



Commandant
U. S. Coast Guard

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COMDTCHANGENOTE 16796
13 JUNE 2016

COMMANDANT CHANGE NOTICE 16796

Subj: CH-1 TO VESSEL SAFETY CHECK MANUAL, COMDTINST M16796.8A

1. PURPOSE. This Commandant Change Notice publishes a change to the Vessel Safety Check Manual, COMDTINST M16796.8A.
2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commanders, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements shall comply with the provisions of this Manual. Internet release is authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None, other than the Vessel Safety Check Manual, COMDTINST M16796.8A.
4. DISCLAIMER. This Manual is guidance and is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.
5. MAJOR CHANGES. This is the simple amendment of conflicting verbiage in COMDTINST M16796.8A to be IAW 33 C.F.R. 175.101.

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No. 167

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A																										
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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION: Auxiliary National Supply Center, NEXCOM, DNACO-RBS, All DCO-RBS, All DSO-VE

6. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.

- a. The development of this Manual and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office and are categorically excluded under current USCG categorical exclusion (CE) #33 from further environmental analysis, in accordance with Section 2.B.2 and Figure 2-1 of the National Environmental Impacts, COMDTINST M16475.1 (series).
- b. This Directive will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policies in this Manual must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Policy NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, DHS and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.

7. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Manual. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) websites. Internet: <http://www.uscg.mil/directives> and CG Portal: <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/library/directives/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

8. PROCEDURE. Remove and replace the following sections of Vessel Safety Check Manual, COMDTINST M16796.8A.

Remove
Pages 3-11, 3-12

Replace
Pages 3-11, 3-12

9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This Manual has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no further records scheduling requirements in accordance with Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3101 et seq, NARA requirements, and Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). This policy does not have any significant or substantial change to existing records management requirements.

10. FORMS/REPORTS. The forms called for in this Manual are available in USCG Electronic Forms on the Standard Workstation or on the Internet: <http://uscg.mil/forms>; CGPortal at: <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/library/forms/SitePages/Home.aspx>. Additional forms are available on the Internet at: <http://forms.cgaux.org/>.

11. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Individuals may recommend changes by writing to:
COMMANDANT (CG-BSX-12), ATTN: OFFICE OF AUXILIARY AND
BOATING SAFETY, U.S. COAST GUARD STOP 7501, 2703 MLK JR AVE SE
WASHINGTON, DC 20593-7501.

P. F. THOMAS/s/
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy

sculls, racing canoes, and racing kayaks, but state laws vary on this issue. Other requirements also may apply for boating in areas that are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or a federal, state, or local park authority. Vessel examiners should check with their local boating authorities.

- n. There are three basic kinds of flotation materials used in life jackets and throwable devices:
- (1) Inherently buoyant (primarily foam) is the most reliable and is designed for both swimmers and non-swimmers. It comes in wearable and throwable styles; in adult, youth, child, and infant sizes; and in special configurations for water sports.
 - (2) Inflatable jackets are the most lightweight and comfortable, but are only recommended for swimmers and are sized only for adults. In addition, they're only manufactured in wearable styles, not as ring buoys or seat cushions.
 - (3) Hybrid jackets (foam and inflation) are reliable; provides inherent and inflatable buoyancy; is made in adult, youth, and child sizes; and is only manufactured in wearable styles. Some are designed for water sports.
- NOTE:** An inflatable life jacket with a built in safety harness is approved only as a Type V special use device, not as a Type I, II, or III life jacket. The reason is that using the harness to prevent falls overboard presents several risks for example, the wearer may be injured if the harness stops his or her fall too abruptly and if the boat capsizes or sinks; the harness may drag the wearer down. Vessel examiners should caution boaters who use such harnesses not to attach the harness to the boat unless it is being worn with a tether of less than 6.5 feet long and is equipped with quick release under load hardware.
- o. Life jackets come in many designs, colors, styles, and materials. Some are made for use in rugged water sports and others are designed to protect the wearer from cold water temperatures. Boaters should buy life jackets that are appropriate for their body size, planned activities, and the water conditions they expect to encounter.
- p. In choosing a life jacket, boaters should take these steps:
- (1) Test the Fit - Start with a life jacket that is U.S. Coast Guard approved. Try it on and make sure it is comfortably snug. The jacket should stay in place and not ride up when the wearer raises his or her arms straight up or when the jacket is lifted at the shoulders. If the zipper touches the wearer's nose or if the jacket almost comes off, the boater should try a tighter fitting jacket.
 - (2) Test the Buoyancy - This can be done by wearing the life jacket in shallow

water or in a swimming pool with a qualified swimmer standing by. The wearer should tighten all straps, zippers, and ties, relax his or her body and tilt the head back. The wearer’s chin should remain above water so that breathing is not impeded. If the jacket fails this test, a different size or model may be needed, possibly one that provides greater buoyancy.

(3) Choosing a Child’s Life Jacket - Boaters should check to see that a child’s life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard approved and that the child’s weight falls within the range specified on the label. Children should be fitted with Type II life jackets, not Type III. Although some children in the 30 pound to 50 pound range may ask for the extra freedom of movement that a Type III jacket provides, youngsters who cannot swim well should wear a Type II jacket. Parents should pick the child up by grasping the shoulders of the life jacket; if it fits properly, the child’s chin and ears will not slip through. A child’s life jacket should be tested in the water immediately after purchase. Children may panic when they fall into the water suddenly. Float testing not only checks the fit and buoyancy, but it also provides an important opportunity to teach children to relax in the water.

q. Wearing a Life Jacket - Vessel examiners must stress that wearing a life jacket while under way is an essential component of boating safety, and that boaters who do not wear them are risking their lives. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that most deaths from drowning occur near shore in calm weather, not at sea during a storm. Nine out of ten drowning fatalities occur in inland waters, most within a few feet of safety. Worse yet, many of these victims owned life jackets and might have survived had they been wearing them.

4. ITEM #4 - VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS
(33 CFR 175.101)

a. **Vessels operating on coastal waters of the United States, the Great Lakes, and territorial seas, as well as those waters connected up to a point where the waterway is less than two nautical miles wide, must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals. Vessels owned in the United States and operating on the high seas must also be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals. Additional state requirements may also apply.**

b. Coast Guard–approved devices and signals include:

Description	Day/Night	CG Approval Number	Minimum Required
Floating Orange Smoke	Day	160.022 160.057	3
Hand-held orange smoke	Day	160.037	3
Orange flag at least 3’ X 3’, with black square and	Day	160.072	1