



VESSEL SAFETY CHECK - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Each year, I receive questions on the Vessel Safety Check (VSC) program. What is the program, how long does the examination take and what happens if I'm missing required safety items. These are valid questions and part of the one-on-one boater educational exchange. When the VSC decal is affixed, this indicates all required safety equipment is aboard and 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 will surprise everyone, and highlight how important the one-on-one experience is for boaters.

HISTORY

In 1946, the Coast Guard Auxiliary Seventh District, with the approval from Coast Guard, began offering complimentary exams to 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 corner stones of the auxiliary.

The role of the examiner became more complicated in 1967 when the Coast Guard reacted to an increase of fires and explosions on pleasure vessels. They introduced a new set of ventilation standards for confined spaces and below decks. Examiners had to look at a boat's intake and exhaust ducts, and determine if they were large enough, facing in the

correct direction and projected far enough into the engine and fuel tank compartments. The program then 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 personal water craft and in 2000 the program name was changed to Vessel Safety Check.*

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Making a difference begins with the one-on-one exchange with the boater. Vessel Examiners (VEs) are be the experts with all the required federal, state and requirements. Reviewing workshops, bulletins and auxiliary web sites will help examiners increase their expertise.

Since 1996, the Auxiliary has conducted over **three million VSCs**. Along with our boating partners, the United States Power Squadrons (USPS) 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.

VESSEL SAFETY CHECK FIGURES

- Auxiliary performed over 3 million VSCs, (including 41,000) Facility Inspections from 1996 through June 2019.
- Auxiliary currently has 4,776 certified VEs.
- Auxiliary performed 213,000 paddle craft VSCs from 2011 - 2019.
- USPS performed 528,000 VECs and 32,400 paddle craft from 2001 - 2018.
- USPS currently has 1,479 current VEs.
- CTDEEP performed 18,500 VSCs from 2012 - 2018 and currently has 13 certified VEs.

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*Ref: Navigator Express, First Quarter 2017