



BOATING SAFETY CIRCULAR

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Boating Safety Circular

The *Boating Safety Circular* is a product of the United States Coast Guard's Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety — Boating Safety Division — Recreational Boating Product Assurance Branch, Commandant (BSX-23), 2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, Stop 7501, Washington, DC 20593-7501
Email: rbscompliance@uscg.mil

The *Boating Safety Circular* is for information only. No Federal Statutes or Regulations are established or changed in this circular.

<https://safeafloat.com/boat-builders-handbook/>
www.uscgboating.org
www.safeafloat.com

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The Boating Safety Circular (BSC) and other important U.S. Coast Guard notices for recreational boat manufacturers are delivered by the GovDelivery system using the following address: uscoast-guard@service.govdelivery.com.

To ensure you receive the BSC and other notices please whitelist this email address or add it to your safe senders list.

Visit the U.S. Coast Guard at the 2026 International Boat Builders' Exhibition & Conference (IBEX) in Tampa, FL.



The Recreational Boating Product Assurance Branch will be hosting a booth (Booth #3-2232) at the 2026 IBEX show from October 6th - 8th. The booth staff will be available to answer questions and educate show attendees on USCG requirements for recreational boats and how to comply with them. Please stop by and say hello!

About the Recreational Boating Product Assurance Branch

Responsible for developing, maintaining and enforcing recreational boat manufacturing safety regulations, Branch staff attend IBEX every year to educate IBEX attendees on Coast Guard requirements. Valuable information for

builders, including the Boat Builder's Handbook, educational videos, and Coast Guard policies, may be found at www.safeafloat.com. Additional boating safety information may be found at www.uscgboating.org.

About IBEX

The world's leading technical boat-building showcase, IBEX delivers a unique forum where the marine industry can do business, share ideas, and accelerate new product development. IBEX keeps people connected to the products, technology, people, and training that are advancing the industry.

Boat Capacity Labels – A new approach

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has issued policy letter *BSX 23 Policy #26-01* recognizing ABYC S-7 2026 as an equivalent level of safety to the current regulations.

<https://safeafloat.com/policies-letters/>

Technology in boats and their propulsion systems continue to evolve. Boat capacity labels haven't seen a significant design change since 1980. The standards that support maximum capacity and labeling of boats recently went through a rigorous technical

review. The result is newly designed boat capacity labels that improve comprehensibility and displays additional guidance for both the industry and consumers.

With the range of outboard types on the market, the weight for a given horsepower engine can vary widely. The revised ABYC S-7 *Boat Capacity Label* for outboard boats provides a maximum outboard motor running weight. This additional rating confirms the designed engine weight on the transom.

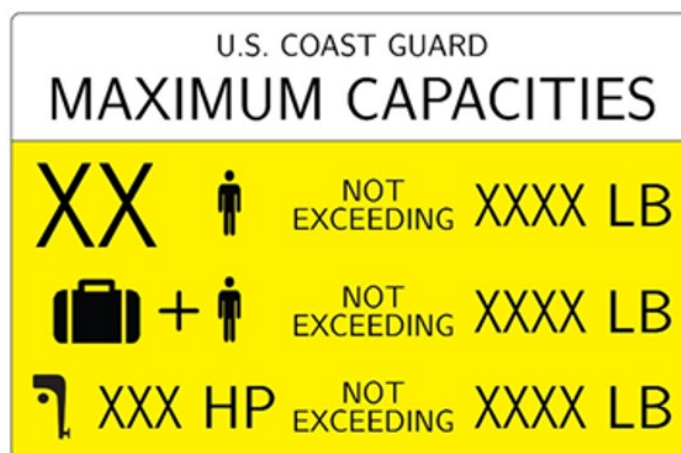
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“manufacturers may now begin using the new design capacity label as an alternative to the capacity label required in 33 CFR 183 Subpart B”

What this means is that boat manufacturers may now begin using the new design capacity label as an alternative to the capacity label required in 33 CFR 183 Subpart B. Details on the new label can be found in the July 2026 publication of ABYC S-7. Of special note for builders of vessels covered by regulation for capacity and flotation of monohulled boats less than 20 feet in length. If utilizing this alternative label, capacity shall be determined using ABYC H-5, *Boat Load Capacity*, in lieu of 33 CFR 183 Subpart C, including the application of designated occupant

positions. Additionally, due to the ability to easily repower these smaller vessels, regardless of what weight is posted for maximum horsepower, compliance with Safe Loading and Flotation will be established utilizing test weights as defined in ABYC S-30 *Outboard Engine and Related Equipment Weights* or 33 CFR 183.75 for testing and compliance purposes.

Here is an example of a new label for an outboard powered boat under 20 ft in length:



Save The Date: Risk Mitigation Series 11 Enlightening the Industry on Lights, Batteries, and Warnings

The Risk Mitigation Series is a free, online event dedicated to improving safety in recreational boat design and construction. Sessions are recorded for later viewing.

Series 11 will be held on **November 5, 2026 from 1 PM – 3 PM**

For updates or to register for free, please visit

<https://www.abycinc.org/riskmitigation>.

To access past recordings, visit

www.abycinc.org/USCGwebinars.



Don't Forget to Take the National Recreational Boating Safety Survey, and Spread the Word!



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Factory Visits 2.0: Strengthening Recreational Boat Safety Through Collaboration and Compliance

“This initiative represents an evolution from traditional compliance inspections”

The U.S. Coast Guard's Office of Auxiliary & Boating Safety is introducing an enhanced approach to recreational boat manufacturer factory visits. This initiative represents an evolution from traditional compliance inspections toward a more collaborative process focused on improving safety, encouraging continuous improvement, and helping manufacturers navigate an increasingly complex regulatory and technological environment.

The recreational boating industry continues to evolve with new materials, propulsion systems, electrical technologies, and manufacturing methods. As innovation accelerates, so does the need to ensure that boats entering the marketplace continue to meet federal safety regulations while incorporating recognized industry best practices. This redesigned approach is designed to meet that challenge.

The Legal Foundation

The Coast Guard's authority to inspect recreational boat manufacturers is well established under **46 U.S.C. Chapter 43**, which authorizes inspections, testing, research, and compliance activities. Manufacturers are required to maintain records and provide access to facilities and documentation necessary for determining compliance with federal regulations. These authorities are supported by regulations contained in **33 CFR Parts 179, 181, and 183**, which govern defect notification, manufacturer responsibilities, and recreational boat construction standards.

Rather than viewing inspections simply as enforcement activities, this new approach emphasizes partnership with manufacturers to improve compliance before problems reach consumers.

Purpose

The primary objectives of the program are to:

- Ensure compliance with federal

recreational boat regulations.

- Evaluate how effectively voluntary industry standards support safety.
- Collaborate with manufacturers on Coast Guard requirements and best practices.
- Encourage continuous improvement in manufacturing processes.
- Promote thorough technical documentation.
- Ultimately ensure that safe boats reach the recreational boating public

This proactive approach benefits both manufacturers and consumers by reducing defects, improving consistency, and strengthening confidence in the recreational boating industry.

The Current Inspection Program

The scope of the Coast Guard's oversight activities continues to expand. During 2025, the Recreational Boating Product Assurance Branch oversaw approximately:

- 370 manufacturer visits
- 30 boat tests
- 25 educational visits
- 200 retail boat inspections
- 10 boat show visits

These activities provide valuable insight into manufacturing practices throughout the recreational marine industry while helping identify opportunities for outreach and education. That said, the Coast Guard focused solely on compliance with federal regulations. This approach misses an opportunity to evaluate compliance with industry best practices for critical safety systems. For example, only a small percentage of Coast Guard visits evaluated machinery and electrical systems (only inboard gasoline powered contain with federal regulations) to any standard.

Inspection Versus Audit

One of the most important concepts introduced in Factory Visits 2.0 is the

“this new approach emphasizes partnership with manufacturers to improve compliance before problems reach consumers”

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“an audit examines whether the company's processes consistently produce compliant boats”

distinction between an **inspection** and an **audit**.

An inspection evaluates whether a specific boat, component, or manufacturing step complies with defined regulatory requirements. Inspectors examine measurable characteristics such as installation, dimensions, hardware, labeling, or workmanship. The result is typically a determination of compliance or noncompliance for a specific item.

An audit, by contrast, evaluates the effectiveness of the manufacturer's overall quality management system. Rather than asking whether a single boat meets requirements, an audit examines whether the company's processes consistently produce compliant boats.

Audits may review:

- Design controls
- Manufacturing procedures
- Employee training
- Calibration systems
- Process documentation
- Internal quality records
- Corrective action systems

This distinction shifts attention from simply identifying problems to understanding why they occurred and how they can be prevented in the future. This approach can identify areas to improve recreational boating safety irrespective of federal requirements.

Deficiencies Versus Findings

It is important to distinguish between **inspection deficiencies** and **audit findings**.

An inspection deficiency refers to a specific instance where a boat or component fails to meet a regulatory requirement. These issues typically require repair, rework, or correction before compliance can be achieved.

An audit finding, however, identifies weaknesses in the manufacturer's processes or management systems. Examples may include missing procedures, inconsistent documentation, inadequate training, or ineffective quality controls.

Correcting a deficiency fixes today's problem.

Correcting an audit finding helps prevent tomorrow's problem.

This systems-based approach encourages long-term improvements rather than repeated corrections of the same issues.

Preparing for a Factory Visit

Preparation plays a significant role in a successful inspection.

Prior to a visit, manufacturers should have readily available information such as:

- Types of vessels produced
- Production volumes
- Current models
- Capacity calculations
- Flotation calculations
- Powering calculations
- First purchaser records

Having this information organized allows both the manufacturer and the Coast Guard to focus on technical discussions rather than document retrieval, making the visit more efficient and productive.

What to Expect During a Factory Visit

Factory Visits 2.0 will follow a structured process designed to promote consistency while minimizing disruption to manufacturing operations.

The visit typically begins with an opening meeting where introductions are made, objectives are reviewed, and the scope of the inspection is confirmed.

Inspectors then conduct a document review, examining engineering calculations, procedures, technical records, previous inspection reports, and corrective actions from earlier visits.

The next phase consists of on-site observations and interviews. Coast Guard personnel observe manufacturing processes, examine boats under construction, and verify compliance with applicable regulations while discussing production methods with company personnel.

After collecting evidence, inspectors evaluate any regulatory deficiencies or audit findings before conducting a closing meeting. During this discussion, preliminary observations are presented, supporting evidence is reviewed, and manufacturers have an opportunity to ask questions or provide clarification.

“Correcting a deficiency fixes today's problem. Correcting an audit finding helps prevent tomorrow's problem.”

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“the program aims to strengthen compliance while encouraging manufacturers to continuously improve their products and processes.”

Following the visit, a formal report documents the results and identifies any corrective actions that may be necessary. Manufacturers are generally expected to respond within approximately 30 days with their proposed corrective actions.

A Partnership for Safer Boating

Factory Visits 2.0 represents more than an inspection program—it reflects a commitment to partnership between the Coast Guard and recreational boat manufacturers.

By combining regulatory oversight, accident analysis, technical expertise, and collaborative engagement, the program

aims to strengthen compliance while encouraging manufacturers to continuously improve their products and processes.

The ultimate measure of success is not the number of inspections completed or deficiencies identified. Success is measured by safer boats on the water, fewer accidents, and greater confidence among the boating public.

Through education, collaboration, and continuous improvement, Factory Visits 2.0 helps ensure that innovation in recreational boating is matched by an equally strong commitment to safety. ■



A Mariner's Must-Read: The Coast Guard Proceedings Magazine:

The most recent edition might be of interest to you!

“Since its inception in 1944, the magazine has remained dedicated to the open and fair discussion of maritime safety”

The *Proceedings of the Marine Safety & Security Council*, more commonly known as the *Coast Guard Proceedings Magazine*, stands as the official journal of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). This publication, issued three times a year, serves as a vital communications link, disseminating crucial information to a broad audience that includes maritime industry stakeholders, USCG personnel, and the wider maritime community.

Since its inception in 1944, the magazine has remained dedicated to the open and fair discussion of maritime safety, offering a platform for all interested parties to share their insights and perspectives. This valuable resource is available to mariners and the public free of charge, in both print and digital formats.

For those who make their living on the

water, the *Coast Guard Proceedings Magazine* is an indispensable tool, offering a wealth of information that directly impacts their safety and professional lives.

The most recent edition of the magazine focuses entirely on Recreational Boating Safety—a topic of direct relevance to the boat manufacturing sector. This issue highlights the collaborative initiatives between the USCG, state authorities, National Association of Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC), the Coast Guard Auxiliary, non-profit groups, and commercial partners. Together, these entities cooperate to decrease maritime casualties, bolster regulations, upgrade vessel safety standards, analyze statistical

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Note: Always check here for the most up-to-date list of area assignments:

<https://safeafloat.com/your-factory-inspector/>

data, and support operator training.

For boat builders and marine equipment manufacturers, staying aligned with the insights in this issue is an essential step toward engineering safer, more compliant, and highly competitive vessels to be used on America's waterways.

You can read or subscribe to the latest issue of the *Coast Guard Proceeding*

Magazine online here:

<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Featured-Content/Proceedings-Magazine/>

Or by using the QR Code below



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Calendar of Events

American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC)

Risk Mitigation Series 10	Virtual	11/05/2026
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ABYC Online Training: https://abycinc.org/events/event_list.asp

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)

Paddlesports Trade Coalition	Montgomery, AL	10/14/2026 - 10/16/2026
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State RBS Workshop	Lexington, KY	02/24/2027 - 02/25/2027
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National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA)

International Boatbuilders Exhibition and Conference (IBEX) Trade Show	Tampa, Florida	10/06/2026 - 10/08/2026
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Engineering Compliance Seminar	Knoxville, TN	12/08/2026 - 12/10/2026
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American Boating Congress (ABC)	Washington, DC	05/17/2026 - 05/19/2027
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Boat and Trade Shows: [Worldwide Boat Show Calendar \(nmma.org\)](http://Worldwide Boat Show Calendar (nmma.org))

Websites of Note:

uscgboating.org - U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division

Facebook.com/USCG Boating Safety - U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety

safeafloat.com - Recreational Boating Product Assurance Branch Boat Building Compliance Website

abycinc.org - American Boat and Yacht Council

nmma.org - National Marine Manufacturers Association

nasbla.org - National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)

Email Addresses of Note:

rbscompliance@uscg.mil - for all manufacturer inquiries except for MICs

rbsinfo@uscg.mil - for general boating safety questions

MICAPP@uscg.mil - for all inquiries related to manufacturer's identification codes (MIC)

TypeApproval@uscg.mil - for all inquiries about equipment and materials that receive Coast Guard approval (life jackets, visual distress signals, inflatable life rafts, etc.)

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The following are active recalls that opened since the last Boating Safety Circular was published in April of 2025. To search for recalls go to:

[Recalls \(uscgboating.org\)](https://uscgboating.org)

2026

FOUR SONS

Campaign # 26CG0010
Year: 2025
Model: Coastal Skiff 145
Problem: Flotation/stability

MY2026 Monsoon 5.3L sterndrive engines - Intl MY2024-MY2026 Monsoon 6.2L sterndrive engines - US MY2024-MY2026 Monsoon 6.2L sterndrive engine
Problem: Potential for the shift/throttle control system software to not recognize a rapid operator shift input between forward and reverse

SEASTORM UNITED STATES LLC

Campaign # 26CG0011
Year: 2025
Model: SEASTORM 14
Problem: Flotation/stability

MJM YACHTS LLC

Campaign # 26MF0338
Year: 2025
Model(s): MJM 4, MJM 42, MJM 47X, MJM 47R
Problem: Inverter/charger installed in the machinery space does not carry a certification as ignition protected.

MI TIDE BOATS LLC

Campaign # 26CG0012
Year: 2025
Model(s): V1620 CC
Problem: Flotation/stability, max horsepower, nav lights

MONTARA INC

Campaign # 26MF0427
Year: 2026
Model(s): EVO, Surf Boss
Problem: On boats equipped with hydraulic steering, the bracket that mounts the steering cylinder to the hull may fail.

MALIBU MONSOON ENGINES

Campaign # 26MF0305
Year: 2024—2026
Model(s): MY2024-MY2026 Monsoon 5.3L sterndrive engines – US MY2024-

