

**UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE**

SMALL BOAT OPERATOR QUALIFICATIONS AND POLICY

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BACKGROUND

A variety of small boats, ranging in size from 13 ft. to 26 ft., are available at the UMCES' labs for project work in local waters. The purpose of this document is to establish a policy to ensure that prospective operators meet certain standards before being allowed to operate an UMCES small boat.

POLICY

Prior to operating any UMCES small boat, individuals will be required to be qualified as an operator. A qualified operator is defined as one who possesses the proper certification, and who can demonstrate to the UMCES Marine Superintendent (UMCES M/S), or his designee, certain small boat handling skills and procedures.

Since there are several different size boats available at each of the labs, each with different equipment, prospective operators must be checked out and demonstrate skills in the operation of each size boat. For any size boat primarily launched from a trailer, individuals must also have knowledge and exhibit proficiency in hook-up, highway practicum, launch and recovery operations.

The requirements set forth in this document are intended to qualify operators of small boats for operation during daylight hours. The UMCES M/S or his designee will consider projects which require the operation of small boats at night on a case-by-case basis.

PROCEDURE

Prior to being qualified as a small boat operator, prospective users will be asked to fill out a simple questionnaire (refer to Attachment 1, Small Boat Experience Questionnaire) to determine their level of certification and experience. After evaluating the questionnaire, the UMCES M/S or his designee will advise the prospective operator as to what training or experience is required. Individuals who already possess the necessary certification and who have had previous boating experience may qualify as an operator immediately, after a satisfactory demonstration of skills. Individuals who lack certification, or who do not have boating experience will have to make their own arrangements for classroom instruction and on-the-water practice.

The requirements for certification can be satisfied in several ways; details are listed under CERTIFICATION. To gain the hands-on skills necessary to qualify as an operator, individuals who lack previous boating experience should: 1) participate in as many small

boat cruises as they can, and 2) spend time operating one of labs' small boats under the direction of a qualified operator.

Once they have satisfied the requirements for certification and demonstration of skills, operators will be issued a certificate which designates the size boat they are qualified to operate, along with any restrictions the UMCES M/S or his designee deem necessary.

CERTIFICATION

The Maryland Boating Safety Education Act requires that any person born after July 1, 1972, who operates a numbered or documented vessel on Maryland waters, be in possession of a Certificate of Boating Safety Education. All prospective small boat operators, regardless of birth date, are required to obtain this Certificate prior to the Demonstration of Skills portion of the UMCES certification process.

The Certificate may be obtained in several ways:

- Online course and examination. Go to <http://www.boat-ed.com/Maryland/index.html> for State of Maryland course information.
- By taking an approved boating safety course leading to the issuance of the Certificate. Courses are usually offered by local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and U.S. Power Squadron units.

Prospective operators are exempted from obtaining a Certificate of Boating Safety Education if they hold a valid license issued by the U.S. Coast Guard to operate a commercial vessel.

DEMONSTRATION OF SKILLS

During a practical underway exercise, prospective operators will be asked to demonstrate or explain, to the UMCES M/S, or his designee, the following:

1. An understanding of the vessel, its systems, and equipment.
2. Trailer procedure and checklist.
3. Perform a pre-cruise/field trip check (complete appropriate checklist).
4. Knowledge and use of installed safety and emergency equipment.
5. VHF-FM radio operation and protocol; distress procedures.
6. Fire, emergency and man overboard procedures.
7. Docking and undocking the vessel.
8. Boat handling skills and judgment while underway.
9. An understanding of the Navigation Rules.
10. Recognition of the Aids to Navigation.
11. Anchoring the vessel.
12. Post-cruise/field trip obligations, fueling and log book entries.

SUMMARY OF CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

1. Submit completed Small Boat Experience Questionnaire to the UMCES Marine Superintendent at Research Fleet Operations, Chesapeake Biological Laboratory or to the Boat Coordinator at Appalachian Laboratory.
2. After reviewing Questionnaire, Marine Superintendent will contact individual with a determination:
 - a. Need for further classroom training and/or boating experience, or a combination of both.
 - b. Schedule Demonstration of Skills check-out in boat commensurate with experience.

Please note that scheduling the Demonstration of Skills check-out is contingent upon the availability of the boat required for the exercise and the Marine Superintendent's schedule.

BOAT OPERATING REQUIREMENTS

1. The ultimate responsibility for safe boat operation rests with the boat operator.
2. Prior to departure the boat operator must file a float plan and complete a pre-cruise/field trip checklist. The operator must also ensure that all passengers are familiar with the location of and proper donning procedures for Personal Floatation Devices (PFD) at this time.
3. Boat operators are required to check the marine weather forecast for the area of planned operation before departing on a cruise/field trip. During periods of small craft warnings, advisories or higher and in riverine research during high winds or high flows, no UMCES operation is to carry on activities. No vessel operations shall take place during periods of restricted visibility (any condition in which visibility is reduced or restricted by fog, heavy rain, snow or similar causes). ***In cases where conditions change while underway or while on station common sense for safety shall apply.***
4. A crew of two (one certified operator, one additional person) is the minimum required for all UMCES boat operations. The UMCES M/S may approve special circumstances that warrant single handed operations.
5. A permanently installed or hand-help portable VHF-FM radio must be carried aboard each boat during each cruise/field trip, in addition to the required safety and emergency equipment that is required by law. The boat operator must have a cell phone aboard for each cruise/field trip.
6. Vessels shall be operated at a safe speed at all times to avoid collision, property damage and to ensure passenger safety.

7. It is the responsibility of the boat operator to use every reasonable means to become familiar with their intended areas of operation. This would include review of charts, word of mouth from locals and any other means available.
8. It is imperative that special precautions be observed during operations where cold water and the risk of hypothermia are safety considerations. Operations conducted where the water temperatures are below 60° Fahrenheit require that a float coat or floatation coverall be available for all persons on board. The boat operator is responsible for ensuring that these special devices are aboard and that all passengers are familiar with donning procedures.
9. All personnel actively engaged in handling equipment over the side are required to wear a U. S. Coast Guard approved work vest, float coat or floatation coveralls. All personnel handling equipment that is overhead are required to wear a hard hat.
10. Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. Open-toed shoes and bare feet are specifically forbidden. Diving and wading type projects would be an exception to this rule
11. Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs are not allowed on UMCES vessels or vessels operating under the auspices of UMCES.
12. The boat operator is responsible for ensuring that boats are returned clean and ready for the next user.
13. The following situations require immediate notification to the U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) or Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP):

A vessel is likely to sink
 It is necessary to abandon the vessel
 A serious injury or death has occurred

Use the following contact information:

USCG VHF-FM Channel 16 or call 410 576-2525 (direct line to Sector Baltimore Search and Rescue Mission Controller)

MNRP 410 260-8888 (DNR Communications Center – to report boating emergencies 24/7)

14. All accidents—*whether or not injury is involved*—must be reported as soon as possible after the event. A written report must be submitted within 24 hours of the accident. This report may be submitted electronically or by other means to the appropriate authority and must include the following information:
 - a. Date
 - b. Operator's Name
 - c. Name of Boat
 - d. Location

- e. Description of Accident
- f. Cause of Accident
- g. Injuries (detail)
- h. First Aid Administered

Certain types of accidents must be reported by the operator to the Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP) within 48 hours if:

- a. A person dies within 24 hours
- b. A person loses consciousness or receives medical treatment beyond first aid or is disabled more than 24 hours
- c. A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury

Accidents must be reported within 10 days if damage to all vessels and other property totals more than \$2000 unless an earlier report is required. Running aground or hitting a fixed or floating object is considered a boating accident. Boating accident report forms (DNR-149) are obtainable from the MNRP. The UMCES M/S will assist the boat operator in obtaining and filing these forms.

- 15. Certified boat operators will have their certification suspended/revoked following an incident involving the unsafe operation of a vessel or operation in a manner that results in property damage or personal injury, pending review by the UMCES Marine Superintendent.

I have read and understand the *Small Boat Operator Qualifications and Policy* and will comply with the provisions of this policy while involved in activities conducted under the auspices of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

Signature

Date