



# VESSEL SAFETY CHECK MANUAL



COMDTINST M16796.8A

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COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION M16796.8A

Subj: VESSEL SAFETY CHECK MANUAL

Ref: (a) Navigation Rules, International - Inland, COMDTINST M16672.2 (series)  
(b) Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This Manual prescribes the policies and standards for the administration of the Vessel Safety Check program. 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. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commanders, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements shall comply with the provisions of this Manual. Internet release is authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The Vessel Safety Check Manual, COMDTINST M16796.8, and the Auxiliary Vessel Examiner Manual, COMDTINST M16796.2E, are cancelled.
4. DISCUSSION. In accordance with reference (a), this Manual is to provide guidance to train and qualify members of participating organizations as Vessel Examiners, and also serves as a technical and policy reference for Vessel Examiners already certified.
5. DISCLAIMER. This Manual is guidance and is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

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6. MAJOR CHANGES. None
7. IMPACT ASSESSMENT. None
8. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.
  - a. The development of this Manual and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office and are categorically excluded under current USCG categorical exclusion (CE) #33 from further environmental analysis, in accordance with Section 2.B.2 and Figure 2-1 of the National Environmental Impacts, COMDTINST M16475.1 (series).
  - b. This directive will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policies in this Manual must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Policy NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, DHS and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.
9. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Manual. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) websites. Internet: <http://www.uscg.mil/directives/>, and CG Portal: <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/library/directives/SitePages/Home.aspx>
10. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This Manual has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no further records scheduling requirements in accordance with Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3101 et seq, NARA requirements, and Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). This policy does not have any significant or substantial change to existing records management requirements.
11. FORMS/REPORTS. The forms called for in this Manual are available in USCG Electronic Forms on the Standard Workstation or on the Internet: <http://uscg.mil/forms/>; CGPortal at: <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/CGForms>. Additional forms are available on the internet at: <http://forms.cgaux.org/forms1.php>.
12. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Individuals may recommend changes by writing to: COMMANDANT (CG-BSX-23), ATTN: RECREATIONAL BOATING PRODUCTION ASSURANCE BRANCH, U.S. COAST GUARD STOP 7501, 2703 MLK JR AVE SE, WASHINGTON, DC 20593-7501.

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Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy

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## CHAPTER 1. THE VESSEL SAFETY CHECK PROGRAM

### A. PURPOSE

1. This Manual is guidance; it is not a rule or regulation. It is intended to provide operational guidance for vessel examiners and is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard. Although this Manual refers to statutes and regulations, those references are provided to assist vessel examiners to educate members of the public who voluntarily apply for a vessel safety check.
2. This Manual is intended as a reference guide for vessel examiners. This chapter, along with chapter 6, gives the vessel examiner administrative guidance while chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide details on conducting vessel safety checks.
3. The vessel safety check 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 vessel examiners.
4. Using the information in this Manual, the vessel examiner will be able to 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.
5. For Coast Guard Auxiliary members, the program also includes Auxiliary Operational Surface Facility Inspections.

### B. DEFINITIONS

1. **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.
2. **Boat Operator:** Either the owner or the operator, the person operating the boat at the time a Vessel Safety Check is being conducted.
3. **Certificate of Documentation:** Issued by the Coast Guard, it serves as evidence of ownership and indicates all trade endorsements under which the vessel is entitled to operate. The certificate must remain on the vessel whenever it is operational for presentation to law enforcement officials.
4. **Certification:** The manufacturer's statement that the boat complies with applicable Coast Guard safety or manufacturing standards in effect on the date of manufacture.
5. **Coast Guard:** The principal federal agency for maritime law enforcement and maritime safety. For the purpose of this Manual, the term Coast Guard also means U. S. Coast Guard.

6. **Coast Guard Auxiliary:** Civilian volunteer component of the Coast Guard that advocates boating safety. For the purpose of this Manual, the term Coast Guard Auxiliary also means U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.
7. **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.
8. **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.
9. **Director of Auxiliary:** Also known as the Regional Director of Auxiliary is charged with the active promotion and administration of Auxiliary affairs in a specific Coast Guard District.
10. **Immediately Available:** Instant access to the device to respond to an emergency.
11. **Inland Waters:** means the navigable waters of the United States shoreward of the navigational demarcation lines dividing the high seas from harbors, rivers and other inland waters of the United States and the waters of the Great Lakes on the United States side of the International Boundary.
12. **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.
13. **Personal Watercraft:** 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.
14. **Readily Accessible:** Reached in a reasonable amount of time.
15. **Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE):** In some cases, this approval designation is accepted in place of U. S. Coast Guard approval.
16. **State Number:** Number issued by a state issuing authority for the purposes of identifying a vessel as found on the vessel registration. This does not include an official number issued by the Coast Guard for documentation purposes.
17. **Underwriters Laboratory (UL):** In some cases, this approval designation is accepted in place of U. S. Coast Guard approval.
18. **United States Power Squadrons®:** Private, non-profit, non-governmental, volunteer organization dedicated to self-education of its members and boating safety education of the public.



19. **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.
20. **Visual Distress Signal:** A visual, emergency signaling device approved or certified by the Coast Guard. These include both pyrotechnic and non-pyrotechnic devices including the launcher.
21. **Vessel Examiner:** A trained, qualified boating safety volunteer or employee who has been certified by the appropriate authority for their respective organization.
22. **Vessel Safety Check:** A voluntary check of vessel compliance with all applicable federal and state laws.

#### C. SCOPE

1. 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.
2. A vessel safety check is not a punitive report, but rather a courtesy safety examination to promote boating safety and awareness. Therefore, vessel examiners do not have any law enforcement authority.
3. 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.
4. A vessel safety check does not prohibit the right of any federal, state, or local law enforcement authority to verify the presence and condition of safety equipment.

#### D. PROMOTING THE VESSEL SAFETY CHECK PROGRAM

1. Vessel examiners should play an active role in promoting the vessel safety check program among recreational boaters and encouraging boat owners and operators to have their boats examined.
2. Vessel examiners should work with other officers in their local units who are in charge of boating safety education, publicity, member training, and recruiting to ensure that their unit's vessel safety check programs are publicized, that vessel examiners are given information about boating safety classes, and membership opportunities that examiners in turn can pass along to the boat owners they meet. Unit officers (or individual vessel examiners) should promote the vessel safety check program by posting flyers at marinas, boating supply stores, and by seeking to publicize these opportunities via newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet.
3. In all cases, publicity about the vessel safety check program should emphasize that examinations are free of charge and "voluntary"; that is, that any discrepancies will not be reported to law enforcement authorities and that vessel safety check decals are a good way to show the public that the boat owner is complying with boating safety regulations.

4. One of the most efficient ways to promote vessel safety checks among boat owners is to ask marina managers for permission to schedule a vessel safety check day at their marinas (perhaps an entire Saturday, Sunday, or holiday) during which vessel examiners will conduct examinations for any boat owner who is interested. In some cases, the process can be made more orderly by posting a timesheet so that boaters can sign up for a specific time-slot for the vessel safety check.
5. Some Auxiliary and Power Squadrons units combine to offer joint, area-wide vessel safety check services at their annual National Safe Boating Week events each spring. Vessel examiners interested in participating should call or e-mail the coordinators of such events early in the planning process so they can be included in the effort.
6. Vessel examiners can also visit yacht clubs, and public boat ramps and invite boaters individually to participate in a vessel safety check. For private marinas, clubs, and boat ramps, the vessel examiner should first secure the permission of the manager to approach boaters about vessel safety checks before entering the slip area. Yacht clubs often permit vessel examiners to appear briefly at a regular meeting to promote the vessel safety check program.
7. Finally, vessel examiners should make sure that their names and contact information are included in the data base of the vessel safety check website that is maintained jointly by the Auxiliary and the Power Squadrons. The address (URL) of the website is <http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=V-DEPT&category=i-want-a-vsc>. Boat owners can call up the website, fill out an online vessel safety check request form, and ask to be contacted by a certified vessel examiner who lives near their vessel. Some division and local-unit websites list vessel examiners who offer vessel safety checks in their areas. Vessel examiners should maintain a regular schedule for providing vessel safety checks and make themselves available to set up appointments for individual vessel examinations promptly when they are contacted by boaters. Failure to respond promptly to an individual request for a vessel safety check can discourage boaters from participating in the program and hurt the effort significantly over time.
8. Vessel examiners should remember that even if a vessel appears unlikely to meet applicable federal and state boating safety requirements, they should still invite the owner or operator to have the boat examined. The vessel safety check provides an opportunity for boaters to learn more about what safety equipment their boat requires, and is strictly a courtesy examination, without consequences for the boat owner if the vessel fails to pass.
9. Vessel examiners should be prepared to follow up the vessel safety check by talking with owners or operators when appropriate. Boat owners should understand that if their vessels fail to qualify for a vessel safety check sticker, the vessel examiner can return to examine items that had been listed as discrepancies after the boat owner has corrected the problems.

**E. VESSELS ELIGIBLE FOR A VESSEL SAFETY CHECK**

1. Generally, any recreational boat, if requested by the owner or operator, is eligible for a vessel safety check. However, a vessel examiner is prohibited from performing a vessel safety check on any boat in which the vessel examiner has any ownership interest.
2. Recreational boats less than 65 feet may be checked for the purpose of issuing a vessel safety check decal if in compliance with all applicable regulations.
3. Auxiliary members' vessels not offered for use as an operational facility, may be issued a vessel safety check decal and are eligible to fly the Blue Auxiliary Ensign when the vessel displays a current year vessel safety check decal.
4. A paddle craft need not be registered to receive a vessel safety check and decal unless it is a state or local requirement.
5. Rental boats are eligible for a vessel safety check. Vessel examiners are encouraged to coordinate with owners of rental vessels in order to conduct vessel safety checks on their vessels.
6. Inflatable craft are eligible for a vessel safety check, provided they meet the following requirements:
  - a. Be fully inflated at the time of the check.
  - b. Have a minimum of three separate air chambers that are not interconnected.
  - c. Have an installed, rigid transom; a strap on motor mount is not sufficient.
  - d. Vessel registration numbers must be properly displayed and firmly attached.
  - e. All vessel safety check requirements must be met as applicable.

**F. BOATS OWNED BY FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

1. At the request of a representative of the government agency concerned, a vessel examiner may conduct a vessel safety check on the following categories of vessels under 65 feet:
2. Government owned recreational boats.
3. Government owned non-recreational vessels or boats (such as patrol boats).
4. Requests for examination of federal, state, or local government agency boats must be made by an agent of the government agency involved. An experienced vessel examiner should be assigned to perform the vessel safety check.

G. BOATS OWNED BY SCOUT GROUPS - Boats owned by the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, or Sea Cadets may be given a vessel safety check, if requested by scouting leaders. The boat must meet the requirements of the vessel safety check program.

H. VESSELS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR SAFETY CHECK

1. A craft of experimental design.
2. Vessels and boats answering the description of work boats (e.g., tugs, icebreaking boats, dredges, derrick barges, and similar craft).
3. Submersibles, amphibious vehicles, inflatable emergency life rafts, life boats, or surface-effect machines.
4. An unmanned water-ski towing craft and motorized surfboards.
5. Vessels registered in countries other than the United States or its territories.
6. Uninspected commercial vessels (e.g., uninspected passenger vessels and uninspected towing vessels).

I. ACTIVITIES BEYOND VESSEL SAFETY CHECK - The vessel safety check 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.

J. MANUFACTURER PRODUCT DEFECT NOTIFICATION

1. The following information is provided regarding 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 visiting the Coast Guard Boating Safety Division website: [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org). The product notification and recall program allows the manufacturer to correct noncompliance with a Coast Guard standard or remedy a safety defect.
2. A safety defect is a design or performance discrepancy which creates a substantial risk of personal injury.
3. Noncompliance is the failure of a manufacturer to construct a product in accordance with a published Coast Guard safety standard or regulation.
4. The defect notification must contain the following information:
  - a. The name and address of the manufacturer.
  - b. Data or other information necessary to identify the watercraft or associated equipment affected by the defect or noncompliance.
  - c. A clear description of the defect or failure to comply with an applicable standard.
  - d. An evaluation of the hazard that can reasonably be expected to result from the defect or failure to comply.

- e. Examiners shall not notify the manufacturer directly, but forward any suspected manufacturer defect to the Office of Boating Safety Product Assurance Branch, Coast Guard Headquarters, or the District Recreational Boating Safety Specialist.

#### K. RELATIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

1. Coast Guard personnel are encouraged to work in conjunction with vessel examiners to promote the vessel safety check program. Displaying the vessel safety check decal indicates that, at the time of the vessel safety check, the recreational vessel complied with the applicable safety regulations and equipment and that the owner/operator exhibited an interest in recreational boating safety. However, a vessel that has a vessel safety check decal is not exempt from enforcement actions for obvious violations, the observance of unsafe practices, and boardings for random law enforcement purposes.
2. State and Local Enforcement Officials
  - a. A close working relationship with state and local enforcement personnel is essential to an effective vessel safety check 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.
  - b. 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.
  - c. Should a difference of opinion occur between a vessel examiner and a law enforcement officer over safety regulations, the vessel examiner shall defer to the law enforcement officer.

L. DISTRICT SUPERVISION OF VESSEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM - Auxiliary District Commodores, the United States Power Squadrons®, vessel safety check Chairpersons, and regional supervisors of other participating organizations, shall ensure that the vessel safety check program is carried out as outlined in this Manual.

M. VESSEL SAFETY CHECKS OUTSIDE OF THE HOME DISTRICT - Vessel examiners may perform vessel safety checks on boats anywhere in the states and territories of the United States. Visiting Auxiliarists and Power Squadrons' members should contact local Auxiliary or local Power Squadrons' personnel to familiarize themselves with local requirements, conditions and plans, and to coordinate their efforts with those of the District in which they are visiting. Provisions dealing with the portability of qualifications as described in section 8.B. of the Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series) dealing with the portability of qualifications apply for all Auxiliary vessel examiners.

N. VESSEL EXAMINER QUALIFICATION

1. Initial Qualification: For initial qualification as a vessel examiner, trainees must take and pass the current vessel examiner qualification examination. This examination is an open book exam with a three hour time limit and a passing score of 90%. Auxiliarists must also successfully complete Basically Qualified (BQ) status requirements identified in section 8.B. of the Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series) in order to qualify as a vessel examiner.
2. Trainees must satisfactorily conduct five vessel safety checks and/or Auxiliary surface facility inspections under the observation of a certified vessel examiner. The Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 must be used for this purpose.
3. During the qualification process, the certified vessel examiner trainer is credited with the five vessel safety checks performed.
4. Annual Certification Procedures: To remain certified, vessel examiners must complete at least five vessel safety checks (passing or failing) and/or Auxiliary surface facility inspections each calendar year. Auxiliarists must also successfully complete specified workshops as part of their annual certification procedures when mandated in accordance with section 8.B. of the Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series).
5. Recertification Procedures: If any qualified vessel examiner fails to perform the annual certification procedures within the last year, they must complete two satisfactory vessel safety checks, as a trainee, under the supervision of a certified vessel examiner utilizing the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012. Only the certified vessel examiner receives the credit for the two recertification vessel safety checks. The Auxiliarist must then complete the annual certification procedures to retain certification for the following year.
6. If a vessel examiner fails to perform the annual certification procedures for five consecutive years, that member must meet the full initial qualification criteria to regain qualification.
7. A fundamental principle of the vessel safety check is that no law enforcement action will be taken if violations of boating safety laws are discovered during the vessel safety

check; 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 vessel safety checks. The performance of vessel safety checks by an Auxiliary or Power Squadrons member who is a law enforcement officer, even in an off duty status, can create a conflict of interest. Auxiliary or Power Squadrons members who are full or part-time law enforcement officers may not perform vessel safety checks 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 Squadrons as appropriate.





## CHAPTER 2. CONDUCTING A VESSEL SAFETY CHECK

A. INTRODUCTION - A vessel examiner conducting a vessel safety check must pay careful attention to the safety equipment carried on board the recreational boat that is being examined and to the condition of the gear and of the vessel itself. He or she also must maintain a courteous demeanor and positive attitude aimed at encouraging boat owners and operators to become more aware of applicable federal and state boating regulations and take steps to ensure that their vessels are in compliance. This chapter outlines the procedures the vessel examiner should follow in conducting vessel safety checks.

### B. UNIFORM

1. Whether they are members of the Auxiliary or the Power Squadrons, vessel examiners shall wear the appropriate uniform or prescribed clothing when conducting scheduled vessel safety checks or participating in a Vessel Safety Check Day event.
2. The Uniform of the Day for Auxiliarists performing vessel safety checks is the Operational Dress Uniform (ODU). The optional vessel examiner polo shirt or the hot weather uniform prescribed in the Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series) may be worn while conducting vessel safety checks.
3. Auxiliarists shall wear a life jacket while conducting vessel safety checks on vessels that are in the water, and are encouraged to do so during classroom training to promote their use among the boating community.
4. When more than one vessel examiner from the same organization are performing vessel safety checks at the same location, all participating vessel examiners should wear the same uniform.

### C. RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT AND FORMS

1. Note pad and pen.
2. A supply of ANSC Forms pertaining to vessel safety checks, including:
  - a. 7012 Vessel Safety Check.7012A Paddle Craft Vessel Safety Check.
  - b. 7003 Vessel Facility Inspection/Offer for Use (for Auxiliarists only).
  - c. 7008 Personal Watercraft Facility Inspection/Offer for Use (for Auxiliarists only).
  - d. 7038 Vessel Examiner Activities Report.
3. Vessel safety check decals.
4. Flashlight bright enough to illuminate an engine compartment or equipment locker.
5. A copy of COLREGS, or *International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea*, known informally as the rules of the road for mariners.

6. A copy of the latest state and local boating laws, rules, and safety regulations.
7. A copy of *A Boater's Guide to the Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats*.
8. Pamphlets listing local boating related classes and how to register for them.
9. Pamphlets describing local boating organizations.
10. A razor blade scraper to remove the residue from previous vessel safety check decals.

**D. PROVIDING BOATING SAFETY INFORMATION**

1. During the vessel safety check, the vessel examiner should discuss applicable federal and state boating safety rules as part of an effort to make boaters more aware of them.
2. While conducting the vessel safety check, the vessel examiner should point out the availability of the many boating safety related classes offered by Auxiliary and Power Squadrons units, both online and in classroom courses, by state agencies, and other boating organizations.
3. Here are some of the topics that a vessel examiner may want to consider discussing with a boat owner or operator:
  - a. The operator must be aware of the navigation rules and how they apply in the case of the vessel being inspected.
  - b. The operator must comply with posted speed limits and no-wake restrictions, particularly when the vessel is near moorings or proceeding through an anchorage.
  - c. It is illegal to tie up to any buoy, light, day beacon, or other aid to navigation owned or maintained by the federal or state government.
  - d. Small boats are advised to keep out of the way of large vessels even in cases where the smaller boat is the stand on vessel (has the right of way).
  - e. For vessels operating offshore or on open waters such as large bays or lakes, it is recommended that boaters carry a DSC VHF-FM radio that is properly registered with a MMSI number and connected to a GPS device.
  - f. When a boat is in danger of flooding or capsizing, it is recommended that all persons on board put on life jackets and stay with the boat. Ideally, all persons on board should wear life jackets whenever the vessel is underway.
  - g. Boaters that witness or are in close proximity to a boating accident are required to stop and render assistance to the extent that they can do so without endangering their own vessel, crewmembers, or passengers. When an accident occurs, it shall be reported to authorities as required by federal, state, or local laws and regulations. If two boats are involved, the operators must provide one another with information about their vessels and the persons on board.

- h. Federal law requires that reports be filed with the appropriate state agency regarding any boating accident that results in death; injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid; damage totaling \$2,000 or more to a vessel or other property; complete loss of a vessel; or the disappearance of a person under circumstances that indicates death or injury is likely.

**NOTE:** Some states require reports on damage of less than \$2,000. Vessel examiners should be aware of the state's requirements. In cases involving deaths, disappearance, or injuries requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, local and state authorities must be notified within 48 hours. Reports on other accidents must be reported within 10 days. Each operator also must file a Recreational Boating Accident Report, Form CG-3865.

- i. Boat owners should ensure that any engine parts or equipment they purchase is designed for the boating environment. The use of automobile parts in marine engines could cause serious problems, including fire or explosion.

#### E. CONDUCTING THE VESSEL SAFETY CHECK

1. When a vessel examiner approaches a boat to conduct a vessel safety check, he or she should ask permission to come aboard before actually boarding the vessel. The vessel examiner should then identify him/herself, outline briefly what the vessel safety check involves, and confirm that the boat owner or operator would like to go ahead with the examination. In describing the vessel safety check, the vessel examiner should emphasize that the exercise is voluntary and that deficiencies will not be reported to the Coast Guard or other law enforcement authorities. The vessel examiner should make it clear that the boat owner or operator must be on board during the entire examination to answer questions and discuss the results of the vessel safety check.
2. It is preferable to conduct a vessel safety check when the boat is in the water, either dockside or in a slip, and at normal trim and adequate freeboard. However, it is permissible to perform the examination while a boat is ashore, on a trailer, on jack stands in a boat yard, or in the yard or driveway of the owner's residence.
3. When the boat is ashore, it should be in a safe location where it will not impede vehicle or pedestrian traffic or pose a danger to the boat owner or vessel examiner. If the vessel is on a trailer, vessel examiners should ensure that it is properly secured before they step aboard.
4. The vessel examiner should next go through the boat, following the checklist of equipment and applicable federal and state boating laws contained in the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 (or, in the case of paddle boats, Paddle Craft Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012A).

**NOTE:** The requirements are described in detail in Chapters 3 and 5 of this Manual. For each item, the vessel examiner should ask the boat owner or operator to point out where the equipment is installed or stowed, and where necessary, remove it from a compartment or mounting and give it to the vessel examiner for inspection. The vessel examiner should then point out whether the equipment meets federal and state requirements and check the

appropriate box on the list. If the item is not acceptable, the vessel examiner should explain to the boat owner or operator why it is not acceptable and what must be done to bring the boat into compliance.

F. LIMITATION OF THE VESSEL SAFETY CHECK

1. The vessel safety check is limited to the general condition of the vessel and the installation of safety equipment for recreational boats required by applicable federal and state laws or regulations.
2. For example, the vessel examiner is not expected to take exact measurements while conducting a vessel safety check. In most cases, the length of the vessel is indicated on the state registration or Coast Guard Certificate of Documentation.
3. The vessel examiner also shall not attempt to discover spots of dry rot or other deteriorated areas that are not readily apparent to the eye. However, obvious discrepancies that might adversely affect the safety of the boat do fall within the scope of the vessel safety check and should be examined. Examples are deteriorated fastenings, broken fittings, and defective hoses, deteriorated connections, loosened planking, or cracked ribs.
4. Under no circumstance will vessel examiner perform the following activities:
  - a. Determine measurements, such as length or beam.
  - b. Align shafting or motor mounts.
  - c. Calibrate sounding devices or speed indicators.
  - d. Calibrate electronic devices.
  - e. Adjust a compass and compute deviation tables.
  - f. Calibrate or check tables showing the ratio of engine revolutions per minute to speed.

G. CRITERIA FOR A SATISFACTORY VESSEL SAFETY CHECK

1. A boat qualifies for a vessel safety check decal if it carries all the required equipment noted on the appropriate Auxiliary vessel safety check form, if the equipment meets U. S. Coast Guard standards, and is in proper working order. Moreover, all safety equipment, from life jackets and fire extinguishers to flares and other distress signals, must be properly stowed. Life jackets and other equipment must bear a legible stamp or label indicating they have been approved by the U. S. Coast Guard. Refer to later chapters for specific items requiring identifiable markings. The boat itself must be in reasonably good condition. (See details in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this Manual.)
2. In discussing the results of the vessel safety check, the vessel examiner shall inform the operator that items listed on the right side of the vessel safety check form are strictly advisory and not formally required by federal or state regulations, and that failure to carry them does not preclude the issuance of a vessel safety check decal.

3. Along with determining whether the boat meets applicable federal and state requirements, the vessel examiner shall also take care to ensure that the vessel is properly equipped with items mandated by state regulations.
4. If a vessel does not meet federal and state requirements, it fails the vessel safety check, and the vessel examiner is obliged to tell the boat owner or operator what the deficiencies are and explain what is needed to correct them.
5. When the vessel safety check has been completed, the vessel examiner shall give the owner or operator a copy of the completed Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012, Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012A, and a copy of the Coast Guard brochure entitled A Boater's Guide to the Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats.
6. If a boat fails to qualify for a vessel safety check decal following the initial examination, the vessel examiner can still award the decal if the owner corrects the deficiencies within 24 hours and the vessel examiner can verify it within that time period.

**NOTE:** The vessel examiner may report the follow up vessel safety check as a separate examination, even if it is performed on the same day as the original one.

#### H. AWARDING A DECAL

1. If a vessel examiner finds that a boat is in compliance with applicable federal and state boating laws and regulations listed on the vessel safety check form, he or she shall award the vessel safety check decal to the vessel's owner or operator and ensure that it is immediately affixed to a portion of the boat where it will be readily visible to law enforcement authorities.

**NOTE:** The vessel examiner shall not give the decal to the boat owner to apply at a later date; such action could open the way for possible fraud if the decal were placed on another boat.

2. Decals are usually affixed to a permanent piece of equipment on the boat, such as on the lower forward corner of a portside window or on the lower corner of the port side of the windshield, so it does not interfere with the operator's vision. If no window is available, the decal may be affixed to the dashboard or other suitable location. On sailboats, the decal may be affixed to the lower port side of the main mast. In any case, the decal should not be attached to easily removable equipment.
3. Before attaching the new decal, the owner/operator should remove any decals from previous years. If that proves difficult, the new decal should be placed directly over the old one so it masks the previous decal.

**NOTE:** The vessel safety check is issued only to the current owner or operator of the boat, and is not valid if the vessel is sold or transferred to a new owner. Should the boat be re-titled, the seller must remove the decal and advise the buyer to schedule a new vessel safety check.

4. Each Auxiliary or Power Squadrons district should establish proper accounting procedures to record the dates and names of vessels and owners whenever a vessel safety check decal is awarded.

## CHAPTER 3. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE VESSEL SAFETY CHECK DECAL

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. To qualify for a vessel safety check decal, a recreational boat must meet applicable federal and state boating safety requirements for registration and numbering; for safety equipment and compliance with environmental regulations; and for good condition of the vessel and the gear it carries. The responsibility of the vessel examiner is twofold. First, the vessel examiner must determine whether the boat meets those federal and state requirements. Second, he or she should use the vessel safety check as an opportunity to carry out the boater education missions of the U.S. Coast Guard, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the U.S. Power Squadrons to help make boaters aware of safety regulations and preferred boating safety practices.
2. This chapter provides the vessel examiner with the information that he or she needs to conduct the vessel safety check properly. It covers each of the items required for a vessel safety check decal as they are listed on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012. Instructions and guidance for making boaters aware of the “recommended and discussion” items on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 are contained in Chapter 4. Guidance for conducting vessel safety checks on paddle craft is provided in Chapter 5.
3. This Manual uses a set format for each of the required items.
  - a. First, each item is numbered and titled just as it appears on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012.
  - b. (Example: ITEM #1 - DISPLAY OF REGISTRATION NUMBERS).
  - c. Second, in a section labeled Current Regulations, the required item in the vessel safety checks checklist is summarized and spelled out, citing the section of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) in which it is described. This enables the vessel examiner to cite the legal reference for each requirement. (Vessel examiners also should compile a list of applicable regulations in their states and be able to show boaters where they can find each requirement in an official state document).
  - d. Third, where appropriate, vessel examiners will find a section labeled Background for Vessel Examiners that provides vessel examiners with information about specific items needed to understand the requirement more fully. This material is provided to help the vessel examiner and the boater understand what is meant by various provisions of the law; it is not intended to replace the language in the regulation.
  - e. Fourth, for each item the booklet presents a section labeled Procedures for Vessel Examiners to follow in verifying that the vessel they are examining meets the requirements for the particular requirement listed on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012.

- f. Finally, where appropriate, in a section labeled Information for Boaters, vessel examiners will find additional comments, suggestions, and best practices followed by knowledgeable boaters and recommendations from boating safety specialists. These comments are presented solely to help the vessel examiner pass along to vessel operators additional information about preferred boating safety practices, the boater education objective of a vessel safety check. Vessel examiners shall not require that boaters meet these suggestions or practices in order to qualify for the vessel safety check decal. Qualifying for a vessel safety check decal depends solely on whether the vessel meets the requirements listed on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012.

#### 4. Terminology

- a. This chapter and the wording throughout this Manual are written to make careful use of the words *shall*, *must*, *should*, and *may*.
- b. Where the word *shall* appears in the text, it means that vessel examiners are specifically required to take a particular action. (By the same token, the phrase *shall not* means they are prohibited from taking that action.) For example: “At the end of each vessel safety check, vessel examiners *shall* give the operator of the vessel a copy of the completed Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012.” That means the vessel examiner is required to do so, according to the procedures for conducting a vessel safety check that have been promulgated by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- c. The word *must* is used to signify that a vessel has to carry a specific piece of equipment, or that the equipment has to be labeled or used in a specific way in order to meet U.S. Coast Guard standards and to qualify for a vessel safety check decal. Example: “To qualify, a life jacket must be in good and serviceable condition and contain a label showing that it has been approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.”
- d. When the word *should* is used, it means that the procedure or option that follows it is strongly recommended by the U.S. Coast Guard as a preferred boating safety practice, but is not required for the vessel to qualify for a vessel safety check decal. Vessel examiners are prohibited from denying a vessel safety check decal if the vessel does not have the recommended and discussion items listed on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 as long as it meets the requirements specified in the list of vessel safety check decal requirements.
- e. The word *may* means that the practice or action described is only a suggestion or an option for the vessel examiner or the boater, and is not a requirement for obtaining a vessel safety check decal.
- f. U.S. Coast Guard approved (or certified) - The term “U.S. Coast Guard approved” refers to equipment that has been approved or certified by the U.S. Coast Guard as meeting specific standards required by federal law. In each case, the equipment must be labeled to indicate that the U.S. Coast Guard (or another agency that it designates) has approved the particular piece of equipment, and vessel examiners



must verify that the equipment bears that label and is in good and serviceable condition. Equipment in this category includes wearable life jackets and throwable devices; fire extinguishers, flame arresters, visual distress signals, and marine sanitation devices. All but flame arresters must be approved or certified by the U.S. Coast Guard.

- g. In each case, if the required approval markings are no longer legible and it is not possible to identify the equipment as having been approved, the vessel examiner *shall not* accept it as having met the requirements for a vessel safety check.

## B. VESSEL SAFETY CHECK DECAL REQUIREMENTS

### 1. ITEM #1 - DISPLAY OF VESSEL REGISTRATION NUMBERS

(33 CFR 173) *Current Regulations*

- a. All boats equipped with propulsion machinery (engines) must be registered either in the state where they are principally used or, as a documented vessel, with the U.S. Coast Guard (*33 CFR 173.27 and 46 CFR 67*). Recreational boats registered with state governments are assigned a registration number consisting of letters and numerals; U.S. Coast Guard documented vessels are issued a six or seven digit “official” number. In either case, the boat must be marked with the appropriate number.
- b. Boats registered with states must display the letter-and-numeral combination on each side of the forward half of the vessel. The letters and numerals must be painted or permanently attached. They must be plain block letters and numerals at least three inches high and in a color that contrasts with the background against which they are affixed. They also must read from left to right. A current state validation sticker (usually square-shaped) must be affixed within six inches of the registration number, in accordance with state requirements. No other letters or numerals may be displayed nearby.
- c. The state issued identification number consists of two letters identifying the state, followed by a group of one to four numerals and one or two more letters. The letter and numeral groupings must be separated by spaces or hyphens that are equal to the width of a letter wider than “I” or the number 1. A boat registered in Virginia, for example, might display a number such as VA 1234 AB or VA-1234-AB.
- d. U.S. Coast Guard documented vessels (usually 25 feet or longer) must have the official number (issued by the U.S. Coast Guard National Vessel Documentation Center) permanently on some clearly visible interior structural part of the hull. The number may be painted, carved, or welded, so long as it is done in a way that alteration, removal, or replacement would be obvious. The number must be displayed block-style Arabic numerals at least three inches high and must be preceded by NO. (for “number”). Example: NO. 1234567. Documented vessels also must display the name and hailing port (city and state) of the boat together in one place (usually on the stern) in letters that are at least four inches high and are clearly readable. Vessel owners may display the name of the boat on both sides of the hull. Owners may

choose as a hailing port from any place in the United States that is included in the U. S. Department of Commerce Pub 55 DC. That is any town with a zip code.

- e. Some states require that Coast Guard documented vessels display a state-issued validation sticker, which must be affixed in a visible spot on the forward half of the exterior of the vessel. In such cases, no state registration numbers are displayed. Boaters must obtain the validation sticker from the state issuing authority.
- f. Vessel examiners need not actually measure the height of the lettering, but should reject numbers that appear too small or are not visible from 100 feet away. Numerals and letters shall be a solid color, not outlined, shadowed, or rounded, for example. If a vessel is multi colored or patterned, the owner may need to paint a solid backing where the letters are to be placed in order to make them legible.
- g. The following vessels are exempt from federal numbering requirements unless they are required to meet them under the applicable state law:
  - (1) A vessel used exclusively for racing.
  - (2) A sailboat that has no auxiliary engine.
  - (3) A boat that exclusively uses an engine of less than 10 horsepower used as a tender for direct transportation between a vessel with a valid certificate and the shore may display the number of that vessel followed by the suffix "1".
  - (4) Foreign vessels temporarily using waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction.
  - (5) Federal, military, state, county, or municipal vessels principally for government service and are clearly identifiable as such.
  - (6) Ship's lifeboats.

2. ITEM #2 - REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION  
(33 CFR 173 and 46 CFR 67)

- a. All boats equipped with propulsion machinery engines (with the exception of the vessels listed above at the end of the section on Item #1) must be registered in the state of principal use or else documented by the U.S. Coast Guard (33 CFR 173 and 46 CFR 67).
- b. In the case of state registered vessels, the state will provide the boat owner with a registration certificate, also called a certificate of number, containing the owner's information; the state of principal operation; the manufacturer's name or the make of the vessel; the length of the boat; the vessel's hull identification number (HIN); the registration number issued by the state; and the date on which the certificate of number expires.
- c. For documented vessels, the owner must register the boat with the U.S. Coast Guard National Vessel Documentation Center at 792 T. J. Jackson Drive, Falling

Waters, WV 25419 (see [www.uscg.mil/nvdc/default.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/nvdc/default.asp)), which will issue a certificate of documentation that performs the same function as a state registration certificate. The document identifies the nationality and the authorized use of the vessel; its home port; hailing port; official number; net and gross tonnage; and the name and address of the owner.

**NOTE:** Recreational vessels are eligible for U.S. Coast Guard documentation only if they are wholly owned by a citizen or citizens of the United States and are of at least five net tons. The documentation procedure is intended to provide evidence of a vessel's nationality for international voyages, but it often is preferred by finance companies that provide mortgages on boats.

- d. Owners or operators must carry the original state certificate of number (registration) or U.S. Coast Guard certificate of documentation on board the vessel at all times and must be prepared to present it when requested by law enforcement authorities or, in case of an accident, by other boaters involved in the mishap.
  - e. In the case of state registered boats, vessel examiners shall ask the operator for the registration papers and verify the registration numerals and letters displayed on the forward half of the vessel. On documented vessels, the vessel examiner shall examine the documentation certificate and verify that the documentation number is properly marked inside the hull and that the name and hailing port of the boat are properly displayed on the stern. In cases where Hull Identification Numbers (HINs) are required, vessel examiners shall also check to make sure that the HIN shown on the registration or documentation certificates matches that displayed on the vessel itself.
  - f. Some states do not require the display of numbers on sailboats that have no mechanical propulsion or on new boats that have not yet been assigned numbers. For a new boat, the owner or operator shall present a receipt or other evidence that the application for a certificate of number is pending. In such cases, the vessel examiner shall note this information on Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 and be sure that the owner or operator is aware of the proper spacing and contrasting color required for displaying the numbers.
  - g. Coast Guard documented vessels must not display state numbers. In some states, however, they are required to display state-issued validation stickers.
3. ITEM #3 - LIFE JACKETS AND PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE  
(33 CFR 175)
- a. A life jacket 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 boater must be able to reach his or her life jacket in a reasonable amount of time and must be available for immediate donning in an emergency, such as vessel sinking, fire, etc. They should not be stowed in plastic bags, in locked or closed compartments, or have other gear stowed on top of them. They may be stowed in

aftermarket “lifejacket stowage bags.”

- b. Throwable devices must be immediately available onboard. *Immediately available* means that an individual has instant access to the device to respond to an emergency. The device must be right at hand, so that if someone were to fall overboard, the throwable device would be where someone could reach it immediately and throw it to the person in the water.
- c. Under current regulations, life jackets and throwable devices are grouped into five categories of flotation devices. Life jackets are labeled as Type I, Type II, and Type III; throwable devices, such as ring buoys, are designated as Type IV; and special use devices from water skiing vests to flotation-assisting deck suits are labeled Type V.
- d. Requirements for Use of Life Jackets. All life jackets must be:
  - (1) U.S. Coast Guard approved.
  - (2) In good and serviceable condition.
  - (3) Of appropriate type and size for the intended user.
  - (4) Properly stored on board the boat.
- e. The U.S. Coast Guard strongly recommends that all boaters wear a life jacket whenever the vessel is under way.
- f. All recreational boaters must carry one Type I, II, III or V wearable life jacket for each person on board. For Type V life jackets 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) device.
- g. Life jackets for children: Federal requirements state that on a vessel that is underway, children under 13 years of age must wear an approved life jacket unless they are below decks or within an enclosed cabin.
- h. U.S. Coast Guard approved inflatable devices are approved only for use on recreational vessels by persons at least 16 years of age. Vessel examiners shall always check the label, since regulations may have changed.
- i. Federal regulations do not require life jackets for racing shells, rowing sculls, and racing kayaks. However, state laws may vary.
- j. A water skier is considered on board the vessel and a life jacket is required for the purposes of compliance. A life jacket designed to withstand the impact of hitting the water at high speed is recommended for skiers and personal watercraft riders. “Impact Class” marking on the label refers to life jacket strength, not personal protection. Most states require skiers and personal watercraft riders to wear life jackets while under way.

- k. Procedures to inspect life jackets:
- (1) Life jackets must be removed from any storage compartment or container and examined by the vessel examiner.
  - (2) Vessel examiners shall verify that all life jackets for recreational boats have a fully legible instruction label and the U.S. Coast Guard approval number is listed. If not, the device does not meet carriage or vessel safety check decal requirements.
  - (3) Regardless of the number required, vessel examiners shall examine *all* life jackets on board. Life jackets must be free of rips or tears and the flotation material must be free of any indication of deterioration. In life jackets that are filled with kapok, the kapok is enclosed in plastics sacks. Vessel examiners should squeeze the jacket. Pinhole air leaks in the sacks do not render the device unacceptable, but evidence of moisture, exposure, or hardening or other damage disqualifies the life jacket. Straps and belts on life jackets must be unaltered, free of dry rot, and in good, serviceable working condition. Metal rings of adjusting buckles must be free of excessive rust and corrosion.
  - (4) Vessel examiners shall advise boaters to replace any life jacket found to be in poor or unserviceable condition.
  - (5) To qualify as one of the required life jackets, a Type V inflatable life jacket must be used according to the conditions for which it has been approved, as shown on the label. In the presence of the vessel examiner, the intended user shall examine the firing device by removing the CO<sub>2</sub> cartridge to determine that it has not been used. Automatic units will have green indicators to show that the manual pull cord is in the correct position. The vessel examiners shall verify that the pull cord is in the correct position for access. He or she should then have the user access the oral inflation tube and partially inflate the device by blowing a small amount of air into the air chambers. The vessel examiner should advise the user to make similar checks periodically, to follow the owner's manual, and to ensure that the life jacket is serviced in accordance with the manual. Other Type V special-purpose vests must bear a label stating dual classification in order to qualify. A Type V work vest is not acceptable for recreational boats.
- l. Vessel examiners must check carefully to make sure that the vessel being examined complies with applicable federal, state, and local regulations. This includes verifying that:
- (1) The boat carries one life jacket for each person on board.
  - (2) All life jackets must be in good condition, free of rips or tears.
- NOTE:** A small pinhole in the life jacket does not render the device

unacceptable.

- (a) Evidence of moisture, exposure, hardening, or other damage disqualifies the life jacket.
  - (b) Straps and belts on life jackets must be unaltered, free of dry rot, and in good, serviceable working condition.
  - (c) Metal rings or adjusting buckles must be free of excessive rust and corrosion.
- (3) The vessel examiner must examine every life jacket on board, regardless of whether they all are needed to meet the requirement that the vessel carry one for every crew member and passenger.
- (4) Vessel examiners must verify that wearable life jackets and throwable devices are stowed in a proper manner, that is, that they are readily accessible in case of emergency. Life jackets must not be stowed in locked compartments or boxes or under heavy gear that would make it difficult for boaters to reach them in an emergency.
- (5) In the case of inflatable life jackets, the vessel examiner must examine the firing device by removing the carbon dioxide cartridge to ensure that it has not been used and that the manual pull cord is in the correct position for access. Automatic inflatable life jackets are equipped with green indicators to show that the manual pull cord is in the correct position. Vessel examiners also must have the user access the oral inflation tube and partially inflate the device by blowing a small amount of air into the chambers. The vessel examiner must then examine the life jacket for leaks and assess its overall condition. Vessel examiners should advise the operator to conduct similar checks periodically and to follow the owner's manual provided by the manufacturer to ensure that the jacket is serviced properly. Type V special-purpose vests must carry a label certifying dual classification in order to qualify. On inflatable life jackets, the carbon dioxide cylinder must be full, and the status indicator gauge must show green; if it is red, the life jacket is unacceptable.
- (6) The vessel examiner shall advise the boater to replace any life jacket that is found to be in poor or unserviceable condition and to remove it from the boat.

m. Types of Life Jackets:

- (1) Type I - Offshore Life Jacket - A Type I life jacket 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 life jacket 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 of life jacket 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 according to U.S. Coast Guard regulations. It is available in three sizes:

- (a) Adult, designed to fit persons who weigh 90 pounds or more.
  - (b) Child, for a youngster who weighs more than 33 pounds and less than 90 pounds.
  - (c) Infant, a baby or toddler who weighs less than 33 pounds.
- (2) Type II - Near-Shore Buoyant Vest - A Type II life jacket 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 life jacket usually is more comfortable to wear than the Type I. It is not reversible. This type life jacket is normally sized for ease of emergency donning, and is available in the following sizes:
- (a) Adult - more than 90 pounds.
  - (b) Child, medium - 50 pounds to 90 pounds.
  - (c) Child, small - 30 pounds to 50 pounds.
  - (d) Child, infant - less than 30 pounds.
  - (e) In addition, some models are sized by chest measurement. The boater may prefer to use the Type II life jacket 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.
- (3) Type III - Flotation Aid. A Type III life jacket 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. It is a good choice for water sports, such as skiing, hunting, fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. These devices are not normally reversible. This type life jacket 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.
- (4) Type IV - Throwable Devices. These may be a buoyant seat cushion, a ring buoy, or a horseshoe design. Type IV devices 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 intended as an aid to be used in emergency situations under unforeseen circumstances.

- (a) Buoyant cushions are thick foam Type IV throwable devices that measure approximately 15 inches by 15 inches by 2 inches. This type of throwable device has two 20 inch grab straps, one each on opposite sides of the PFD.
  - (b) Ring buoys are available in 18, 18 1/2, 19, 20, 24, and 30 inch outside diameters.
- (5) The Type V Special Use Device - The Type V life jacket is intended for special-use activities and may be carried instead of another jacket only if used according to the approval conditions state on the label. A type V may also provide performance of a Type I, II, or III life jacket (as marked on its label). If the label says the life jacket is “approved only when worn,” the boater must wear the life jacket for it to be acceptable. Some Type V devices provide significant hypothermia protection. Varieties include exposure suits, work vests, and sailboard vests.
- (6) Inflatable Life Jackets - U.S. Coast Guard approved inflatable life jackets are authorized for use by persons 16 years of age and older. Persons younger than 16 years of age must not wear inflatable life jackets.
- (7) Life Jacket Requirements for Children - Children under 13 years of age must wear an appropriate, U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket on any vessel that is underway, unless they are below deck or inside an enclosed cabin. If a state has established a child life jacket requirement that differs from that of the U.S. Coast Guard, the state requirement applies on waters subject to that state’s jurisdiction.

**NOTE:** States are most likely to maintain additional life jacket requirements for children, for personal watercraft operators and passengers, and for persons engaged in specific activities, such as water-skiing.

- (8) Children’s life jackets are approved for three specific weight ranges - less than 30 pounds, 30 pounds to 50 pounds, or 50 pounds to 90 pounds. Vessel examiners should check the recommended user weight listed on the life jacket label. (Example: “Approved for use on recreational boats and uninspected commercial vessels not carrying passengers for hire by persons weighing less than 30 lbs.”).
- (9) Life Jacket Requirements for Specific Activities - The U.S. Coast Guard recommends, and many states require that all persons engaged in activities such as water-skiing, whitewater paddling, sail boarding, stand up paddle boarding and the use of personal watercraft wear life jackets at all times. Federal law does not require the use of life jackets on racing shells, rowing



sculls, racing canoes, and racing kayaks, but state laws vary on this issue. Other requirements also may apply for boating in areas that are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or a federal, state, or local park authority. Vessel examiners should check with their local boating authorities.

- n. There are three basic kinds of flotation materials used in life jackets and throwable devices:
- (1) Inherently buoyant (primarily foam) is the most reliable and is designed for both swimmers and non-swimmers. It comes in wearable and throwable styles; in adult, youth, child, and infant sizes; and in special configurations for water sports.
  - (2) Inflatable jackets are the most lightweight and comfortable, but are only recommended for swimmers and are sized only for adults. In addition, they're only manufactured in wearable styles, not as ring buoys or seat cushions.
  - (3) Hybrid jackets (foam and inflation) are reliable; provides inherent and inflatable buoyancy; is made in adult, youth, and child sizes; and is only manufactured in wearable styles. Some are designed for water sports.
- NOTE:** An inflatable life jacket with a built in safety harness is approved only as a Type V special use device, not as a Type I, II, or III life jacket. The reason is that using the harness to prevent falls overboard presents several risks for example, the wearer may be injured if the harness stops his or her fall too abruptly and if the boat capsizes or sinks; the harness may drag the wearer down. Vessel examiners should caution boaters who use such harnesses not to attach the harness to the boat unless it is being worn with a tether of less than 6.5 feet long and is equipped with quick release under load hardware.
- o. Life jackets come in many designs, colors, styles, and materials. Some are made for use in rugged water sports and others are designed to protect the wearer from cold water temperatures. Boaters should buy life jackets that are appropriate for their body size, planned activities, and the water conditions they expect to encounter.
- p. In choosing a life jacket, boaters should take these steps:
- (1) Test the Fit - Start with a life jacket that is U.S. Coast Guard approved. Try it on and make sure it is comfortably snug. The jacket should stay in place and not ride up when the wearer raises his or her arms straight up or when the jacket is lifted at the shoulders. If the zipper touches the wearer's nose or if the jacket almost comes off, the boater should try a tighter fitting jacket.
  - (2) Test the Buoyancy - This can be done by wearing the life jacket in shallow

water or in a swimming pool with a qualified swimmer standing by. The wearer should tighten all straps, zippers, and ties, relax his or her body and tilt the head back. The wearer’s chin should remain above water so that breathing is not impeded. If the jacket fails this test, a different size or model may be needed, possibly one that provides greater buoyancy.

(3) Choosing a Child’s Life Jacket - Boaters should check to see that a child’s life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard approved and that the child’s weight falls within the range specified on the label. Children should be fitted with Type II life jackets, not Type III. Although some children in the 30 pound to 50 pound range may ask for the extra freedom of movement that a Type III jacket provides, youngsters who cannot swim well should wear a Type II jacket. Parents should pick the child up by grasping the shoulders of the life jacket; if it fits properly, the child’s chin and ears will not slip through. A child’s life jacket should be tested in the water immediately after purchase. Children may panic when they fall into the water suddenly. Float testing not only checks the fit and buoyancy, but it also provides an important opportunity to teach children to relax in the water.

q. Wearing a Life Jacket - Vessel examiners shall stress that wearing a life jacket while under way is an essential component of boating safety, and that boaters who do not wear them are risking their lives. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that most deaths from drowning occur near shore in calm weather, not at sea during a storm. Nine out of ten drowning fatalities occur in inland waters, most within a few feet of safety. Worse yet, many of these victims owned life jackets and might have survived had they been wearing them.

4. ITEM #4 - VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS

(33 CFR 175.101)

a. Vessels operating on coastal waters of the United States, the Great Lakes, and territorial seas, as well as those inland waters connected directly to coastal waters, the Great Lakes, and territorial seas from the point of connection to the point at which the waterway narrows to less than two nautical miles wide, must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals. Vessels owned in the United States and operating on the high seas must also be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals. Additional state requirements may also apply.

b. Coast Guard–approved devices and signals include:

Description	Day/Night	CG Approval Number	Minimum Required
Floating Orange Smoke	Day	160.022 160.057	3
Hand-held orange smoke	Day	160.037	3
Orange flag at least 3’ X 3’, with black square and	Day	160.072	1

ball			
Electric distress light (flashing SOS)	Night	161.013	1
Hand-held red flare	Day/Night	160.021	3
Pistol parachute red flare	Day/Night	160.024	3
Hand-held parachute red flare	Day/Night	160.036	3
Aerial Pyrotechnics red flare	Day/Night	160.066	3

- c. The following vessels are not required to carry day signals, but must carry night signals when operating from sunset to sunrise:
- (1) Recreational boats less than 16 feet in length.
  - (2) A vessel participating in any organized marine parade, regatta, race, or similar event.
  - (3) A manually propelled boat.
  - (4) Sailboats less than 26 feet of completely open construction and not equipped with propulsion machinery.
- d. 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.
- e. Stowage: Visual distress signals must be properly stowed and readily accessible.
- f. Serviceability: Each visual distress signal on board must be in serviceable condition and not past its expiration date. However, expired visual distress signals may be retained on board as additional backup.
- g. Marking: Each required signal must be legibly marked with the approval number or certification statement.
- h. 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.
- i. Flashing lights should only be used as authorized in the Navigation Rules in order to avoid confusion with the authorized distress signals. While some mariners consider strobe lights and personal marker lights to be signals of distress, they are not approved devices and are not acceptable to meet the requirement for visual distress signals.
- j. 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. Inappropriate use may be considered a false

distress or hoax and is strictly prohibited.

- k. Verify that the boat has on board suitable devices in the number required for day and night use. Different combinations are acceptable. The type of device determines the number required.
- l. When doing a vessel safety check in a state that prohibits percussion type distress signals, advise the owner of possible restrictions and alternative devices.
- m. Pistol launched and hand held parachute flares and meteors have many characteristics of a firearm and must be handled with extreme caution. In some states and in Canada, they may be considered a firearm and prohibited from use. Vessel examiners and boat owners should check with their state boating agencies to determine whether such restrictions apply.
- n. Verify that pyrotechnic devices do not display evidence of moisture damage.
- o. Dates of manufacture and (or) expiration dates must be legible.
- p. Ensure that the devices are properly stowed (that is, readily accessible).
- q. At no time should a visual distress signal be test fired as part of the examination.
- r. Information for Boaters:
  - (1) All boaters should be able to signal for help. Boaters must have U. S. Coast Guard approved day and night signals for vessels when required. Signaling devices are strongly recommended for all boats. Boaters are prohibited from activating a visual distress signal unless they are in a situation where assistance is needed: that is, where there is actual or immediate or potential danger to the vessel or persons on board. It is against the law to initiate a hoax emergency call. Violators may be subject to monetary fines or imprisonment.
  - (2) Each pyrotechnics device has a different operating burn time. The boater should check the label to see how long each device will continue burning and choose one best suited to conditions in the area where the vessel is used.
  - (3) Pyrotechnic devices should be stored in a cool, dry place. A watertight container red or orange in color and prominently marked **DISTRESS SIGNALS** or **FLARES** is recommended.
  - (4) All distress signals have distinct advantages and disadvantages. No single device is ideal under all conditions or suitable for all purposes.
  - (5) Pyrotechnics are universally recognized as excellent distress signals, but there is potential for injury and property damage if they are not handled properly. These devices produce a very hot flame that could cause burns and ignite flammable materials.

5. ITEM #5 - FIRE EXTINGUISHERS  
(46 CFR 25)

a. U.S. Coast Guard approved fire extinguishers are hand portable, provided with a mounting bracket, and are required on boats where a fire hazard could be expected from the engine or fuel system. Extinguishers are classified by 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:

(1) “Marine Type U.S. Coast Guard Approved, Size\_\_ Type \_\_, 162.028/\_\_\_”

b. Boats required to carry fire extinguishers:

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

(2) All boats with double bottoms that are not sealed to the hull or are not completely filled with flotation materials.

(3) All boats with closed stowage compartments in which combustible or flammable materials are stowed.

(4) All boats with closed living spaces.

(5) All boats with permanently installed fuel tanks. (Fuel tanks that have been 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 whether a fuel tank is portable. Tanks that require a mechanical means (a wrench or screwdriver, for example) to remove them are considered permanently installed.

c. This chart shows the requirements for the type and number of extinguishers required for each category of vessel:

BOAT LENGTH	WITHOUT FIXED SYSTEM	WITH FIXED SYSTEM
Under 26 feet	1 extinguisher, type B-I	None
26 feet to 40 feet	2 B-I or 1 B-II	1 B-I
40 feet to 65 feet	3 B-I or 1 B-II and 1 B-I	2 B-I or 1 B-II

- d. These are the minimum carriage requirements. The examiner should discuss the consequences of insufficient fire fighting capabilities and the advantages of carrying extra fire fighting protection.
- e. Owners should check extinguishers monthly to ensure that:
  - (1) Seals and tamper indicators are not broken or missing.
  - (2) Pressure gauges or indicators read in the operable range. If there is no gauge or indicator, verify the weight or fullness of the unit.
 

**NOTE:** CO<sub>2</sub> extinguishers do not have gauges.
  - (3) There is no obvious physical damage, corrosion, leakage, or clogged nozzles (discharge hose if provided).
- f. All portable extinguishers must be aboard and should be readily accessible (it is recommended that they be mounted, but not required).
- g. Fire extinguishers used on boats must be specifically marked “Marine Type U. S. Coast Guard Approved.”

*Fire Extinguisher Minimum Weight or Volume*

TYPE	AGENT	MINIMUM
B-I	Carbon dioxide	4 pounds
	Dry chemical	2 pounds
	Halon	2.5 pounds
	AFFF (foam)	1.75 gallons
B-II	Carbon dioxide	15 pounds
	Dry chemical	10 pounds
	Halon	10 pounds
	AFFF (foam)	25 gallons

- h. 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 would only be required to carry one B-1 portable extinguisher if a fixed extinguishing system is properly installed and maintained.
- i. Boats shall carry at least the minimum number of hand portable fire extinguishers as set for above. Exception: Boats less than 26 feet in length 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.

- j. Having the appropriate firefighting equipment on board is only part of being prepared for a fire emergency. The operator and crew must be aware of firefighting capabilities and limitations of the available equipment. They should be aware of the following points:
- (1) Know how to use available equipment.
  - (2) Know the hazards related to fires.
  - (3) Fire extinguishing agents may cause hazardous fumes or be lethal. Smoke from a halon extinguisher is very toxic.
  - (4) If the fire extinguisher system has an automatic engine shutdown feature, the owners and crew should know how to restart the engine.
  - (5) CO<sub>2</sub> is discharged at sub-zero temperatures. The operator may be injured if contact is made with the horn of a portable CO<sub>2</sub> extinguisher.
  - (6) Halon discharged in closed spaces consumes the oxygen available, and persons should be evacuated immediately.
- k. Inspection Vessel Safety Check Techniques:
- (1) Ask the operator to retrieve each extinguisher. Ensure that all extinguishers are approved types and in serviceable condition, including no evidence of corrosion, leakage, discharge, or physical damage to the extinguisher or discharge nozzle (hose, if provided). The approval labels and instructions must be clearly legible.
  - (2) Verify that the pressure indicator is in the normal charge range. Excessive high or low readings are cause for disqualification.
  - (3) Testing dry chemical extinguishers by holding the fire extinguisher inverted and solidly hitting the base of the extinguisher with the palm of the hand several times is no longer an acceptable practice, possibly resulting in clogging the discharge tube. Additionally, the use of flowing and anti-caking agents has eliminated the problem with caked powder, eliminating the need to rotate the fire extinguisher to feel the powder flowing.
  - (4) Most of the small extinguishers on recreational boats are non-rechargeable, stored pressure, dry chemical extinguishers. The fire extinguisher label will clearly state that the extinguisher is non-refillable or non-rechargeable.
  - (5) The rechargeable, stored-pressure, dry chemical extinguisher needs to be professionally maintained and serviced every six years. This can be verified by looking at the tag attached to the extinguisher.
  - (6) Check the visual gauge at the top to determine that the plastic crystal

covering of the indicator is not being 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.

- (7) Verify that the manual controls for fixed systems are located outside the space that the system is designed to protect. System tests are not required. The intact seal is sufficient evidence of compliance.
- (8) 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 system inspected.
- (9) Discuss additional safety points with the operator and crew to know their firefighting capabilities and limitations.

6. ITEM #6 - VENTILATION

(33 CFR 175.201, 33 CFR 183.601, 46 CFR 25.40-1)

- a. All boats that have gasoline engines for electrical generation, mechanical power, or propulsion must be equipped with a ventilation system.
- b. There are two types of ventilation systems - *natural and powered*.
- c. A natural ventilation system is required for each closed compartment in a boat that contains a permanently installed gasoline engine; has openings between the engine 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, either fixed or portable, that vents into that compartment; or contains a non-metallic fuel tank.
- d. A natural ventilation system consists of:
  - (1) A supply opening (duct or cowl) located on the exterior of the boat, which brings outside air into the vessel or else lets in air from a ventilated compartment or from a compartment that is open to the outside air.
  - (2) An exhaust opening or duct that expels exhaust into another ventilated compartment or to the atmosphere.
- e. 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.
- f. 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. Boats built before 1980 were not required to install a powered ventilation system, but some boats manufactured then were equipped with a blower.
- g. Boats that were built after August 1, 1980, and have gasoline engines in closed



compartments must have a powered ventilation system. Those built before that date must have a natural or powered system. Boats that were built after August 1, 1978 and have closed fuel tank compartments must meet requirements for displaying a certificate of compliance. Boats built before that date must have either natural or powered ventilation in the fuel tank compartment.

- h. Open Boats are exempted from ventilation requirements because gasoline vapors may be dissipated by exposure to the open atmosphere.
- i. Boats that are required to have an exhaust blower must have a label that is as close to as practicable to the ignition switch, in plain view, and contains the following information: **WARNING: Gasoline vapors can explode. Before starting engine, operate blower for four minutes and check engine compartment for gasoline vapors.**
- j. All boat owners are responsible for keeping their vessel's ventilation systems in operating condition. This means making sure openings are free of obstructions, ducts and ducting are not blocked or torn, blowers operate properly, and that worn components are replaced with equivalent marine type equipment.
- k. Vessel Safety Check Techniques: Vessel examiners shall inspect all compartments and verify that the vessel meets the requirements outlined above.

7. ITEM #7 - BACKFIRE FLAME CONTROL  
(46 CFR 25/58)

- a. Every boat with a gasoline engine installed in a vessel after 25 April 1940, except outboard motors, shall be equipped with an acceptable means of backfire flame control. Installations made prior to November 19, 1952 are acceptable as long as they remain good and serviceable.
- b. The device must be suitably attached to the air intake with a flame-tight connection. It is required to be U.S. Coast Guard approved or to comply with the standards set by the Society of Automotive Engineers or Underwriters Laboratories and be marked accordingly. The device will be marked U.S. Coast Guard Approval 162.042/XX or 162.015; or SAE J-1928; or UL 1111, indicating that it is acceptable.
- c. Installation of an air induction system (usually found on personal water crafts) should have a label so stating manufacturer's construction compliance.
- d. 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.

- (1) The cowls or scoops face to the rear or vertically, thus directing any backfire flames to the open atmosphere.

- (2) There is no provision for carrying passengers behind the forward edge of the engine.
- (3) All connections on cowls or scoops must be flame tight and firmly secured.
- e. Other acceptable means of backfire flame control, including air and fuel induction systems usually found on personal water craft, velocity stacks to carburetors, and reed type found in outboards, provide protection equivalent to that of a backfire flame arrester. They must be clearly marked with SAE J-1928 to be in compliance with the standard.
- f. Vessel Safety Check Techniques:
  - (1) Check to ensure that any boat with gasoline powered inboard engine(s) has a properly installed backfire flame control device on each carburetor with the appropriate approval number on the device.
  - (2) Some flame arresters are covered by decorative cowling. It is not necessary to ask the owner/operator to remove the cowl unless it looks like there have been alterations. If possible, check the flame arrester by feeling under the cowl for the arrester grids. However, exercise caution since some backfire flame arresters may have sharp internal fins/plates which could cut. The vessel examiner should not attempt to disassemble or require the owner to disassemble.
  - (3) Some newer approved flame controls look like automotive air cleaners. Disassembly should not be required to verify the approval number on these units, as the approval number should be readily visible.
  - (4) A dirty backfire flame arrester will function properly and prevent flames from exiting the carburetor. Vessel examiners should advise the boater to clean the arrester on a regular basis, as this may improve fuel efficiency.

8. ITEM #8 - SOUND-PRODUCING DEVICES/BELL

(33 CFR 83) (COMDTINST M16672.2 (series), Part D-Sound and Light Signals)

- a. 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 the Navigation Rules for specifics.)
- b. The following matrix provides sound producing devices required for vessels:

BOAT LENGTH	WHISTLE	BELL	GONG
39.4 feet or more (12 meters)	X		

65.6 feet or more (20 meters)	X	X	
328.1 feet or more (100meters)	X	X	X

- c. Vessels 65.6 feet or more 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.
- d. Vessels between 39.4 feet and less than 65.6 feet are no longer required to carry a bell.
- e. Vessels of less than 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 or position in periods of reduced visibility (mouth horns or whistles are acceptable).
- f. For personal water craft, a whistle attached to the operator’s life jacket meets the requirement and provides a means to signal should the operator be separated from the personal watercraft.
- g. Vessel Safety Check Techniques:
  - (1) Check for proper operation of the boat’s whistle or other sound producing devices. Have the operator test and operate the device to produce a sound signal for at least four seconds.
  - (2) If the vessel requires a bell, the bell need not be mounted for the boat to qualify for the vessel safety check decal. The bell should be stored so that it is readily accessible.

9. ITEM #9 - NAVIGATION LIGHTS  
(33 CFR 83) Ref (a), Part C-Lights and Shapes)

- a. 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 the Navigation Rules. The information provided here is intended for power driven vessels and sailing vessels.
- b. The following definitions, extracted from the Navigation Rules, will be used in reference to Vessel Safety Check lighting requirements.
- c. 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° and so fixed as to show the light from dead ahead to 22.5° abaft the beam on either side of the vessel. Under special circumstances, a 360° white light may be substituted.

- d. 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° and so fixed as to show the light from dead ahead to 22.5° abaft the beam on its respective side. On a vessel of less than 20 meters 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 12 meters 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.
- e. 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° and so fixed as to show the light 67.5° from right aft on each side of the vessel.
- f. Towing light means a yellow light having the same characteristics as the sternlight defined above.
- g. All-round light means a light showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 360 degrees.
- h. Flashing light means a light flashing at regular intervals at a frequency of 120 flashes or more per minute.
- i. Special flashing light means a yellow light flashing at regular intervals at a frequency of 50 to 70 flashes a minute, placed as far forward and as near as practicable on the fore-and-aft centerline of the tow and showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon not less than 180° or more than 225° and fixed to show the light from right ahead to abeam and no more than 22.5° abaft the beam on either side of the vessel.
- j. Here are the arcs of visibility, color, and distance from which lights must be visible as prescribed in the navigation rules: both international and inland, and their associated annexes:
 

(1) PORT SIDELIGHT (RED)	112.5°
(2) STARBOARD SIDELIGHT (GREEN)	112.5°
(3) STERN (WHITE)	135°
(4) MASTHEAD (WHITE)	225°
- k. Power driven vessels under 65.6 feet (20 meters) shall exhibit navigation lights in accordance with Ref (a), Part C-Lights and Shapes.
- l. Power driven vessels less than 23 feet (7 meters) in length and whose maximum speed does not exceed 7 knots, may display an all-round white light and, if possible, sidelights, instead of the lights prescribed previously. (International Rules only).
- m. For power vessels less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length, the masthead or all-

around white light must be at least 3.3 feet above the red and green sidelights.

- n. Sailing vessels under 65.6 feet (20 meters) and vessels under oars may exhibit the navigation lights in accordance with reference (a), Part C-Lights and Shapes.
- o. Sailing vessels less than 23 feet (7 meters) shall, if practicable, exhibit the masthead, sidelights, and stern light prescribed in Rule 23, but if she does not, she shall exhibit an all-round white light or have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision.
- p. Vessels under oars may display the lights prescribed for sailing vessels. She shall exhibit an all-round white light or have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light, which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision.
- q. Additional Federal Requirements:
  - (1) 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:
    - (a) Anchor lights. Power driven vessels and sailing vessels must display anchor lights while at anchor, except in a designated anchorage. Vessels less than 164 feet (49 meters) in length must display an all-round white light visible for two miles, exhibited where it can be seen from all directions.
    - (b) Day shapes include balls and diamonds as described in the Navigation Rules, which indicate the vessel's operating status or condition.
    - (c) Vessels at anchor shall exhibit a ball shape forward where best seen.
    - (d) Vessels less than 23 feet (7 meters) are not required to display anchor lights or day shapes unless they are anchored in or near a narrow channel, fairway, or anchorage, or where other vessels normally navigate.
    - (e) Anchor lights or day shapes are not required on vessels less than 65 feet (20 meters) when anchored in special anchorages in inland waters as designated by the Secretary (see 33 CFR 110 Subpart A).
    - (f) 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 (12 meters) 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).
    - (g) Vessels restricted in their ability to maneuver must display appropriate day shapes or lights.

(h) Recreational vessels engaged in diving activities may exhibit a rigid replica of the international code flag “Alpha” not less than 3.3 feet high during the day or at night display the appropriate lights. State or local regulations may require additional indicators, which may also include displaying the “Diver Down” flag that has a red background with a diagonal white stripe across it.

r. Vessel Safety Check Techniques:

- (1) The vessel examiner must be knowledgeable of the navigation rules regarding navigation lights.
- (2) 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 issued.
- (3) Check that the lights installed on boats less than 16 feet long are properly configured and in working order. These boats do not require lights to be issued a decal. However, if the lights have been installed they must work properly.
- (4) Ensure that all installed navigation lights display an unbroken light through the prescribed arcs of visibility. All-round lights may not be obstructed more than six degrees by items such as collapsible canopies, bimini tops, masts, jack staffs, trolling motors, and the like.
- (5) Ensure that boats 16 feet or greater are able to display proper navigation lights during the hours of night. They should be able to display both under way and anchor lights. Switches must be capable of turning off running lights when the anchor light is on.
- (6) 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.
- (7) Verify that any navigation lights operated by dry cell batteries have the appropriate minimum range of visibility using the vessel examiner’s best judgment (i.e., the lamp appears as bright as the navigation lights displayed by other vessels).

10. ITEM #10 - POLLUTION PLACARD

(Oil Pollution Prevention/Oily Waste Discharge) (33 CFR 151/155)

- a. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act prohibits the discharge of oil or hazardous substances that may be harmful into U.S. navigable waters. Vessels 26 feet and greater in length, with machinery spaces, must display a placard, at least 5 by 8 inches, made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery space 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.**

- b. 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 of discharging 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.
- c. The U.S. 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 or 1-202-267-2675 to report the incident.
- d. Vessel Safety Techniques:
  - (1) Check for placard, if required.
  - (2) Check for display of placard. Vessel examiners may carry a supply of the placards to provide to owners or operators.

## 11. ITEM #11 - MARPOL PLACARD

(Discharge of Garbage MARPOL Trash Placards) (33 CFR 151/155)

- a. 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.
- b. United States vessels 26 feet or longer must display in a prominent location a durable placard notifying the crew and passengers of the discharge restrictions.
- c. United States oceangoing vessels 40 feet or longer that are engaged in commerce or are equipped with a galley and berthing must have a written waste management plan describing the procedures for collecting, processing, storing, and discharging garbage and must designate the person in charge of carrying out the plan.
- d. Recreational vessels used exclusively in the Great Lakes may use the Annex V placards or a specially developed placard that prohibits the dumping of the

garbage.

e. Vessel Safety Check Techniques:

- (1) Check for the placard if the boat is required to have one.
- (2) Ensure that the placard is clearly visible to all passengers. Larger boats may post more than one placard as needed.
- (3) Remind boaters that trash disposal laws apply to everyone whether a placard is required or not.
- (4) Advise the operator regarding any local discharge regulations. Some states and local lakes prohibit the dumping or the discharge of anything, even gray water (from sink drains).

12. ITEM #12 - MARINE SANITATION DEVICES

(33 CFR 159)

- a. All recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board.
- b. Vessels 65 feet and under may install a Type I, II, or III MSD.
- c. Type I and Type II are flow through devices, while a holding tank is a Type III device.
- d. All installed MSDs must be U.S. Coast Guard certified and so labeled, except for some Type III holding tanks which are certified by definition under the regulations. Type III holding tanks are designed for the storage of sewage and flush water and may be of various design including commercially manufactured and home built tanks or other containers.
- e. The discharge of treated sewage is allowed within three nautical miles of shore except in designated no discharge zones. Untreated sewage may be discharged beyond that three mile limit.
- f. A no discharge zone is a designated body or area of water where the discharge of treated or untreated sewage is prohibited. When operating a vessel in a no discharge zone, the operator must secure the device in a manner that prevents any discharge. Some acceptable methods are: padlocking overboard discharge valves in the closed position, using a non-releasable wire tie to hold overboard discharge valves in the closed position, closing overboard discharge valves and removing the handle, and locking the door to the space enclosing the toilets (Type I & Type II MSD only).
- g. These methods for preventing the overboard discharge are only required when operating in a no discharge zone. State and local laws may place further restrictions on overboard discharges.



- h. Portable toilets, often referred to as port-a-potties, are not considered installed devices and are not subject to the regulations.
- i. Vessel Safety Check Techniques:
  - (1) Determine whether there is an installed toilet on board. If so, then the vessel must also have an MSD on board.
  - (2) Determine what type and have the owner explain how the system works.
- j. Check to ensure that Type I and Type II MSDs have, attached to the unit, the required placard showing the type and U.S. Coast Guard certification. Determine that the unit cannot be discharged overboard in no discharge zones or areas.
- k. Determine that it is not possible to accidentally operate a valve that will cause an overboard discharge of the holding tank.

### 13. ITEM #13 - NAVIGATION RULES

- a. The Navigation Rules established actions 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 Navigation Rules.
- b. The owner or operator of each self propelled vessel 39.4 feet or more, when operating on inland waters, shall carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of the Navigation Rules.
- c. The requirement to carry navigation rules aboard certain vessels includes electronic format (laptop, tablet, etc.) if the vessel owner can show the required rules in whatever form they have, is acceptable.
- d. A complete copy of the rules is not required. Only the inland rules are required to be carried when shoreward of the line of demarcation.
- e. Vessel Safety Check Techniques: verify that the operator has a copy of Navigation Rules aboard.

### 14. ITEM #14 - STATE AND LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

- a. State equipment requirements that pertain to basic safety must be met before the vessel safety check decal can be awarded. The requirements of the state where the Vessel safety check is conducted will be included in the vessel safety check. Only equipment directly related to vessel safety or items on the vessel safety check form will be inspected.
- b. Vessel Safety Check Techniques:
  - (1) Have a current copy of state and local requirements on hand during the vessel safety check.

- (2) Determine that any equipment required by the state is on board and in good and serviceable condition.

15. ITEM #15 - OVERALL VESSEL CONDITION (AS APPLICABLE)

- a. The vessel must have a safe overall material condition in order to meet the final requirement for the vessel safety check decal. Applicable items below are critical to the safety of the vessel and must be acceptable before the vessel examiner awards the vessel safety check decal.
- b. 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 should not exceed what is shown on the capacity plate.
- c. Electrical and Fuel systems:
  - (1) 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.
  - (2) Wiring must be in good condition, properly installed with no exposed areas or deteriorated insulation.
  - (3) If the vessel is equipped with a shore power connection, check the plug and the receptacle. Look for evidence of charring, brown, or corrosion around the prongs. This results from tiny arcing at the connection and a poor contact. Often the securing ring is not used or not tight. Time creates more and more arcing, a filing connection, and a heating up of the plug, receptacle and wiring near the site. A large percentage of fires on board vessels are electrical. Additionally, *electric shock drowning* (ESD) is the result of the passage of a typically low level alternating current (AC) through the body while immersed in fresh water, with sufficient force to cause skeletal muscular paralysis, with drowning the eventual result. An invisible killer in freshwater ESD most frequently strikes near marinas and people should be aware of the risk of swimming near them.
  - (4) Batteries should be secured and terminals covered to prevent accidental arcing. Covering just the positive terminal is acceptable to prevent accidental arcing. However, some states may require that both the positive and negative terminals be covered to prevent accidental arcing. Vessels with outboards are exempt from this requirement.
  - (5) If installed, self circling or kill switch mechanisms must be in proper working order. All personal watercrafts require an operating self circling or kill switch mechanism.
  - (6) Portable fuel tanks with a seven gallon capacity or less must be

constructed of non-breakable material and be free of corrosion and leaks. A full seven gallon tank will weigh about 50 pounds, which is about the maximum that can be conveniently loaded aboard a boat after filling on the dock. All vents must be capable of being closed. The tank must be properly secured to the deck and have a vapor tight, leak proof cap. Each permanent fuel tank must be properly ventilated.

d. Galley and Heating System:

- (1) Systems and fuel tanks must be properly secured with no flammable materials nearby.
- (2) Adequate ventilation provided for all appliances and their fuel source.
- (3) Appliance shutoff valves readily accessible.

e. Vessel Safety Check Techniques (general conditions of the boat):

- (1) 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.
- (2) Sailboat equipment and rigging should appear sound, with no rusty shackles, corroded fittings, broken stem heads and plates, or frayed wire straps and shrouds.
- (3) Check personal watercraft steering and throttle controls for proper operation. Forward storage compartment cover and latches should be secure. Check for general maintenance and upkeep. No modifications to factory installed systems or components are acceptable.
- (4) On vessels with jet drives, have operator start engine in idle. While engine is idling, have the operator pull free the kill switch mechanism, and the engine should stop immediately. When using this technique on boats with other than jet drives, the boat must be in the water.
- (5) 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.
- (6) Verify that battery cables are securely connected. The battery should be clamped down or otherwise secured so as to prevent movement. At a minimum, the positive terminal should be covered unless state law requires both terminals 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.

- (7) 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. Vessels with outboards are exempt from these requirements.
- (8) Verify that no flammable material is in proximity to appliances. Portable appliances should be securely fixed in position while stowed, being used, and at any time a person is not using them. Permanently installed appliances should be securely fastened in place.
- (9) Check that the galley and appliances are adequately ventilated.
- (10) Capacity plates are required on mono-hull vessels less than 20 feet in length. If there is no capacity plate, the maximum number of persons that can be safely carried in calm weather can be determined by using the following formula: number of persons equals length of the boat times the width of the boat and dividing that by 15.

## CHAPTER 4. PASSING ALONG BOATER SAFETY INFORMATION

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. The Vessel safety check is organized into two parts. First, the vessel examiner conducts a survey of the equipment that is required by applicable federal and state boating safety laws and checks off the findings in the list on the left side of the appropriate vessel safety check reporting form (Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 or Paddlecraft Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012A). The items in this list were the subject of Chapter 3.
2. Some of the items on this “recommended” list are required by state regulations, and the vessel examiner should be familiar with the applicable boating laws in the area in which the vessel safety check is being conducted. If an item in the right side checklist on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 is required by state boating regulations and the vessel does not carry it on board, the boat fails to meet item #14 (state requirements) on the left side of the form, and thus does not qualify for a vessel safety check decal.
3. The checklist in the right column on the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 contains items that are recommended, but not required by federal law. The vessel examiner should take time to go over each piece of equipment on the list and advise the boater of the importance of having it on board even though the law doesn’t actually require it. Although the vessel examiner should try to make sure that boaters are aware of safety regulations and good practices, he or she should not insist on providing all of the information in this chapter to every boater. The material is here for the vessel examiner’s own reference. He or she should use judgment to determine how much the boater is willing to absorb.
4. Below is a list of these recommended items and related information that the vessel examiner may want to pass along to boaters:

### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. REGISTERED VHF-FM MARINE RADIO (DSC) WITH GPS INPUT
  - a. Although most recreational vessels less than 65 feet long are not required to carry a DSC VHF-FM marine radio, the equipment is an important piece of safety gear. With a DSC VHF-FM marine radio, boaters are able to call for help if they need it, listen to updated weather forecasts and to Coast Guard broadcasts about other vessels in distress, and hear warnings from law enforcement authorities about hazards they may encounter. Cell phones and Citizens Band (CB) radios may seem like attractive substitutes to some boaters, but they aren’t nearly as good. Cell phones require that the boater know the telephone number of the first responder they want to contact, and they cannot receive area wide warnings that are broadcast over marine radio. Cell phones are not typically maritime friendly. Coverage is not guaranteed in many maritime environments. CB radios are used primarily by truckers and other motorists, and are not monitored by the Coast

Guard.

- b. Moreover, with the new Digital Selective Calling (DSC) system and the Coast Guard's Rescue 21 radio system, DSC VHF-FM radios serve as emergency beacons that can tell first-responders precisely where a vessel in distress is located when properly registered with a GPS input. These days, DSC VHF-FM marine radios are relatively inexpensive. A bulkhead mounted marine radio is best, since it has a greater range than a hand held model, but even a hand held radio will provide some protection. The best advice about VHF-FM marine radios is: For safety's sake, don't leave port without one.
- c. Boaters are not required to have licenses or to obtain permission to set up a shipboard radio station in order to operate DSC VHF-FM marine radios on recreational boats. But they must follow the procedures and courtesies required of licensed operators and must identify the vessel by its name or registration number each time they transmit. When their radios are turned on, they should continuously monitor channel 16, which has been designated as the emergency and hailing channel for all vessels. In some locations, recreational boaters have been directed to use channel 9 instead of channel 16. The vessel examiner should be familiar with local practices on this issue.
- d. A recreational vessel that is on an international voyage or is communicating with a foreign station from U.S. waters must obtain a shipboard station license from the Federal Communications Commission.
- e. Vessel examiners should make sure that boaters are aware of the protocol for making a MAYDAY call to report a life threatening emergency on the water. They also should point out that it is unlawful to transmit a false distress alert intentionally or to fail to cancel an alert that has been transmitted unintentionally.
- f. Newer VHF-FM marine radios are equipped to participate in the Digital Selective Calling System (DSC), and when properly registered, enable mariners to send a specially formatted distress alert to the Coast Guard or other rescue authority anywhere in the world. The DSC program also permits mariners to initiate or receive radiotelephone calls to or from any vessel or shore station that is equipped with this system, whether they are emergency or routine transmissions. In effect, DSC automatically "dials" and "rings" other radios and allows them to "ring" the boater's vessel without either party having to listen to a speaker.
- g. The Coast Guard strongly urges that boaters take time to have their GPS receivers connect directly to the DSC systems on their radios and to obtain a nine digit Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number, which can be obtained for free from Boat U. S. and the Power Squadron at <http://www.boatus.com/mmsi/>. A properly registered MMSI will automatically identify their vessel to a nearby rescue station. When a boater presses the DSC button on the vessel's radio, and selects the type of emergency he or she is encountering, the radio will transmit the boat's position, name, owner, and situation. A Coast Guard dispatcher will then respond verbally. Once the Coast Guard has the information it needs, the

dispatcher will transmit an “all-ship call” for any vessel near the distressed boat to respond and render assistance. He or she also will transmit the boat’s position to all vessels and aircraft assigned to come to its aid.

- h. DSC systems are one of the most reliable and expeditious ways for the Coast Guard to receive notification of distress when properly registered and connected. Boaters should be aware that if they fail to connect their GPS receiver to the DSC receiver on their radio and/or fail to obtain an MMSI and register it to a vessel, the boater will not benefit from many of the DSC distress alert advantages. If distress radio transmissions are broken or cut off, the Coast Guard may not have enough information to conduct a search, and any potential searches may be delayed or less effective.

## 2. DEWATERING DEVICE AND BACKUP

- a. A dewatering device is a piece of equipment designed to help bail out or pump out a boat. It isn’t required, but strongly recommended. It may be the only way to deal with a situation in which the vessel is taking on water.
- b. All boats should carry at least one effective manual dewatering device, a hand operated pump, a bucket, or a large plastic bottle with the bottom cut off that can serve as a water scoop, in addition to any electrical or manual bilge pump that may have been installed on board. Vessels equipped with installed bilge pumps should be periodically tested. Pontoon boats or vessels that do not have compartments vulnerable to flooding should carry at least one dewatering device in case they are called on to help other boaters.

## 3. MOUNTED FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- a. Fire extinguishers are not required to be mounted. It is strongly recommended that fire extinguishers be mounted in locations that are visible and readily accessible.
- b. Vessel examiners should stress that before a vessel gets under way, boat operators should show all crewmembers and passengers where fire extinguishers are located and how to operate them.

## 4. ANCHOR AND RODE

- a. Vessel examiners should stress the importance of having an anchor on board. It is more than just a convenience to secure the boat for fishing, swimming, serving meals, or staying overnight in a cove. Anchors also are an important piece of safety equipment to keep the boat from drifting into danger or running aground.
- b. Boaters should make sure that their boats are equipped with an anchor of the appropriate type, size and weight for their vessel, as well as the kind of bottom that prevails in the waters in which they will be operating, such as sand, mud, rocks, etc.
- c. The anchor should be attached to a 3-6 foot length of galvanized chain, which

resists abrasion better than a fiber line would and which helps to hold the anchor flat on the bottom so it can dig in more effectively. The chain, in turn, is attached to the anchor line. Together, they are known as the anchor rode.

- d. The anchor rode should be long enough to enable the boater to pay out line at least seven times the likely depth of the water in which the vessel will be anchoring. Ideally, line should be made of nylon, whose elasticity enables it to stretch with the motion of the sea and helps reduce the load on both the anchor and the vessel.
- e. In choosing a spot in which to drop anchor, the operator should pick an area that offers maximum shelter from weather elements and boat traffic. Choose a bottom consisting of sand or mud which makes it more likely that the anchor's flukes will dig in and hold. The anchor line should be paid out at least five to seven times the distance between the anchor chock at the vessel's bow and the bottom. The operator should know how to set and weigh anchor.

#### 5. FIRST-AID KIT AND RESCUE GEAR

- a. Boaters should carry a first aid kit properly sized and appropriate for the type of boating they do, such as on small lakes, coastal waters, offshore, or extended cruising. Adequate kits of all sizes can be purchased at boating supply stores or online. Boaters should also consider adding medicines or medical equipment that may be needed by crew members or passengers who have special medical conditions, such as allergies.
- b. Operators also should consider carrying rescue equipment designed to help pull someone out of the water, such as extra life jackets; a life ring (or horseshoe buoy) with a polypropylene line tied to it; a line throw bag; or, on a sailboat, a rescue strop that can be wrapped around the chest of a person in the water so he or she can be hoisted aboard. Attaching a line to a life ring enables those on board to retrieve the device if it is tossed too far for the person in the water to reach; it also helps pull the person back to the boat once he or she grabs onto the life ring. The operator should always make sure that the vessel's propeller is stopped when a person in the water is near the boat; the best way to do that is to shut off the engine while the person is close by.

6. VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS ON LAKES - Boaters operating on inland waters or locations where visual distress signals are not required should consider keeping them on board to enable them to signal other vessels or persons on land in case of emergency. Vessel owners should determine what types of signals they need based on the area and conditions in which their boats will be operating.



7. **CAPACITY PLATE** - The capacity plate, usually affixed to the transom, gunwale or on the center console of a recreational boat, contains important information about the limits under which the vessel should operate to ensure safety. It includes the maximum horsepower, the maximum number of persons and the maximum weight that may be carried (equipment and passengers combined). Capacity plates are required on mono-hull vessels under 20 feet in length.
8. **OTHER ITEMS**
  - a. Some other items vessel examiners have found most useful:
    - (1) **ACCIDENT REPORTING:** Boaters involved in a maritime accident are required to stop and render assistance to the extent that they can do so without endangering their own vessels, crewmembers, or passengers. When an accident occurs, it should be reported to authorities as required by federal, state, or local laws and regulations. If two boats are involved, the operators must provide one another with information about their vessels and the persons on board. Some states may vary in reporting times.
    - (2) Federal law requires that reports be filed with the appropriate state agency for any boating accident that results in death; injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid; damage totaling \$2,000 or more to a vessel or other property; complete loss of a vessel; or the disappearance of a person under circumstances that indicates that death or injury is likely.  
**NOTE:** Some states require reports on damage of less than \$2,000. Vessel examiners should be aware of state requirements.
    - (3) In cases involving deaths, disappearance, or injuries requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, local and state authorities must be notified within 48 hours. Reports on other accidents must be reported within 10 days. Some states may vary in reporting times.
    - (4) Each operator also must file a Recreational Boating Accident Report, Form CG-3865.
9. **OWNER RESPONSIBILITY** - Under maritime law, the owner of a vessel may be held responsible for the safety and condition of his or her boat even if someone else is at the helm or if the owner is not on board and someone else is using the boat with his or her permission.

10. OFFSHORE OPERATION - EPIRB, LIFE RAFT, and ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS - Boaters who operate offshore should carry additional equipment beyond that mandated by federal or state regulations. Among these items are Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), which enable rescue personnel to determine a boat's location; an inflatable life raft; an immersion suit for each person on board, if the vessel is to operate in cold waters; and VHF-FM or high-frequency transceivers suitable for the operating area, along with backup radios and cell phones.
11. EMERGENCY POSITIONING INDICATING RADIO BEACON (EPIRB) AND PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON (PLB)
- a. An Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) and Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) are used to alert search and rescue services in the event of an emergency. It does this by transmitting a coded message on the 406 Mhz distress frequency via satellite and earth stations to the nearest rescue coordination center. Some EPIRBs also have built-in GPS, which enables rescue services to accurately locate you +/- 125 meters.
  - b. A properly registered EPIRB and PLB are some of the most reliable and expeditious ways for the Coast Guard to receive notification of distress when properly registered and mounted. Registration is required by federal regulation (47 CFR 80.1061).
  - c. Boaters with EPIRBs should be informed that the registration information is an important tool to assist the Coast Guard in locating and quickly responding to boaters. Failure to register or transfer registration properly may delay or degrade a rescue response. Accurate, up-to-date registration information will also be used to conserve resources by helping to eliminate false alert deployments, as an inadvertent activation can be resolved with a phone call when the beacon is properly registered.
  - d. Boaters should be encouraged to call NOAA or visit the NOAA website to confirm correct registration. Proper registration is required by federal regulation and is free. Registration should be updated every five years and upon change of address/phone numbers, change of vessel, cancellation by the vessel's previous owner, and registration by the new owner upon sale of the EPIRB. 1-888-212-SAVE (7283) or <http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov/>
  - e. Boaters should ensure that EPIRBs are mounted or stored securely and in a location that will enable the EPIRB to float free (ex. outside cabin for mounted EPIRB) or easily accessible (ex. in pants pocket or primary life jacket pocket for PLB) in case of capsize or other emergency.
  - f. Life rafts can serve as a survival platform for an extended time. Operators should be sure that the raft is large enough to hold the maximum number of persons that will be aboard. The raft should be equipped with a package of appropriate emergency equipment and serviced professionally according to the manufacturer's instructions.
12. NAUTICAL CHARTS - Nautical charts provide important information for navigating waterways and planning trips. They show the nature and shape of the coast, water depths, and characteristics of the bottom, prominent landmarks, port facilities, navigational aids,

marine hazards, and other pertinent information. Charts are updated regularly by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and sold as print on demand through NOAA certified agents, marine supply stores and chart vendors. Boaters should be sure to use the most up to date charts available, and, when operating in coastal waters, obtain the largest scale charts they can, which show the greatest amount of detail about the area. Operators who use a chart plotter or GPS receiver in place of a paper chart should periodically buy or download updated charts.

13. HYPOTHERMIA - Immersion into cold water can lead to hypothermia, the abnormal reduction of body temperature. Hypothermia can induce rapid, uncontrolled breathing, cardiac arrest, and other physical conditions, and can easily result in death from cold or drowning.
14. COLD WATER SURVIVAL -A boater operating in cold water should always wear a life jacket. Anyone forced to enter the water should button up all clothing, and, if possible, cover his or her head; enter the water slowly; keep the head out of the water; and assume the heat escape lessening posture (HELP). He or she should also attempt to climb aboard the overturned hull if it is still afloat.
15. IMMERSION SUITS -Immersion suits and dry suits can delay the effects of hypothermia in cold water, but they must be maintained and stored according to the manufacturer's instructions. Crew members and passengers should wear them when operating in water whose temperature is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.
16. FIRST AID -Boaters should be encouraged to take a first aid training course to prepare them to deal with medical emergencies that may arise while they are under way. First aid classes are available through the American Red Cross and other civic organizations. Some first aid courses include basic Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training.
17. FUELING
  - a. Gasoline and gasoline fumes are dangerous and can easily explode. Vessel examiners should stress that boaters need to take special precautions to prevent gasoline related fires and explosions while fueling their vessels, after fueling, and while under way.
  - b. Before fueling, operators should remove all portable fuel tanks from the vessel and place them on the dock; close all ports, hatches, and other openings; extinguish all smoking materials; turn off all engines, electrical equipment, radios, stoves, and other appliances; ask passengers to leave the boat; keep the fill nozzle in direct contact with the tank; and wipe up any spilled fuel.
  - c. After fueling, boaters should open all ports, hatches, and doors to help ventilate the vessel; check the bilge for fuel vapors before starting the engine; sniff around the areas both inside and outside the boat to make sure there is no gasoline odor anywhere; run the boat's blower system for at least four minutes before starting the engine; start the engine when satisfied that such action is safe; and only then ask passengers to come aboard.

18. FUEL MANAGEMENT - Boaters should take special precautions to avoid running out of fuel. One easy to remember formula is to allocate one third of the vessel's total fuel supply for traveling to your destination; one third for returning to port; and one third to hold in reserve.

#### 19. FLOAT PLANS

- a. A prudent boater will file a float plan before heading out on the water. The plan should include your destination, intended route and expected time of return.
- b. Additionally, include a description of the vessel and a list of the mechanical, communication, navigation equipment, and a list of distress signals and other safety gear on board. The names and contact information of the operator, crewmembers, and passengers should also be included. Boaters can find a blank float plan at: <http://www.floatplancentral.org/download/USCGFloatPlan.pdf>; fill it out online; and print out as many copies as required.
- c. Float plans should not be filed with the Coast Guard or other first responders; rather, they should be given to a friend, relative, or local marina operator before the vessel gets under way. If the boater is delayed an unusually long time, the person holding the float plan should contact the Coast Guard or local marine police. When the boater returns, those first responders should be notified so authorities do not launch a costly and unnecessary search.

#### 20. WEATHER AND SEA CONDITIONS

- a. Boaters should always check the local weather forecast before leaving the dock. Besides newspaper, radio, and television forecasts, boaters should get to know online forecasts published and updated frequently by the National Weather Service (NWS) and various private sector forecasting companies. Ships, marinas, and yacht clubs also may display storm warning flags.
- b. Boaters should try to become proficient in recognizing weather changes when they are out on the water. They also should check the NWS forecast hourly on VHF-FM weather channels 1 through 10.
- c. If the weather rapidly deteriorates, boat operators should reduce speed while keeping enough power to maintain headway; have crewmembers and passengers put on life jackets; turn on navigation running lights; head for the nearest safe harbor; steer the bow of the boat into the waves at a 45-degree angle; strive to keep bilges free of water; and seat passengers on the bottom of the boat, near the centerline.
- d. In the event of an engine failure, the operator should put out a sea anchor to keep the boat headed into the waves (a metal bucket can serve as a sea anchor in an emergency).

## 21. INSURANCE AND TOWING CONSIDERATIONS

- a. Some states require proof of insurance before registering a vessel. In any case, it is a good idea to carry marine insurance.
- b. Among the items that may be covered by a marine insurance policy are loss of the boat; loss of equipment carried on board; protection against liability for personal injury or property damage; medical coverage in case of injury; and the cost of towing the boat in the water or carrying it by trailer on land.
- c. Boaters should talk to an insurance agency about the kind of coverage that may be best for their boat. Coverage can be part of a homeowner policy or provided in a separate boat insurance policy. Some companies may offer discounts to boaters who complete boating safety classes or whose boat passes a vessel safety check. In states that require boaters to carry insurance coverage, the vessel examiner shall not ask the boat owner or operator to provide proof of insurance. The vessel examiner shall not decline to issue a decal because the boater does not have such proof on hand. Instead, the vessel examiner should make the boater aware of state requirements as a matter of information.
- d. Boaters may also consider obtaining a commercial salvage company membership. Some companies offer monthly membership fees with no additional fees for emergency assistance up to certain distances, and members typically receive priority assistance at no additional or reduced cost.

22. QUICK REFERENCE CHART AND PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST - The brochure, A Boater's Guide to the Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats, contains a quick-reference chart that lists individual requirements that the boater must meet to obtain a vessel safety check decal, along with items that are recommended, though not mandated, for prudent mariners. Vessel examiners should encourage boaters to use that checklist regularly to ensure that their vessels are well equipped. In addition, the brochure contains a checklist that boaters should review before getting under way each time they go out. This may help avoid mishaps later.

## 23. SAFE BOATING COURSES

- a. Vessel examiners should recommend strongly that all boaters take safe boating courses offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Power Squadrons or state. The boater's entire family or household should learn the basics of safe boating practices.
- b. Coast Guard Auxiliary course information is available on the organization's website at [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org). Information about Power Squadrons courses can be found at [www.United States Power Squadrons.org](http://www.United States Power Squadrons.org) or by calling 1-888-367-8777. Both organizations maintain WebPages to promote Vessel Safety Checks. Many states also sponsor boating safety courses.

24. RESPONSIBLE SEAMANSHIP - Maritime domain awareness means knowing what is going on in every direction and thinking in advance about how to deal with it. When a motorist drives along an interstate highway, he or she must not only watch the road that is directly ahead. The driver also has to keep an eye out for cars entering or preparing to exit the main highway; passing on either side; or tailgating too closely. If the road runs through the mountains, the motorist also may have to watch out for sudden curves; fallen rocks; or the absence of shoulders. The person steering (or in command of) a boat faces similar challenges. Is that cargo vessel steaming up the bay likely to pose a danger to the boat he or she is operating? If so, what action should the operator take? Slow down? Change course? A good helmsman is constantly checking for boat traffic, changes in sea state, weather patterns, and other factors affecting the boat, and relies on other crew members (and even some passengers) to help serve as lookouts. At the first sign of any changes, he or she begins making plans to deal with the new situation and to inform the crew on what action will be taken.

## CHAPTER 5. PADDLE CRAFT

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Paddle craft are a new and increasingly important opportunity for Auxiliary and Power Squadrons vessel examiners.
2. Boaters are purchasing these small, versatile boats because they are far less expensive than conventional powerboats or sailboats; can be kept and launched almost anywhere and are fun to use. Paddleboats are a constantly expanding category that includes canoes, kayaks, stand up paddle boards, and pedal propelled boats, which are also involved in a growing share of the nation's boating accidents, injuries, and deaths. These type of vessels present special challenges for vessel examiners.
3. All safety equipment that is recommended is essential, since paddle boats can swamp or capsize easily and boaters can be injured or drown. Especially important is that paddle boaters acquire the knowledge and skills to operate their vessels safely and to use good judgment in deciding whether they can handle the weather and sea conditions that are likely to occur on each trip. As a result, the boater education aspect of the Vessel Safety Check becomes even more important.

### B. QUALIFICATIONS FOR VESSEL EXAMINERS

1. All certified Auxiliary and Power Squadrons vessel examiners may also conduct vessel safety checks on paddle craft without additional training or qualification tests.
2. Vessel examiners examining paddle craft must use the Paddle Craft Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012, which is designed for vessel safety checks on conventional boats. They should also become familiar with the differences between the forms before performing vessel safety checks on a paddle craft.

### C. DUTIES, REQUIREMENTS, AND PROCEDURES

1. Duties, requirements, and procedures set out for vessel examiners in chapters 1 and 2 of this Manual apply to the vessel safety check process for examining paddle craft as well.
2. The process of providing boating safety information to operators of paddle craft can be challenging for examiners. Vessel examiners may find that some paddle craft operators may consider them unfamiliar with operating paddle craft, and so may be less receptive to recommendations about good safety practices. Vessel examiners may find that one way of gaining operator confidence is to learn the terminology and practices that are specific to paddle craft, and to involve the boater in the conversation early to talk about his or her particular variety of boat.
3. Since many vessel examiners have never operated a paddle craft, a vessel examiner who intends to conduct vessel safety checks on paddle craft may want to consider taking an

entry level class in paddle craft handling offered by a local kayaking or canoeing organization.

D. CONDUCTING THE VESSEL SAFETY CHECK FOR PADDLE CRAFT

1. GENERAL

- a. The vessel safety check form for paddle craft examination is organized into five sections; information about the owner or operator; information about the paddle craft; mandatory requirements for boating safety equipment; equipment recommended when the boat is used in open water; and other recommendations.
- b. As in the case with vessel safety checks for powerboats and sailboats, the determination of whether a vessel qualifies for a vessel safety check decal depends primarily on whether it meets the requirements of the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012A, Section III. The items listed in Sections IV and V are recommended, but not required.
- c. The vessel examiner should take every opportunity to ensure that the boater is aware of the regulations and good practices that can help avoid accidents and personal injury or death. He or she should recommend that the paddle boat operator take courses such as the Auxiliary's Paddle Sports America, the Power Squadrons' Paddle Smart seminar, and classes in paddle craft skills offered by organizations such as the American Canoe Association.

2. OWNER/OPERATOR INFORMATION - Attended related skills class - The designation refers to a class or seminar that concentrates on specific paddle craft skills, such as paddling strokes, kinds of rescues, exit and re-entry, and safety equipment.

3. PADDLE CRAFT INFORMATION - Hull Identification Number (HIN) Some paddle craft, such as stand-up paddle boards, might not display the HIN called for in the vessel safety check form because some manufacturers have not etched it into the hull. These craft are exempt from HIN requirements.

4. SAFETY CHECK REQUIREMENTS:

- a. Sound signal - The paddler must carry some sort of sound signaling device such as a whistle (ideally attached to his or her life jacket) or an air horn.
- b. Life jacket(s) - The requirements are the same as other vessels, one U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person aboard the vessel.
- c. Overall vessel condition - Several items require particular attention.
- d. Hull and deck condition - Check for leaky hulls and bulkheads and for lines or fittings that need repair or replacement. If holes are patched with duct tape, the vessel will not qualify for a vessel safety check decal. If the paddle craft has a skeg or a rudder, be sure it is working and is fastened securely.



- e. Hatch covers - Must be in good condition, secure, and fitted properly to keep water out of the hull.
- f. Deck lines and bungee cords - Should be in good condition and secure, not fraying or hanging off the paddle craft. The paddler uses the lines to secure equipment, get back into the paddle craft if he or she has fallen overboard, and hold on to the boat if it has capsized.
- g. Bulkheads, airbags, emergency flotation - Check for holes and cracks. Some paddle craft do not have any bulkheads and instead require the use of airbags or foam blocks at the stern and bow to help provide flotation. This type of craft will become unusable or will sink when flooded if the airbags or foam blocks are missing.
- h. Paddles, oars - Check the shaft and blade of paddles and oars to make sure there are no cracks or fractures.
- i. Navigation lights - Displayed in accordance with the Navigation Rules. Rule 25 (a) side lights and a stern light, or 25 (d) (ii) an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light, which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision.
- j. Visual distress signals - A paddle craft operating on coastal waters between sunset and sunrise is required to carry visual distress signals suitable for night use. This can be a battery powered S.O.S light or three combination day and night flares.
- k. State and local requirements - If a paddle craft does not comply with all applicable state and local boating safety requirements, it does not qualify for a vessel safety check decal. These requirements differ with each state and locality.

## 5. OPEN WATER AND OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Anchor light - Displayed in accordance with the Navigation Rules. Rule 30 (a) or (e), an all-round white light as appropriate.
- b. Spray skirt - Piece of watertight material rigged to keep water from flooding into the cockpit in rough seas or when the operator is executing a roll. Must fit tightly around the vessel's coaming.

## 6. PROVIDING BOATING SAFETY INFORMATION - Here are some points the vessel examiner may want to emphasize in discussing boater safety practices with paddle craft operators:

- a. Swimming skills and life jackets - Although paddle craft operators aren't required to be skilled swimmers, they are strongly urged to improve their swimming ability. With paddle craft, sudden immersion in water is not a rarity. Boaters should always wear U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets that are designed for the specific activity. If they cannot swim well, they should not use paddle craft without close supervision. Paddle craft operators should regularly practice their skills in exiting and entering their boats, preferably under the same conditions in which they plan to use the craft.

- b. Prepare for the worst - Paddle craft operators should carry whatever equipment will be needed to cope with the worst situation they are apt to encounter on a specific trip, including a life jacket, throw bag, towline, compass, signaling devices, sponge, bailer, spare paddle, gloves, sun glasses, and a hat with a brim.
- c. Be visible to other boaters - Paddlers should take steps to ensure that boaters in larger vessels will be able to see them relatively easily, even in rough water, high traffic areas, and reduced visibility. That means wearing high visibility clothing and accessories whenever possible.
- d. Float Plan - Paddle craft operators should regularly file a float plan before using their vessels, even for short trips. It can be an informal document to tell a person on shore where the operator is planning to go, what time he or she is likely to return, which authorities to call if the boat does not return as scheduled, and how to describe the vessel to first-responders.
- e. Continually reassess conditions - Paddlers should assess weather, sea state, boat traffic, and other conditions before getting under way and should re-evaluate the situation periodically and at the first sign of any change. They also should remain alert to early hints of fatigue, reserving some of their energy for getting home. If more than one person is on board the craft, the crew should work as a team, keeping tabs on one another.
- f. Have a backup plan - Operators should always have a backup plan to use in case conditions change while they are out on the water, and should update that plan as the trip progresses.
- g. Using caution about adverse conditions - One of the most dangerous mistakes a paddler can make is to venture out into rough seas, adverse weather conditions, or areas where boat traffic is more difficult than the operator or the vessel can handle. Before beginning a trip, boaters should assess the possibility that such conditions may exist and should always opt for prudence. Small boats whose operators go out into heavy seas, storms, or major sea lanes risk getting into serious trouble.
- h. Cold weather - Paddlers should wear anti-exposure suits or dry suits in cold water, complete with hood, gloves, booties, and masks when circumstances call for them. The high risk of rapid immersion in paddle craft dictates that operators take cold weather dangers seriously.
- i. Towing and rescue - Paddle craft operators should carry an effective towline or towing system and rescue gear, learn the rudiments of towing and rescue procedures, and practice them regularly.
- j. Helmets - Paddlers who boat in whitewater, surf, tide races, breaking waves, and other rough water should consider wearing helmets that protect the entire head, including the face, against concussion and abrasion. The structure and materials used in the helmet will vary with the activity for which it is designed.

## CHAPTER 6. OPERATIONAL SURFACE FACILITIES

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. This chapter covers the required equipment which a boat needs to be considered an Auxiliary operational surface facility. The district commander (through the director) may specify additional requirements to support Auxiliary operations.
2. A primary mission of the Auxiliary, SAFETY, is promoted by the careful and complete inspection of operational surface facilities. Every Auxiliary operational surface facility is required to pass an annual inspection. An operational surface facility, flying the Auxiliary ensign or operational ensign, must be one of the safest boats afloat. It must meet higher standards than are established for award of the vessel safety check decal.
3. All operational surface facilities must first meet the standards for a vessel safety check of a vessel the same length, and then they are required to meet the operational facility inspection requirements set forth in this Chapter.
4. Inspection of operational surface facilities shall be performed by Auxiliarists who are qualified vessel examiners. It is recommended that experienced vessel examiners conduct operational surface facility inspections. The vessel examiner cannot be the owner of the operational surface facility being inspected, or a member of the immediate family.
5. Vessel examiners must ensure that along with the normal inspection paperwork (Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 or the PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008, owner's info, etc.), Auxiliarists complete the "Non-Owner Use" section of the form when Auxiliarists other than the owner are authorized to coxswain their operational vessel facility. Those members authorized to operate the facility without the owner onboard must be listed by name and Member ID number in the proper section.
6. The director shall insure that all operational surface facilities in the district are inspected annually prior to the expiration of the current offer for use, which is 1 year and 45 days from the date of last inspection.
7. This program shall in no manner be construed as permission to infringe upon the Coast Guard vessel inspection program.
8. Credit for an operational surface facility inspection is credited to the vessel examiner when the Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 or PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008 are posted. If an operational surface facility fails to meet requirements, report the failed inspection as a regular vessel safety check on the current vessel safety check reporting form to receive credit for the inspection.

**NOTE:** When the vessel examiner completes an inspection of an operational surface facility or operational vessel facility that vessel examiner has certified that ALL the required equipment is per this manual and the requirements of the district commander.

B. OPERATIONAL SURFACE FACILITY CLASSIFICATIONS - An operational surface facility is one that has met requirements of this chapter, and has satisfactorily met the additional following criteria:

- a. Been offered for use.
- b. Met additional requirements imposed by the district commander via the Director, who is his representative in supervision of the Auxiliary program; and;
- c. Been accepted by the Director.

C. OPERATIONAL SURFACE FACILITY CRITERIA

1. Auxiliary boats that may be designated as an operational surface facility are motorboats 14 feet or OVER in length. All vessels propelled by machinery 65 feet in length OR LESS, (except tugboats propelled by steam), are classed as motorboats.
2. This includes motorboats carrying passengers or freight for hire and commercial fishing boats.
  - a. Pleasure sailboats 16 feet or more in length.
  - b. All commercial motor vessels offered for use, MUST be inspected by the Coast Guard.
  - c. The majority of boats in the Auxiliary are motorboats, with which this section will be mostly concerned.
  - d. Auxiliary member's motorboats less than 14 feet and sailboats less than 16 feet cannot be inspected as operational surface facilities, but may be examined for the vessel safety check decal. A member's boat with the vessel safety check decal can fly the Auxiliary ensign.
3. An Auxiliarist owning more than one boat may request that all or several of those boats be designated as operational surface facilities, except those that do not meet the length requirement. EACH boat must be inspected as an operational surface facility.

D. SPECIAL PURPOSE FACILITY CRITERIA - A special purpose facility is a vessel less than 14 feet in length, offered for use, in writing, and accepted by the Director.

E. CORPORATE, PARTNERSHIP, OR MULTIPLE OWNED FACILITIES

1. Facilities offered as operational facilities or special purpose facilities and not solely owned by a single Auxiliarist (this includes husband/wife combinations), must submit the proper authorization by all owners of the facility authorizing the Auxiliary member to use

the boat for Coast Guard activities along with their Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 or PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008. See Enclosures 1, 2, and 3 for the information corporate, partnership, or multiple owners must submit.

2. Auxiliarists offering a corporate owned facility, and Auxiliary Unit Vessels, for use as operational or special purpose, must, in addition to other requirements, provide written information that identifies the legal ownership of the facility.

#### F. TRANSFERS OF OPERATIONAL FACILITIES BETWEEN DISTRICTS/REGIONS

1. If a member owning an operational vessel facility transfers to another district/region, the new district/region may also require the facility to pass another inspection. This is to ensure that the facility meets any additional equipment requirements of the new district/region.
2. If a member lives in one district/region and has an operational vessel facility located in and/or intends to patrol in a different district/region, then the operational vessel facility must also be inspected by a vessel examiner from the host district/region and meet any special equipment requirement of the host district/region.

#### G. EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. Directors may waive only the equipment noted on the Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, ANSC 7003 or PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008 as authorized to be waived, or may require additional equipment for operational vessel facilities, based on the operational needs of their area.
2. District unique items may be included on a supplemental sheet to the Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 or PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form 7008, but, to reduce local administrative workload, DIRAUXs are encouraged to use the standard Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 or PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008.
3. An operational surface facility **MUST** meet the highest standards of equipment requirements. Equipment requirements must be at a minimum in accordance with Chapter 3 of this instruction, as well as the Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 or PWC Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008.

- H. DISPLAY OF OPERATIONAL SURFACE FACILITY FLAG AND DECAL - A vessel accepted by the Director as an operational vessel facility is required to display the Auxiliary patrol boat ensign (white with red diagonal stripe) and patrol signboards when operating under Coast Guard orders. Any operational surface facility flying the patrol boat ensign and displaying patrol signboards MUST also display the current vessel facility decal along with the operational "wreath." (See Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual, COMDTINST M16798.3 (series), or district guidance).
- I. DISPLAY OF PUBLIC SAFETY VESSEL I.D. LIGHT - An operational vessel facility engaged in public safety activities may use the alternating red and yellow identification light. The light does NOT grant the right of way or supersede other required lighting configurations as set forth in the Navigational Rules of the Road. Its primary purpose is to provide for public safety when actively engaged in activities such as regattas, traffic control, special celebrations and the wide array of other maritime assistance activities. Good judgment should prevail in using the I.D. light.

## APPENDIX – SAMPLE FORMS AND WORK SHEETS

1. This appendix provides information on resources and forms applicable to the vessel safety check program.
2. A Boater’s Guide to the Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats
  - a. This pamphlet contains the applicable federal safety requirements for recreational boats and additional safety recommendations and information. It may be given to boaters inquiring about the vessel safety program even if they are not yet ready to schedule a vessel safety check.  
  
**NOTE:** The federal requirements are also briefly described on the reverse side of the Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 and the Paddle Craft Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012A.
  - b. At the completion of a vessel safety check, vessel examiners should give a copy of the pamphlet to the vessel’s owner or operator.
3. State Requirements
  - a. Applicable state boating safety requirements for recreational vessels are available from the state department of natural resources and are frequently listed on the agency’s website.
  - b. Vessel examiners should provide a copy of the state requirements when available or provide the owner or operator of the boat the link to the state’s website.
4. Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012 and Paddle Craft Vessel Safety Check, Form ANSC 7012A (both Auxiliary and Power Squadrons) - Both forms, along with vessel safety check decals, are available from Auxiliary or Power Squadrons units. The forms can be accessed, filled in, and printed out online at [www.cgaux.org/members](http://www.cgaux.org/members) (click on Forms Warehouse in the menu at the left). These forms are used by all vessel examiners, in both the Auxiliary and the Power Squadrons, while conducting the vessel safety check. After the vessel examiner has completed and signed the appropriate form, he or she gives a copy of the document to the vessel owner or operator.
5. Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003 and Personal Watercraft Facility and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7008.
  - a. For Auxiliary members only. These forms are used to record an inspection of an Auxiliarist owned boat or personal watercraft that is being offered for use as an Auxiliary operational surface facility.
  - b. For all other vessels offered for use, that require additional information that isn’t covered in the Vessel Facility Inspection and Offer for Use, Form ANSC 7003, refer to the Enclosures within this chapter.

Appendix A to COMDTINST M16796.8A

6. Vessel Examination Activity Report, Form ANSC 7038 (Auxiliary only) - This form is used to record all vessel examiner activity for a given period and may be accessed and sent electronically or in paper form to the member's Information Systems officer.
7. Technical Questions - Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel examiners who have questions about the program should ask their Flotilla Staff Officers for Vessel Examinations (FSO-VEs) or send inquiries to the Auxiliary's National Chief, Technical Services Division (DVC-VT), via the chain of leadership and management.
8. Power Squadrons Vessel Examiners should route inquiries through their local officers or the UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS® national Vessel Safety Check Committee.



ENCLOSURE (1)

**SAMPLE FORMAT FOR CORPORATE OWNERSHIP**

[ **name of corporation** ]

[ **address** ]

I, \_\_\_\_\_, duly elected Clerk/Secretary of below hereto were duly adopted by all of the existing Directors holding office at a meeting held on, [date].

I further certify that said Votes are in accordance with law, the By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation/Organization of said Corporation, and that said Votes are presently in full force and effect and have not been adversely affected by any other Vote of the Directors or Stockholders of this Corporation.

VOTED: That the Corporation offer the Vessel/Aircraft/Radio Station described in the attached U.S. Coast Guard Offer of Use Form as an Operational Surface Facility (hereinafter referred to as "the Facility"), in accordance with the provisions of Title 14, U.S.C. 826 and applicable regulations, and that the President, Treasurer or any Vice President of this Corporation, acting singly, be and is hereby authorized and empowered, in the name of and on behalf of this Corporation, and with or without corporate Coast Guard Auxiliary, now or at any time in the future, such forms, applications, documents, instruments and writings, without limitation upon such terms and conditions and whenever said President, Treasurer or any Vice President shall deem it necessary or desirable pertaining to the use of the Facility, and the execution thereof shall be sufficient evidence of the determination authorizing the transaction by the Board of Directors.

VOTED: That the Corporation understands that the Facility may be used in circumstances which could result in damage to the Facility and/or third party claims. The Corporation understands that pursuant to Title 14 U.S.C. 830 and Coast Guard Regulations promulgated under that loss or damage to the Facility and/or third party the Coast Guard. The Corporation has determined that it has adequate insurance in the event the Facility is so damaged or if such a claim results, or has sufficient finances available to assume this risk. I further certify that the Corporation validly exists and in good standing, and the person(s) named as officers and Directors of this Corporation, as set forth in the Corporate-Owned Facility Application, are true, complete and correct.

VOTED: That the Facility may be utilized and operated by the attached list of Coast Guard Auxiliarists who may use the Facility for any authorized Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary purpose, provided the Coast Guard issues reimbursable or non-reimbursable patrol orders.

Enclosure (1) to COMDTINST M16796.8A

A true copy Attest

---

Secretary/Clerk

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_

ENCLOSURE (2)

**SAMPLE FORMAT FOR MULITPLE OWNERSHIP**

ASSENT AND AUTHORIZATION FOR USE

The undersigned, being a partial owner of the vessel/aircraft/radio station described below and in the attached United States Coast Guard Offer For Use form as Auxiliary Operational Surface Facility (hereinafter referred to as "the Facility"), in accordance with the provisions of Title 14 U.S.C 826 and applicable regulations, assent to the Facility being utilized and operated by the attached list of Coast Guard Auxiliarists who may use the Facility for any authorized Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary purpose, provided the Coast Guard issues reimbursable or non-reimbursable patrol orders. The undersigned understands that the Facility may be used in circumstances which could result in loss or damage to the Facility and/or third party claims, which under Title 14 U.S.C. 830 and applicable Coast Guard regulations may not be paid for or reimbursed by the Coast Guard. The undersigned has determined that there is adequate insurance to cover this risk or that they are prepared to assume this risk.

DESCRIPTION OF FACILITY OFFERED FOR USE

**[ add enough date, name address, percent owner,  
and signature lines to cover ALL owners ]**

Year, Make, Model \_\_\_\_\_

ID/Registration/Documentation Number \_\_\_\_\_

Boat \_\_\_\_\_ Aircraft \_\_\_\_\_ Radio \_\_\_\_\_

OWNERS ASSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (type or print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Percent Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (type or print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Percent Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



ENCLOSURE (3)

**SAMPLE INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR A CORPORATE OWNED FACILITY**

1. Name of Corporation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Address of Corporation: \_\_\_\_\_

3. State and Date Incorporated: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Purpose of Corporation: \_\_\_\_\_

5. List Name and Title of all Officers and Directors: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Is this a flotilla, division, or district related Corporation? Yes\_\_\_, No\_\_\_. If yes, specify which: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are all members of flotilla, division, or district members of Corporation? Yes\_\_\_, No\_\_\_. Percent: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Percent of Corporation owned by Auxiliarist(s): \_\_\_\_\_

9. Relationship between Corporation and Auxiliary: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Relationship of Non-Auxiliary stockholders or members to Auxiliary: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. How was facility acquired by Corporation?

(a) Purchased: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Donated: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Donor: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Attach Corporate Resolutions

**THE FOLLOWING TO BE ANSWERED FOR OPERATIONAL FACILITY STATUS.**

1. Is facility dedicated to Coast Guard and Auxiliary use only?

Yes\_\_\_\_ or No\_\_\_\_.

2. Is facility only used when under Coast Guard orders?

Yes\_\_\_\_ or No\_\_\_\_.

3. Primary use of Facility: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Attach authorization for non-owner use of Auxiliary facility (make sure all person (s) authorized to operate facility while under Coast Guard orders are listed) as outlined in chapter 1, of the Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual, COMDTINST M16798.3 (series).

Primary Auxiliary User:

Corporate Facility Owner:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (print or type)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Officer

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Enclosure (4) to COMDTINST M16796.8A

ENCLOSURE (4)

**SAMPLE FORMAT FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE FACILITY OFFER FOR USE  
LETTER**

[ date ]

From: [ name ] , [ member number ]

To: Director of Auxiliary, [ specify ] Coast Guard District

Subj: SPECIAL PURPOSE FACILITY OFFER FOR USE

Ref: (a) Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual, COMDTINST M16798.3 (series)

1. I hereby offer the below listed special purpose facility for use in any authorized Auxiliary mission.
  - a. [ complete description including make, model, motor type, VIN, and registration numbers, as appropriate ]
2. This letter is valid for [..specify specific time period – 12 month maximum ], so long as the above special purpose facility continues to be accepted for use or unless specifically revoked by me.

[ owner's name and signature ]

Copy: [ member, member's division, etc. ]

\_\_\_\_\_ Accepted      \_\_\_\_\_ Rejected  
[ director check one ]                      [ director signature and date ]

**DEDICATED TO PROMOTING RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY**