



U.S. Ferry Industry Reflects Safety

The U.S. Ferry Industry has a far-reaching record of safe operations; carrying more than 130 million passengers and commuters each year in nearly every major port in the United States.

The U.S. Ferry Industry places a systematic emphasis on safe operations and a strict adherence to sound risk management practices. By focusing on pertinent organizational, procedural and personnel aspects of vessel safety, ferry operators are focused on securing passenger and crew safety by implement programs and practices that strive to prevent accidents before they happen. Under the command of a Coast Guard licensed Captain, ferry vessel crews are professionally trained to anticipate and respond to a wide-range of emergency protocols.

Unfortunately, accidents do sometimes occur. From 2000-2010* there has been an average of fewer than two fatalities per year nationwide due to ferry vessel operations.

*United States Coast Guard Data

Most ferry operators in the U.S. are members of the Passenger Vessel Association (PVA). PVA and a highly active PVA Safety and Security Committee—comprised of individuals with years of operational experience—emphasizes safety of passengers and crew by producing safety training videos, distributing materials such as the PVA Risk Guide, PVA Preventive Maintenance Program, and Deckhand and Senior Deckhand Training Manuals, and offering numerous safety seminars at its annual convention and five annual regional meetings. PVA has developed and is testing a Safety Management System entitled “Flagship” for use by U.S. passenger vessel operators.

General Industry Facts

U.S. Flag Passenger Vessels: Professionalism and Safe Operation

The passenger vessel industry carries more than 200 million passengers each year. The industry is highly regulated by numerous federal and state governmental agencies and has a history of safe and responsible operation.

The U.S flag passenger vessel industry is extremely diverse. It includes dinner and excursion vessels, ferry vessels; both public and private, overnight cruise vessels, casino vessels, whale watch vessels, private charter boats, and amphibious DUKW.

There are more than 5,000 Coast Guard certificated passenger vessels in the U.S. and these vessels are present in most every port and navigable waterway in the Nation. The domestic passenger vessel industry is arguably the most regulated segment of the U.S. marine transportation system. Regulations cover vessel design, construction, repair, manning and inspection throughout a vessel's operating history. Any alterations or modifications must be approved in advance by the U.S. Coast Guard. Regulations require an annual examination/inspection that includes the vessel, its equipment and crew competency through emergency drills. Annual inspections actually are a minimum. Many larger vessels are visited by the Coast Guard quarterly. In addition, each vessel in freshwater service is dry-docked at least once during each five-year period. Vessels in saltwater service are dry-docked at

least twice during a five year period.

U.S. Coast Guard inspection includes stability, hulls, propulsion and other machinery, electrical systems, lifesaving appliances and arrangements, fire prevention and firefighting systems, navigation instruments, and communications systems.

The domestic passenger vessel industry stresses safety and training. The Passenger Vessel Association and its members have taken a leadership role in developing and advocating preparation and training to ensure passenger vessel safety. As a result, accidents are minimized and the Coast Guard has recognized the industry for its stellar safety record. Following is general information about the passenger vessel industry:

Safety Record of the Passenger Vessel Industry

In a recent report to Congress, the Coast Guard noted that the small passenger vessel segment of the U.S.-flagged fleet has an “excellent safety record.” Vessel-related fatalities are “very rare occurrences,” said the Coast Guard. In a typical year, vessel-related fatalities in the domestic passenger vessel industry are in the single digits. The majority of incidents relate to minor slips, trips and falls.

Coast Guard Regulation and Oversight

A commercial U.S.-flag passenger vessel that operates on federal waterways is inspected at least once a year by Coast Guard safety inspectors. Items examined by inspectors include stability, hulls, propulsion and other machinery, electrical systems, lifesaving appliances and arrangements, fire prevention and firefighting systems, navigation instruments, and communications systems. Through its vessel certification process, the Coast Guard establishes the number of passengers that can be safely carried and sets the specific conditions for safe operation of the vessel and the qualifications of the crew.

Crew Qualifications and Training

The Coast Guard designates the required levels of manning. Most small passenger vessels must have at least a licensed captain and a deckhand (unless the operator can demonstrate to the Coast Guard that the second person is not required, taking into account the vessel design, route, etc.). The captain is licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard. This license must be renewed every five years. To obtain a license, an individual must meet work experience criteria and pass rigorous Coast Guard examinations.

All vessel crew members must go through pre-employment drug testing and subsequently are subject to random drug testing. In the event of a marine incident or accident, all crew are tested for presence of drugs and alcohol.

Every licensed crew member must pass a comprehensive physical examination every five (5) years.

Passenger Vessel Construction

All new vessel plans must be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Coast Guard prior to construction. Particular attention is paid to stability of the vessel; the vessel must pass an in-water stability test. Any alterations or modifications must be approved in advance by the Coast Guard.

Lifesaving Devices

All lifesaving equipment on board must be Coast Guard-approved and all crew members must be trained to use it.

Personal Flotation Devices (life preservers) are required for every passenger and crew member. The Coast Guard approves the design and manufacture of all approved personal flotation devices.

Safety Drills

Emergency drills including fire, abandon ship, and man overboard drills are required and are conducted at least quarterly. In addition, security drills, exercises and scenarios are conducted regularly.

Rigorous Security Standards

U.S. flag passenger vessels above 150 passengers are required to have a security plan in place that meets standards set by the Coast Guard. Such security regulations are far-reaching. Many PVA members utilize the PVA Alternative Security Plan, which is Coast Guard approved, that allows passenger vessel operators to smoothly and effectively implement security aboard vessels and at facilities.

About the Passenger Vessel Association

PVA is the national trade association for U.S.-flagged passenger vessels of all types. It represents the interests of owners and operators of dinner cruise vessels, sightseeing and excursion vessels, passenger and vehicular ferries, private charter vessels, whale watch operators, gaming vessels, amphibious vessels, and overnight cruise ships. PVA has been in operation for over nearly 40 years and represents approximately 550 vessel and associate members. Its vessel-operating members range from small family businesses with a single boat to companies with several large vessels in different locations to governmental agencies operating ferries. Its associate members are key suppliers to the passenger vessel industry, including marine architects, vessel builders and decorators, insurance companies, publishers, food supply companies, computer software vendors, marine equipment suppliers, engine manufacturers, and others.

PVA Web page: www.passengervessel.com

PVA's staff includes experts on marine safety, Coast Guard regulation, and federal legislation affecting the passenger vessel industry.

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