



**Homeland
Security**

**U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
District 11 Northern Region**

Serving Northern California, Nevada, Utah



Instructions on how to Perform VSC's for Rental Agencies

All D11NR Vessel Examiners,

Vessel Safety Checks (VSC's) performed on rental vessels are different than standing at the launch ramp, working a yacht club, or visiting a large vessel in a marina. At these locations, we are there to verify that the boat has the equipment on board at the time of the VSC. At the rental agency, we want to make certain that the agency understands how to equip the vessel properly, show the customer where the safety equipment is located and offer brief instruction on the proper use, educate the customer on basic boating safety laws, and make certain that the counter person is fully knowledgeable about the vessel safety equipment requirements, basic boating laws, and is able to answer any safety related questions. In addition, we want to provide basic boating safety information, either the ABC's or Federal Requirements. So, this program requires a Program Visitor and a Vessel Examiner, they could be one in the same.

The first order of business is to make a phone contact and find out who the owner or manager is and briefly describe the program. Ideally, you'd like for them to provide their name and mailing address, or an email address so you can provide a letter and a copy of the agreement for their review. Explain that you would like to call back in a few days and schedule an interview to further explain the program and answer any questions. PLEASE make it clear that this is at NO COST to them and NO report is made to ANY law enforcement agency or insurance company.

If you are not a Program Visitor, you need to make contact with one from your flotilla to attend the scheduled meeting. Plan to dress the same whether in tropics or ODU's, but dress the same and neatly.

At the meeting, explain boating safety, the VSC program, and how we would like their company to partner with us to help promote water safety.

Explain that you would like them to demonstrate to you how they equip their vessels: lifejackets, fire extinguishers, etc. per the length and type of vessel. Here you can make suggestions based on the VSC form 7012 or 7012A for paddle craft. Be prepared to validate your suggestions with the Calif ABC's or Federal Requirements. For example, ask if they fit children under 12 with a lifejacket and stress wearing it. Explain the type IV and make certain that each vessel over 16' except paddle craft have one. Also explain that by law each paddle craft operator needs a horn or a whistle. However, it is NOT your responsibility to provide it unless your flotilla has a source.

After you feel comfortable with their presentation and have the signed agreement (2-copies), make an appointment for the VSC's. Pass or fail, be certain to fill out either fill out the 7012 form or 7012a form and issue a decal for each vessel. Make certain that ALL required safety equipment is in stock and available at the time of a rental. Explain that you reserve the right to perform a brief unannounced spot check during the boating season to make certain that the counter personnel are equipping each vessel properly and each customer is receiving a copy of the ABC's or Federal Requirements in addition to a brief safety talk. WHATEVER you do, PLEASE do not put the owner or manager in an uncomfortable position by lecturing them. Be polite, professional, and offer constructive comments. It may take a couple of visits to bring the owner/manager to understand the liability issue if the vessel is improperly equipped and that you are there to help, not hinder their business.

Finally, if at the end of the boating season you have an agency that you feel excels, and would like to recognize them at a flotilla or division meeting and would like a certificate of appreciation from the district, please let me know at least 2-3 weeks prior so I can prepare something and get your feelings prior to the finished product.

Finally, if you have ANY questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Mike Lauro DSO-VE

VESSEL SAFETY CHECKS FOR RENTAL AGENCIES (LIVERIES)

For those Vessel Examiners who plan to conduct VSCs at locations which rent out small boats, we suggest you take a few minutes to once again review Chapter 5 (Paddle Craft) in the Vessel Safety Check Manual (COMDTINST M16796.8) before heading out.

Obviously you will not be meeting with the individuals who will actually be renting the boats. You will need to rely on the agency to provide the necessary safety information. Take the time to emphasize the importance of their stressing **boater safety** and that everyone should always wear their life jacket. Ensuring the rental agency is providing their customers the necessary boater safety information is just as important as you ensuring their equipment meets state and federal requirements. Here are a few additional tips to keep in mind:

- 1- You are dealing with a business and you are representing the Coast Guard, please act accordingly.

- 2- Look each vessel over closely. They get a lot of use by "non-boaters" and may not always be in the best condition. If you are not satisfied that the vessel is "safe", it should be rejected. Take your time and examine each vessel. As you read in the manual, there are specific items to be aware of when examining different paddle craft.

- 3- Life jackets should be examined individually for wear, broken zippers, tears, missing hardware, etc.
 - a. Are there enough life jackets, in different sizes, for the number of boats?
 - b. It's recommended, but not required, that a whistle be attached to each life jacket.

- 4- If a whistle isn't attached to each life jacket, are sufficient whistles available for each customer?

- 5- The vessels are generally rented for day time use. It is recommended, but again not required, that a flashlight be on board (a necessity when suddenly caught during a period of reduced visibility such as fog or a passing shower).

- 6- Look over their selection of paddles (oars) to ensure they meet the necessary standards.

- 7- Complete a 7012A for each paddlecraft you examine. After signing and dating each form, give a copy to the owner/manager for their records. As a side note, remember ANSC Form 7012A is not to be used when certifying Vessel Examiner candidates.

- 8- Ask the owner/ manager to place a decal on each vessel (which passed the examination) as described in the VSC manual. It's important that you observe the decals being installed.

Boating rental liveries, by nature, attract the NOVICE and NON BOATERS – ensuring every boater returns safely to the dock is one of the key reasons we consider these vessel safety checks to be critical in our campaign to reduce boating fatalities.

One final suggestion, within a day or two of completing the vessel safety checks, send a letter (preferably by the U S Postal Service) thanking them for participating in our program. This more formal THANK YOU will go a long way in you being invited back next year.

THANK YOU for participating in the Vessel Safety Check Program!