



You can use this page to examine your own boat. We suggest you print the form that we use to also use as a guide while performing this self-inspection. You can get the form [here](#) and it requires that you have the free Adobe Acrobat reader installed on your computer. If you do not have the reader, you can download a copy from here: [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).

Online Vessel Safety Check - This fun, interactive program lets you find out if your boat or personal watercraft would pass a Vessel Safety Check, before you have one. It's easy and convenient to use!

After you have completed the self-examination, you can request that one of our examiners perform an actual Vessel Safety Check by going to the "[I Want a VSC](#)" page at <http://SafetySeal.net/GetVSC/> and enter your ZIP Code to contact an examiner near you.

Item 1 - Display of Numbers:

The boat's registration number must be permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the boat. They must be plain, vertical, block characters, not less than three (3) inches high, and in a color contrasting with the background. A space or hyphen must separate the letters from the numbers. Place State tax sticker according to State policy.

(e.g. FL 1234 AB or FL-1234-AB)



Item 2 - Registration / Documentation:

Registration or Documentation papers must be on board and available. Documentation numbers must be permanently marked on a visible part of the interior structure. The documented boat's name and hailing port must be displayed on the exterior hull in letters not less than 4 inches in height. To be documented a boat must be 5 net tons or greater.



Item 3 - Personal Flotation Devices (PFD):

Acceptable PFDs (also known as Life Jackets) must be U.S. Coast Guard approved, in good serviceable condition, and of suitable size for the each person on the boat. Children must have properly fitted PFDs designed for children. Wearable PFDs shall be "readily accessible." Throwable devices shall be "immediately available." PFDs shall NOT be stored in unopened plastic packaging. For Personal Watercraft riders, the PFD must be worn and indicate an impact rating. Boats 16 Feet or longer, must also have one Type IV.



Item 4 - Visual Distress Signals (VDS):

Recreational boats 16 feet and over used on coastal waters or the Great Lakes are required to carry a minimum of either 1) three day and three night pyrotechnic devices, 2) one day non-pyrotechnic device (flag) and one night non-pyrotechnic device (auto SOS light) or 3) a combination of 1) and 2). Recreational boats less than 16 feet on coastal waters or the Great Lakes need only carry night visual distress signals when operating from sunset to sunrise.



It is recommended, but not required, that boats operating on inland waters should have some means of making a suitable day and night distress signal. The number and type of signals is best judged by considering conditions under which the boat will be operating. Alternatives to pyrotechnic devices (flares) include:

Night

- Strobe light
- Flashlight
- Lantern

Day

- Signal mirror
- Red or orange flags
- Hand signals

Item 5 - Fire Extinguishers:

Fire extinguishers are required if one of the following conditions exists: (1) Inboard engine(s); (2) Closed compartments that store portable fuel tanks; (3) Double bottom hulls not completely sealed or not completely filled with flotation materials (4) Closed living space (5) Closed stowage compartments that contain flammable materials or (6) Permanently installed fuel tanks NOTE: Fire extinguishers must be readily accessible and verified as serviceable.

Minimum number of extinguishers required

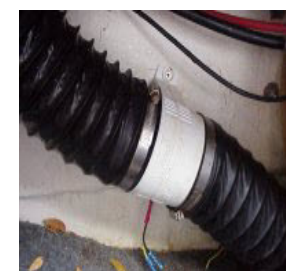
<u>Boat Length</u>	<u>No Fixed System</u>	<u>With Fixed System</u>
Less than 26'	one B-1	none
26' to less than 40'	two B-1 or one B-2	one B-1
40' to 65'	three B-1 or one B-1 & one B-2	two B-1 or one B-2



Item 6 - Ventilation:

Boats with gasoline engines in closed compartments, built after 1 August 1980 must have a powered ventilation system. Those built prior to that date must have natural or powered ventilation.

Boats with closed fuel tank compartments built after 1 August 1978 must meet requirements by displaying a "certificate of compliance." Boats built before that date must have either natural or powered ventilation in the fuel tank compartment.



Item 7 - Backfire Flame Control:

All gasoline powered inboard/outboard or inboard motor boats must be equipped with an approved backfire flame control device. This must be free of dirt and oil



Item 8 - Sound Producing Devices / Bell:

To comply with Navigation Rules and for distress signaling purposes all boats must carry a sound producing device (whistle, horn, siren, etc.) capable of a 4-second blast audible for 1/2 mile. *Boats larger than 39.4 ft. are also required to have a bell (see Navigation Rules.)

***Under a recent change, a vessel 12 meters (39.4 ft) to less than 20 meters (65 ft) is no longer required to carry a bell on board.**

The Coast Guard said: "The bottom-line, a bell is no longer required on a vessel less than 20 meters in length. That of course means a bell is not required for those same vessels for successful completion of a VSC."



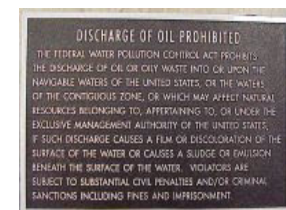
Item 9 - Navigation Lights:

All boats must be able to display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise and in conditions of reduced visibility. Boats 16 feet or more in length must have properly installed, working navigation lights and an all-around anchor light capable of being lit independently from the red/green/white "running" lights.



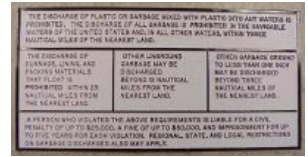
Item 10 - Pollution Placard:

Boats 26 feet and over with a machinery compartment must display an oily waste "pollution" placard.



Item 11 - MARPOL Trash Placard:

Boats 26 feet and over in length must display a "MARPOL" trash placard. Boats 40 feet and over must also display a written trash disposal plan.



Item 12 - Marine Sanitation Devices:

Any installed toilet must be a Coast Guard approved device. Overboard discharge outlets must be capable of being sealed.



Item 13 - Navigation Rules:

Boats 39.4 feet and over must have on board a current copy of the Navigation Rules.



Item 14 - State and/ or Local Requirements:

These requirements must be met before the "Vessel Safety Check" decal can be awarded. A boat must meet the requirements of the state in which it is being examined.



Contact your local marine law enforcement agency.

Item 15 - Overall Vessel condition:

As it applies to this Vessel. Including, but not limited to:

a. Deck free of hazards and clean bilge:

The boat must be free from fire hazards, in good overall condition, with bilges reasonably clean and visible hull structure generally sound. The use of automobile parts on boat engines is not acceptable. The engine horsepower must not exceed that shown on the capacity plate.



b. Safe Electrical and Fuel Systems:

The electrical system - Must be protected by fuses or manual reset circuit breakers. Switches and fuse panels must be protected from rain or water spray. Wiring must be in good condition, properly installed and with no exposed areas or deteriorated insulation. Batteries must be secured and terminals covered to prevent accidental arcing.. If installed, self-circling or kill switch mechanism must be in proper working order. All PWCs require an operating self circling or kill switch mechanism.



Fuel Systems - Portable fuel tanks (normally 7 gallon capacity or less) must be constructed of non-breakable material and free of corrosion and leaks. All vents must be capable of being closed. The tank must be secured and have a vapor-tight, leak-proof cap. Each permanent fuel tank must be properly ventilated.



c. Safe Galley and Heating Systems:

System and fuel tanks must be properly secured with no flammable materials nearby.



PREPARING FOR AN INSPECTION

Display of Numbers: Some self-adhesive numbers may be a fraction of an inch off in height. The rule of thumb is if the numbers can be read at a distance of 100 feet, they will accept them. They must have a contrasting background.

Registration and Documentation: The Registration or Documentation papers must be on board and available. I keep my registration papers in a 5" by 7" photo book. I have the Registration, the Insurance policy, the Navigation Rules, the Wisconsin Regs, all the Certificates from the Boating Safety programs I've taken, my past VSC papers, and some cards that contain emergency information. **I place these on the dash by the helm.**

Personal Floatation Devices: I place a case of four on the back seat of the boat. Our personal ones are placed beside our seats on the helm. I have a Type IV behind my seat on the helm, we have a coiled light weight line attached to it. The line isn't required, however the inspector will suggest that it is a good idea. We also keep a self inflating one for the person who goes to the bow to handle lines when docking.

Visual Distress Signals: We have the kit with the gun. We also have the individual flares. These are fine for night, but the smoke flare is much better for day time. It isn't required, but it is recommended. We also carry a distress flag that could be mounted on the antenna if needed. The important thing here is that you have flares that are within the allowed date. Old ones will more than likely work, just don't rely on them. If you have outdated flares, consider donating them to USCG auxiliary or Power Squadron, they often use them for instructional purposes.

Fire Extinguishers: Ensure they are in good condition. You should shake the powdered type once per month. Check the gauges for proper pressure (Cheaper units do not always read correctly). Halon units should be weighed annually. Halon units need to have a Hydro test every 12 years. Larger dry units should have a Hydro test every 6 years. This isn't required, but is good practice and shows well with inspectors - keep a log of your inspections.

Ventilation: They will have you run it and will check that it is expelling air. Your intake line is to be in the lower third of the bilge and above the water level. Check your tubing for cracks, they will look for them.

Backfire Flame Control and Engine Room: They will wipe the unit and check for oil or fuel. They do check the bottom. It is important to keep them clean. While you are down there, it's a good time to make sure the bilge is clean - no oil or fuel and minimum water. I also wipe down my engines. Make sure your Pollution Placard is clearly visible. This is required on boats over 26 feet.

Marine Sanitation Devices: If yours are connected with a Y pipe, you must ensure that it cannot accidentally open and dump overboard. They will check the routing of the lines. They cannot go overboard, they must go to the waste tank. Water from the galley sink, bathroom sink, and shower drains are allowed to be dumped overboard.

Navigation Rules, and State or Local Rules: Boats 39.4 ft and over must have the Nav Rules on board. State requirements must be met before you can pass an inspection. As stated, I keep both in the little photo album.

Overall Vessel Condition: Galley is clean and neat, no exposed wiring, Stoves and heating system in good condition. Our MAR-POL Trash Placard is located inside the first cabinet door. If you are over 26 ft you must have one, if you are over 40 ft you need a written trash disposal plan also. A clean boat makes for a good show, everything in it's place. They will inspect your electrical system for fuses and that the batteries are either in boxes that are vented or the connectors are protected and cannot be accidentally shorted out.

Navigation Lights and Sound Producing Devices: Check your Horns, Bells, Navigation lights, and Mooring lights. They must be in working order.

Radio and Information System: If you have a radio it needs to be in working order as you are required to monitor channel 16. An Informational System is not required. I am mentioning this as computers have become more and more involved with boaters. I use mine to run two GPS systems. The one system is run by a Garmin hand held. I would have to lose the power to the helm, then after 3 hrs - the battery in the laptop, finally I'd have about two hours left on the hand held. Of course we carry spare batteries for the little Garmin. The nice part to the laptop is the ability to store information, Wis Regs, Nav Rules, Emergency phone numbers, Directions and phone numbers for Marinas, Yacht Clubs, Harbors, and Eating Places.

This is a great place to keep First Aid information.