



We're Being Boarded by the Coast Guard Now What?



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If you've ever seen the reflection of the blue-rotating hailing light in the reflection of your boat's windshield, you've felt the quickening in certain parts of your body - "What did I do wrong?" The United States Coast Guard can and will board you at their discretion. They need no search warrant, no provocation, no reason other than "Good Morning, sir. My name is Officer Jones with the US Coast Guard - the Coast Guard is here today to ensure you are in compliance with all applicable federal laws and regulations."

What Happens First

First, you will be impressed by their youthfulness and their polite and professional demeanor. These are highly trained federal officers. And the very first question that they will ask you, before they even step off their vessel onto yours, is, "Without reaching for them or touching them, do you have any weapons on board?" Subtly but powerfully, the tone is set. "I am polite. I am professional. I mean business." Let's assume that the answer to that question is "no," since I would need much more space than this column if the answer is "yes."

What Happens Next

The inspection that follows is driven largely by the size of the vessel, with a few standard exceptions. Your actual registration needs to be aboard and current. The HIN, similar to your car's VIN, needs to be the same both on your registration and on your board (low on the port side of the transom.) If they don't match, someone has a lot of explaining to do. The registration numbers must be of proper size (at least 3" tall), of contrasting color to your hull and be the most forward of any numbering or lettering on the boat.

If you have a "MSD" (Marine Sanitation Device, a.k.a. a "head" or toilet), regardless of the size of your vessel, it must conform to regulations. All the bays and creeks are "No Discharge Zones" so, if there is an overboard through-hull from the MSD holding tank, it must be in the locked/closed position and the key must be under the control of the skipper. It can be seized closed or, lastly, the handle can be removed and it must be in the closed position.

The rest is largely going to be driven by the size of your vessel:

- personal flotation devices (life jackets)

- at least one for everybody aboard, and in good working order and readily available

- fire extinguishers - boat size dependent but all must be in working order
- flares - boat size dependent but all must "good to go," i.e., not yet expired

And so on and so forth.

What Happens Then?

Well, there are three outcomes from here. The best is when you get a Report of Boarding marked "No Violations." You are good to go for the season. Then your Report of Boarding could be marked "Written Warning" about some violation that has not risen to the level of Notice of Violation. However, if the boarding officer learns you already have been given a warning for the same issue, that warning becomes a "Notice of Violation."

When a "Notice of Violation" is issued as a direct result of a boarding, there are generally two outcomes. If the boarding officer believes that the nature of the violation is inherently unsafe, you will be directed to follow the Coast Guard back to the dock. They are not going to allow you to keep fishing with some aspect of your boat that can lead

to serious injury or death to you, your crew or other boaters. In the case of a less serious violation, the notice is sent to the Coast Guard hearing office in Portsmouth, VA, where a case officer will assess fines, etc. You will be notified by mail and have 15 days to file an appeal.

How to Avoid All This?

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary conducts free vessel exams all season long - and they are not enforcement events. If your boat "fails" virtually the same inspection that would be conducted by the regulars, you get a report that details the deficiency - and the inspector's cell phone number. He or she will tell you, "When you have this addressed, call me. I will come down and re-run the inspection." When you pass, you get a USCGAux sticker of compliance that you can affix to your windshield.

If you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at USCGAUX2006@aol.com or go direct to MaryJo Cruickshank, who is in charge of new members matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing..."

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The Time Offsets mentioned in the column are as follows:

Tidal Time Offsets	USCG Station	Potunk Point	Mastic Beach	Smith Pt Bridge
High Tide	+45 min	+4.5 hrs	+4.5 hrs	+3 hrs
Low Tide	+2 hrs	+5 hrs	+5 hrs	+4 hrs

Day	High		High	
	Phase	Low	Low	Low
Thu 16	03:29 /	09:30 /	15:38 /	21:46 /
Fri 17	04:13 /	10:15 /	16:25 /	22:24 /
Sat 18	04:53 /	10:58 /	17:07 /	23:02 /
Sun 19	05:31 /	11:41 /	17:47 /	23:41 /
Mon 20	06:06 /	12:24 /	18:25 /	
New Moon				
Tue 21		00:20 /	06:40 /	13:06 /
Wed 22		00:59 /	07:15 /	13:47 /
Thu 23		01:38 /	07:52 /	14:29 /
Fri 24		02:18 /	08:36 /	15:11 /
Sat 25		03:01 /	09:27 /	15:57 /
Sun 26		03:51 /	10:26 /	16:50 /
Mon 27		04:54 /	11:26 /	17:50 /
Tue 28	00:11 /	06:12 /	12:26 /	18:54 /
First Qtr				
Wed 29	01:09 /	07:28 /	13:27 /	19:52 /
Thu 30	02:09 /	08:33 /	14:30 /	20:46 /

State, County and Town Protect Last Large Parcel of Environmentally Sensitive Land in Brookhaven



Senator Kenneth P. LaValle announced recently that the State, County, and Town of Brookhaven has entered into a joint agreement for the purchase of 403 acres of Central Pine Barrens land in Yaphank. The parcel, known as the AVR property, is included in the state's Open Space Protection Plan.

The state, county, and town have each committed to one-third of the purchase price and will work together to go to contract on the property as soon as possible.

"As architect of the Pine Barrens Act, the preservation of the AVR property has been a priority of mine for quite some time," said Senator Kenneth P. LaValle. "I began working on acquiring the 400 plus acres in 1997 when the Ridge Civic Association approached me with concerns about over development. The process has been long and arduous, but our determination and perseverance have paid off."

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan said, "The State is proud to partner with Suffolk County and the Town of Brookhaven and to have worked with Senator LaValle to protect this important parcel that will be added to existing State land."

According to Senator LaValle, New York State will acquire one-third

of the property through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) following a state-administered appraisal process. The contiguous 403 acres of oak and pitch pine dry forest are included in the Pine Barrens' Compatible Growth Area.

The property bridges DEC's Rocky Point Preserve to the north, DEC's Longwood Conservation Area to the east, and Suffolk County's Warbler Woods to the South. The preservation of this environmentally sensitive land will also enhance the protection of the Peconic and Carmens Rivers and Long Island's drinking water quality.

"No one level of government can shoulder the burden for preserving large tracts of land such as this, but by pooling our resources we can make significant progress in the race against over development," said Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy.

"The town, county and state have acted together to preserve this key 400-acre parcel in the heart of the pine barrens," said Brookhaven Town Supervisor Brian X. Foley. "My administration has worked tirelessly to preserve open space, and this particular purchase is a critical piece of a key pine barrens preservation jigsaw puzzle."