



VESSEL SAFETY CHECK – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Every year, I receive many questions about the Vessel Safety Check (VSC) program including: What is the program, how long does the examination take and what happens if I'm missing required safety items, and how many do I need to do. These are valid questions and part of the "one-on-one boater" educational exchange. When the VSC decal is awarded, at the time of the exam it indicates all required safety equipment is aboard for the length and type of vessel, and is functional. Understanding why the program was started and the impact of the VSC program should be important to all Vessel Examiners. The program history and the number of examinations may surprise you!

HISTORY

In 1918 Roger Chapman of the New York Yacht Club realized that there no safety or use guidelines for recreational boats. He developed programs to help standard safety and equipment. 1946, Coast Guard Auxiliary 7th District, with the approval from Coast Guard, took the program one step further and began offering very rigorous complimentary exams to recreational motor vessels. The program was expanded the following year (1947) to include all the districts and was called "Courtesy Boat Inspection". During the same year, the Vessel Examination program became one of the four cornerstones of the Auxiliary. The program evolved with the approval of sailboats and the name was changed to "Courtesy Marine Examination" in 1972. In 1997 the Auxiliary started issuing "safety checks" to include personal water craft (PWC's). In 2000 the program name was changed to Vessel Safety Check program and for the 1st time the requirements mirrored the Federal Requirements. However, the program also included additions for state and local unique requirements. Also to help expand the outreach USPS/America's Boating Club, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and state agencies were invited to participate as long as no citations were issued for missing equipment. With the addition of rentals, kayaks/canoes, and sailboards, the outreach efforts expanded in 2010.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Making a difference begins with the "one-on-one" educational exchange with the boater. Vessel Examiners (VEs) are be the experts with all the federal, state, and local requirements.

Reviewing the Federal Requirements Booklet and state boating law booklets, bulletins and our D11NR Vessel Examiner website help examiners increase their expertise.

Since 1991, nationally the Auxiliary has conducted approximately 3,000,000 VSCs and in D11NR 160,000 VSC's including 20,000 paddlecraft VSC's have been performed! Along with the United States Power Squadrons/America's Boating Club and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP), another 528,000 and 18,000 VSCs have been conducted respectively. We should all be proud of the contribution that has been made towards promoting boating education and safe boating.

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