

## Documentation and PML Information You need to Know!

Since the spring of 2008, the USCG has been randomly checking charterboats including Michigan charterboats, for several items. The list includes a Certificate of Documentation for all charterboats greater than 5 net tons (about 25') and USCG approved PML's (personal marker lights) for each PFD. After much research and many conversations between the Association and the USCG, it has been confirmed that both COD'S and PML's are required by laws which can be enforced by the USCG on all UPV's carrying 6 passengers or less on navigable waters. USCG personnel who conduct random boardings of all UPV's (uninspected passenger vessels) have safety check lists which requires both COD's and PML's. Every documentable charterboat must have on a COD with a "Coastwise" endorsement . If you are already documented, check to see that your endorsements includes Coastwise. If so you are all set. If you are documented but your endorsement(s) do not yet include "Coastwise" you need to apply for a change. A COD stating "Recreational" is not sufficient. (You may have multiple endorsements, including "Recreational, Coastwise, and/or "Registry", but you must have "Coastwise" along with any others.) If your boat is not documented and your tonnage rating is 5 tons or greater you need to be documented. The Coast Guard has advised us that if you can prove that you are in the process of obtaining documentation, by showing copies of your application and or any correspondence that you may have had with the National Vessel Document Center (NVDC), they may be willing to accept that in the short term. Be sure to keep copies of all applications, documents, or correspondence you may have created in your efforts to become documented. Information regarding all the documentation requirements, rules and applications may be found at the National Vessel Document Center (NVDC) website which can be easily accessed at: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/nvdc/>. The instruction for filling out the forms are also available at the website. To be documented you need to submit a "Fact of Build" document which has to be acquired from the company that built your boat, in addition to other ownership documents. If the company that built your boat is no longer in business, you may have difficulty getting a Fact of build statement. It may also be necessary to pay a fee to obtain a Fact of build statement from a private company that holds the records for your boat company.

In addition to acquiring a "Coastwise" endorsement you will need to check off on the second page of the application, a Primary Service of "Passengers (6 or fewer)". Note: The "Primary Service" notation does not appear on the COD, but is part of the vessels file at the NVDC . If you are currently documented, you may wish to call the NVDC and see if you have the Primary Service designation "Passengers(6 or fewer)". If not, you can have it added by phone: no charge. There are companies that specialize in filing documentation applications for a fee. If your situation is complicated it may be the best method of obtaining your COD. Several companies that provide this service can be found on the internet. This service can be very

expensive.

**The bottom line:** The USCG is now requiring all UPV's to be documented, and is now checking for them during random inspections. If you are not documented you should get it done. Do it now, and be ready should you be hailed for a random USCG charterboat inspection.

**What to do if you are not currently documented:**

First, if your vessel was built by a company that is still in business, contact them with your hull identification number (HIN). This number is stamped into your hull on the outside at the upper right corner. Depending on the company you may be asked for additional vessel and/or owner information. In some cases there may be a fee for the "Fact of Build" document. If, for example, your vessel is a Tiara, call 616-392-7163, ask for fact of build information. Tiara will get it out to you promptly. Tiara does not charge for this service. Other companies offer similar quick service.

If you own an older vessel and the company that built it is out of business or has gone through multiple changes in ownership you may have trouble getting your "Fact of Build" document. We have learned that each of these companies has different rules and requirements, and in some cases, costs, to provide the "Fact of Build" that you will need to get your COD.

You may be able to find the information you need to locate the records for your vessel by using the website: <http://www.uscgboating.org/recalls/mic1.aspx>

Start by entering your vessel brand name in the middle line – Company, and do a Find by company in the third column.

**Note:** The spelling of the name is crucial. If nothing appears, try different spelling versions. This may return from one to several choices. If you are unsuccessful using the boat's common name you may need to try to find the "MIC" (Manufacturers Identification Code). You can find this by doing a search by MIC (found on a pull down menu). It may take some time as there are more than 300 such codes.

They may not be as simple as it would seem. For example, Tiara's code is "SSU". The actual company is legally called S2 Yachts, Inc.

You will find addresses and phone #'s that hopefully will lead you to the person or place where your vessel's "build" records are kept. Call them and find what information and steps are required to get a "Fact of Build" for your particular boat. Find out if there is a cost for this service. Then proceed to acquire that document so you can apply for your COD.

**We have information related to some of the required sources for some vessels:**

(note: these contacts were valid at one time. The information may not be current.

If these contacts are not current for your boat, please find the current information through the database search described above)

For Marinette: John Atwell. 517-230-4326. atwell06@comcast.net no charge.

For older Sea Rays: Helen Gilbert at 865-582-2200. Information required. Cost is \$15.

For Chris Craft: Robert G. Kallotte, 4962 Cedar Oak Way Sarasota FL 34233

phone: 941-929-7555 Will need to send boat info. Cost \$100.

It is clear from these examples that it varies widely from company to company.

A quick survey of the MCBA website indicated that there are vessels in service on Lake Michigan built by at least 29 different builders. About half of these companies have re-organized or are out of business. Finding the "Fact of Build" document information for your particular boat may be difficult. If all else fails contact the NVDC (National Vessel Documentation Center and ask for help.

In some cases they have been able to supply clues to the necessary information.

In some cases they may be able to assist in getting a waiver.

Once you have acquired your "FOB" apply right away to the NVDC for your COD. You will need to download CG 1258. It will cost \$162 (non-refundable). Get it right the first time.

Use your most permanent address: city and state as your "home port", since changing it requires a new application. You will also have to apply your vessel name on both sides of the bow in letters at least 4" high, and attach your documentation number to your hull inside the boat (on a stringer, etc) in 3" high letters/numbers. Once documented you will still need to be registered in your state and display your state decal, but you MUST remove your "MC" numbers.

Once documented you will have to renew your documentation each year (no cost). The NVDC will send you a renewal letter each winter. If you let your documentation lapse you may be subject to a substantial Federal penalty. Much more information about this and other related topics may be found in the FAQ's at the NVDC website.

### **Personal Marker Lights: (AKA: PML's)**

In addition to requiring all UPV's to be documented, the USCG is requiring all UPV's to be equipped with USCG approved PML's for each PFD aboard your vessel. These lights attach to the upper portion of a pfd and provide light when activated to aide in locating during low light or darkness.

There are many USCG approved PML's, including the Orion Cyalume PML. These light have a expiration date of 2 - 3 years, and cost from \$12 - \$20 depending on your source. They are not refillable when expired. They can be found in most major marine catalogs, and are available through many websites. A second lower cost approved light is the ACR "C" light which uses two AA batteries. These lights may be powered by alkaline batteries with a life of 4 or 5 years, or even the new lithium AA batteries with a life of 10 years or more. The "C" lights are also available in many marine catalogs/stores and on many websites With out batteries, these lights also cost from \$7 or \$8, up to \$12 -\$15 each, again depending on the source. Many additional USCG approved lights are available at greater cost. Whatever PML you choose, be sure it is marked USCG approved. If it is battery powered, be sure to have "in date" batteries installed, and check to see that it lights when activated.