

Procedure for Small Boat Operator Qualification

Introduction

Prior to being qualified as a small boat operator, prospective users will be asked to fill out a questionnaire (contact RFO for copy of questionnaire) to determine their level of certification and experience. After evaluating the questionnaire, the UMCES M/S or his designee will advise the prospective operator as to what training or experience is required. Individuals who already possess the necessary certification and who have had previous experience may qualify as an operator immediately, after a satisfactory demonstration of skills. Individuals who lack certification, or do not have boating experience will have to make their own arrangements for classroom instruction and on-the-water practice.

Certification

The requirements for certification can be satisfied in several ways; (see Small Boat Operator Policy, section IV). To gain the hands-on skills necessary to qualify as an operator, individuals who lack previous boating experience should: 1) participate in as many small boat cruises as they can, and 2) spend time operating one of labs' small boats under the direction of a qualified operator.

Once they have satisfied the requirements for certification and demonstration of skills, operators will be issued a certificate which designates the size boat they are qualified to operate, along with any restrictions the UMCES M/S or his designee deem necessary.

Demonstration of Skills

During a practical underway exercise, prospective operators will be asked to demonstrate or explain, to UMCES M/S, or his designee, to demonstrate or explain, to the UMCES M/S, or his designee, the following:

1. An understanding of the vessel, its systems, and equipment.
2. Trailer procedure and checklist.
3. Perform a pre-cruise/field trip check (complete appropriate checklist).
4. Knowledge and use of installed safety and emergency equipment.

5. VHF-FM radio operation and protocol; distress procedures.
6. Fire, emergency and man overboard procedures.
7. Docking and undocking the vessel.
8. Boat handling skills and judgment while underway.
9. An understanding of Navigation Rules.
10. Recognition of Aids to Navigation.
11. Anchoring the vessel.
12. Post cruise/field trip obligations, fueling and log book entries.

Summary of Certification Procedure

Submit completed Small Boat Experience Questionnaire to the UMCES Marine Superintendent at Research Fleet Operations, Chesapeake Biological Laboratory or to the Boat Coordinator at the Appalachian laboratory.

1. After reviewing Questionnaire, Marine Superintendent will contact individual with a determination:
 - a. Need for further classroom training and/or boating experience, or a combination of both.
 - b. Schedule Demonstration of Skills check-out in boat commensurate with experience.

Please note that scheduling the Demonstration of Skills check-out is contingent upon the availability of the boat required for the exercise and Marine Superintendent's schedule.

Boat Operating Requirements

1. The ultimate responsibility for safe boat operation rests with the boat operator.
2. Prior to departure the boat operator must file a float plan and complete a pre-cruise/field checklist. The operator must also ensure that all passengers are

familiar with the location of and proper donning procedures for Personal Floatation Devices (PFD) at this time.

3. Boat operators are required to check the marine weather forecast for the area of planned operation before departing on a cruise/field trip. During periods of small craft warnings, advisories or higher and in riverine research during high winds or high flows, no UMCES operation is to carry on activities. No vessel operations shall take place during periods of restricted visibility (any condition in which visibility is reduced or restricted by fog, heavy rain, snow or similar causes). In cases where conditions change while underway or while on station, common sense for safety shall apply.
4. A crew of two (one certified operator, one additional person) is the minimum required for all UMCES boat operations. The UMCES M/S may approve special circumstances that warrant single handed operations.
5. A permanently installed or hand-held portable VHF-FM radio must be carried aboard each boat during each cruise/field trip, in addition to the required safety and emergency equipment that is required by law. The boat operator must have a cell phone aboard for each cruise/field trip.
6. Vessels should be operated at a safe speed at all times to avoid collision, property damage and to ensure passenger safety.
7. It is the responsibility of the boat operator to use every reasonable means to become familiar with their intended areas of operation. This would include review of charts, word of mouth from locals and other means available.
8. It is imperative that special precautions be observed during operation where cold water and the risk of hypothermia are safety considerations. Operations conducted where the water temperatures are below 60° Fahrenheit require that a float coat or floatation coverall be available for all persons on board. The boat operator is responsible for ensuring that these special devices are aboard and that all passengers are familiar with donning procedures.
9. All personnel actively engaged in handling equipment over the side are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved work vest, float coat or floatation coveralls. All personnel handling equipment that is overhead are required to wear a hard hat.

10. Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. Open-toed shoes and bare feet are specifically forbidden. Diving and wading type projects would be an exception to this rule.
11. Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs are not allowed on UMCES vessels or vessels operating under the auspices of UMCES.
12. The boat operator is responsible for ensuring that boats are returned clean and ready for the next user.
13. The following situations require immediate notification to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) or Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP):
 - a. vessel is likely to sink
 - b. It is necessary to abandon the vehicle
 - c. A serious death or injury has occurred
 - d. Use the following contact information:
 - e. USCG VHF-FM Channel 16 or call 410-576-2525 (direct line to Sector Baltimore Search and rescue Mission Controller)
 - f. MNRP 410-260-888 (DNR Communications Center- to report boating emergencies 24/7)
14. All accidents-whether or not injury is involved- must be reported as soon as possible after the event. A written report must be submitted within 24 hours of the accident. This report may be submitted electronically or by other means to the appropriate authority and must include the following information:
 - a. Date
 - b. Operators Name
 - c. Name of Boat
 - d. Location
 - e. Description of Accident
 - f. Cause of Accident
 - g. Injuries (detail)
 - h. First Aid Administered

15. Certain types of accidents must be reported by the operator to the Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP) within 48 hours if:
- a. A person dies within 24 hours
 - b. A person loses consciousness or receives medical treatment beyond first aid or is disabled more than 24 hours.
 - c. A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury.
16. Certified boat operators will have their certification suspended/revoked following an incident involving unsafe operation of a vessel or operation in a manner that results in property damage or personal injury, pending review by the UMCES Marine Superintendent.
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I have read and understand the Small Boat Operator Qualifications and Policy and will comply with the provisions of this policy while involved in activities conducted under the auspices of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

Signature

Date

