



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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## OPERATION ABOVEBOARD COMBATS ILLEGAL CHARTERS

Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay will commence Operation ABOVEBOARD this Memorial Day weekend in an effort to combat illegal charter vessel operations. We will be employing three lines of effort to promote safe and legal vessel operations: Educate, Verify, Enforce. To that end, you can expect to see an increased Coast Guard presence across Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware waterways throughout the summer until Labor Day as we educate the boating community, verify compliance and enforce applicable safety regulations.

Thanks to the ease of connecting to the marketplace via social media and the internet, there is a growing trend in the vacation and recreation industry whereby property owners enter into agreements to temporarily lease, charter or rent their homes or vehicles to interested parties for compensation. Similarly, there are now several emerging vessel-based business ventures dedicated to boat rentals, fishing excursions, sightseeing, etc. whereby vessel owners/operators rent and/or charter their vessel out for services.

Illegal charters negatively impact legal commercial passenger vessel commerce and may also circumvent federal licensing and safety requirements, which in some instances have led to fatalities. For example, these types of activities may include, but are not limited to, vessel operators who carry passenger(s) for hire without a valid USCG credential or those with a valid credential carrying more than the maximum number of six (06) passengers for hire allowed on an uninspected passenger vessel (UPV).

There are many UPV safety requirements that relate to licensing, watch standing, vessel documentation, mandatory drug testing, casualty reporting, required charts and electronic equivalencies, navigation lights and sound signals, lifesaving and firefighting equipment, safety orientation and instruction, and pollution prevention. These regulatory "safety net" items usually exceed both the scope of knowledge an average boat operator may have as well as the basic safety equipment found onboard a typical recreational vessel.

Because each case may vary, anyone considering chartering (i.e. renting out) their vessel, or operating their vessel with passengers-for-hire, should contact Sector Delaware Bay Marine Inspections at (215) 908-9827 or [DomesticVessels@uscg.mil](mailto:DomesticVessels@uscg.mil) to discuss the specific operating parameters and identify which regulations apply to you.

In accordance with Title 46 U.S. Code § 4106, if a vessel is operated in violation of applicable laws and regulations, the owner, charterer, managing operator, agent, master and individual in charge may be liable for a civil penalty up to \$10,519 per violation per day. We urge the boating community to remain vigilant and report any suspicious operations to (215) 271-4807 (anonymous reporting is optional) or email [PhillyIO@uscg.mil](mailto:PhillyIO@uscg.mil).

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