



**Homeland
Security**

**U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
District 11 Northern Region**

Serving Northern California, Nevada, Utah



DEPARTMENT of VESSEL EXAMINATION

How does one perform a VSC on a PWC (Personal Water Craft)? I'd like to offer the following tips. These follow the ANSC 7012 (204) form. California, Nevada, and Utah all 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. Coastal waters will be different than bays or inland protected waters. 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 need to be block, 3" in height, contrasting color, and properly spaced. In California, Nevada, and Utah the year decal is placed on the stern side of the numbers. In Utah, the month of expiration decal must be displayed immediately aft of the year decal. In addition, the CF#'s (NV, UT) need to be on the forward ½ of the vessel and permanently attached to each side. This requirement also applies to the on older stand-up models with a narrow nose cowl cover. 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 another watertight container. Now is the time to check the HIN (Hull Identification Number) on the stern and compare it to be registration. The HIN may be difficult to locate on some models.

3-PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE: There MUST be an approved PFD (life jacket) for each person on board. Federal, California, Utah, and Nevada law doesn't specify, but the PFD should be a type III with an impact rated of at least 50 MPH. A type I PFD is acceptable, but bulky. Discourage a type II as it is NOT impact rated. A type V inflatable is NOT approved. A type IV is NOT required.

4-FIRE EXTINGUISHERS: A Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher is required and it should be in it's designated compartment. As the charge can deteriorate with age, recommend a replacement if it's over 8-10 years old.

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: PWC's do NOT operate at night. However, if they operate on coastal waters, at least three (3) orange day or three (3) red day and night flares are required. Again, because they do not operate at night, there is no requirement for inland waters. 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, Nevada, and California are all the same-all vessels MUST have a means of producing a sound audible for at least ½ mile. Utah does NOT require but recommends a whistle. A regular marine whistle with a lanyard to be attached to the operators PFD is acceptable. Discourage a coach's whistle.

9-NAVIGATION LIGHTS: California, Nevada, and Utah laws do NOT allow pwc's to operate at night. Therefore, lights are not required. However, there are pwc/boats 16 ft or longer that do have lights, and they MUST work as on a normal vessel.

10-POLLUTION PLACARD: Not Applicable. However, possible pollution should be discussed and remind the operator about draining any dirty or oily bilge water back into the lake.

11-MARPOL PLACARD: Not Applicable.

12-MARINE SANITATION DEVICE: Not Applicable.

13-NAVIGATION RULES: Not required. However, this is an excellent opportunity to discuss courtesy and the basic right of way rules. In addition, provide a copy of the state boating laws.

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. State requirements may 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, sunscreen, an anchor, tow rope and a ball cap or a wide brimmed hat. Riders should ALWAYS travel with at least one additional partner. A good idea is also to remind them about the safety and exclusion zones around dams, ships, airports, etc. Remember, 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 about performing a VSC on a PWC, please don't hesitate to contact me at : sumfun@juno.com or (209) 368-0122.

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