



# No Fuss, No Muss - and Your Favorite Price (Free!) - Vessel Exams



by VINCENT T. PICA, II  
 DISTRICT COMMODORE, FIRST DISTRICT, SOUTHERN REGION (D1SR)  
 UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

In the springtime, the saying goes that a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love. This may be true but just about everyone I speak to lately has had it with "cabin fever" and wants to get back out on there! And, fitfully, Spring is here. When getting to work commissioning your boat for the water, stop for a moment and consider getting the "gilt edged" United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel Safety Check - better know as the Vessel Exam. Oh, and it's free.

**What It is Not!**

USCGAux vessel safety checks are not a regulatory event. If your boat doesn't pass all components of the exam, no one "turns you in." The examiner will explain exactly what needs to be brought back into line to conform to Federal standards and, most likely, will also give you his or her cell phone number. "Call me when you've addressed the issue. I'll come over and we'll get this boat decal'd as having passed the USCGAux Vessel Safety Check."

**What Does The Decal Mean?**

It says something very simple. This boat meets, at least, Federal minimums for 15 specific safety or regulatory features. Can USCG active-duty members still come alongside and board you? Of course they can. They need no reason whatsoever (see "We're Being Boarded by the Coast Guard - Now What!?" SSP, 11/15/06). But experience tells me that when the regulars are faced with two boats, and one has passed our exam and the other hasn't, the other guy had better hope that he has no reason to worry.

**How Do I Get One?**

In an out-reach program started a few years ago, the USCGAux flotillas "Out East" have created "Vessel Exam Days" with a number of marinas and dock masters. Some throw BBQs for their customers. Some set up tables with fresh sets of flares (the most common reason for a boat not to get its decal) and other necessary items

like fire extinguishers or air-horns, etc. So, check with your dock master and, if he or she isn't planning to sponsor a "VE Day", email me below and I will follow up directly. Or, you can go online. WWW.CGAUX.ORG and click on Vessel Safety Checks. Follow a few simple prompts and you will be connected via email to a USCGAux-trained Vessel Examiner for scheduling. Or just email me below and we'll get it set up for you.

**What Will The Vessel Examiner Check?**

Believe it or not, the first thing that the Examiner will ask for is your registration. The registration, not a copy, is required by law to be on the boat. If it isn't there, the examiner will still conduct the exam to see if there are any other show-stoppers but the VSC decal cannot be awarded without a valid registration on the boat. It can be in your wallet as long as you are on the boat!

An important reason for the registration to be in hand is that right on it is the length of the boat as it is known to DMV. USCG safety standards are size-dependent. For example, a boat over 39.4 feet shall (must!) have a copy of the Navigation Rules (*the COLREGs you've seen so much on here*) on the boat. Twenty-six feet or more? Where's your Pollution placard? Trash placard? At least two "B-1" fire extinguishers aboard?

**Why Typically Don't All Boats Pass?**

Well, as I noted above, the most common reason is expired flares. What does that mean? Your flares come from the factory with 40 months of "life" and that date is stamped on the side of the flare. Why 40? So, after shipping and sitting on a shelf, hopefully you have 3-years (36 months) of coverage. Are the flares still good after the expiration date? Almost without a doubt, they are. But the Examiner cannot give you your decal unless you have at least 3 day and 3 night "pyrotechnic devices" aboard in an un-expired state.

What else can go wrong? Well, before you get nervous, with over 100,000 exams as the basis, 75% of all boats pass on the first pass. And it is not a regulatory event if it doesn't. You get specific advice from the Examiner on what you need. And likely his or her cell phone number to schedule the re-exam. And, oh yes, it is free. Both times...

Here is the breakdown:

<b>Display of Numbers</b> 5.435%	<b>Registration / Documentation</b> 5.574%
<b>Personal Flotation Device</b> 2.832%	<b>Ventilation</b> 1.451%
<b>Visual Distress Signals</b> 12.221%	<b>Fire Extinguishers</b> 4.501%
<b>Backfire Flame Control</b> 1.639%	<b>Sound Producing Device</b> 5.156%
<b>Navigation Lights</b> 8.465%	<b>Marine Sanitation Device</b> 2.921%
<b>Pollution Placard</b> 2.375%	<b>MARPOL Trash Placard</b> 2.802%
<b>Navigation Rules</b> 2.742%	<b>State and/or Local Regulations</b> 10.432%
Overall Vessel Condition (catch-all) - 4.670%	

Does every boat need to pass every item? Not at all. If you don't have a marine sanitation device (a "head") aboard, the Examiner just checks "N/A." But if you do, it must meet Federal standards for safe and secure operation. Does your 20' Seahunt need a set of Nav Rules aboard? Nope. But that 46' Ocean yacht of yours does..! You get the picture.

So, let's be sure we go to sea with a vessel that meets the gold standard and increase the safety of life at sea - yours! Oh, and it's free...

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR and we will help you "get in this thing..."

**Tides for Moriches Inlet starting with May 22, 2013**

Day	High/Low	Tide Time	Height Feet	Sunrise/Sunset	Moon Time	% Moon Visible
Wed. 22	High	4:50 AM	2.9	5:28 AM	Set 3:31 AM	85
22	Low	11:01 AM	0.0	8:08 PM	Rise 5:26 PM	
22	High	5:24 PM	3.6			
22	Low	11:45 PM	-0.1			
Thur. 23	High	5:47 AM	3.1	5:27 AM	Set 4:10 AM	92
23	Low	11:51 AM	-0.1	8:09 PM	Rise 6:38 PM	
23	High	6:15 PM	3.8			
Fri. 24	Low	12:38 AM	-0.2	5:26 AM	Set 4:56 AM	97
24	High	6:40 AM	3.2	8:10 PM	Rise 7:49 PM	
24	Low	12:44 PM	-0.2			
24	High	7:05 PM	4.0			
Sat. 25	Low	1:31 AM	-0.4	5:25 AM	Set 5:50 AM	99
25	High	7:32 AM	3.3	8:11 PM	Rise 8:56 PM	
25	Low	1:36 PM	-0.2			
25	High	7:55 PM	4.0			
Sun 26	Low	2:23 AM	-0.5	5:25 AM	Set 6:51 AM	99
26	High	8:26 AM	3.3	8:12 PM	Rise 9:56 PM	
26	Low	2:29 PM	-0.2			
26	High	8:47 PM	4.0			
Mon. 27	Low	3:14 AM	-0.5	5:24 AM	Set 7:59 AM	95
27	High	9:22 AM	3.3	8:12 PM	Rise 10:49 PM	
27	Low	3:22 PM	-0.2			
27	High	9:43 PM	3.8			
Tues. 28	Low	4:05 AM	-0.4	5:24 AM	Set 9:09 AM	89
28	High	10:21 AM	3.2	8:13 PM	Rise 11:34 PM	
28	Low	4:15 PM	-0.1			
28	High	10:41 PM	3.7			

<b>Weather Forecast</b> E Moriches, NY (11940)	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Wed</b>
	May 22	May 23	May 24	May 25	May 26	May 27	May 28	May 29
	75°F 63°F	72°F 60°F	68°F 51°F	67°F 50°F	68°F 51°F	67°F 52°F	69°F 55°F	70°F 57°F

## FISHING WITH TONY ■ by TONY SALERNO

### Habitat Restoration Yields Long-term Benefits to Fisheries

Restoring and expanding coastal and estuarine habitat leads to increases in fish populations, which have a positive impact on the communities and the industries that depend on thriving and sustainable fisheries.

A report released by Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) and the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) and co-authored with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) makes a powerful case that investing in our nation's coastlines and estuaries leads to healthy habitat and strong fisheries, which has a positive impact on the businesses and industries, both recreational and commercial, that need healthy fisheries to survive and thrive.

Among the findings are: Over 75 percent of our nation's commercial fish catch and 80-90 percent of the recreational fish catch depend on key estuary habitat at some point in their lifecycle. Fish populations can respond quickly to habitat improvement and the impact will last over an extended period of time. Rebounds in fish populations can occur within months and persist for years. Since 2000, in Massachusetts and New York, herring, shad and sturgeon have doubled and tripled in population due to habitat restoration projects. Just two years after a single culvert was repaired connecting Bride Brook to Long Island Sound, the herring population more than tripled from 75,000 to 287,000. An oyster reef restoration project in Alabama increased populations of several economically-important species, including blue crab, red drum, spotted sea trout, and flounder.

Investing in coastal and estuarine habitat restoration is essential not only for the long-term future of our fisheries but also because it helps support economies and communities through the recreational and commercial fishing industries. In order to have fish, we have to have healthy habitat. If we want more fish, we need healthier habitat.

American Sportfishing Association President and CEO Mike Nussman noted, "As an industry, we are keenly aware of the impact that sport fishing has on our nation's habitat restoration efforts. In many ways, America's anglers are the nation's most powerful force for conserving our nation's fisheries and waters, investing more than \$1 billion dollars each year in fisheries management and conservation through taxes on fishing equipment and state fishing license sales."

The report notes that strategic habitat restoration is required, particularly in an era of shrinking budgets. "The big challenges that fisheries face are increasingly habitat challenges. Without healthy habitat, we cannot sustain the fisheries that will feed Americans now and into the future," said Eric C. Schwab, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries.