BEFORE YOU CHARTER A BOAT

GUIDANCE FOR BOAT MASTERS AND PASSENGERS

• Charter boat masters must have a license to carry even one passenger for hire (up to 6).
• Issuance of a Coast Guard certificate of inspection of a vessel (boat) is required to do the following (not all inclusive):
  • Carry over 6 passengers (at least one for hire) with a crew (including rentals);
  • Bareboat charter for more than 12 passengers.
  • Charge as a platform for events, even at the pier, for more than 6 passengers;
  • Charter your boat for fishing, tours and/or dinner cruises for more than 6 passengers.
  • You must hold a current Coast Guard Issued Credential if you plan to accept consideration for as little as one person.
  • “Consideration” is anything that could be construed as being economically beneficial to the vessel owner.

• All vessels operating as passenger vessels must be operated by a Captain with a Merchant Mariner’s Credential on board. This is critical since only credentialed operators have received comprehensive training on safe vessel maintenance, prudent operating techniques, and emergency procedures.
• If a boat carries more than 6 passengers, including at least one for hire, ask to see a valid Certificate of Inspection. It must meet all Coast Guard safety requirements for an inspected passenger vessel.
• Even if passengers share expenses such as donating fuel, food, beverage or supplies, this still constitutes a passenger for hire operation.
• If you suspect illegal charter vessel activity, you can assist the Coast Guard by providing the following: 1) a detailed description of the activity; 2) photographs of the activity; 3) name of the vessel; and 4) area of operation.
• In addition, if you go on a chartered fishing trip, be sure to request a receipt signed by the operator in exchange for your payment.

If in doubt whether a vessel is operating legally, or if you have any other questions, contact the United States Coast Guard with your concerns at 630.986.2131

Consequences for charter boat master/operators found in violation of United States Coast Guard Regulations include maximum civil penalties of up to $1,1000 for failure to have a valid Coast Guard license, face suspension and/or revocation of their credentials, and may result in civil fines and criminal prosecution by IRS.