



UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS®

SAIL AND POWER BOATING



Anna Maria Island Sail & Power Squadron

Commander Janet Razze, AP

Squadron Location: 1200 71st Street NW, Bradenton, Florida 34209

www.usps.org/localusps/annamaria

Vessel Safety Check

Since July 1, 2012, the United Safe Boating Institute has been collecting data on failed Vessel Safety Checks (VSC) from U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCGA) and U.S. Power Squadrons (USPS) Vessel Examiners. Approximately 46% of the failed VSCs reports indicate multiple failures per Vessel Safety Check. The Anna Maria Island Sail and Power Squadron along with the USCGA perform FREE Vessel Safety Checks throughout the year to our Bradenton/Sarasota area. This past year we had many vessels that could not obtain the safety decal upon the first inspection. Our data also reflects similar results found throughout the nation. The most common reasons for failure found in our local community by AMISPS and USCGA this year were:

- 23% Visual Distress Signals – missing or expired dates
- 20% Navigation Lights- not working
- 13% Registration – missing
- 10% Display of Numbers – missing or not displayed correctly
- 9% Fire Extinguisher – lacking or not charged
- 7% Sound Device – missing
- 4% PFD – non serviceable, not enough for each person, missing
- 2% Ventilation – improper ventilation or no ventilation
- 2% Backfire Flame Arrestor – not serviceable
- 2% Navigation Rules
- 1% Pollution Placard – missing on required boats
- 1% Type IV Throwable PFD – missing
- 1% MARPOL – missing
- 0% Marine Sanitation Device

Here are the most common reasons for failure and a short explanation of what is required:

Correct Display of Registration Numbers – The boat's registration number must be permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the boat. Characters must be plain, vertical, block style, 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 validation sticker according to State policy.

Registration Documentation on Board – 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.

Personal Floatation Device (PFD -Life Jackets) – Acceptable PFDs (also known as life jackets) must be U.S. Coast Guard approved and in good, serviceable condition. A wearable PFD of suitable size is required for each person on the boat. Children must have properly fitted PFDs designed for children. Wearable PFDs shall be "readily accessible." Boats 16 Feet or longer, must also have one Type IV (throwable) device, which shall be "immediately available". PFDs shall NOT be stored in unopened plastic packaging. For Personal Watercraft riders (jet skis) the PFD must be worn and recommended to be impact rated.

Type IV Throwable PFD – This can be of any shape. It is recommended that you also have a floating line that can be attached to it so that you can retrieve your man over board in high wind or currents.

Visual Distress Signal (flares) – Recreational boats 16 feet and over used on coastal waters or the Great Lakes are required to carry at 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.

Fire Extinguishers – Fire extinguishers are required if one of the following conditions exists: 1) inboard engine(s); 2) Double bottom hulls not completely sealed or not completely filled with floatation materials; 3) Closed living space; 4) Closed stowage compartments that contain flammable materials or 5) Permanently installed fuel tanks. Recreational boats less than 26 feet, and propelled by outboard motors are NOT required to have fire extinguishers, unless one or more of the conditions (2-5) listed above applies. The size and number of required fire extinguishers is determined by the length of the boat. Note: Fire extinguishers must be readily accessible and verified as serviceable.

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 display a “certificate of compliance.” Boats built before that date must have either natural or powered ventilation in the fuel tank compartments.

Backfire Flame Arrestor – All gasoline powered inboard/outboard motor boats must be equipped with an approved backfire flame control device.

Sound Producing Device – 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 ½ mile.

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.

Pollution Placard – Boats 26 feet and over with a machinery compartment must display an oily waste “pollution” placard.

MARPOL Trash Placard – Boats 26 feet and over in length, operating in U.S. navigable waters, must display a “MARPOL” trash placard. Oceangoing boats 40 feet and over must also have a written trash disposal plan available onboard.

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

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

State and 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.

Overall Boat Conditions as it applies to the vessel including but not limited to:

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.

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.

Galley and Heating Systems – System and fuel tanks must be properly secured with no flammable materials nearby.

I hope you found this information helpful. Please check your vessel for all areas above. If you would like to schedule a Vessel Safety Check, simply contact any of our AMISPS certified members. Remember, this is a FREE civic service provided to our local community, but donations to our non-profit are always appreciated to cover the administrative costs of this service.

To schedule a Vessel Safety Check please call 941-792-0394. There will be a delay as the phone will be relayed to a member's phone.

Sincerely,
Commander Janet Razze, AP
Anna Maria Island Sail & Power Squadron

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