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Fisheries & Tourism Fact Sheet Series: Getting Your Boat Ready for Passengers: Vessel Requirements

Maine Sea Grant

Lobster Institute

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FISHERIES & TOURISM

FACT SHEET SERIES

Getting your boat ready for passengers: vessel requirements

Are you interested in taking passengers for hire aboard your fishing boat or another vessel?

Federal law requires that vessels used to take passengers for hire from Maine ports are owned and constructed in the United States. A fishing boat may be classified as an *inspected vessel* or an *uninspected vessel*, depending on the number of passengers it will carry and whether it meets the required construction and safety requirements.

Uninspected vessels

Uninspected passenger vessels generally weigh less than 100 gross tons and are limited to carrying a maximum of six passengers. Most inshore fishing boats in Maine are constructed to meet this classification. An uninspected vessel must still be compliant with the minimal federal standards for safety. Requirements for an uninspected vessel are available from the U.S. Coast Guard, uscg.mil/pvs/UPV.asp.

Inspected vessels

There are two classifications of inspected passenger vessels.

A passenger vessel is a vessel of at least 100 gross tons carrying more than 12 passengers.

A small passenger vessel is a vessel of less than 100 gross tons carrying more than six passengers. Most inshore commercial fishing boats in Maine would meet this classification. A small passenger vessel is required to have a valid U.S. Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection and to be in full compliance with this certificate when passengers are aboard. The Certificate of Inspection is valid for five years from the date it is issued and describes:

- ▶ the vessel,
- ▶ the route that the vessel may travel,
- ▶ the minimum number of required crew members,
- ▶ the number and types of safety and survival gear which must be on board,
- ▶ the maximum number of passengers, and
- ▶ the total number of persons (including crew) that may be carried.



Catherine Schmitt

In order to obtain a Certificate of Inspection, a boat owner must apply for an initial inspection by the U.S. Coast Guard Officer in Charge of Marine Inspections for your area (located in Portland for all of Maine). The application for this inspection (Form CG 3752) must be submitted before a new boat is constructed or an existing boat is converted to take passengers for hire.

The initial inspection includes review of construction materials, workmanship, and condition of all parts of the vessel, its machinery and equipment, including all life-saving, fire-detecting and fire-extinguishing equipment. Operating boats will likely be dry-docked for this inspection.

A stability test will also be performed to ensure that the vessel meets seaworthiness regulations and also to assist in determining the number of passengers that can be safely carried. This is done by fully loading the boat's deck with known test weights, such as barrels of water or bags of sand, and shifting the test weights to the rail to simulate the movement of passengers. The boat passes if a line on the outside hull does not submerge.



Catherine Schmitt

The U.S. Coast Guard Officer in Charge of Marine Inspections will determine the number of passengers that a vessel can legally carry and issue a Certificate of Inspection that is very specific for the boat.

These requirements for an inspected small passenger vessel are available from the U.S. Coast Guard, uscg.mil/pvs/SPV.asp. ■



Dana Morse

This fact sheet is part of a series intended to provide resources for fishermen and aquaculture farmers who seek to augment their earnings through tourism. More information, including the legal research upon which these fact sheets are based, can be found at seagrant.umaine.edu/fisheries-tourism.

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