



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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MSIB Number: 05-23
Date: April 6, 2023
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Fire Safety on Small Passenger Vessels

Over the last 12 months, fires on several small passenger vessels (SPVs) have highlighted the need for a renewed focus on fire safety. As such, the Coast Guard is initiating a new effort to address certain areas of concern. The present effort is two-fold: (1) A focused self-assessment by owners and operators of all small passenger vessels, and (2) a Coast Guard-led concentrated inspection campaign.

Owners and operators of all small passenger vessels should conduct an assessment of each vessel, using the list below as a checklist.

- Review emergency duties with the entire crew to ensure everyone understands their role in the event of fire, flooding, man overboard, abandon ship, or other type of emergency. Regularly conduct training and drills to ensure each crewmember is familiar with the use of onboard firefighting, lifesaving, and safety systems.
- Review the frequency and content of crew training and drills. Ensure each event is logged.
- Review the vessel's Certificate of Inspection (COI) and ensure crewmembers are aware of the number of passengers permitted, minimum manning requirements, and operational limits such as route, safe speed, or weather conditions.
- Review procedures for recording passenger count. Ensure that the passenger safety orientation includes the location of emergency exits, survival craft, and ring life buoys; locations of and instructions for donning life jackets; and any other instructions pertinent to the particular vessel's operations. Consider conducting emergency escape drills with passengers, especially when they have access below the main deck.
- Ensure all firefighting and fire protection equipment is on board and operational including fixed suppression systems, portable extinguishers, fire doors, and smoke and heat detectors. Verify integrity of installed structural fire insulation.
- Ensure every means of escape is unobstructed, marked with "EMERGENCY EXIT, KEEP CLEAR," and can be operated by one person from either side, including in the dark.
- Ensure extension cords are used only in temporary applications and power strips are used sparingly. Identify lingering or outstanding electrical problems and provide a repair proposal to the local Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI).
- Verify that flammable or combustible materials, such as cardboard boxes, rags, and garbage, are not stored near sources of heat, such as machinery, stoves, and space heaters. Remove any accumulation of oil, trash, and debris from bilges. Ensure stoves and surrounding areas are free of grease buildup.
- Ensure all written procedures, instructions, checklists, and manuals are accurate and used by the crew. Determine which onboard practices for operations, maintenance, emergency response, or training are not documented and create written procedures, instructions, checklists, or manuals.

The Coast Guard's concentrated inspection campaign will include additional inspections of some SPVs initially certificated prior to 1996 that carry 100 or more passengers. The focus of the inspection aligns with the list above. Owners and operators are encouraged to conduct their self-evaluation prior to the Coast Guard's scheduled attendance.

Owners and operators of small passenger vessels who are unsure of the requirements on the vessel's COI or otherwise required by regulation are encouraged to contact their local OCMI. A "Marine Inspections Contact List" is available at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/cvc>. Alternatively, questions may be forwarded to the Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, Domestic & Offshore Compliance Division (CG-CVC-1) by email at CGCVC@uscg.mil

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