



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY 8TH COAST GUARD DISTRICT(ER) DEPARTMENT of VESSEL EXAMINATION

By James Jackson DSO-VE

How does one perform a VSC on a PWC? I'd like to offer the following tips. These follow the ANSC 7012 (204) form. The states in our region may have slightly different requirements and there may be additional requirements for local areas. Please review the requirements in the geographical location where the VSC is to be performed. The VSC should take NO longer than 15 minutes to perform.

- 1- **NUMBERING:** The PWC is a motor powered vessel. The requirements for lettering are EXACTLY the same as all other vessels. The numbers should be 3'' in height and the letters should be block, contrasting, and properly spaced. This is a Federal Requirement.
- 2- **REGISTRATION:** The original registration copy must be on board and available for review. The document should be sealed in a watertight baggie or something similar. Now is the time to check the HIN on the stern. You may have to look for it.
- 3- **PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE:** There MUST be a U.S.C.G. approved PFD for each person on board. Federal Law does not specify the PFD type, some states do. Ideally it will be a type III with at least a 50 MPH rating. No type IV throwable is required
- 4- **FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:** A Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher is required and it should be in it's designated compartment.
- 5- **VENTILATION:** No blower is required. PWC's have natural ventilation. There should be no obstructions on the entrance and exit ports.
- 6- **VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS:** These are the same as powered vessels when operating on coastal waters-at least 3 orange day or 3 red day and night flares are required. Note however that if the pwc is operating on inland waters, there are no requirements. Here's an opportunity to educate the boater and recommend a signaling mirror designed to be attached to a pfd or the key.

- 7- **BACKFIRE FLAME ARRESTER:** The pwc has a watertight backfire flame arrester and should be serviced only by a qualified marine technician. On some models, it is built into the fuel injection system. Be certain that there are NO apparent modifications.
- 8- **SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE:** The Federal Requirements are the same-All vessels MUST have a means of producing a sound audible for at least ½ mile. A regular marine whistle should be attached with a lanyard to the operators pfd or key. Discourage a coach's whistle.
- 9- **NAVIGATION LIGHTS:** Most PWCs are not manufactured with navigation lights, and lights are not required. If, however, a PWC has lights installed, they MUST work to pass this part of the examination.
- 10- **POLLUTION PLACARD:** N/A and none required. However, pollution should be discussed and remind the operator about draining any dirty or oily bilge water back into the lake, etc.
- 11- **MARPOL PLACARD:** N/A and none required.
- 12- **MARINE SANITATION DEVICE:** N/A
- 13- **NAVIGATION RULES:** N/A. However this is an excellent opportunity to discuss the basic right of way rules.
- 14- **STATE and LOCAL REQUIREMENTS:** PWC's like all vessels must comply with all state and local requirements. This may include: hours of operation, riding restrictions, age requirements, lanyards, insurance, and education. States requirements vary.
- 15- **OVERALL VESSEL CONDITION:** The pwc must be well maintained. The battery needs to be strapped down and the positive terminal covered. MAKE certain that there is NO gasoline in the engine compartment. MOST fuel tanks on early models are located there. The pwc must have an electrical cut-off or self-circling device in working order.

Please remember not to limit the VSC to the left side-the mandatory VSC DECAL REQUIREMENTS of the examination form. Don't forget the right side-RECOMMENDED and DISCUSSION ITEMS. Suggest a float plan, an anchor, tow rope, sunscreen, and a ball cap or a wide brimmed hat. Riders should always ride with a partner. The VSC is a one-on-one education with the boater, don't lecture or hold them up unnecessarily.

Believe it or not, PWC owners are very receptive to a VSC!! If there is ever any question on how to perform a VSC on a PWC, please don't hesitate to contact me at jackson0948@att.net .