



No Fuss, No Muss - and Your Favorite Price (Free!) - Vessel Exams

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In the springtime, the saying goes that a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love. This may be true but just about everyone I speak to lately has had it with "cabin fever" and wants to get back out on there! And, fitfully, Spring is nearly here. When getting to work commissioning your boat for the water, stop for a moment and consider getting the "gilt edged" United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel Safety Check - better known as the Vessel Exam. Oh, and it's free.

What it is Not!

USCGAux vessel safety checks are not a regulatory event. If your boat doesn't pass all components of the exam, no one "turns you in." The examiner will explain exactly what needs to be brought back into line to conform to Federal standards and, most likely, will also give you his or her cell phone number.

"Call me when you've addressed the issue. I'll come over and we'll get this boat decal'd as having passed the USCGAux Vessel Safety Check."

What Does The Decal Mean?

It says something very simple. This boat meets, at least, Federal minimums for 15 specific safety or regulatory features. Can USCG active-duty members still come alongside and board you? Of course they can. They need no reason whatsoever (see "*We're being Boarded by the Coast Guard - Now What???*" <<http://www.atlanticmaritimeacademy.com/boarding.html>>SSP, 6/22/11). But experience tells me that when the regulars are faced with two boats, and one has passed our exam and the other hasn't, the other guy had better hope that he has no reason to worry.

How Do I Get One?

In an out-reach program started a few years ago, the USCGAux flotillas "Out East" have created "Vessel Exam Days" with a number of marinas and dock masters. Some throw BBQs for their customers. Some set up tables with fresh sets of flares (the most common reason for a boat not to get its decal) and other necessary items like fire extinguishers or air-horns, etc. So,

check with your dock master and, if he or she isn't planning to sponsor a "VE Day", email me below and I will follow up directly. Or, you can go online. WWW.CGaux.ORG<<http://www.cgaux.org/>> and click on Vessel Safety Checks. Follow a few simple prompts and you will be asked for your zip-code. The computer will then list for you, closest first, where the Vessel Examiners are and you can email them automatically. Or just email me below and we'll get it set up for you.

What Will The Vessel Examiner Check?

Believe it or not, the first thing that the Examiner will ask for is your registration. The registration, not a copy, is required by law to be on the boat. If it isn't there, the examiner will still conduct the exam to see if there are any other show-stoppers but the VSC decal cannot be awarded without a valid registration on the boat. It can be in your wallet as long as you are on the boat!

An important reason for the registration to be in hand is that right on it is the length of the boat as it is known to DMV. USCG safety standards are size-dependent. For example, a boat over 39.4 feet shall (must!) have a copy of the Navigation Rules (the COLREGS you've seen so much on here) on the boat. Twenty-six feet or more? Where's your Pollution placard? Trash placard? At least two "B-1" fire extinguishers aboard?

Why Typically Don't All Boats Pass?

Well, as I noted above, the most common reason is expired flares. What does that mean? Your flares come from the factory with 40 months of "life" and that date is stamped on the side of the flare. Why 40? So, after shipping and sitting on a shelf, hopefully you have 3-years (36 months) of coverage. Are the flares still good after the expiration date? Almost without a doubt, they are. But the Examiner cannot give you your decal unless you have at least three days and three nights "pyrotechnic devices" aboard in an un-expired state.

What else can go wrong? Well, before you get nerv-

ous, with over 100,000 exams as the basis, 75% of all boats pass on the first pass. And it is not a regulatory event if it doesn't. You get specific advice from the Examiner on what you need. And likely his or her cell phone number to schedule the re exam. And, oh yes, it is free. Both times...

Here is the breakdown:

- Display of Numbers Registration / Documentation 5.435% 5.574%
- Personal Flotation Device Ventilation 2.832% 1.451%
- Visual Distress Signals Fire Extinguishers 12.221% 4.501%
- Backfire Flame Control Sound Producing Device 1.639% 5.156%
- Navigation Lights Marine Sanitation Device 8.465% 2.921%
- Pollution Placard MARPOL Trash Placard 2.375% 2.802%
- Navigation Rules State and/or Local Regulations - 2.742% 10.432%
- Overall Vessel Condition (catch-all) - 4.670%

Does every boat need to pass every item? Not at all. If you don't have a marine sanitation device (a "head") aboard, the Examiner just checks "N/A." But if you do, it must meet Federal standards for safe and secure operation. Does your 20' Seahunt need a set of Nav Rules aboard? Nope. But that 46' Ocean yacht of yours does..! You get the picture.

So, let's be sure we go to sea with a vessel that meets the gold standard and increase the safety of life at sea - yours! Oh, and it's free...

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at

JoinUSCGAux@aol.com<<mailto:JoinUSCGAux@aol.com>> or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR<<http://www.d1south.org/StaffPages/DSO-HR.php>> and we will help you "get in this thing..."



County Clerk Update

by SUFFOLK COUNTY CLERK

JUDY PASCALE

HOW TO APPEAL WHEN YOUR ASSESSMENT GRIEVANCE IS REJECTED

County Clerk Judith Pascale would like to remind all those who file unsuccessful real property assessment grievances that they may file a Small Claims Assessment Review Petition (SCARP) to appeal the decision.

"A Small Claims Assessment Review Petition allows the owner-occupant of residential property to file a court case should the assessment grievance be turned down by the Town's Board of Assessment Review. Each Town Assessor's Office establishes the deadline to file a Small Claims Assessment Review Petition and each town has a different deadline date," explained Pascale. Therefore, anyone interested in doing so must contact their local town assessor for the filing date.

SCARP forms are available on the County clerk's website at www.suffolkcountyny.com/clerk under On-Line Forms or at the County Clerk's Office in Riverhead. Also, you may request forms by mail by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Court Action Department, County Clerk's Office, 310 Center Drive, Riverhead, NY 11901.

Once a petition is completed, the homeowners' should make seven copies - two for the County Clerk's Office, one copy to be sent to the school district

clerk, one copy to the town assessor, one copy to be sent to the Suffolk County Treasurer's Office (Center Drive, Riverhead, NY 11901) and one copy for the homeowner's file.

The petition procedure is as follows:

1. Your written petition must be accompanied by a \$30 filing fee, payable to the Suffolk County Clerk, and should include supporting statements, records and other relevant information to support your petition.

2. If you cannot file your petition in person, you may send your petition by certified return receipt mail, but it must be mailed no later than thirty days after the final assessment roll is completed and filed. The failure to file your petition on time may result in a dismissal of your claim.

3. Once the hearing officer schedules a hearing, you may appear personally, with or without an attorney or other representative, to support the statements contained in the petition and attachments.

4. You may authorize your attorney or other representative to appear personally without you to support the petition. This authorization must be in writing and bear a date within the same calendar year during which the petition was filed.

5. The hearing officer will require you or your representative to appear personally, and may request that you submit additional evidence. If you willfully refuse or neglect to do so, or to answer any material questions put to you, you may be unable to obtain any reduction in assessment from the hearing officer. Failure to appear shall result in the petition being determined by the hearing officer based upon the available evidence submitted.

6. The hearing officer may determine the final assessment to be the same as or less than the original assessment. However, he or she cannot reduce your assessment to any amount lower than you claimed on your petition.

Upon receipt of the original and two copies of your petition, the County Clerk's Office will assign a control number to your case and immediately forward the original and one copy to Supreme Court for assignment to a hearing officer. The County Clerk's Office is not involved in scheduling the hearing or providing you with the decision. To check on your case please call 853-7707. After your hearing, a copy of the decision will be sent to you directly from Supreme Court.