

ASPS VSCs: 2019 Year End Report

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ASPS Vessel Safety Check Chair



The ASPS Vessel Safety Examiners had a successful 2019. Ten examiners completed 211 Vessel Safety Checks over the past year. With the help of our squadron members, our goal is to significantly increase that number in 2020. You can make that happen.

Of the 211 VSCs we completed, only 182 (about 88%) of them passed and were rewarded a VSC decal for their vessel. Fortunately, many owners of vessels that didn't pass often corrected the identified issues quickly, often within 24hrs. Then they would invite us back for a re-examination, allowing us to issue them a VSC decal. It was very rewarding knowing we made many vessels legal and safer.

Let's examine why some vessels didn't pass. Some of the most common issues included:

- Visual Distress Signals being out of date. Recreational vessels 16-feet and over (and boats less than 16-feet operating at night) are required to carry USCG approved signaling devices that are current and not beyond their expiration date.
- Navigation Lights not working, or not properly configured. All vessels must be able to display USCG approved navigation lights between sunset and sunrise and in conditions of reduced visibility.
- Registration and Documentation papers must always be aboard and available. There are detailed requirements for display of State stickers and numbers. Federally documented vessels have several additional requirements. Vessel owners don't always know or completely understand these regulations.
- Sound Producing Devices inoperable. To comply with Navigation Rules and for distress signaling purposes, all vessels must carry an operational sound producing device that complies with USCG standards.
- Marine Sanitation Devices not properly locked. Any installed toilet must be an unmodified USCG approved device. Overboard discharge outlets must be locked. Federal and State laws prohibit untreated sewage discharged in Inland waters or within 3 nautical miles from the shore in Coastal waters. Maryland is very strict on this requirement and can issue fines up to \$2,000 for violations.
- Ventilation Systems inoperable. Vessels with gasoline engines in closed compartments must have an operational powered ventilation system that adheres to USCG standards. We are very thankful when we discover an inoperable Ventilation System, due to the potential risk of explosion and fire.
- Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs): PFDs (also known as Life Jackets) must be USCG approved and in good condition. Vessels 16-feet and over must also have one Type IV (throwable) device immediately available for deployment.

All VSCs also include briefings on safe operation, proper training, and recommended non-required safety equipment that all responsible vessel owners and operators should consider. Among the subjects addressed includes; Boating Safety Classes, Marine Radios, Nautical Charts, Fuel Management, Accident Reporting requirements, Survival Tips, First Aid Kits, and Float Plans. We attempt to answer any questions asked. If we don't know the answer, we always follow-up with verified information.

The best way for someone to prepare for a successful Vessel Safety Check is to visit the Virtual VSC web page (<https://bit.ly/2EiAnVS>) and complete a self-examination on all your vessels. Then schedule a VSC by an ASPS examiner by using my contact information shown below.

One of the highlights for 2019 was the addition of a new ASPS Vessel Safety Examiner. 1st/Lt Patrick McGeehan, P studied the VSE manual and passed the required written test. Then he completed the required five supervised VSCs to become fully VSE qualified. After which he completed several VSCs on his own before the season ended. Please join me in congratulating Patrick, and all the ASPS Vessel Safety Examiners for a job well done in 2019!



We are always looking for and need additional Vessel Safety Examiners. You don't need to be an expert on engines, electronics, marine architecture, etc. We teach you everything you need to know. It's very rewarding, plus you get to see some beautiful vessels and meet some great people. If you have any interest in joining our team or have any questions about becoming a Vessel Safety Examiner, please contact me via my contact information shown below.

We checked a wide diversity of vessels over the past year; anything from kayaks, 8-foot dinghies, Flemings and 58-foot Kadey-Krogen trawler yachts. We do all vessels under 65 feet. Many of our VSCs are performed at pre-scheduled events that occur yearly at Yacht Clubs and various Marinas. Our Squadron has a good reputation for having excellent Vessel Safety Examiners and performing very thorough Vessel Safety Checks.

Free courtesy Vessel Safety Checks cover safety equipment carried or installed on a vessel, and certain aspects of the vessel's condition. If the vessel meets or exceeds all requirements, the examiner will award the owner or operator a decal current for that year. VSCs decals expire at year's end, so vessels should be checked every year.

If a vessel doesn't pass their Vessel Safety Check, we are prohibited from notifying or reporting anything to authorities. If safety gear needs to be purchased to pass, we provide coupons for 10% discount at West Marine. There is no down side for having a VSC. It's a win-win endeavor for everyone that leaves vessel owners and operators knowing their vessel is safe, and meets Federal and State requirements

To schedule a future Vessel Safety Check for your vessel(s), please email me at vsch@aspsmd.org or call me at 410-703-9559. Our goal is to check every vessel owned by ASPS members over the next year. Only you can make that happen. Hope to hear from you in 2020. Have a wonderful New Year!

Safe Boating,

Kathy Nash