

**U.S. COAST GUARD  
NAVIGATION AND INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 1-91**

**RECOMMENDED QUALIFICATIONS  
FOR  
SMALL PASSENGER VESSEL DECKHANDS**

**6 PAGES (INCLUDING COVER)**

**NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 1-91**

**Subj: Recommended Qualifications for Small Passenger Vessel Deckhands**

**Ref: (a) 46 CFR Part 15  
(b) Marine Safety Manual Volume III Chapter 19**

**1. PURPOSE.** The purpose of this circular is to provide the Marine Industry with guidelines for the recommended qualifications and training topics for deckhands engaged or employed on small passenger vessels to ensure the safe operation of these vessels. This circular also discusses the concept of SENIOR DECKHAND.

**2. BACKGROUND.**

- a. Various statutes in Title 46 United States Code, the implementing regulations in Title 46 Code of Federal Regulations part 15, and the Marine Safety Manual, volume III, chapter 19, provide the requirements for vessel manning. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of innovative vessel designs tailored to take advantage of the admeasurement exemptions that have resulted in Small Passenger Vessels with significantly increased passenger capacity over what was envisioned when the current manning and deckhand qualification scheme was developed. In some cases, vessels over 200 feet long, carrying in excess of 1000 passengers and on international routes have been admeasured at less than 100 gross tons. This increase in vessel capacity has raised concerns on the part of the Coast Guard, industry and others regarding the level of training and qualifications of the deckhands employed on all Small Passenger Vessels.
- b. The Coast Guard and the industry recognize that a Small Passenger Vessel's licensed officer(s) would be unable to navigate the vessel and effectively respond to emergencies such as fire, engineering casualties, collision, flooding, medical emergencies, man overboard, etc. without the assistance of trained and qualified deckhands.
- c. The Coast Guard, in consultation with the industry, has determined that the best approach to improving deckhand training and qualifications is to allow the industry to undertake a voluntary training program which will provide an increased level of knowledge and skill for their crew members. The Coast Guard believes that because of the generally high level of responsibility and concern displayed by the industry that this approach will be both successful and cost effective.

**3. DISCUSSION.**

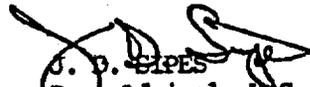
- a. The employment and training of qualified deckhands is the responsibility of the marine employer (46 CFR 15.103). The Coast Guard is issuing, by means of this NVIC, recommended criteria for assessing the qualifications of an individual deckhand.

NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 1-91

- b. **The Marine employer is responsible for ensuring that an individual engaged as a deckhand on a small passenger vessel:**
  - (1) Meets the minimum physical requirements;
  - (2) Is familiar with the location of equipment and procedures; and
  - (3) Has demonstrated the ability to respond to emergency situations.
- c. **This NVIC is not intended to be all encompassing nor indicative of the topics of training for every deckhand, but rather it is a general guide that should be adapted to individual vessel operations.**
- d. **At the discretion of the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection, some or all of the deckhands may be permitted to perform duties such as concessionaires, waiters or waitresses provided that they can readily respond to their regularly assigned deckhand duties. However, cooks and foodhandlers should not normally be accepted as deckhands, because of their employment status and good health practices.**
- e. **The Coast Guard is responsible for determining that Small Passenger Vessels are manned with competent crews. The method of accomplishing this is left to the discretion of the Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection (OCMI). In general, this is accomplished by relying on the vessel inspection process including the proper performance of emergency drills and the questioning of the crew on duties assigned and/or a review of the company training program. There is no intent that company training programs undergo any formal Coast Guard approval process.**

**4. ACTION.**

- a. **The guidelines contained in this circular apply to Small Passenger Vessels and are intended for use by Small Passenger Vessel owner/operators and masters of vessels less than 100 gross tons. Enclosure (1) provides guidance for marine employers and masters of Small Passenger Vessels to use when structuring training programs for deckhands.**
- b. **OCMI'S should use this circular as guidance during inspections for certification and reinspections, when evaluating training programs, and during drills conducted to ensure crew competency.**
- c. **The criteria proposed should be tailored to specific vessel needs on the basis of:**
  - (1) Operating conditions of the vessel on which the deckhand is employed;
  - (2) Overall vessel complexity;
  - (3) Number of passengers carried; and
  - (4) The specific duties the deckhand is expected to perform.



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**End: (1) Recommended Qualifications for Deckhands on Small Passenger Vessels**

**RECOMMENDED QUALIFICATIONS FOR DECKHANDS ON SMALL PASSENGER VESSELS**

- I. Every deckhand on a small passenger vessel should be at least 16 years of age, should be qualified as to sight, hearing, and physical condition to perform the deckhand's duties and should be physically able to perform all duties associated with the protection and evacuation of passengers during emergency situations.
- II. Every deckhand should be familiar with the following matters relating to emergency conditions:
  - A. Man Overboard.
    1. Location and use of lifesaving equipment.
    2. The vessel's maneuvering characteristics.
    3. Emergency communications skills.
    4. Proper recovery procedures.
    5. Station bill assignment/duties.
  - B. Fire.
    1. Fire detection and alarm systems.
    2. Classes of fires and the appropriate fire fighting technique.
    3. Location and operation of fire fighting equipment.
    4. Location and operation of power, ventilation and fuel shut-offs.
    5. Location and operation of watertight doors, hatches, fire-screen doors and escapes.
    6. Mustering passengers.
    7. Station bill assignment/duties.
  - C. Abandon Ship.
    1. Location, launching, and operation of survival equipment and craft (this includes, but is not limited to lifeboats, liferafts, buoyant apparatus, lifefloats, survival suits, and personal flotation devices).
    2. Proper method of abandoning the vessel, mustering and debarking passengers.
    3. Proper emergency communications procedures (i.e., EPIRB, distress signals).
    4. Station bill assignment/duties.
  - D. Foul Weather.
    1. Location and operation of watertight and weathertight closures.

2. Means of access to weather information.
3. Location and operation of bilge and emergency pumping systems.
4. Station bill assignment/duties.

**E. Medical Emergency.**

1. Red Cross certified in first aid and CPR. (Minimum of 50% of required deckhands)

**F. Collision.**

1. Location of watertight doors.
2. Methods of dewatering.
3. Station bill assignment/duties.

**III. Deckhands assigned to seamanship duties, engineering or passenger safety/control duties should be familiar with the appropriate vessel operational matters based on their assigned positions:**

**A. Bridge.**

1. All navigational equipment, engine alarms/indicators, controls, gauges, and communication procedures.

**B. Engineering.**

1. Main and auxiliary machinery, steering systems, alarms, refueling techniques, and emergency procedures (i.e., fuel, electrical, ventilation, etc.).
2. In instances where a larger vessel with complex engineering systems or other factors has been required by the OCMI to have unlicensed engineers in the required complement, these individuals will require a greater in-depth knowledge of and training in the subjects noted above. The OCMI may require specific training and qualification requirements for these individuals.

**C. Safety.**

1. Crowd control, rigging, line handling, casualty control, first aid and CPR.

**D. Vessel Assistance.**

1. Search and rescue techniques, towing, and superior shiphandling skills.

**E. Seamanship.**

1. Knots, linehandling, docking/undocking procedures, and basic navigation (i.e., piloting, deadreckoning).

**IV. Senior Deckhand.**

- A. In many situations it is important for the vessel's master to have available a more highly qualified deckhand, for example where the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection has allowed the deletion of the required mate. In addition to having a more in-depth knowledge of the above subjects, the SENIOR DECKHAND should also have practical experience on the vessel on which he or she is serving. The recommended experience for the SENIOR DECKHAND is:**
- 1. 30 days experience on board the vessel.**
  - 2. 30 hours at the helm under supervision of a master or mate.**
- B. The SENIOR DECKHAND will provide an increased level of experience on vessels where there is only one licensed officer required. The SENIOR DECKHAND will be responsible for supervising the other deckhands while the vessel is underway and act as the team leader in response to any emergencies on board. He or she will be able to assist the master in the operation of the vessel, and will be available to operate the vessel in the event the master becomes incapacitated. In order to properly identify this individual, the vessel's master should designate the SENIOR DECKHAND in writing and a copy of this designation should be retained on board the vessel.**