, licensed to carry six or fewer passengers, at least one of which is a passenger for hire.

United States Power Squadrons (USPS®). Private, nonprofit, non-governmental, volunteer organization dedicated to self-education of its members and boating safety education of the public.

USPS®-VSC Chairperson. A member of the Vessel Safety Check Committee, chaired by the Auxiliary N-V. (National Director of the Vessel Safety Check program)

Vessel. All watercraft, other than seaplanes, of any size that are used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on the water.

Vessel Carrying Passengers for Hire. A vessel or boat used to carry a passenger or passengers for a consideration.

Visual Distress Signal. A visual, emergency signaling device approved by the Coast Guard.

Vessel Safety Check Program:

The combined efforts of the Vessel Safety Check, the Auxiliary Facility Inspections and Uninspected Passenger Vessels (UPV) initiatives are known as the Vessel Safety Check Program.

Vessel Examiner:

A Vessel Examiner (VE) is:

- A trained, qualified boating safety volunteer or employee who has been certified by the appropriate authority for their respective organization.

- A public representative of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel Safety Check Program with no law enforcement authority.

Vessel Safety Check (VSC):

A VSC is:

- A voluntary check of vessel compliance with all federal and state laws.

- An authorized boating safety activity contributing to the Coast Guard's recreational boating safety mission.

- The opportunity for the exchange of boating safety information.

- A courtesy check of safety equipment carried or installed on a boat, and certain aspects of the boat's general condition.

- Endorsed by the USCG, state boating authorities and recreational boating organizations.

- A boating safety program reaching large numbers of the boating public.

- Uniform in its standards throughout the country, except for certain state-specific requirements.

Vessels Eligible for the Vessel Safety Check:

Generally, any recreational boat, if requested by the owner or operator, is eligible for a VSC. However, a vessel esaminer is prohibited from performing a vessel safety check on any boat in which the VE member has any ownership interest.

- Boats over 65 feet, used for recreational purposes may be examined and, if qualified, awarded the VSC decal.

- Sailboats with mechanical power must meet the same requirements as motorboats.

- Auxiliary members' powerboats, not offered for use as facilities or operational facilities, may be awarded a VSC decal. Auxiliary members' boats 14 feet or over and sailboats 16 feet or over may be inspected as an Auxiliary Facility or as an Operational Facility.



- Sport and utility boats (SUBS) such as canoes, kayaks, "jon boats" and PWC deserve special interest because of the accident rate of this group of boaters. This program encourages the VE to include them. A SUBS boat need not be registered to receive a VSC and decal.

Boats Owned by Federal, State, or Local Governments

Boats owned by federal, state, or local government agencies are public vessels and may be exempt from Coast Guard inspection requirements. Certain boats owned by these agencies may be examined and awarded the decal if all requirements of this manual are met.

At the request of a representative of the government agency concerned, a VE may conduct a VSC on the following categories of vessels under 65 feet:

- Government owned recreational boats.

- Government owned non-recreational vessels or boats (such as patrol boats).

- Requests for examination of federal, state, or local government agency boats must be made by an agent of the government agency involved. An experienced VE should be assigned to perform the VSC.

- Boats eligible to receive a VSC must be of a design and construction similar to that commonly found in recreational boats

Inflatable Craft

To be eligible for a VSC, inflatable craft must meet the following requirements:

- Be fully inflated at the time of the check;

- Have a minimum of three separate air chambers that are not interconnected;

- Have an installed, rigid transom; a strap-on motor mount is not sufficient;

- Vessel registration numbers must be properly displayed and firmly attached; and

- All VSC requirements must be met, as applicable.

Boats Owned by Scout Groups

Boats owned by the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, or Sea Cadets may be given a VSC, if requested by Scouting leaders. The boat must meet the requirements of the VSC Program.

Special Exceptions

Some vessels (e.g., surface effect craft, sailboards) cannot meet VSC requirements for a decal. In certain situations it is permissible to conduct a VSC even though a decal will not be awarded. In these cases, providing the educational information to the boater becomes the focus of the exchange.

Vessels Not Eligible For Vessel Safety Check:

A VSC may not be performed on:

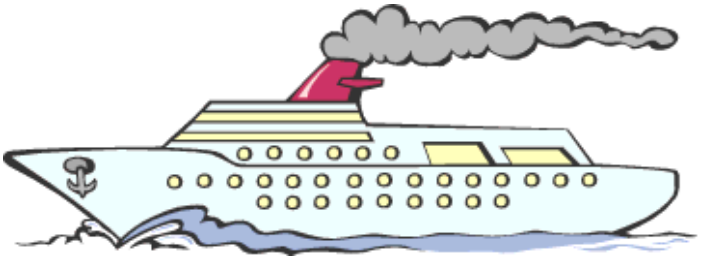
- A craft of experimental or unproven design.

- Vessels and boats answering the description of work boats (e.g., tugs, icebreaking boats, dredges, derrick barges, and similar craft).

- Submersibles, amphibious vehicles, inflatable emergency life rafts or surface-effect machines.

- An unmanned water-ski towing craft and motorized surfboards.

- Vessels registered in countries other than the United States and its territories.



Activities Beyond The Scope Of The Vessel Safety Check:

The VSC is limited to certain aspects of the general condition of a boat and certain equipment carried or installed on a boat. It must not extend into areas beyond those intended and identified in this manual.

- The VE is not expected to make exact measurements while conducting a VSC. In most instances, the length of a vessel is indicated on the registration certificate or documentation papers.

- The VSC is not intended to ferret out spots of dry rot not readily apparent to the eye. Areas of the boat that are readily apparent to the eye, which do not require probing or disassembly, and might adversely affect the safety of the boat DO fall within the scope of the VSC. Examples are: deteriorated fastenings, wasted fittings, defective hoses, deteriorated connections, loosened planking or cracked ribs. Under no condition will the VSC include the following activities:

    - Admeasurements (determination of measurements;

    - Alignment check of shafting or motor mounts;

    - Calibration of sounding devices or water speed indicators;

    - Calibration of electronic devices;

    - Compass adjustment and construction of deviation tables; and

    - Calibration check or construction of rpm speed tables.

Manufacturer Product Defect Notification

The following information is supplied in case the public asks questions about defect notification. The requirements pertaining to defect notification are outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations. Recreational boaters can obtain information on boat recalls by calling the Coast Guard Customer Infoline at 800-368-5647 or by visting the USCG Office of Boating Safety website - **www.uscgboater.org**. The product notification and recall program allows the manufacturer to correct noncompliance with a Coast Guard standard or remedy a safety defect.

- A safety defect is a design or performance discrepancy which creates a substantial risk of personal injury.

- Noncompliance is the failure of a manufacturer to construct a product in accordance with a published Coast Guard safety standard or regulation.

The defect notification must contain the following information:

- The name and address of the manufacturer;

- Data or other information necessary to identify the watercraft or associated equipment affected by the defect or noncompliance;

- A clear description of the defect or failure to comply with an applicable standard;

- An evaluation of the hazard that can reasonably be expected to result from the defect or failure to comply.

Relations With Law Enforcement Officials:

Coast Guard Personnel

Personnel of the Coast Guard are encouraged to cooperate to the fullest extent with all providers in the operation of this valuable program. Display of the VSC decal indicates that, at the time of the safety check, the boat carried proper safety equipment and the owner/operator exhibits an interest in safety on the water. However, obvious violations, unsafe practices observed, and boarding for random law enforcement inspection programs do not exclude boats with the VSC decal.

Coast Guard personnel promote boating safety and good relations between the Coast Guard and the Vessel Safety Check Program.

State and Local Enforcement Officials



A close working relationship with state and local enforcement personnel is essential to an effective VSC Program. These enforcement officials represent an added source of knowledge concerning local regulations, designated prohibited areas, local speed limits and other matters concerning safe and legal boating in their area. State enforcement officials are often engaged in enforcement of conservation laws and can advise the Vessel Examiner of current restrictions or requirements.

- To maximize assistance to state and local officials, Vessel Examiners are encouraged to become familiar with local regulations. They will then be in a position to answer inquiries on these matters and direct recreational boaters to the proper authorities when applying for original registration number replacement, notification of sale, destruction or loss of a boat, change of address, or submission of required accident reports.

- If Coast Guard, state and local officials are asked to respect the VSC decal, the VSC examination procedures must be consistently of the highest quality.

District Supervision Of The Vessel Examination Program:

Auxiliary District Commodores, the USPS® VSC Chairpersons, and regional supervisors of other participating organizations, shall ensure that the VSC Program is carried out as outlined in this Manual. Spot checks will ensure compliance with the inspection/ examination requirements, as well as with uniformity of the program.

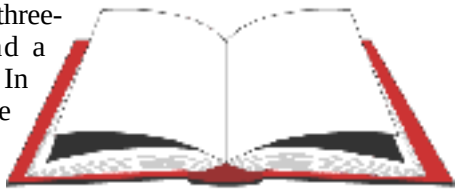
Vessel Safety Checks Performed Outside Of The Home District:



VEs may perform VSCs on boats anywhere in the 50 states and territories of the United States. Visiting Auxiliarists and Power Squadron members should contact local Auxiliary or local Power Squadron personnel to familiarize themselves with local conditions and plans, and to coordinate their efforts with those of the District in which they are visiting.

Vessel Examiner Qualification:

Initial Qualification: To become a Vessel Examiner (VE) members must pass the current VE qualification examination. This examination is an open book test with a three-hour time limit and a passing score of 90%. In addition, the candidate must perform five VSCs on recreational boats under the supervision of a certified VE. For the Coast Guard Auxiliary, VEs may also examine Uninspected Passenger Vessels and Commercial Fishing Vessels. The certified VE determines whether or not the examination was satisfactory and provides specific, instructional feedback to the qualifying member to further assist in the qualification process. During the qualification process, the certified VE trainer is credited with the five VSCs performed.



A fundamental principle of the VSC is that no law enforcement will be taken if violations of boating safety laws are discovered during the VSC; nor will a report of any violations be made to any law enforcement agency. Strict adherence to this principle is vital to maintain the public's trust and willingness to receive VSCs. The performance of VSCs by an Auxiliary or Power Squadron member who is a law enforcement officer, even in an off-duty status, can create a conflict of interest. Auxiliary or Power Squadron members who are full or part-time law enforcement officers may not perform VSCs on a body of water or in a jurisdiction where they have lawful police power or may be perceived as acting under the color of law. Failure to follow this standard shall result in immediate suspension of certification by the Auxiliary or Power Squadron as appropriate.



Annual Certification Procedures: To remain certified, VEs must complete at least five VSCs each calendar year.

Recertification Procedures: If any qualified VE fails to perform the annual certification procedures within the last five years, they must complete two satisfactory VSCs under the supervision of a certified VE in order to regain their certification. The certifying VE receives the credit for the two recertification VSCs. The candidate must then meet the requirements as stated in the Annual Certification Procedures above to retain their certification.

If a VE fails to perform the annual certification procedures for five consecutive years, that member will have to meet the full initial qualification criteria to regain qualification.

Notes on Chapter 1:

Chapter 2
Vessel Safety Check Techniques

Introduction.

The basic philosophy of the Vessel Safety Check Program (VSCP) is to foster high standards of boating safety in an atmosphere of goodwill. This chapter addresses the techniques that the Vessel Examiner should be aware of and adhere to when performing a Vessel Safety Check.

The Vessel Examiner Should:

- Get out and meet the boating public. Personal one-on-one encounters with boaters are the best way to promote the benefits of the VSC with boaters.

- Always take the opportunity to provide boating safety information to the owner or operator. Even if it is obvious that the boat will not meet the requirements of the VSC, it should not be ignored or passed over.

- Encourage all operators to have their boats examined. It should be clearly explained that the VE has no law enforcement authority.

- Discuss deficiencies noted during a VSC and explain these to the owner or operator without criticism. Assure the operator that the boat can be checked at the operator's request after deficiencies have been corrected. The decal is not a guarantee of boarding immunity. However, when a VSC decal is displayed on the boat, law enforcement officials may refrain from boarding for an official inspection unless an obvious violation is observed. (An exception to this would be when law enforcement officials are mandated to board all boats during specific periods for particular law enforcement situations.)

Vessel Examiner Availability.



- All VEs should, whenever possible, maintain a regular schedule for providing VSCs. Publishing and maintaining a schedule for conducting VSCs is advised.

- VEs should post names and phone numbers of VEs in boating organizations, yacht clubs, and by other various methods that will provide boaters another means for contacting VEs.

- Follow-up contact with owners or operators is encouraged.

Uniforms.

Vessel Examiners should wear the appropriate or prescribed clothing when representing their specific organization, (i.e., Auxiliary or Power Squadron) during scheduled VSCs.

- When more than one VE of the same organization is performing VSCs at any given location, all VEs present should dress alike.

- Even when not in uniform or prescribed dress, the VE should not refuse or delay a request for a VSC. It is more important that the VSC be conducted and the public be accommodated.

Educational Materials.

The following publications may aid the VE in conducting a VSC. Provide information about these publications and distribute copies of the latest editions if available.



- Federal Requirements and Safety Tips for Recreational Boats.

- State boating laws, rules, and regulations

- Boating Safety pamphlets with local classes listed.

- Information on the availability of boating organizations.

- Other safety publications.

Exchange Boating Safety Information.

The VSC is primarily a check of equipment. **It is not a complete survey of the boat!** The VE is a fellow boater trained in the principles of boating safety. While the decal indicates that the boat is free from obvious sources of danger it does not guarantee immunity from problems while underway.

- The VSC program encourages boaters to take approved boating safety classes to further their boating safety knowledge.

- The VSC program is in the interest of greater safety on the water. It is a means of helping the operator become more safety conscious. This program is a public service performed by a fellow boater.

- In accepting and displaying the VSC decal, the owner or operator agrees to maintain the boat and equipment to the

safety standards of the VSC. Should the ownership of the boat be transferred a new VSC will be required. Seller must remove the decal and advise the buyer to schedule a new VSC.



- It is the responsibility of the operator to be aware of the Navigation Rules and how they apply in relation to the boat undergoing a VSC.

- The operator must be aware of and comply with posted speed limits, especially when near moorings or proceeding through an anchorage.

- Small boats are advised to keep out of the way of large boats even if the smaller boat is the stand-on vessel (has right of way).

- It is illegal to moor or tie to any buoy, day beacon or other aids of naviagation owned or maintained by the government.

- For vessels operating on open waters, such as large bays and lakes or offshore, it is recommended that boaters have an accurate rpm - speed table and an up-to-date compass deviation card posted near the operator's position.

- When a boat floods or overturns it is recommended that all personnel on board put on personal flotation devices and STAY WITH THE BOAT.

- Automobile parts are not designed for the boating environment and, if installed, could cause serious problems. They are not to be substituted for similar parts on a boat engine.

- Boaters are required to stop and render assistance when involved in an accident in so far as can be done without endangering the operator's own boat or persons aboard. Information regarding involved parties and their boats must be exchanged.

- Federal law requires that reports be made for any boating accident which results in:

    - Death;
    - Injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid;
    - Damage to a boat (or vessel) or other property totaling more than $500;
    - Complete loss of a boat (or vessel); or
    - The disappearance of a person under circumstances that indicates death or injury.

This report must be provided to the appropriate state agency. Some states require reports on damage less than $500. VEs should be aware of the state's requirements.

Coast Guard form (CG-3865): A Boating Accident Report or State-specific Accident Report form is to be submitted by the operator of each boat involved in an accident.

See below for accident type, agency to notify and time requirement.

- **Death -** Local and state authorities within 48 hours

- **Injury** requiring medical treatment beyond first aid. Local and state authorities within 48 hours

- **Disappearance** - Local and state authorities within 48 hours

(All other accidents must be reported within 10 days.)

Conducting the Vessel Safety Check.

- The owner or operator of the boat must be present during the examination. The boat may be examined out of the water, such as on a trailer for transport, or in the water safely afloat at normal trim with adequate freeboard at dockside only.

- The VE shall check each item on the Form 204 as the VSC progresses. When the VSC is completed the operator should be given a copy of Form 204 and a copy of the Federal Requirements pamphlet. If any deficiency is noted it should be carefully explained and suggestions for corrections offered. Clearly explain that the failed items do not meet federal and/or state requirements and that they will not be reported to any enforcement agency. If the deficiencies are corrected within 24 hours only the failed items will be rechecked and a new exam will not be required.

- A new VSC will be required if more than 24 hours elapse between the original VSC and when the deficiencies are corrected. Note: Even if the second VSC is done on the same day, it may be reported as a separate VSC on Form 204.

- The VE awarding a decal must ensure that the boat is equipped according to the regulations of the state in which the VSC is being conducted. The VE must be thoroughly

familiar with federal and state regulations as well as recommendations.

- The VE shall inform the operator that items on the right side of Form 204 are advisory in nature. They include: marine radio, dewatering device and backup, mounted fire extinguishers, anchor and line for area, first aid, Person In the Water (PIW) kits and Inland Visual Distress Signals. A capacity plate and Certificate of Compliance are provided by the manufacturer and beyond the control of the owner or operator.

- The VE shall carry through to completion each examination even though disqualifying deficiencies are noted. However, the operator may request that the VE stop the examination. Incomplete VSCs are not to be reported.

Awarding the VSC Decal.



- A decal shall be awarded upon the successful completion of the VSC. The VE shall ensure it is affixed immediately by the operator in the presence of the VE. It shall be affixed in a location that will not interfere with or obscure the operator's view and be readily visible to authorities while underway. This is normally on the lower forward corner of a portside window or a lower corner on the port side of the windshield. If no window is available it may be affixed to the dashboard or the back of a seat. It should only be affixed to permanently installed equipment.

- The VSC decal is valid until December 31st of the year in which it is awarded. The VE shall ensure that only one VSC decal is displayed at any one time. Old decals should be removed before affixing the new one. As an alternative, have the operator place the new decal directly over any old VSC decal (all old CME decals must be removed before a VSC decal is affixed.)

- The VE shall take every opportunity to promote boating safety education and to engage the operator in the process and encourage updating a previous year's decal.

- A strict accounting of decals is required. Each Auxiliary or Power Squadron District should implement proper accounting procedures to track the decals when issued to each VE.

Notes on Chapter 2:

U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

FREE!!!



Vessel Safety Check

A *Free* Check of your vessel's compliance with federal and state requirements is scheduled for:

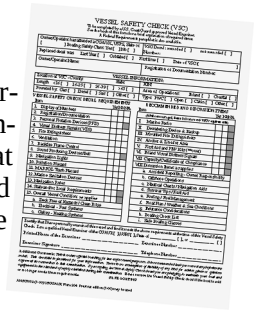
Date _____ Time _____

Place _____

(Auxiliarists may order mini-posters from ANSC. USPS® and other cooperating organizations may create similar advertising to promote the VSC Program)

Chapter 3
VSC Decal Requirements

Introduction.



This chapter provides detailed information about the VSC requirements identified on Form 204. It focuses on what the Vessel Examiner and the boater need to understand to ensure the safety of the boat and its passengers.

Coast Guard Approved and Certified Equipment.

The term "Coast Guard Approved Equipment" is applied only to those items of equipment that are required by regulation to be in compliance with Coast Guard specifications. For recreational boats, the five items of equipment listed below are required to be either Coast Guard approved, or have a UL or SAE number. Each must carry a label that includes the approval number. The five types of equipment are:



Coast Guard Approved Equipment

- Personal Flotation Devices - COAST GUARD approved only.
- Fire Extinguishers - COAST GUARD approved only.
- Flame Arresters - COAST GUARD, UL or SAE approved.
- Visual Distress Signals - COAST GUARD approved only.
- Marine Sanitation Devices (MSD) - Type I & II - COAST GUARD certified only.

Equipment Approvals.

Required equipment approvals are issued by the Commandant. Such approvals are published in the Federal Register and other publications. Each item whose identity is maintained and can be checked is assigned an approval number. When the specification for approval of the equipment is terminated, or the approval for such an item is withdrawn, it is known as "formerly approved equipment."

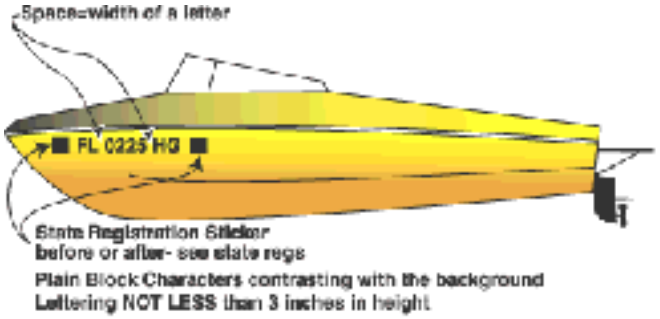
Equipment, which was once approved by the Coast Guard or former Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, for which approval of the manufacturing has not been withdrawn will remain approved equipment so long as it remains in good and serviceable condition.

When the required approval markings are no longer legible, and the equipment cannot be otherwise identified as having been approved, such equipment may not be considered as meeting VSC requirements.

Vessel Safety Check Required Items.

✔ ITEM 1. Display of Registration Numbers

Registration numbers must be painted or permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the vessel. State validation stickers must, when required, be affixed within six inches of the registration number. State requirements may vary.



Registration Numbers:

- Consist of two letters identifying the state of principal operation (prefix), followed by a combination of number(s), and ending with one or more letters (suffix). These numbers are issued by the state.

- Must be painted on or permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the vessel except in the case of inflatable craft which may have the number firmly attached to the forward half of the vessel by a method which meets all other criteria.

- Must be in plain vertical block characters of not less than three inches in height.

- Must contrast to the color of the background and be distinctly visible (clearly readable at 100 feet) and legible. Multicolor numbers may be acceptable.

- Must have space or hyphens that are equal to the width of a letter (other than "I") to clearly separate the letter and number groupings.

- Must read from left to right.

- Must be the only number displayed on the forward half of the vessel. (Except the validation sticker required by most states).

- The following are exceptions to the requirements for displaying registration numbers.

Vessels used by a manufacturer or dealer for testing or demonstration may display the number on a temporary plate firmly attached to each side of the forward half of the vessel.

On vessels so configured that a number on the hull or superstructure would not be easily visible, the number must be painted on or attached to a plate that is permanently attached to the forward half of the vessel so that the number is visible from each side of the vessel.

- Each number displayed on a tender, used as direct transportation between the parent vessel and the shore and for no other purpose, must meet the display requirement of the parent vessel. This includes having a space or hyphen that is equal to the width of a letter other than "I" or a number other than "1" between the suffix and the tender's number.

✔ ITEM 2. Registration and Documentation

Every undocumented vessel equipped with propulsion machinery of any type used on waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and on the high seas beyond the territorial seas, and owned in the United States shall be numbered, EXCEPT:

- Foreign vessels temporarily using waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction;

- Military or public vessels of the United States, excluding recreational type public vessels;

- A vessel whose owner is a state or subdivision thereof, which is used principally for governmental purposes, and which is clearly identifiable as such;

- Ship's lifeboats, when used as such; and

- A vessel which has or is required to have a valid marine document as a vessel of the United States.

Vessels exempted from numbering by regulation as listed below: (States do not have to exempt these vessels, but are given the authority to do so if they desire).

- A vessel that is used exclusively for racing;

- A vessel equipped with propulsion machinery of less than 10 horsepower that is used as a tender for direct transportation between a documented vessel and the shore, and for no other purpose, may display the number of that numbered vessel followed by the suffix "1" in the manner prescribed by regulation.

- Sailboats without auxiliary machinery power are exempt from the numbering requirement although states may require them to be numbered.

- A boat is required to be registered in the state of principal operation, which need not be the state of permanent address of the owner. Where issued by the Coast Guard the Registration Numbers are valid for a period of three years. Certificates of number issued by states may vary from state to state. No certificate of number, whether issued by the Coast Guard or by a state with an approved numbering system, is transferable by the original owner to a new owner without first re-registering in that state. The new owner must submit an application for a new registration number. The certificate of number must be available for inspection at all times when the vessel is in use.

A delay may occur from the time the registration is made until it is received. Usually a temporary registration number is issued which is valid for a limited number of days. This temporary registration information should be kept on board and available at all times when the vessel is in use until the new registration is received.

The current certificate of number contains the following identifying information: name of owner, state of principal operation, make, length, statement as to the use of the boat, the number awarded, hull identification number and the date of expiration of the certificate of number.

Length of boats (measurement). Registration or documentation papers must reflect a boat's length accurately. If this is not the case then the vessel must be measured. A rough measure along the outside length of the boat is sufficient. The following definitions will apply:

- For determining the length of the boat, the distance is measured from end to end, over the deck, excluding sheer. This means a straight line measurement of the overall length from the foremost part of the vessel to the aftermost part of the vessel, measured parallel to the centerline.

- Bowsprits, bumpkins, rudders, outboard motors and brackets, attached diving platforms, and similar fittings or attachments are not included in the measurement.

- Length shall be stated in feet and inches.

Identification of Documented Vessels.

- Vessels which are documented have their identity established officially by the Coast Guard who also issues the Certificate of Documentation.

- Documented vessels must be at least five net tons. The documentation of vessels is a function of the Coast Guard. A vessel of five net tons or more, used exclusively for pleasure, may be documented by the Coast Guard or registered with the state of principal operation, at the option of the owner. Some states require documented vessels to also display a state registration decal.

- The document, which is issued to the particular vessel, identifies the nationality and the authorized use of the vessel.

- The document identifies the vessel by its home port, port of documentation, official number, net and gross tonnage, and owner's name and address. The original Certificate of Documentation must be carried on board at all times.

- Every documented vessel must have an official number marked by any permanent method which cannot be obliterated or obscured. The number will be preceded with the letters "No." and be in block-type Arabic numerals not less than three inches in height, on some clearly visible interior structural part of the hull.

- Documented pleasure vessels must have the name and hailing port, including city and state abbreviation, marked together in clearly legible letters not less than four inches in height on some clearly visible exterior part of the hull. (The hailing port is identified on the vessel's Certificate of Documentation).

The words "official number" refer to the permanent identification number required to be marked on a documented vessel. It is not to be confused or mistaken for the registration number issued to the same vessel by some states. Documented vessels are exempt from any requirement to display state registration numbers.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques.

- Ask the operator for the registration or documentation papers.

- State registered vessels: Verify that the registration numbers on both sides of the forward half of the boat agree with the registration papers, and that the numbers are properly placed on the boat. Additionally, ensure the hull identification number (HIN), if required, is marked appropriately on the exterior part of the hull.

- Documented vessels: Verify that the boat's name and hailing port are marked in clearly legible letters on the exterior. The letters shall be not less than four inches in height. Determine that the documentation number is properly marked inside the hull on a structural part of the vessel.

- Should the name of the operator not match that of the owner on the registration, the Vessel Examiner must be satisfied that the operator is authorized to use the boat. The decal may be awarded if the VE determines the operator has met all the requirements.

- Some states do not require numbers on sailboats without power, or when a new boat has not yet been assigned registration numbers. (The owner/operator of a new boat should have a receipt or other evidence that the numbers are pending.) If all other requirements are met the decal may be awarded. The VE should note this information on Form 204 and instruct the owner/operator about the proper spacing and contrasting color of the numbers.

✔ ITEM 3. Personal Flotation Devices

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) must be Coast Guard approved, in good and serviceable condition, and of appropriate size for the intended user. Wearable PFDs must be readily accessible and available for immediate donning in an emergency (vessel sinking, fire on board, etc.) They should not be stowed in plastic bags, in locked or closed compartments, or have other gear stowed on top of them. Throwable devices must be immediately available for use. Though not required, boaters should be encouraged to wear a PFD when the vessel is underway.

- All recreational boats must carry one Type I, II, III or V (wearable) PFD for each person on board. For Type V PFDs to be counted they must be used according to their label requirements. Any boat 16 feet or over (except canoes and kayaks) must also carry one Type IV (throwable) PFD.

- PFDs for children. Some states or local agencies require PFDs be worn by children of specific ages under certain conditions.

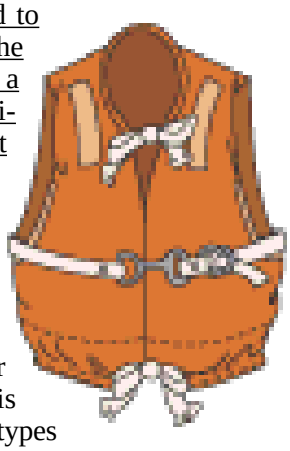
- Coast Guard approved inflatable PFDs are approved only for use on recreational boats by persons at least 16 years of age.

- Federal regulations do not require PFDs for racing shells, rowing sculls and racing kayaks. State laws vary.

- A water skier is considered on board the vessel and a PFD is required for the purposes of compliance. A PFD designed to withstand the impact of hitting the water at high speed is recommended for skiers and PWC riders. "Impact Class" marking on the label refers to PFD strength, not personal protection. Most states require skiers and PWC riders to wear PFDs while underway.

Types Of Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs).

- **Type I - Off-Shore Life Jacket.** A Type I PFD has the greatest buoyancy and is designed to turn most unconscious persons in the water from a face down position to a vertical and slightly backward position and to maintain the person in that position, increasing the chances of survival. The Type I PFD is suitable for all waters, especially for cruising on waters where there is a probability of delayed rescue, such as large bodies of water where it is not likely that a significant number of boats will be in proximity. This type PFD is the most effective of all types in rough water. The Type I will bear an inspection stamp that indicates that the device has been inspected and tested per U.S. Coast Guard regulations. It is reversible and available in only two sizes - adult (90 lbs. or more) and child (less than 90 lbs.) that are universal sizes (designed to fit all persons in the appropriate category). Each Type I PFD must have clearly marked in waterproof ink on a front section in letters 3/4-inches or more in height: "ADULT" or "CHILD" depending on the size.



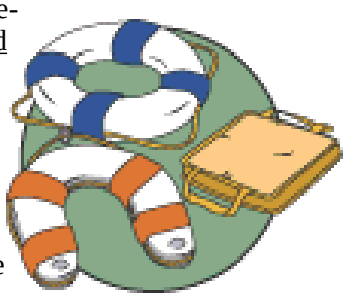
- **Type II - Near-Shore Buoyant Vest.** A Type II PFD is designed to turn the wearer to a vertical and slightly backward position in the water. The turning action is not as pronounced as with the Type I, and the device will not turn as many persons under the same conditions as the Type I. The Type II PFD is usually more comfortable to wear than the Type I. It is not reversible. This type PFD is normally sized for ease of emergency donning and is available in the following sizes: Adult (more than 90 lbs.), child medium (50 lbs. to 90 lbs.), child small (30 lbs. to 50 lbs., OR less than 30 lbs.). In addition, some models are sized by chest measurement. The boater may prefer to use the Type II where there is a probability of quick rescue such as areas where it is common for other persons to be engaged in boating, fishing, and other water activities.



- **Type III - Flotation Aid.** A Type III PFD is designed so that the wearer can assume vertical or slightly backward position, and the device will tend to maintain the wearer in that position and have no tendency to turn the wearer face down. A Type III can be the most comfortable, and comes in a variety of styles which should be matched to the individual use, and is a good choice for water sports, such as skiing, hunting, fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. These devices are not normally reversible. This type PFD comes in many chest sizes and weight ranges. Some universal sizes are available. The wearer may also prefer to use the Type III where there is a probability of quick rescue such as areas where there is considerable boating activity.



- **Type IV - Throwable Devices** may be a buoyant cushion, a ring buoy, or a horsehoe design. Type IV PFDs are designed to be grasped and held by the user until rescued, as well as to be thrown to a person who has fallen overboard. The Type IV is suitable only where there is a probability of quick rescue such as areas where there is considerable boating activity.



* Buoyant cushions are thick foam Type IV Throwable Devices approximately 15 by 15 by 2 inches. This type of throwable PFD has two 20 inch grab straps, one each on opposite side of the PFD. The grab straps are for holding the

PFD to your chest or for putting one leg and head through opposite straps.

- **Ring buoys** are available in 18, 18-1/2, 19, 20, 24, and 30 inch outside diameter.

*** The Horseshoe, a Type IV Throwable Device** common to sailboats, is an approved type and, even though different in design from other Type IVs, is acceptable if properly labeled and in serviceable condition.

- **The Type V Special Use Device.** Type V PFDs are intended for special use activities and may be carried instead of another PFD only if used according to the approval condition stated on the label. A Type V PFD may also provide performance of either a Type I, II, or III PFD (as marked on its label). If the label says the PFD is "approved only when worn" the PFD is required to be worn during the VSC as well as when underway to be acceptable for meeting VSC requirements. Some Type V devices provide significant hypothermia protection. Varieties include exposure suits, work vests, and sailboard vests.



- **Fully Inflatable Recreational PFD.** Inflatable recreational PFDs may be more comfortable to wear. The best PFD is the one that will be worn. Unlike other kinds of PFDs, inflatables require the user to pay careful attention to the condition of the firing device. Inflatable PFDs must have a full cylinder and all status indicators on the inflator must be green to satisfy the requirement for carrying this type PFD. Coast Guard approved inflatable recreational PFDs are approved only for persons 16 years of age and older, weighing more than 80 pounds, as marked on the PFD label. Type V fully inflatable PFDs must be worn during a VSC.



Stowage.

A PFD in a suitable size for each person on board a recreational boat must be stowed in a readily accessible location. Readily accessible means that the PFD must be stowed in a manner so that it can be easily retrieved. PFDs must not be stowed in compartments, boxes, or lockers under gear which would hinder a person from getting to them in an emergency. Storage spaces must not be locked, and everyone on board should know where the PFDs are stowed.

A Type IV PFD must also be immediately available on board. Immediately available means that the device must be right at hand, so that if someone were to fall overboard, the Type IV device would be where someone could reach it immediately and throw it to the person in the water.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques.

- Verify that all PFDs for recreational boats have a fully legible instruction label and the Coast Guard approval number is listed. If not, the device does not meet carriage or VSC decal requirements.

- Regardless of the number required, examine ALL PFDs on board. PFDs must be free of rips or tears and the flotation material must be free of any indication of deterioration. In PFDs that use kapok, the kapok is enclosed in plastic sacks. Give each compartment the "squeeze" test. Air leaks in the sacks, evidence of moisture, exposure or hardening disqualifies the PFD. Straps and belts on PFDs must be unaltered, free of dry rot, and in perfect working condition. Metal rings or adjusting buckles must be free of excessive rust and corrosion.

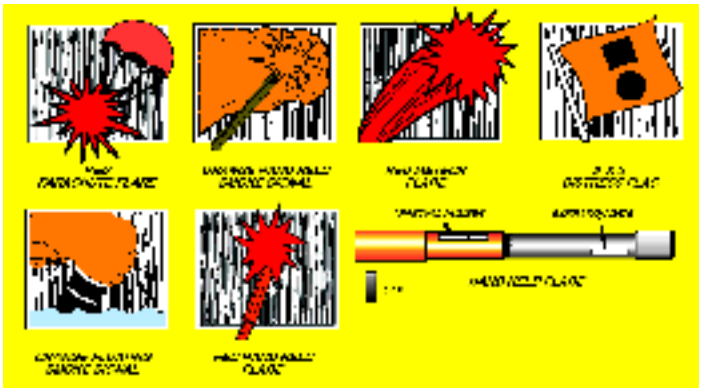
- Advise replacement for any PFD found to be in poor or unserviceable condition. Recommend that the unserviceable units be replaced and the defective ones be removed from the boat

- To qualify as one of the minimum required units, a Type V inflatable PFD must be worn by its intended user (persons 16 years and older) during the examination. In the presence of the VE, the intended user must examine the firing device by removing the CO_2 cartridge to determine it has not been used. Automatic units will have green indicators to show that the manual pull cord is in the correct position. Verify that the pull cord is in the correct position for access. Have the user open the other side and blow a little air in through the blow tube. After the user has checked the PFD, the VE will examine it for leaks and overall condition. Advise user to periodically make similar checks including an in the-water-check. The user should be advised to follow the manual and ensure PFD is serviced annually. Other Type V special purpose vests must have a label stating dual classification to qualify. A Type V work vest is not acceptable to recreational boats.

✔ ITEM 4. Visual Distress Signals (VDS)

Visual Distress Signals Required.

All vessels 16 feet and over, operating on the high seas and the coastal waters of the U.S., as defined by Federal regulations, must be equipped with Coast Guard approved visual distress signals. Between the hours of sunset and sunrise ALL boats, on both International and Inland Waters, must carry on board a means of distress signaling suitable for night use.



Description	Use	Number	Req'd
Floating Orange Smoke	Day	160.022 160.057	3
Hand-Held Orange Smoke	Day	160.037	3
Orange Flag	Day	160.072	1
Electric Distress Light (SOS Flashing)	Night	161.013	1
Hand Held Flare	Day/Night	160.021	3
Pistol Parachute Red	Day/Night	160.024	3
Flare			
Handheld Parachute Red Flare	Day/Night	160.036	3
Red Aerial Pyrotechnic Flare	Day/Night	160.066	3

VDS Types and Number Required

Exceptions.

- A vessel participating in any organized marine parade, regatta, race, or similar event;
- A manually propelled boat; or
- A sailboat under 26 feet of completely open construction and not equipped with propulsion machinery.



Launcher. Boats which carry visual distress signals that require a launcher to activate the signal must have the appropriate approved launcher on board. Signal launchers for use with cartridges are acceptable.

Stowage. Visual distress signals must be properly stowed and readily accessible.

Serviceability. Each VDS on board must be in serviceable condition with the date marked on it current. For a signal to be considered current, its date must be no more than 42 months from date of manufacture. After 42 months they are then considered expired and no longer meet decal requirements. However, expired VDSs may be retained as additional backup, or used for Inland Waters (in some states).

Marking. Each signal required must be legibly marked with the approval number or certification statement. Approved pyrotechnic launching devices must be stamped with a date of 01OCT80 or later.

- Devices may be either self-contained or pistol launched, and either meteor or parachute assisted type. Some signals may require use in combination with a suitable launching device.
- Flashing lights should only be used as authorized in the Navigation Rules in order to avoid confusion with the authorized distress signals. Strobe lights are considered distress signals but are not a replacement for approved devices.

Prohibited Use. No visual distress signal shall be activated except under a situation where assistance is needed because of immediate or potential danger to the vessel or the persons on board.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Verify that the boat has on board suitable devices in the number and type required for day and night use. Different combinations are acceptable. The type of device determines the number required.

- When doing a VSC in a state that prohibits percussion type distress signals, advise the owner of possible restrictions and alternative devices.

- Ensure that pyrotechnic devices are properly sealed with all wrappings intact to prevent moisture damage.

- Manufacture and/or expiration dates must be legible to meet decal requirements.

- At no time should a VDS be test fired as part of the examination.

✔ ITEM 5. Fire Extinguishers

Coast Guard approved fire extinguishers are required on certain boats. Extinguishers are classified by a letter and a number symbol. The letter indicates the type of fire the unit is designed to extinguish (Type B for example is designed to extinguish flammable liquids, such as gasoline, oil and grease fires). The number indicates the relative size of the extinguisher (minimum extinguishing agent weight). They can be identified by the following markings **"Marine Type US COAST GUARD Approved, Size ___ Type ___, 162.028/___."** Coast Guard approved extinguishers are hand portable and have specific marine type mounting brackets.



Boats required to carry fire extinguishers:

- All motorboats with inboard engines

- All motorboats 26 feet or more with outboard motors

- All boats with closed compartments and compartments under seats where portable fuel tanks can be stored.

- All boats with double bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation materials.

- All boats with closed living spaces.

- All boats with closed stowage compartments in which combustible or flammable materials are stored.

Hand Portable Fire Extinguisher Requirements

Boat Length	Without Fixed System	With Approved Fixed System
Under 26'	1 BI	None
26' to < 40'	2 B-I or 1 B-II	1 B-I
40' to 65'	3 B-I or 1 B-II and 1 B-1	2 B-I or 1 B-II

- All boats with permanently installed fuel tanks. Fuel tanks secured so they cannot be moved in case of fire or other emergency are considered permanently installed. There are no gallon capacity limits to determine if a fuel tank is portable. If the weight of a fuel tank is such that persons on board cannot move it, the Coast Guard considers it permanently installed.

Extinguishers should be checked monthly to ensure that:

- Seals and tamper indicators are not broken or missing.

- Pressure gauges or indicators read in the operable range. (Note: CO_2 extinguishers do not have gauges.)

- There is no obvious physical damage, corrosion, leakage or clogged nozzles.

- CO_2, HALON, FE-241 and other extinguishers with replacement compounds for HALON must be weighed annually to assure that the minimum weight is as stated on the extinguisher label. These units must be inspected and tagged by a recognized authority within one year of the VSC. Pressure gauges on this type fire extinguisher are not accurate indicators that they are full.

- All hand portable extinguishers must be readily accessible. (It is recommended that they be mounted, but not required for a VSC.)

Type	Agent	Minimum
B-I	Carbon Dioxide	4 lbs
	Dry Chemical	2 lbs
	HALON	2 ½ lbs
	AFFF (Foam)	1 ¾ gals
B-II	Carbon Dioxide	15 lbs
	Dry Chemicals	10 lbs
	HALON	10 lbs
	AFFF (Foam)	2 ½ gals

Fire Extinguisher Minimum Weight or Volume

- Fire extinguishers used on boats must be specifically marked "Marine Type US Coast Guard Approved."

A fixed fire extinguishing system will reduce the number of required portable fire extinguishers by one. For example, a vessel that is required to carry two B-I or one B-II fire extinguisher(s) would only be required to carry one B-I portable extinguisher if a fixed extinguishing system is properly installed and maintained and has a current inspection tag.

Boats shall carry at least the minimum number of hand portable fire extinguishers as set forth above. EXCEPTION: **Boats less than 26 feet with outboard motors and portable fuel cans, not carrying passengers for hire, need not carry such portable fire extinguishers if the construction of the boat will not permit the entrapment of explosive or flammable gases or vapors.**

Safety.

Having the appropriate fire fighting equipment on board is only part of being prepared for a fire emergency. The operator and crew should be aware of fire fighting capabilities and limitations of the available equipment. They should be aware of the following points:

- Know how to use available equipment.
- Know the hazards related to fires.
- Fire extinguishing agents may cause hazardous fumes or be lethal. Smoke from HALON extinguished fires is very toxic.
- If the fire extinguisher system has an automatic engine shutdown feature, the owner and crew should know how to restart the engine.
- CO_2 is discharged at sub-zero temperatures. The operator may be injured if contact is made with the horn of a portable CO_2 extinguisher.
- HALON discharged in closed spaces consumes the oxygen available and persons should be evacuated immediately.
- HALON systems may have been discharged without the operator's knowledge. The discharge indicator light or signal should be checked.
- To be accepted, a hand portable HALON extinguisher must be rated 5 BC and the contents must weigh at least 2½ lbs. Fixed HALON extinguisher systems do not have to comply with this requirement as they are designed for a specific compartment volume.

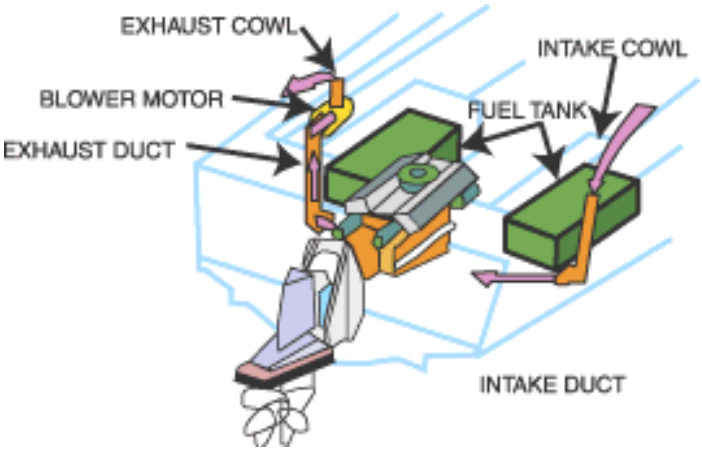
Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Ask the operator to retrieve each extinguisher. Ensure that all extinguishers are approved types and in serviceable condition. The approval labels and instructions must be clearly legible and pressure indicators must show within the normal charge range. Excessive high or low readings are cause for disqualification. Do not rely on the gauge on HALON extinguishers.
- Check dry chemical extinguishers by holding the fire extinguisher inverted to its normally stored position and solidly hitting the base of the extinguisher with the palm of the hand several times. By rocking the extinguisher the VE should be able to determine if the chemical moves freely within the cylinder. (The concept that the powdered chemical inside an extinguisher can be loosened by shaking is erroneous. Caked powder will not "flow" but may fall with a "thunk" when the extinguisher is inverted.) Caked powder is not acceptable. If there is evidence of damage, use or leakage observed anywhere on the extinguisher, including rust or corrosion, the unit is unacceptable.
- Verify that both manual and fixed systems have appropriate seals and/or tags on the releasing mechanisms. Indicator lights on fixed systems will not show whether a cylinder leaked over a period of time. Manually activated systems with pull handles must have an intact lead or plastic seal on the releasing mechanism. The intact seal or tag shall be accepted as evidence of compliance. They must be dated within the past 12 months.
- Check the visual gauge at the top to determine that the plastic crystal covering the indicator is not pushed against the needle. It is okay to tap the pressure indicator lightly or push a pressure indicating pin in/out several times when testing dry chemical fire extinguishers. Those units without visual indicators must carry an inspection tag showing evidence of a weight inspection within one year and the seals should not be broken.
- Verify that the manual controls for fixed systems are located outside the space the system is designed to protect. System tests are not required. The intact seal is sufficient evidence of compliance.
- Verify that in automatically actuated systems the thermal-activated fusible elements in the sprinkler heads are intact. If there is any indication that the system may have been discharged the operator should be advised to have the cylinders weighed.
- Discuss additional safety points with the operator to ensure the operator and crew know their fire fighting capabilities and limitations.

✔ ITEM 6. Ventilation

All boats that use gasoline for electrical generation, mechanical power or propulsion are required to be equipped with a ventilation system.

A natural ventilation system consists of a supply duct which either opens to the atmosphere on the surface of the boat, from a ventilated compartment, or from a compartment that is open to the atmosphere and has an exhaust into another ventilated compartment or through an exhaust duct to the atmosphere. Each exhaust and supply opening or duct must originate in the lower one-third of the compartment and must be above the normal accumulation of bilge water. A natural ventilation system is required for each closed compartment in a boat that:



- Contains a permanently installed gasoline engine;
- Has openings between it and a compartment that requires ventilation;
- Contains a permanently installed fuel tank and an electrical component that is not ignition-protected;
- Contains a fuel tank that vents into that compartment (including a portable tank); or
- Contains a non-metallic fuel tank.

A powered ventilation system is required for each compartment in a boat that has a permanently installed gasoline engine with a cranking motor for remote starting. A powered ventilation system consists of one or more exhaust blowers. Each intake duct for an exhaust blower must be in the lower one-third of the compartment and above the normal accumulation of bilge water.

Open Boats. In open boats, gasoline vapors may be dissipated through exposure to the open atmosphere. Therefore, open boats are exempted from ventilation requirements. The term "open boat," means those motorboats or motor vessels with all engine and fuel tank compartments (and other spaces to which explosive or flammable gases and vapors may flow), open to the atmosphere, preventing the entrapment of gases and vapors within the vessel.

These requirements include:

- Engine and fuel tank compartments shall have a minimum 15 square inches of open area directly exposed to the atmosphere for each cubic foot of net compartment volume. (Length in inches X width in inches = square inches.)
- There must be no long or narrow unventilated spaces accessible from such compartments in which a flame front could propagate.
- Long, narrow compartments (such as side panels), if joining engine or fuel compartments and not serving as ducts thereto, shall have at least 15 square inches of open area per cubic foot provided by frequent openings along the full length of the compartment.
- Sailboats. Ventilation requirements are identical to those for power boats whenever combustible fuels are carried.

Boats Built Before 01 AUG 80. The Motorboat Act of 1940 requires all vessels (except open boats built after 25 APR 40) using fuel with a flash point of 110°F or less (gasoline) to have at least one intake cowl and duct extending from the atmosphere to a point at least midway to the bilge or below the carburetor and one exhaust cowl and duct from the atmosphere to the lower portion of the bilge in every closed engine and fuel tank compartment. Cowls and louvers must be trimmed for maximum effectiveness. If louvers are used, the intake louver must be facing forward and must extend outward ½ inch.

- The blower duct, if equipped, could also serve as the exhaust duct for the natural ventilation as long as the duct size is adequate and the flow of air is not obstructed by the blower fan blade. Separate ducting is also acceptable.
- On boats built prior to 01 AUG 80, there are no federal regulations that prescribe minimum ducting size. It is Coast Guard policy that the minimum acceptable size is two inches in diameter for all boats.

Engine Compartments.

- **Boats built after 31 JUL 80,** require an operable power blower in ADDITION to natural ventilation in closed compartments having gasoline engines for propulsion, electrical generating, or mechanical power.

- A warning label for the blower MUST be mounted near each ignition switch. If there is more than one ignition switch, there must be a warning label near EACH. The same applies to auxiliary generators. The statement on the label MUST begin with the word **"WARNING"** while the rest of the label may be expressed in various forms. The suggested wording is:

> **WARNING**
> **Gas vapors can explode.**
> **Before starting engine, operate blower fo four minutes and check engine compartment for gas vapors**

- Exhaust ducting must be connected to the blower intake and extend to the lower 1/3 of the compartment, but above the normal accumulation of bilge water. One or more blowers may be used in combination to achieve the proper output.

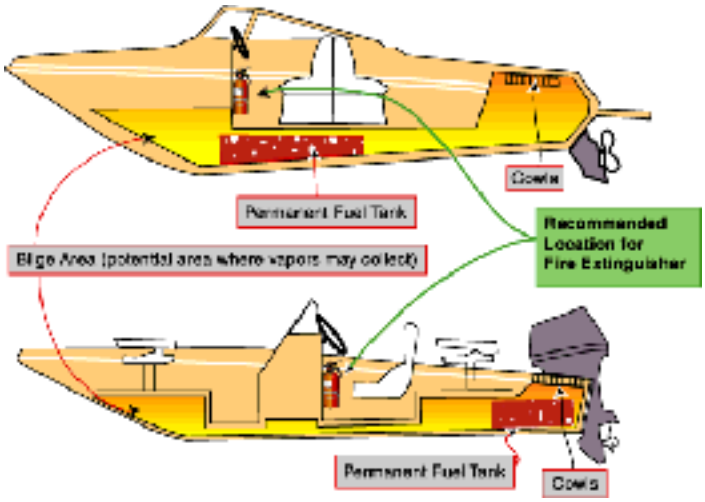
- Intake openings are required. Ducting is not required on the intake opening but is permissible. The intake opening may also be from another ventilated compartment.

Principles Of Natural Ventilation.

- The typical natural ventilation system on a boat with a fuel tank or engine compartment that is not "open to the atmosphere" consists of at least one supply opening and one exhaust opening. Each of these openings is fitted with a cowl, vent, or louver located on the exterior surface of the boat. On most boats, two cowls, vents, or louvers usually face forward and two of them face aft. Ducting extends from these openings to the lower portion of a compartment requiring natural ventilation. The ducting extends no lower than the normal accumulation of bilge water.

- Amendments: Boats manufactured **BEFORE 06MAR87** must have intake cowls facing forward and exhaust facing aft. However, testing has shown the natural airflow is over the stern and towards the bow, even with the boat underway in a headwind. This has resulted in amendments to the Ventilation Standard, removing the requirement for forward facing supply openings on boats built ON **or AFTER 06MAR87.**

- On boats built **AFTER 31JUL80** the minimum size of ducting permitted is two inches in diameter. The manufacturer's Certification of Compliance label is proof that the ventilation system is installed properly, provided the system does not ***APPEAR*** to have been altered.



Fuel Tank Compartments.

- There is no requirement for ventilation of the **PERMANENT** fuel tank compartment as long as there is no electrical source of ignition in the compartment and the fuel tank is vented to the outside of the boat. Fuel compartments that do not meet these criteria must have proper ventilation.

- Compartments containing PORTABLE fuel tanks, including those fixed to portable generators, trolling motors, etc., MUST be properly ventilated regardless of when the boat was built. They may be naturally ventilated or have sufficient compartment area open to the atmosphere.

- Spaces not containing engine or fuel tank systems and which are closed off by bulkheads from other compartments requiring ventilation do not require ventilation. Bulkheads may have small limber holes for the passage of bilge water.

- Engine compartments where the engine has no cranking motor and the engine cover box must be removed for starting, exposing the engine to the atmosphere, require only natural ventilation. (These are usually found in older boats.)

Operator Responsibility For Maintenance.

- On boats built prior to 01AUG80, the owner/operator is responsible for the proper installation and maintenance of the system.

- On boats built after 31JUL80, the owner must maintain the ventilation system installed by the manufacturer. The owner is not required to perform any system performance

test for the power ventilation. However if the blower is replaced; it must be NO smaller than the original (this applies to replaced ducting also).

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Look into fuel and engine compartments or spaces. (Request owner/operator to open these.) Check for any gas or fuel odors and any leaks. Any evidence of leaks is unacceptable.

- Check ventilation intake and exhaust ports for proper installation and function. Include all openings with ducting to and from compartments. Have owner/operator turn on the blower so that the air exhausting from the blower can be felt.

- Ensure there are no blocked or obstructed openings that will prevent the free flow of fresh air. Exhaust ducts should not have any cracks that allow air to re-circulate or bends that would block adequate air flow.

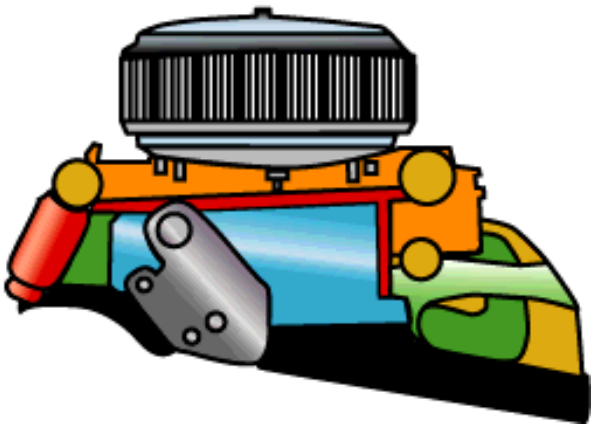
- Check that boats with closed engine compartments built BEFORE 01AUG80 have either natural or powered ventilation. Those built ON or AFTER that date are required to have working powered ventilation in the engine compartment.

- Check that boats built on or before 01AUG78 with closed fuel compartments, have either natural or powered ventilation in the compartment. Boats built after that date need not have any ventilation in the fuel tank compartment provided the compartment conforms to construction standards.

- Check for a Certificate of Compliance on boats built after 31JUL80. This is acceptable for meeting ventilation requirements as long as no obvious defects are observed.

✔ ITEM 7. Backfire Flame Control

Every boat with a gasoline engine installed in a vessel after 25 APR 40, except outboard motors, must be equipped with an acceptable meams of backfire flame control.



Fuel injected engines without carburetors require a backfire flame arrester over the air intake to prevent exhaust valves from backfiring into the air chamber which might cause a fire or explosion.

- The device must be suitably attached to the air intake with a flame-tight connection. It is required to be Coast Guard approved or comply with the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) or Underwriter Laboratory (UL) standards and be marked accordingly. The device will be marked with "U.S. Coast Guard Approval 162.042/XX, or 162.015, SAE J-1928 or UL 1111."

- Attachments to the carburetor or the engine **air induction system** shall be of metallic construction with flame-tight connection, firmly secured to withstand vibration, shock and engine backfire so that any engine backfire flames will be dispersed to the atmosphere outside the boat. They shall be maintained in good and serviceable condition.

    - The installation of the air induction system does not require an approval number and labeling but is acceptable on the basis of the above. Many inboard ski boats are constructed so that the fuel/air induction system is above the sides of the hull. In such cases, a cowl, scoop, or multiple installation of either is acceptable, provided:

    - The cowl(s) or scoop(s) faces to the rear or vertically, thus directing any backfire flames to the open atmosphere.

    - There is no provision for carrying passengers behind the forward edge of the engine.

    - Cowls or scoops:

        * All connections must be flame-tight and firmly secured.

        * Mounted so as to direct the backfire flames away from the boat and its occupants, not sideways, but over the transom or vertically.

- Fuel injected engines without carburetors still require a backfire flame arrester over the air intake. Reason: There are exhaust valves that can allow a backfire into the air chamber to cause a fire or explosion.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Check that any boat with gasoline powered inboard engine(s) has a properly installed backfire flame control on each carburetor with the appropriate approval number on the device.

- Determine that the control grid and housing are securely attached to the inner housing and that the inner housing is securely attached to the air intake. All elements shall be clean and free of foreign matter. No damaged elements, cracked housings or fittings are acceptable.

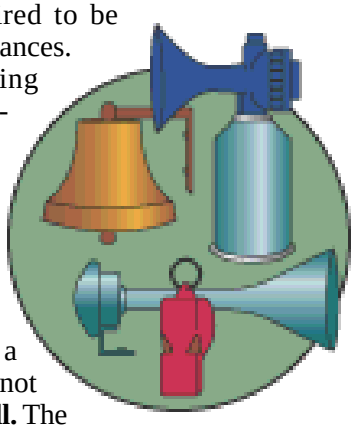
- Ensure the flame control approval number is clearly visible. Feel under the cowling to determine the arrester is present and free of excessive dirt. Some newer approved flame controls look like automotive air cleaners. (Disassembly may be required to verify the approval number on these units.)

- Advise the operator that if a cowl or scoop system is used, the boat should not be operated in a manner in which docks, individuals, or other boats might be endangered in the event of a backfire.

- Some flame arresters are covered by a decorative cowling. It is not necessary to ask the owner/operator to remove the cowl unless it looks like there have been alterations. Check the flame arrester by feeling under the cowl for the arrester grids, drag a finger on the grids to check for excessive dirt. Advise the boater to clean the arrester on a regular basis with soap and water, or a commercial cleaner made for that purpose.

✔ ITEM 8. Sound Producing Devices.

Sound signals are required to be made under certain circumstances. Meeting, crossing, overtaking situations, and periods of reduced visibility all require sound signals to be used. (See Navigation Rules for specifics.)



- Vessels over 39.4 feet are required to carry on board a whistle (Athletic whistles are not acceptable.) or horn, **and a bell.** The bell must be in operating condition, with a minimum diameter of 7 7/8 inches measured at the mouth.

- Vessels under 39.4 feet are required to carry an efficient sound signaling device, such as a whistle, horn or other means, and to use that device to signal their intentions and/or position in periods of reduced visibility. (Athletic whistles are acceptable.)

- For PWCs a whistle attached to the operator's PFD meets the requirement and provides a means to signal should operator be separated from the PWC.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Check for proper operation of the boat's whistle or other sound producing device(s). Have the operator test and operate the device producing a sound signal for at least four seconds.

- If the vessel requires a bell, it is not required to be mounted to qualify for the decal. It should be stored so that it is readily accessible.

4 ITEM 9. Navigation Lights

Recreational vessels are required to display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise and other periods of reduced visibility (fog, rain, haze, etc.). Detailed lighting requirements for every description of watercraft are shown in Navigation Rules. The information provided here is intended for power-driven vessels and sailing vessels.

Vessels lighted per the International Rules may be legally operated in Inland Waters as well as in International Waters. Vessels lighted per the Inland Rules are correct only on the Inland Waters of the U.S.

Definitions.

The following definitions, extracted from the Navigation Rules, will be used in reference to VSC lighting requirements.

- **Masthead light** means a white light placed over the fore and aft centerline of the vessel showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 225^0 and so fixed as to show the light from dead ahead to 22.5^0 abaft the beam on either side of the vessel. Exception: A vessel of less than 39.4 feet may display an all-around white light, rather than a white masthead light and stern light as required for larger boats.

- **Sidelight** means a green light on the starboard side and a red light on the port side, each showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 112.5^0 and so fixed as to show the light from dead ahead to 22.5^0 abaft the beam on its respective side. On a vessel of less than 65 feet in length the sidelights may be combined in one lantern carried on the fore and aft centerline of the vessel, except that on a vessel of less than 39.4 feet in length the sidelights when combined in one lantern shall be placed as nearly as practicable to the fore and aft centerline of the vessel.

- **Sternlight** means a white light placed as nearly as practicable at the stern showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 135^0 and so fixed as to show the light 67.5^0 from directly aft on each side of the vessel.

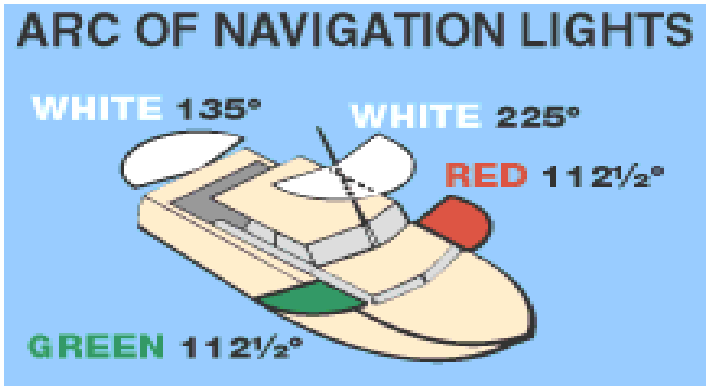
- **Towing light** means a yellow light having the same characteristics as the "sternlight" defined above.

- **All-around light** means a light showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 3600.

- **Flashing light** means a light flashing at regular intervals at a frequency of 120 flashes or more per minute. This light is used on air cushion vessels operating in the non-displacement mode.

- **Special flashing light** means a yellow light flashing at regular intervals at a frequency of 50 to 70 flashes per minute, placed as far forward and as nearly as practicable on the fore and aft centerline of the tow (being pushed ahead in Inland Waters) and showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon not less than 180^0 nor more than 225^0 and so fixed as to show the light from dead ahead to abeam and no more than 22.5^0 abaft the beam on either side of the vessel.

The arcs of visibility, color, and distance from which lights must be visible are prescribed in the Navigational Rules, International-Inland Rules, and their associated annexes.

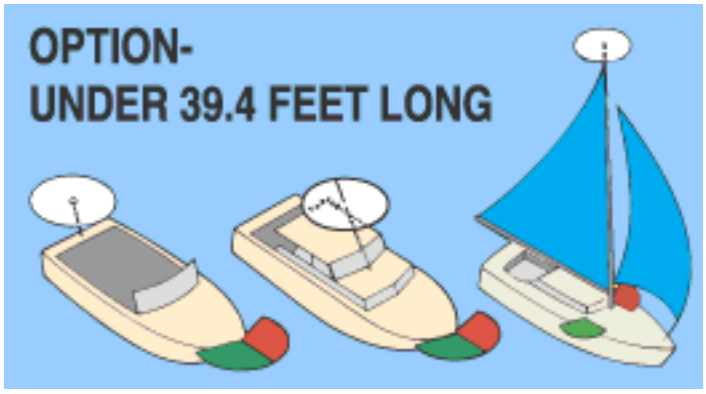


• Port – **red** 112½° • Starboard – **green** 112½°
• Stern – white 135° • Masthead – white 225°

- Power-driven vessels under 65 feet, shall exhibit navigation lights as shown below.



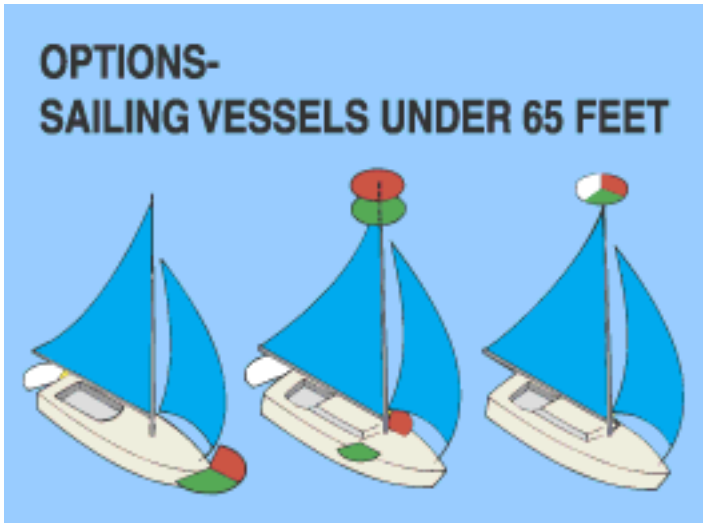
- Vessels of less than 39.4 feet may exhibit lights as shown below or that of a 65 foot vessel



- Power-driven vessels of under 23 feet whose maximum speed cannot exceed 7 knots may exhibit an all-around white light. If practicable sidelights instead of the lights prescribed above, in International Waters only.

- The masthead or all around white light on power vessels under 39.4 feet in length must be at least one meter (approximately 39 inches) above the red and green sidelights.

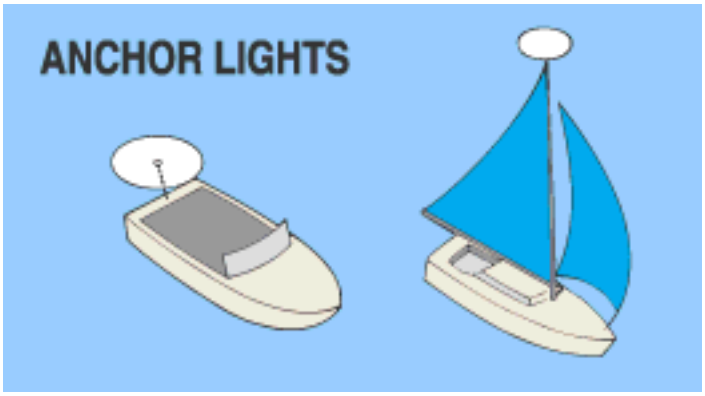
- Sailing vessels less than 65 feet and vessels under oars may exhibit the navigation lights shown below.



- Sailing vessels less than 23 feet may carry an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light that should be displayed in sufficient time to prevent collision. If practicable, the lights prescribed for sailing vessels under 65 feet should be displayed. Vessels under oars may display the lights prescribed for sailing vessels, otherwise they must have ready at hand an electric or lighted lantern showing a white light to be displayed in sufficient time to prevent collision.

Additional Federal Requirements. To alert other vessels of conditions which may be hazardous, the following lights (at night) and shapes (during the day) are required to be displayed:

- Anchor Lights. Power-driven vessels and sailing vessels must display anchor lights while at anchor. A vessel under 164 feet in length must display an all-around white light visible for two miles exhibited where it can best be seen.



Shapes during the day.

- Vessels at anchor shall exhibit forward where best seen a ball shape.

- Vessels under 23 feet are not required to display anchor lights or day shapes unless anchored in or near a narrow channel, fairway or anchorage, or where other vessels normally navigate.

- Anchor lights or day shapes are not required on vessels under 65 feet when anchored in special anchorages in Inland Waters as designated by the Secretary of Transportation.

- Sailing vessels under power must exhibit forward, where best seen, a conical shape with the apex pointing down. Sailing vessels less than 39.4 feet are not required to exhibit the day shapes in Inland Waters. (At night these vessels are considered power-driven and must display the lights prescribed for a power-driven vessel.)

- Vessels restricted in their ability to maneuver must display appropriate day shapes or lights. Recreational vessels engaged in diving activities may exhibit a rigid replica of the international code flag "A" not less than 39 inches in height during the day, or at night display the appropriate lights. State or local regulations may require additional indicators.

- Under the Inland Navigation Rules Act of 1980, the small craft operator is responsible for the display of proper navigation lights. Lighting configuration **is not** included in the boat manufacturer's Certification of Compliance.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

The Vessel Examiner must be knowledgeable of the Navigation lighting rules and be able to explain them.

- Verify the proper installation and operation of the boat's navigation lights. Cracked or discolored lenses, inoperative lights, or improper configuration must be corrected before a decal is awarded.

- Check that the lights installed on boats under 16 feet are properly configured and in working order. These boats DO NOT require lights installed to be awarded a decal; however, if installed, they must work properly.

- Ensure that all installed navigation lights display an unbroken light through the prescribed arcs of visibility. All-around lights may not be obstructed more than six degrees by items such as collapsible canopies, bimini tops, masts, jackstaffs, trolling motors and the like.

- Ensure that boats 16 feet or longer are able to display proper navigation lights during the hours of night. They should be able to display both underway and anchor lights. Switches must be capable of turning off navigation lights when the anchor light is on.

- When examining boats on Inland Waters or waters not defined as International by the Navigation Rules remember that either Inland or International lighting is acceptable.

- Verify that any navigation lights operated by dry cell batteries have the appropriate minimum range of visibility.

✔ ITEM 10. Pollution Placards (Oily Waste Discharge)

The Refuse Act of 1898 prohibits throwing, discharging or depositing any refuse matter of any kind (including trash, garbage, oil, and other liquid pollutants) into the waters of the United States. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act prohibits the discharge of oil or hazardous substances which may be harmful into U.S. navigable waters. Vessels over 26 feet must display a placard, at least 5 by 8 inches, made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery spaces, or at the bilge pump control station stating the following:

DISCHARGE OF OIL PROHIBITED

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act prohibits the discharge of oil or oily waste into or upon the navigable waters of the United States, or the waters of the contiguous zone, or which may affect natural resources belonging to, appertaining to, or under the exclusive management authority of the United States, if such discharge causes a film or discoloration of the surface of the water or causes a sludge or emulsion beneath the surface of the water. Violators are subject to substantial civil penalties and/or criminal sanctions including fines and imprisonment.

- The Water Pollution Control Act regulations require all vessels with propulsion machinery to have a capacity to retain oil mixtures on board. A fixed or portable means to discharge oily waste to a reception facility is required. A bucket or bailer is suitable as a portable means of discharging oily waste on recreational vessels. No person may intentionally drain oil or oily waste from any source into the bilge of any vessel.

- The Coast Guard must be notified immediately if a vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances into the water. Call the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802. Provide the location where the discharge occurred, the color, the source and type of substance if known, the size of area involved and how long the spill has been observed.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Check for placard, if required.

- Check for visibility of placard. (VEs may carry a supply of the placards to provide to owner/operators. Some marine supply stores have free placards available. Most have them for sale.)

✔ ITEM 11. MARPOL Trash Placards (Garbage Dumping Restriction)



The Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships (MARPOL ANNEX V) places limitations on the discharge of garbage from vessels. It is illegal to dump plastic trash anywhere in the ocean or navigable waters of the United States. It is also illegal to discharge garbage in the navigable waters of the United States, including the Great Lakes. The discharge of other types of garbage is permitted outside of specific distances offshore based on the nature of that garbage. On 31MAY90, the Coast Guard amended the Garbage Pollution Regulations by adding waste management plans and placard requirements for certain U.S. ships.

- United States vessels of 26 feet or longer must display in a prominent location, a durable placard at least 4 x 9 inches notifying the crew and passengers of the discharge restrictions.

- United States oceangoing vessels over 40 feet, which are engaged in commerce or are equipped with a galley and berthing, must have a written Trash Management Plan describing the procedures for collecting, processing, storing and discharging garbage, and designate the person in charge of carrying out the plan.

- Recreational vessels used exclusively in the Great Lakes may use the Annex V placards or a specially developed placard that prohibits the dumping of garbage.

- The trash placard is NOT required on inland lakes and sole state waters.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Check for the placard if the boat is required to have one. (VEs may carry a supply of the placard and provide one to the owner/operator if needed to satisfy this requirement.)

- Ensure the placard is clearly visible to all passengers. Larger boats may post more than one placard as needed.

- Remind boaters that trash disposal laws apply to everyone whether a placard is required or not.

- Know and advise the operator regarding any local discharge regulations. Some states and local lakes prohibit dumping anything, even gray water.

✔ ITEM 12. Marine Sanitation Devices (MSDs).

All recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities ***MUST*** have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board. Direct discharge toilets are illegal unless the vessel is operating under a waiver granted by the Commandant.

- Vessels 65 feet and under may install a Type I, II, or III MSD.
- Vessels over 65 feet must install a Type II or III MSD.
- Type I and Type II devices have the ability to discharge overboard.
- Type III devices re-circulate waste. They are discharged at a pump out station or offshore in a legal dumping area.

No-Discharge Areas. Vessels shall not discharge sewage overboard in an area designated as no discharge. A Type I or II flow-through MSD must be adequately secured while the vessel is in a no-discharge area to prevent any overboard discharge of treated or untreated sewage, such as:

- Closing the seacock and padlocking, using a non-releasable wire-tie, or removing the seacock handle,
- Locking the door to the head with the owner/operator in possession of the key in not-discharge controlled areas.
- A combination of switches that have to be pressed simultaneously or
- Switches that can only be turned on after inserting a key.

Portable Toilets. Portable toilets are not considered installed devices and are therefore not subject to the regulations. Sewage from portable toilets may not be dumped overboard in U.S. waters.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Determine if there is an MSD on board and what type. Have the owner or operator explain how the system works.
- Determine that it is not possible to accidentally operate a valve that will cause an overboard discharge of the holding tank. The discharge valves should not be located in the head area. (If located in the head area the valves must be sealed or have the handles removed to prevent accidental operation.)
- Check that Type I and Type II MSDs have, attached to the unit, the required plaque showing the type and Coast Guard approval. Determine that the unit cannot be discharged overboard in no-discharge controlled areas.

✔ ITEM 13. Carriage Of Inland Navigation Rules



The Navigation Rules establish action to be taken by vessels to avoid collision The rules are divided into two parts, Inland and International. Inland Rules apply to vessels operating inside the line of demarcation while International Rules apply to vessels outside these areas. Demarcation lines are printed on most navigational charts and are published in the Navigation Rules.

- The owner or operator of each self-propelled vessel 39.4 feet or more shall carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of the Navigation Rules. When it is required to carry a copy of the Rules aboard, a complete copy must be carried.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

- Verify that the operator has the current edition readily available.

✔ ITEM 14. State Requirements

State equipment requirements that pertain to basic safety must be met before the VSC decal can be awarded. The requirements of the state where the VSC is conducted will be included in the VSC. While states may require liability insurance, license restrictions, or specific activity equipment, only equipment directly related to vessel safety or items on the VSC checklist will be considered.

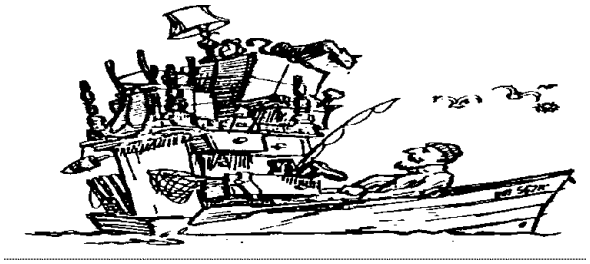
Vessel Safety Check Techniques.

- Have a copy of state requirements and the latest changes on hand during the safety check.
- Determine that any extra equipment required by the state is on board and in serviceable condition.

✔ ITEM 15. Overall Vessel Condition (as applies)

The vessel must have a safe overall condition in order to meet the final requirement for the VSC decal. Applicable items below are critical to the safety of the vessel and must be acceptable before the VE awards the VSC decal.

Deck Free of Hazards and Clean Bilge. The boat must be free from fire hazards, in good overall condition, with bilges reasonably clean, and visible hull and structure generally sound. The use of automobile parts on boat engines is not acceptable. The engine horsepower must not exceed that shown on the capacity plate.



Electrical and Fuel Systems.



- The electrical system must be protected by fuses or manual reset circuit breakers. Switches and fuse panels must be protected from rain or water spray. Wiring must be in good condition, properly installed with no exposed areas, or deteriorated insulation. Batteries must be secured and terminals covered to prevent accidental arcing. If installed, self-circling or kill-switch mechanism must be in proper working order. All PWCs require an operating self-circling or kill-switch mechanism.

- Portable fuel tanks (7 gallons capacity or less) must be constructed of non-breakable material and be free of corrosion and leaks. All vents must be capable of being closed. The tank must be secured and have a vapor-tight, leak-proof cap. Each permanent fuel tank must be properly ventilated.

Galley and Heating System.



- Systems and fuel tanks must be properly secured with no flammable materials nearby.

- Adequate ventilation provided for all appliances and their fuel source.

- Appliance shut off valves readily accessible.

Vessel Safety Check Techniques

General condition of the boat.

- Check that the bilge is clean and free from oil or grease. Check that the hull appears to be sound and seaworthy with no fractures visible in the basic hull material. Equipment should be stowed in a neat and orderly manner.

- Sailboat equipment and rigging should appear sound with no rusty shackles, corroded fittings, broken stem heads and plates, or frayed wire straps and shrouds.

- Check PWC steering and throttle controls for proper operation. Hood cover and latches should be secure. Check for general maintenance and upkeep. No modifications to factory installed systems or components are acceptable.

- Have operator start engine in idle. While engine is idling have the operator pull free the kill-switch mechanism. (The engine should stop immediately.) When using this technique on boats with other than jet engines the boat must be in the water.

- Verify that all general wiring is in good condition, neatly bundled, and clamped to suitable supports at regular intervals, or in conduits to prevent damage from vibration. Circuits should be protected by fuses or circuit breakers. Circuit breakers should be of the non-automatic resetting type. No open knife switches may be located in the bilge, engine spaces, or fuel tank compartments.

- Verify that battery cables are securely connected. The battery should be clamped down or otherwise secured so as to prevent movement. Battery terminals must be covered. Plastic battery boxes or other covers to protect the battery are recommended but not required. Installed battery chargers should be of marine type design. Batteries should be well ventilated while charging.

- Verify that all fuel tanks are free of corrosion and leaks. Each portable tank should be properly ventilated and have a vapor-tight, leak-proof cap. Portable tanks should be stowed securely.

- Verify that no flammable material is in proximity to appliances. Portable appliances should be securely fixed in position when in use and when in the stowed position. Permanently installed appliances should be securely fastened in place.

- Check that the galley and appliances are adequately ventilated.

- On vessels less than 20 feet and others with Capacity Plates, verify that the engine horsepower is equal to or less than that stated on the capacity plate.

- If there is no capacity plate on a single hull boat under 20 feet, the maximum number of persons that can be safely carried in calm weather can be determined using the following formula:

$$\text{People} = \frac{\text{Length X Width}}{15}$$

Notes on Chapter 3:

Chapter 4
Recommended and Discussion Items

Introduction

This chapter provides information on items not required by Federal Regulations but strongly recommended for the safety of recreational boaters. These items are listed on the right side of Form 204. Many states have made these recommended items a requirement. Therefore non-compliance would be a reason for failure of Item 14 on the left side of Form 204.

Recommended Items:

✔ ITEM I - Marine Radio

Most recreational vessels under 65 feet do not have to carry a marine radio. Operators of vessels that carry a marine radio must follow the rules of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).



Radio Licenses

The FCC does not require an operator of a recreational vessel with VHF radio (with or without digital selective calling capability), EPIRBs, or any type of radar to have a license to operate the equipment. However, operators must follow the procedures and courtesies that are required of licensed operators specified in FCC Rules. When using the radio the name or registration number of the vessel must be used to identify the vessel.

Users of a VHF marine radio equipped with digital selective calling need to obtain a maritime mobile service identity from the FCC. It is unlawful to use digital selective calling without obtaining this identity.

Vessels required to be FCC licensed:

Vessels required to use MF/HF single side-band radio, satellite communications or telegraphy include:

- Power driven vessels over 65 feet;
- Vessels used for commercial purposes; and
- Any vessel, including a recreational vessel, on an international voyage or communicating with a foreign station from U.S. waters.

Radio listening watch

- Vessels not required to carry a marine radio (e.g. recreational vessels less than 65 feet), but which voluntarily carry a radio, **must** maintain a watch on channel 16 whenever the radio is operating and not being used for communications. Depending on the district, some vessels may be designated to maintain a watch on VHF channel 9, the boater-calling channel.

- Vessels required to carry a VHF marine radio, such as commercial fishing vessels, must maintain a watch on channel 16 while underway whenever the radio is not being used for exchanging communications.

False distress alerts

It is unlawful to intentionally transmit a false distress alert, or to unintentionally transmit a false distress alert without taking steps to cancel that alert.

Distress calls

VHF Channel 16 (and in some areas Channel 9) is designated as the hailing and distress channel. Boaters may hail other boaters briefly on these channels but should immediately switch to another channel to continue the conversation. The main use of Channel 16 is to communicate distress calls on a channel that is required to be monitored.

- A typical radiotelephone distress call for a MAYDAY (dire distress, not just out of fuel) is given below:

"MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY! THIS IS THE VESSEL (use the boat name or registration number) **LOCATED AT** (give location), **DESCRIBE SITUATION** (give reason for distress). **OVER."**

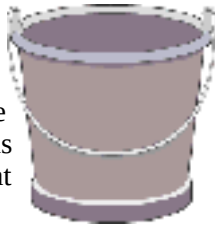
For further information:

- FCC toll free telephone: 1-888-CALLFCC
- World Wide Web: http://www.fcc.gov/wtb
- Coast Guard: http://www.navcen.uscg.mil/marcomms

✔ ITEM II - Dewatering Device and Backup

The dewatering equipment recommendation is built on common sense. This may be the only means to take care of an emergency situation.

All boats should carry at least one effective manual dewatering device. It is recommended that boaters carry a hand-operated plunger, a bucket, or a large plastic bottle with the bottom cut off to serve as a water scoop. This recommendation is in addition to any installed bilge pump that the boat may have on board.



If an electrical or mechanical bilge pump is installed, it should be in satisfactory operating condition.

Pontoon boats with no bilge or compartments that cannot flood are encouraged to carry at least one dewatering device for possible assistance to other boaters.

✔ ITEM III - Mounted Fire Extinguishers

While it is NOT required to mount fire extinguishers, it is recommended that they be mounted in a readily visible and consistent location known to all aboard.



✔ ITEM IV - Anchoring and Line

Anchoring is done for two principal reasons: first to stop for fishing, swimming, meals, or overnight stay; and secondly, to keep the boat from running aground or into danger. Anchoring can be a simple task by following these guidelines.

- Ensure the boat is equipped with the proper type anchor.
- A three to six foot length of galvanized chain should be attached to the anchor. The chain resists abrasion better than a fiber line, and helps to hold the anchor flat on the bottom so it can dig in better.
- A suitable length of nylon anchor line should be attached to the end of the chain. Nylon line resists the strain from wind or wave action better.
- When anchoring, the operator should select an area that offers maximum shelter from weather elements and traffic.
- To determine length of line needed, the boater needs to know water depth and type of bottom. (General rule is length of line needs to be 5-7 times the depth of water.)
- The operator needs to know how to secure and set the anchor.

4 ITEM V - First Aid and PIW kits

Boaters are encouraged to carry additional safety equipment including a First Aid kit. These can be purchased in various sizes, depending on the type of boating a person does (i.e., small lakes, local coastal, and offshore and/or extended cruising).



- Personalized First Aid kits are advised for boaters with any unique medical needs.
- Person In the Water (PIW) Kits refer to devices to assist in removing someone from the water. To assist in this process, it is recommended that boaters carry extra PFDs on board as well as a life ring (or horseshoe) with a polypropylene line tied to it. A line attached to the PFD or ring thrown to a PIW will provide a means for pulling them back to the vessel. DO NOT use a gaff hook to retrieve a person in the water. The operator should always make sure the propeller is stopped when assisting a person back on board near the stern.

✔ ITEM VI - Inland Approved Visual Distress Signals (VDS)

For boats, 16 feet or more, operating on coastal waters, the Coast Guard requires some means of making a suitable day and night visual distress signal. Between sunset and sunrise, boats less than 16 feet must carry VDS suitable for night use. The type of device and the amount carried is best judged by taking into account the size of the area, and the conditions in which the boat will be operating. Recommended equipment could include approved VDS, even if expired, but in serviceable condition. (Some states require unexpired VDS, even in Inland waters.)







- The visual distress signal (VDS) recommendations for a personal watercraft (PWC) are the same as those for recreational boats. In most cases PWCs will be operating on Inland Waters and are allowed to be operated only during daylight hours. A red or orange cloth located in a storage compartment is recommended as a minimum. Other devices that provide the necessary visibility in daylight could be used.
- If the PWC is operating on, or can be expected to be used on coastal or offshore waters, it must meet the same VDS requirements as stated for other recreational boats to qualify for a decal.

✔ ITEM VII - Capacity Plate

The Capacity Plate contains important information. The operator should clearly understand it. It provides information for the maximum safe limits under ideal sea conditions. Changes in the state of the weather and seas will reduce this capacity.

- If there is no capacity plate on a boat less than 20 feet, the following formula can be used to determine the maximum number of persons that can be safely carried in calm weather:

> Boat length multiplied by boat width divided by 15
> (L x W/15) =
> Number people that can be safely carried in calm waters.

The capacity plate also provides information on the maximum horsepower limits. While the horsepower rating on the capacity label is "advisory" in nature, some states have laws prohibiting any overpowering. Outboard motors with greater horsepower than listed on the capacity plate are possibly in violation of these laws. In addition, most manufacturers will void the warranty if the boat is overpowered. Some insurance companies may cancel policies because of the overpowering. (VEs should be aware of state law applicability.)

✔ ITEM VIII - Discussion Items:

Accident Reports

The operator of any recreational boat is required to file a Boating Accident Report (BAR) if the boat is involved in an accident that results in:

- Loss of life;
- Personal injury which requires medical treatment beyond first aid;
- Damage to the boat and other property exceeding $500 (amount may vary in some states); or
- Complete loss of the boat.
- Boat operators are required to report their accident to state and local authorities in the state where the accident occurred.

Fatal Accidents. Notification is required for fatal accidents. If a person dies or disappears as a result of a recreational boating accident, the nearest state boating authority must be notified. The following information must be provided:

- Date, time and exact location of the accident;
- Name of each person who died or disappeared;
- Number and name of vessel; and
- Name and address of the owner and/or operator.

Reporting Timelines.

- If a person dies, disappears from the boat, or there are injuries requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, a formal report must be filed within 48 hours of the accident with state and local authorities.
- **A formal report must be made within 10 days for accidents involving more than $500 damage or complete loss of a vessel.**

Owner Responsibility

The owner can be held responsible for the safety and condition of their boat even if someone else is at the helm. This is also true if the owner is not on board and someone else has permission to use the boat.

Rendering Assistance.

The master or person in charge of a vessel is required by law to provide assistance that can be safely provided to any individual in danger at sea. Failing to do so could result in fine or imprisonment. The Good Samaritan Act will protect boaters rendering responsible assistance.

Offshore Operation

When operating offshore it is recommended that boaters carry additional equipment beyond the minimum federal requirements. This equipment should include appropriate communications gear, an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), a means to accurately determine the boat's location and an inflatable life raft. In cold waters, an immersion suit should be carried for every person on board.

Boaters should carry communications gear, marine VHF-FM and/or HF transceiver(s) appropriate to the operating area. Cellular phone coverage is available in many coastal areas. While cellular phone coverage may be available, use of the cellular phone should NOT BE CONSIDERED a substitute for VHF-FM marine band radios for emergency purposes. In addition, they do not allow for direct communications with the rescue craft.

Satellite EPIRBs are designed to quickly and reliably alert rescue forces, indicate an accurate distress position, and guide rescue units to the distress scene, even when all other communications fail.



EPIRBs are registered at time of purchase with the name of the vessel, the owner and point of contact information. When activated it provides a signal to aid in rescue operations. While some EPIRBs may provide a GPS position, that is not the primary means of position determination.

Inflatable Life Rafts

These can provide a survival platform for an extended period of time. Be sure the raft is large enough for the number of persons on board. It should be equipped with the appropriate emergency equipment pack and be professionally serviced according to manufacturer's instructions

Immersion Suits

Immersions suits will delay the effects of hypothermia in cold water. They should be stored and maintained according to manufacture's instructions. Boaters should have the immersion suits available when operating in cold water, especially 59 degrees F and below.

Nautical Charts

Nautical Charts provide important information for safely navigating waterways and planning trips. They show the nature and shape of the coast, depths of water, general configuration and character of the bottom, prominent landmarks, port facilities, aids to navigation, marine hazards and other pertinent information. These charts must be constantly maintained to reflect any changes by man or nature. Boaters should use the most up-to-date charts available and, when operating in coastal waters, have the largest scale available.

Charts may be purchased from the National Ocean Service (NOS). For information on a local distributor the owner should call (301) 436-6990 or visit the web at http://www.nos.noaa.gov/

Survival Tips

Cold Water Survival. The sudden immersion in cold water can induce rapid, uncontrolled breathing, cardiac arrest and other physical body conditions, which can result in drowning. Always wearing a PFD will help a person survive in rapid immersion situations. If they are forced to enter the water they should:

- Button up all clothing.
- Cover the head if possible and enter the water slowly.
- Keep the head out of the water if at all possible.



- Assume the H.E.L.P. position (**H**eat **E**scape **L**essing **P**osture).

Hypothermia. Immersion in water speeds the loss of body heat and can lead to hypothermia - the abnormal lowering of internal body temperature. If the boat capsizes it will likely float on or just below the surface. Tell the boater how to reduce the effects of hypothermia by trying to get as much of the body as possible out of the water. (Most small boats built since 1978 are designed to stay afloat even if filled with water.) Keeping the head out of the water will increase the chances of survival.

Remind the boater that it may be possible to revive a drowning victim who has been under water a considerable amount of time and shows no signs of life. They should start CPR immediately and get the victim to a hospital as quickly as possible.

First Aid

Boaters are encouraged to take a first aid training course. These courses provide basic information which will help individuals deal with medical emergencies until professional help can be obtained. Some first aid courses include basic CPR training.

Fueling

Fueling Precautions. To prevent accidents from fueling these rules should be followed:



- Take portable tanks off the vessel before fueling.
- Close all hatches and other openings before fueling.
- Extinguish all smoking materials.
- Turn off engines, all electrical equipment, radios, stoves and other appliances.
- Remove all passengers.
- Keep the fill nozzle in contact with the tank and wipe up any spilled fuel.

After Fueling.

- Open all ports, hatches and doors to ventilate. Run the blower for at least four minutes before starting engine.

- Check the bilge for fuel vapors before starting the engine.

- Do the "sniff test." Make sure there is no gasoline odor anywhere on the boat.

Fuel Management

Boaters should practice the One-Third Rule by using:



One third of the fuel going out;

One third of the fuel to getting back; and

One third of the fuel held in reserve.

Float Plan

The owner or operator should keep a supply of float plan forms on hand. They should leave a copy with a friend, relative or local marina before heading out on the water. In case of an emergency, pertinent information will be readily available to enable them to contact the local marine police or Coast Guard with virtually all of the necessary information. If the boater is delayed and it is not an emergency they should be sure to let them know immediately upon return so the plan can be closed out and any unnecessary and costly search avoided.

> Show the boater an example of a Float Plan in the Federal Requirements pamphlet.

Weather and Sea Conditions

Boaters must always check the local weather forecast before leaving the dock. Besides local media weather reports, ships, marinas and yacht clubs may also display storm-warning flags. Know the signals and heed their warnings. Know how to recognize weather changes when out on the water. If the weather rapidly changes the following precautions should be taken:

- Reduce speed but keep enough power to maintain headway.

- Put on PFDs.

- Turn on navigation running lights.

- If possible head for nearest harbor that is safe to approach.

- Head bow of boat into the waves at about a 45-degree angle.

- Keep bilges free of water.

- Seat passengers on bottom of boat near centerline.

- If the engine fails, the operator should trail a sea anchor on a line from the bow to keep the boat headed into the waves. A metal bucket will work as a sea anchor in an emergency.

Insurance Considerations

Some states require proof of insurance before registering a vessel. The boater should consider the following when purchasing Marine insurance:

- Loss of the boat;

- Loss of the equipment on the boat;

- Protection against liability for personal injury or property damage;

- Medical coverage in case of injury; and

- Cost for transporting the boat (towing, over water or land).

Boaters should talk to an insurance agent for the kind of coverage needed. It can be part of a homeowner's policy or as separate boat insurance coverage. Some insurance companies offer discounts to boaters who take boating safety classes and/or whose boat passes a Vessel Safety Check.

Boating Check List

The boaters check list shown in the Federal Requirements booklet refers boaters to individual items required and/or recommended for a VSC. This is a quick reference for boaters looking for information on specific equipment and should help them to become better informed. The boater is encouraged to use the list as a check-off prior to each trip.

Safe Boating Courses

The Coast Guard Auxiliary, USPS®, and states promote safe boating by conducting boating courses throughout the country. These boating safety courses are designed for the entire family to learn the basics of safe boating practices, and then use their knowledge while boating.

- Coast Guard Auxiliary boating course information can be obtained by calling the U.S. Coast Guard Customer Info-line toll-free number: 1-800-368-5647, or checking the Coast Guard Auxiliary Web site at: **http:\\www.uscgaux.org**

- USPS® Boating and Boat Smart Courses meet the educational requirements for boat operation in most states. Course information and class schedules throughout the United States can be obtained by visiting the USPS® Web site at: **http:\\www.usps.org** or calling the toll-free number: 1-888-367-8777.

- State sponsored boating safety courses. Many states design courses to provide the boater with an overview of the rules and regulations that govern boating, along with providing practical information that will make the boater's time on the water safer and more enjoyable. An educated boater is a safer boater.

- Advertise our Public WEB Site to the public. It is designed specifically to promote Vessel Safety Checks! Encourage a visit to:

http:\\SafetySeal.net

Notes on Chapter 4:

Chapter 5
VSC Resources and Forms

This chapter provides information on resources and forms applicable to the Vessel Safety Check Program.

Federal Requirements and Safety Tips Pamphlet.



- This pamphlet contains all of the federal requirements for recreational boaters plus additional safety recommendations and information beyond boating law.

- It may be given to boaters inquiring about the VSC program even if they are not ready to schedule a VSC. The requirements are also briefly described on Form 204.

- At the completion of a Vessel Safety Check, a copy of the pamphlet, if available, should be given to the owner/operator.

U.S. Coast Guard Infoline.

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains this help desk presence to provide information to the general public about U.S. Coast Guard operations and maritime safety. Known as the U.S. Coast Guard Infoline, it responds to public information requests and specifically supports recreational boating safety

The Infoline operates from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (EST), Monday-Friday.

Infoline Telephone Number:

1-800-368-5647

State Requirements.

State requirements, especially those which might exceed Federal requirements should be kept on hand, and made available to boaters.

Vessel Safety Check (Form 204).

This form is used by the VE while conducting a VSC. After each requirement, recommendation, and discussion item is completed, and the form signed off, a copy should be provided to the boat operator.

CG-5232 - Action Information Notification (AIN).

The CG-5232 is used for questions on matters referring to the VSC program that cannot be resolved at the local or District level. Within the Coast Guard Auxiliary, completed forms should be sent to: Chief, Technical Services Division (DVC-VT) via the chain of leadership and management.

USPS® questions should be routed through the USPS® VSC Committee.

If information about a specific boat is questioned, be sure to include the make, model, HIN, area where boat was examined, and any other description that will help identify the situation.

Notes on Chapter 5:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
U.S. COAST GUARD
CG-5232 (REV.05/00)

VESSEL SAFETY CHECK ACTION INFORMATION NOTIFICATION

(Please Print)

PROBLEM:

- ☐ Difficulty in performing VSC as specified.
- ☐ Misunderstanding of individual requirement.
- ☐ Condition not covered in VE Manual.
- ☐ OTHER (specify

PROBLEM:

- ☐ Federal Requirements.
- ☐ State/Local Requirements
- ☐ Other (specify)

QUESTION: Give as much detail as possible - if boat - what is the HIN Number?_____

COMMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

(Please Print)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY,STATE,ZIP _____

MEMBER NUMBER

SAMPLE

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

IN ACCORDANCE WITH 5 USC 552a(e) (3), THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION PROVIDED TO YOU WHEN SUPPLYING PERSONAL INFORMATION TO THE U.S. COAST GUARD.

1. AUTHORITY WHICH AUTHORIZED THE SOLICITATION OF THE INFORMATION: 14 USC SECTION 821, 822, AND 826.

2 PRINCIPAL PURPOSE(S) FOR WHICH INFORMATION IS INTENDED TO BE USED: TO ADDRESS REPLY TO VSC ACTION INFORMATION NOTIFICATION.

3. THE ROUTINE USES WHICH MAY BE MADE OF THIS INFORMATION: SAME AS ABOVE.

4. WHETHER OR NOT DISCLOSURE OF SUCH INFORMATION IS MANDATORY OR VOLUNTARY (REQUIRED BY LAW OR OPTIONAL) AND THE EFFECT ON THE INDIVIDUAL, IF ANY, OF NOT PROVIDING ALL OR ANY PART OF THE REQUEST INFORMATION: DISCLOSURE OF THE INFORMATION IS VOLUNTARY, BUT NON DISCLOSURE COULD RESULT IN A SLOWER REPLY TO THE VSC ACTION INFORMATION NOTIFICATION FORM.

VESSEL SAFETY CHECK (VSC)

To be completed by a U.S. Coast Guard approved Vessel Examiner.
See the back of this form for a brief explanation of required items.
A Federal Requirements pamphlet is also available.

Owner/Operator has attended a CGAUX, USPS, State or [ ] Boating Safety Class: Yes [ ] No [ ]	**VSC Decal: awarded [ ] not awarded [ ] Number:**
Replaced decal was: Last Year [ ] Outdated [ ] First time [ ]	**Date of VSC:[ ]**
Owner/Operator Name:	Registration or Documentation Number:

VESSEL INFORMATION:

Location of VSC - County: State:	HIN:
Length <16 [ ] 16-25 [ ] 26-39 [ ] >65 [ ]	Area of Operations: Inland [ ] Coastal [ ]
Powered by: Gas [ ] Diesel [ ] Sail [ ] Other [ ]	Type: PWC [ ] Open [ ] Cabin [ ] Other [ ]

VESSEL SAFETY CHECK DECAL REQUIREMENTS

Item	Yes	No	N/A
1. Display of Numbers			
2. Registration/Documentation			
3. Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)			
4. Visual Distress Signals (VDS)			
5. Fire Extinguishers			
6. Ventilation			
7. Backfire Flame Control			
8. Sound Producing Devices/Bell			
9. Navigation Lights			
10. Pollution Placard			
11. MARPOL Trash Placard			
12. Marine Sanitation Devices			
13. Navigation Rules			
14. State and/or Local Requirements			
15. Overall Vessel Condition: **as applies**			
a. Deck Free of Hazards / Clean Bilge			
b. Electrical - Fuel Systems			
c. Galley - Heating Systems			

RECOMMENDED AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Item	Yes	No	NA
(While encouraged, items below are not VSC requirements)			
I. Marine Radio			
II. Dewatering Device & Backup			
III. Mounted Fire Extinguishers			
IV. Anchor & Line for Area			
V. First Aid and PIW Kits (**over)			
VI. Inland Visual Distress Signals			
VII. Capacity/Certificate of Compliance			
VIII. Discussion Items: as applies			
a. Accident Reporting - Owner Responsibility			
b. Offshore Operations			
c. Nautical Charts / Navigation Aids			
d. Survival Tips / First Aid			
e. Fueling / Fuel Management			
f. Float Plan / Weather & Sea Conditions			
g. Insurance Considerations			
h. Boating Check List			
i. Safe Boating Classes			

SAMPLE

I certify that I have personally examined this vessel and find it meets the above requirements at the time of this Vessel Safety Check. I am a qualified Vessel Examiner of the: CGAUX [ ], USPS [ ], State of _____ [ ], or _____ [ ]

Printed Name of the Examiner _____ **Examiner Number** _____

Examiner Signature _____ **Telephone Number** _____

Additional Comments: *This is not an official boarding for law enforcement purposes. It is recommended that you correct any deficiencies noted. This checklist is furnished for your information. There is no assumption of liability of any kind for advice given or opinions expressed in connection to this examination. By accepting the Vessel Safety Check decal you are pledging to maintain your boat and equipment to the standard of safety exhibited during this examination.* **Please remove the Vessel Safety Check decal if the boat is sold or no longer meets these requirements.** **SAFE BOATING**

ANSC7012 (7-00) USCGAUX Form 204 Previous edition (1-00) may be used

Back of ANSC7012 (7/00)

Brief Explanation of VSC Required Items:

❑ **1. NUMBERING:** The boat's registration number must be permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the boat characters must be plain, vertical, block style, not less than three (3) inches high, and in a color oontrasting with the background. A space or hyphen must separate the letters from the numbers. Place State validation sticker according to State policy. (e.g. **FL 1234 AB or FL4234-AB**)

❑ **2. REGISTRATION/DOCUMENTATION:** Registration or Documentation papers must be on board and available. Documentation numbers must be permanently marked on a visible part of the interior structure. The documented boat's name and hailing Port must be displayed on the exterior hull in letters not less than 4 inches in height.

❑ **3. PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFDs):** Acceptable PFDs (also known as Life Jackets) must be U.S. Coast Guard approved and in good, serviceable condition. A wearable PFD of suitable size is required for the each person on the boat. Children must have properly fitted PFDs designed for children. Wearable PFDs shall be *"readily accessible."* Boats 16 Feet or longer, must also have one Type IV (throwable) device, which shall be *"immediately available."* PFDs shall NOT be stored in unopened plastic packaging. For Personal Watercraft riders, the PFD must be worn. An impact rating is recommended, but not required.

❑ **4. VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS:** Recreational boats 16 feet and over used on coast waters or the Great Lakes are required to carry a minimum of either 1) three day and three night pyrotechnic devices, 2) one day non-pyrotechnic device (flag) and one night non-pyrotechnic device (auto SOS light) or 3) a combination of 1) and 2). Recreational boats less than 16 feet on coastal waters or the Great Lakes need only carry night visual distress signals when operating from sunset to sunrise.

It is recommended, but not required, that boats operating on inland waters should have some means of making a suitable day and night distress signal. The number and type of signals is best judged by considering conditions under which the boat will be operating.

❑ **5. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:** Fire extinguishers are required if one of the following conditions exists: 1) Inboard engine(s); 2) Double bottom hulls not completely sealed or not completely filled with flotation materials 3) Closed living space 4) Closed stowage compartments that contain flammable materials or 5) Permanently installed fuel tanks. Recreational boats less than 26 feet, and propelled by outboard motors are NOT required to have fire extinguishers unless one or more of the conditions (2-5) listed above applies. *NOTE: Fire extinguishers must be readily accessible and verified as serviceable.*

Minimum number of extinguishers required

Boat Length	*No Fixed System*	*With Fixed System*
Less than 26'	**one B-1**	**0**
26' to less than 40'	**two B-1 or one B-2**	**one B-1**
40' to 65'	**three B-1 or one B-1 & one B-2**	**two B-1 or one B-**2

❑ **6. VENTILATION:** Boats with gasoline engines in closed compartments, built after 1 August 1980 must have a powered ventilation system. Those built prior to that date must have natural or powered ventilation. Boats with closed fuel tank compartments built after 1 August 1978 must meet requirements by displaying a "certificate of compliance." Boats built before that date must have either natural or powered ventilation in the fuel tank compartment.

❑ **7. BACKFIRE FLAME ARRESTER:** All gasoline powered inboard/outboard or inboard motor boats must be equipped with an approved backfire flame control device.

❑ **8. SOUND PRODUCING DEVICES:** To comply with Navigation Rules and for distress signaling purposes all boats must carry a sound producing device (whistle, horn, siren, etc.) capable of a 4-second blast audible for ½ mile. Boats larger than 39.4 ft. are also required to have a bell (see Navigation Rules.)

❑ **9. NAVIGATION LIGHTS:** All boats must be able to display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise and in conditions of reduced visibility. Boats 16 feet or more in length must have properly installed, working navigation lights and an all- around anchor light capable of being lit independently from the red/green/white "running" lights.

❑ **10. POLLUTION PLACARD:** Boats 26 feet and over with a machinery compartment must display an oily waste "pollution" placard.

❑ **11. MARPOL TRASH PLACARD:** Boats 26 feet and over in length, operating in U.S. navigable waters, must display a "MARPOL" trash placard. Oceangoing boats 40 feet and over must also have a written trash disposal plan available onboard.

❑ **12. MARINE SANITATION DEVICE:** Any installed toilet must be a Coast Guard approved device. Overboard discharge outlets must be capable of being sealed.

❑ **13. NAVIGATION RULES:** Boats 39.4 feet and over must have on board a current copy of the Navigation Rules.

❑ **14. STATE AND LOCAL REQUIREMENTS:** These requirements must be met before the "Vessel Safety Check" decal can be awarded. A boat must meet the requirements of the state in which it is being examined.

❑ **15. OVERALL BOAT CONDITION: As it applies to this Vessel. Including, but not limited to:**

a. Deck free of hazards and clean bilge - The boat must be free from fire hazards, in good overall condition, with bilges reasonably clean and visible hull structure generally sound. The use of automobile parts on boat engines is not acceptable. The engine horsepower must not exceed that shown on the capacity plate.

b. Electrical and Fuel Systems: The electrical system must be protected by fuses or manual reset circuit breakers. Switches and fuse panels must be protected from rain or water spray. Wiring must be in good condition, properly installed and with no exposed areas or deteriorated insulation. Batteries must be secured and terminals covered to prevent accidental arcing.. **If installed,** self-circling or kill switch mechanism must be in proper working order. All PWCs **require** an operating self circling or kill switch mechanism.

Fuel Systems - Portable fuel tanks (normally 7 gallon capacity or less) must be constructed of non-breakable material and free of corrosion and leaks. All vents must be capable of being closed. The tank must be secured and have a vapor-tight, leak-proof cap. Each permanent fuel tank must be properly ventilated.

c. Galley and Heating Systems - System and fuel tanks must be properly secured with no flammable materials nearby.

I - VIII. RECOMMENDED AND DISCUSSION ITEMS: **(Not required for the award of the "Vessel Safety Check" decal).** For the very best boaters, we recommend these additional items. Meeting these requirements reflects your concern for Boating Safety.

**** Person in the Water (PIW) kit consists of one extra wearable PFD and a throwable type IV PFD w/line.**

SAMPLE

For more information: Ask your Vessel Examiner,
Visit http://SafetySeal.net or
Call the Boating Safety Hotline - 800-368-5647

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VESSEL SAFETY CHECK
THIS VESSEL HAS BEEN
CHECKED FOR SAFETY
CGAX1234USPS