

Vessel Safety Check Manual:

Errata, Explanations and FAQ

Fourth Edition

18 August 2003

Compiled by the Technical Division

USCG Auxiliary National Vessel Examination Department

Purpose

This document lists the known errors (errata) in the Vessel Safety Check (VSC) Manual COMDTINST 16796.8. It also provides additional explanations for some of the more difficult sections of the manual. It is intended for use by Vessel Examiners (VEs) of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCGAUX) and United States Power Squadrons (USPS).

To report any problems or issues with the Vessel Safety Check Manual COMDTINST M16796.8 or this document, please send an email to bc_vts@att.net

Revision History

Edition	Summary of Changes
1	Draft. Internal working document
2	First public release.
3	Correction to Chapter 5 VSC Resources And Forms
4	Incorporate USCG Office of Boating Safety Program Guidance For Display Of Vessel Registration Numbers in Chapter 3, 1 Display of Registration Numbers

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Chapter 5 VSC Resources And Forms

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Chapter 1 The Vessel Safety Check Program

Purpose – none reported and verified

Scope – none reported and verified

Definitions – none reported and verified

Vessel Safety Check Program – none reported and verified

Vessel Examiner – none reported and verified

Vessel Safety Check (VSC) – none reported and verified

Vessels Eligible For the Vessel Safety Check – none reported and verified

Vessels Not Eligible For the Vessel Safety Check – none reported and verified

Activities Beyond the Scope of the Vessel Safety Check – none reported and verified

Manufacturer Product Defect Notification – none reported and verified

Relations With Law Enforcement Officers – none reported and verified

District Supervision of the Vessel Examination Program – none reported and verified

Vessel Safety Checks Performed Outside of The Home District – none reported and verified

Vessel Examiner Qualification

Page 6, left column, first paragraph, the sentence (Vessel Examiner Qualification: Initial Qualification): "For the Coast Guard Auxiliary, VEs may also examine Uninspected Passenger Vessels and Commercial Fishing Vessels." Change to: "For the Coast Guard Auxiliary, VEs may also examine Uninspected Passenger Vessels (UPV) if the USCG District Marine Safety Office (MSO) does not have a UPV examination program in place. Such examinations must be conducted according to the procedures and policies contained in Auxiliary Vessel Examiner Manual COMDTINST M16796.2E (old VE Manual) Chapter 4."

Page 6, left column, second paragraph, insert the word "action" between "no law enforcement" and "will be taken"

Chapter 2 Vessel Safety Check Techniques

Introduction – none reported and verified

The Vessel Examiner Should – none reported and verified

Educational Materials – none reported and verified

Exchange Boating Safety Information – none reported and verified

Conducting The Vessel Safety Check

Page 8, 1st bullet under Conducting VSC; insert after “on trailer for transport” the words “while parked in a safe location so it does not impede vehicle or pedestrian traffic,”

Awarding The VSC Decal – none reported and verified

Chapter 3 VSC Decal Requirements

Display of Registration Numbers – Replace the entire section with the following:

United States Coast Guard
Office of Boating Safety
16780
August 14, 2003

All State Boating Law Administrators
U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Department Chief Vessel Examination
U. S. Power Squadrons, National Coordinator Vessel Safety Check Program

PROGRAM GUIDANCE FOR DISPLAY OF VESSEL REGISTRATION NUMBERS

Several questions and issues have been raised concerning the proper display of state issued registration numbers on recreational vessels. Of the 185,000 vessels examined in 2002 under the VSC Program, 10,000 failed due to improper display of numbers. State marine patrol officers and Vessel Examiners (VE) for the Vessel Safety Check (VSC) Program have noted several problems in the field, especially with newer sportier designed vessels where the owners want their numbers to match the designs and color schemes of their boats. As a result, the Office of Boating Safety, as program manager, has been asked to provide program guidance on this issue. This letter serves to provide that guidance for Vessel Examiners of the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U. S. Power Squadrons, and the State providers for the Vessel Safety Check Program and state boating law enforcement agencies.

The manner in which numbers are to be displayed on vessels is prescribed under Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 173.27. The basic tenets of the regulation are, the numbers must 1) be painted on or permanently attached to both sides of the forward half of the vessel, 2) be in plain vertical block characters of not less than 3 inches in height, 3) contrast with the color of the background and be distinctly visible and legible, 4) have spaces or hyphens that are equal in width to a letter or number other than “I” or “1” between the letter and number groupings, and 5) read from left to right. There are exemptions and exceptions for vessels operated by dealers for the purposes of demonstration, and for vessels due to their construction that cannot fully comply with the regulations as written.

The following is program guidance for applying the basic tenets as outlined.

The numbers must be painted on or permanently attached to both sides of the forward half of the vessel. Generally numbers are applied to the hull, but this is not required. Numbers may be applied to the superstructure or cabin sides, provided the placement is still on the forward half of the vessel. Self-adhesive numbers are accepted as permanently attached. Numbers may also be placed on placards or plates, and then bolted or screwed in place. Plates or placards may not be attached to removable

stanchions or rails, nor may numbers be placed on glass windows, as they are not considered permanent attachment points.

Numbers and letters must be in plain vertical block characters of not less than 3 inches in height. They must be of a single color, not outlined, shadowed, or rounded, and appear in the manner as illustrated:

VA 1234 AB

Some self-adhesive numbers may be a fraction of an inch off in height. Generally, the Coast Guard does not require the measuring of the numbers unless they appear to be too small. The rule of thumb used by the Coast Guard to determine proper height without measuring is, if the numbers can be read at a distance of 100 feet, accept them. If not, then measuring may be called for.

Numbers must be in contrasting color to the background and be distinctly visible and legible. If the background of the surface of the vessel is multi-colored or patterned (i.e. paisley pattern or product graphics), it may be necessary to block out an area in a single color to allow the numbers to be distinctly visible.

There must be spaces or hyphens between number and letter groupings equal to any letter or number other than "T" or "1". Numbers must read from left to right. These tenets are self-explanatory, and need no further clarification.

National standardization of examination and enforcement is vital to promote understanding of, compliance with, and continuity regarding the numbering regulations. It is critical that all Recreational Boating Safety partners (Vessel Examiners, State Law Enforcement personnel, and Coast Guard personnel) adhere to the same criteria and apply the same standard when conducting vessel safety checks.

Sincerely,

JOHN M. MALATAK
Chief, Program Operations Division
U.S. Coast Guard
By direction

From: Joe Barcelo, DC-V, USCG Auxiliary
To: All Vessel Examiners
Sent: Sunday, August 17, 2003 10:17 AM
Subject: Re: Vessel Numbering----- Questions and Answers

All:
Yesterday we sent out a letter from the Office of Boating Safety, USCG, laying out the

requirements and code for the numbering of recreational vessels. While this is quite direct and clear, I thought it might be a good idea to pose several questions which I have heard among some of our members and the correct answers to those questions.

"When I examine a boat, and they have all the equipment on board, as they should, but their numbers don't have the required spaces between them, or they are not block letters, can I give them the decal anyway?"

Answer No, the numbering requirement (CFR 173.27) is an integral part of the vessel safety check and cannot be ignored. The boater may also be at risk of getting cited for the discrepancy if boarded.

"As long as the numbers can be clearly seen from 100 feet, then it's OK to award the decal, even if the colors and spacing isn't correct, isn't it?"

Answer No, all the other criteria need to be satisfied, as listed in the Program Guidance letter from USCG.

"Everything was OK with the boat I did a VSC on including the spacing and contrasting colors of the numbers, but I measured the stick on numbers and they are just a small fraction of an inch smaller than three inches. The numbers can be seen clearly from over 100 feet away. Can I award the decal?"

Answer Yes, if all the other criteria have been met, and the numbers are just a small fraction of an inch smaller than three inches but clearly visible at 100 feet, you may award the decal. (Sometimes those stick on numbers are printed just a tiny bit smaller than three inches.)

If you have additional questions on this subject, I recommend that you access the public Question and Answer pages http://www.vesselsafetycheck.org/pub_qanda.asp or the USCG Auxiliary V Department Question and Answer pages (for members of the USCG Auxiliary) <http://www.safetyseal.net/QandA.asp>

*Joseph L. Barcelo, DC-V
Chief, National Dept. of Vessel Examination
and Marine Dealer Visitation
US Coast Guard Auxiliary*

Registration and Documentation

Page 13 - left-hand column, last bullet point.

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

Change to read:

"Documented pleasure vessels must have the name and hailing port marked together in clearly legible letters not less than four inches on some clearly visible exterior part of the hull. The hailing port must include the city and State, territory, or possession in which it is located. Vessels which were issued a Certificate of Documentation before

July 1, 1982 are not required to have the State, territory, or possession displayed on the vessel. Standard postal abbreviations or the full name of the state, territory or possession are allowed in the hailing port designation.. (The hailing port is identified on the vessel's Certification of Documentation." (page 13 - left-hand column, last bullet point)."

Page 13, right-hand column, second bullet point under Vessel Safety Check techniques: Insert after "agree with the registration papers, and that", the words "the registration numbers and letters are plain vertical block characters not less than three inches in height and" .

Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)

Page 14, third bullet point, top left-hand column, delete the entire bullet point: "Coast Guard approved inflatable PFDs are approved by persons at least 16 years of age."

Page 15, left column, under Fully Inflatable Recreational PFD, delete the sentence: "Coast Guard approved inflatable recreational PFDs are approved only for persons 16 years of age and older, weighing more than 80 pounds, as marked on the PFD label".

Page 15, right-hand column 2nd bullet under techniques, next to last full line: Change the words "perfect working condition" to "good, serviceable working condition".

Page 15, right column under " Vessel Safety Check Techniques", 4th bullet point, delete the phrase: "(persons 16 years and older)".

Visual Distress Signals (VDS)

Page 17, first bullet point states: "When doing a VSC in a state that prohibits percussion type distress signals, advise the owner of possible restrictions and alternatives." Add a bullet point below this one: "Pistol launched and hand-held parachute flares and meteors have many characteristics of a firearm and must be handled with caution. In some states they are considered a firearm and prohibited from use."

Fire Extinguishers

Page 17, The Fire Extinguisher Minimum Weight or Volume chart has three typographical errors. In the right-most column change: "2 (degree symbol) lbs" to "2.5 lbs". Change 1 (clef symbol) gals" to "1.25 gals". Change 2 (degree symbol) gals" to "2.5 gals".

Page 18, left-hand column: there is a typographical error in the last paragraph Change "the contents must weigh at least 2 (degree symbol) lbs" to "the contents must weigh at least 2.5 lbs."

Ventilation

Page 19, right-hand column, typographical error in the sixth paragraph Change: “If louvers are used, the intake louver must be facing forward and must extend outward (degree symbol) inch.” to “If louvers are used, the intake louver must be facing forward and must extend outward one inch.”

Page 20, the "WARNING" graphic has a typographical error in the 4th line- "blower fo four..." should be "blower for four...".

Backfire Flame Control

Page 21, ITEM 7. Backfire Flame Control, the last sentence of the first paragraph has a typographical error. Change "...with an acceptable meams of backfire ..." to "... with an acceptable means of backfire ...".

Sound Producing Devices – none reported and verified

Navigation Lights

Page 23, Under the Arc of Navigation Lights graphic, change “Port - red 112 (small degree symbol) (large degree symbol) Starboard - green 112 (small degree symbol) (large degree symbol)” to “Port - red 112.5 degrees Starboard - green 112.5 degrees”.

Page 23, right-hand column, first bullet point: change “less than 39.4 feet to “under 39.4 feet”.

Page 23, right-hand column, second bullet point: delete the word “of” between “vessels” and “under”.

Page 23, right-hand column, fourth bullet point: change “less than 65 feet to “under 65.6 feet”.

Page 23, right-hand column, fifth bullet point: change “less than 23 feet to “under 23 feet”.

Page 24, left-hand column, fourth bullet point, change “less than 39.4 feet” to “under 39.4 feet”

Page 28, left-hand column 1st bullet change “less than” to “under”

Pollution Placards – none reported and verified

MARPOL Trash Placards (Garbage Dumping Restrictions) – none reported and verified

Marine Sanitation Devices (MSDs) – none reported and verified

Carriage of Inland Navigation Rules

Page 26, right-hand column, first bullet point. Insert the words “, when operating on inland waters,” between “39.4 feet or more” and “shall carry on board”.

State Requirements – none reported and verified

Overall Vessel Condition

Electrical and Fuel Systems

Page 27. The second bullet point defines a portable fuel tank as 7 gallons capacity or less. This definition is not in the federal regulations. The Auxiliary has considered 7 gallons as the "maximum" size tank that is "easily" portable. The reason, a gallon of gas weighs just over 6 pounds. A full 7 gallon tank will weigh about 50 pounds, which is about the maximum that can conveniently be loaded aboard a boat, after filling on the dock.

If there is a fire on an open boat, with portable fuel tanks, the first thing that should go overboard, is the fuel tank. This, of course, is if the boat can be saved. Again, the weight of the tank being thrown overboard should not weigh over 50 pounds or the boat will be rolled and the passengers thrown in the water.

Larger fuel tanks, sold as portable, will usually be filled on board. This is dangerous because of spills, vapors and difficulty to handle.

These are the reasons we should explain to the boater why we only accept 7 gallons as portable."

Chapter 4 Recommended and Discussion Items

Marine Radio

Page 29, 1st bullet point under “Radio listening watch”: change “less than” to “under”

Dewatering Device and Backup – none reported and verified

Mounted Fire Extinguishers – none reported and verified

Anchoring and Line – none reported and verified

First Aid and Person in Water (PIW) Kits

Page 30, there should be a check mark instead of the character "4" before "ITEM V - First Aid and PIW kits".

Inland Approved Visual Distress Signals (VDS)

The Vessel Examination department is aware that this section needs improvement. There is no federal VDS requirement for Inland Waters. The VE should check state and local regulations regarding the use of aerial flares. Some states and localities bar their use on inland waters.

Capacity Plate

Page 31, 2nd bullet, left-hand column: change “less than” to “under”

Discussion Items

Accident Reports

Page 31, left hand column, 3rd bullet point: Change “\$500” to “\$2000”.

Chapter 5 VSC Resources And Forms

Vessel Safety Check Form

The latest version of the ANSC 7012 Vessel Safety Check form can be found at <http://www.uscgaux.org/~forms/archive/a7012.pdf>

There is a printing error some older ANSC 7012 (6-02) forms (hard copy version). The shadings in the N/A column were printed one line lower than they should have been. The old form may be corrected by putting an "X" on lines 3, 8, and 14 in the N/A column. The on-line version of the 7012 (6-02) on the National Forms Web Site is correct. This problem was corrected and new forms are printed and available. Any old forms may be used, so long as the correction above is made.

Chapter 6 Frequently Asked Questions

Location of VE Exam On-line , posted: 4/22/03

Question: Where can I find the Vessel Examiner test online?

Answer: <http://cgexams.info/testing/> for the USCG Auxiliary

Linked from <http://www.usps.org/national/vsc/> for the USPS

*Hal Leahy, DVC-VT
USCG Auxiliary*

VE Registartion , posted: 4/16/03

Question: I am an examiner for the zip code of nnnnn. The VSC database says that there on examiners in that zip code.. I know there are 6 VEs in that zip code. Why is your database not showing the proper information?

Answer: *The VSC database is not automatically filled. VEs from the USCG Auxiliary and the USPS must individually register. To register please go to the on-line form at <http://www.safetyseal.net/GetVSC/EnterNewExaminer.asp>*

*Hal Leahy, DVC-VT
USCG Auxiliary*

Editing the VSC Database , posted: 1/12/03

Question: How can someone go into your database and change a mistake in an email address?

Answer: *From the instructions on the sign-up page at <http://safetyseal.net/GetVSC/EnterNewExaminer.asp>:*

"If you have already joined this database and need to change your email address or ZIP Code, City and State in the existing database or desire to be removed, please send your request to the webmaster at webmaster@safetyseal.net "

*Paul Mayer, DVC-VC
USCG Auxiliary*

Finding Flotillas and Squadrons , posted: 8/9/02

Question: How do I find the nearest USCG Auxiliary flotilla or USPS squadron?

Answer: To find the nearest USCG Auxiliary Flotilla use the Flotilla Finder at:
<http://www.cgaux.org/cgauxweb/getzip.html>.

The fastest way to find your nearest USPS Squadron is to use their Squadron Finder program at http://www.usps.org/d_stuff/MAPS.html

Hal Leahy, BC-VTS
USCG Auxiliary

Training Question , posted: 4/29/03

Question: In a previous Q&A, one question related to the VSCs done by the trainee; question below. My question: Do the examinations where the trainee "observes" the training VE count as a portion of the "five required VSC", or must the trainee do five exams in addition to those which he/she observes?

Who Does the Exam? , posted: 11/18/02

Question: Must a certified Vessel Examiner, observe a VE trainee do a vessel examine or must the certified VE do the examination while the trainee watches?

In the above cases who signs the ANSC 7012 (former 204) form on the vessel examiner's form line?

Answer: It is recommended that the Vessel Examiner perform the first two or three VSCs with the trainee closely observing. This way the trainee has an opportunity to observe how to approach, ask the boat owner, and properly conduct himself/herself in addition to what to look for. The ART of being a good VE is practice, consistency and professionalism. Much like a Door to Door Salesman showing his Apprentice the ropes - nothing is accomplished until the apprentice sees how its done properly first.

The VE forms are signed off by the lead VE, until the Trainee has done his/her mandatory five VEs under the supervision of the Lead VE.

Joe Curry, BA-VTS
Vessel Examination Department
USCG Auxiliary

Pre-Inspection (Examination) , posted: 8/24/01

Question: Is pre-inspection, i.e. informally discuss the VSC requirements with the vessel owner, allow the vessel owner to bring his boat into compliance and then conduct the official inspection and award the decal, allowed? Does this pre-inspection violate the letter or spirit of the Vessel Safety Check Program?

***Answer:** As Coast Guard Program Manager for the VSC Program, our thoughts are focused more on educating the boater and doing all we can to have the boater bring their boat into compliance for safe and enjoyable operation. The bottom line is to have every boat on our waters safe, the operator aware of safety rules, regulations and all state, local and federal requirements for safe operation and handling. Working with the boat operators/owners in advance of actually conducting a VSC is a great concept ... more exposure to the boater, more opportunity to discuss more boating safety, more opportunity to solicit their interest in either the USPS or CGAUX, etc. etc. AND.... illustrates to the boater that "WE" care about them... not numbers... we want them and their boats to be safe.*

Whatever it takes to create safe boats and safe boaters, I'm for it.

*John Malatak
Chief, Program Development and Implementation
United States Coast Guard*

Initial Year Qualification Requirements , posted: 8/8/01

Question: In the initial year of qualification, does a new VE have to do 5 VSCs on his/her own to retain their quals?

***Answer:** In the first year that the VE becomes qualified, they will NOT be required to perform 5 VSCs for that year. This has been USCG Auxiliary policy since December 1999 and applies to the USCG Auxiliary and the USPS Vessel Safety Check Programs.*

*Maxine Cavanaugh, BC-VTM
USCG Auxiliary*

*R/C Luis Ojeda, JN/DVC-VT
USPS and USCG Auxiliary*

Coastal Versus Inland , posted: 11/18/02

Question: There is disagreement on our vessel safety team as to the meaning of "Coastal and Inland" waters. Some say Inland is shoreward of the COLREG demarcation line (purple) on charts. Others say if the river or tributary going into the bay is less than two nautical miles wide it is inland up to this point and coastal beyond in the wider water. Please clarify.

***Answer:** This question comes up often. It is usually related to the confusion over where the line for the change-over from the International Navigation Rules (NavRules) to the Inland NavRules occurs and the VDS carriage requirements.*

The NavRules change-over occurs at the ColRegs Demarcation Line. The VDS rule changes at the point, coming in from the territorial sea or coastal waters, "where the

distance between shorelines (including islands) narrows to less than two nautical miles, as measured on a nautical chart." VE Manual, Definitions, Coastal Waters, page 1.

*Hal Leahy, DVC-VT
Vessel Examination Department
USCG Auxiliary*

Type IV Throwable PFD , posted: 6/20/03

Question: For Throwable type PFD's, does it state how much line should be attached to it??

Answer: There is no federal requirement that a line be attached to a Type IV throwable PFD used on a recreational boat. However it is highly recommended that polypropylene line be tied to the PFD. The USCG Auxiliary does not have a specific recommendation for how much line should be attached.

I would recommend you actually throw the PFD on land. Measure the greatest distance thrown and add an additional fudge factor for windy days and to allow you to hold some line in your hand after you throw the PFD. That should give you sufficient line.

*Hal Leahy, DVC-VT
USCG Auxiliary
National Vessel Examination Department*