

MARINE SAFETY/SECURITY
INFORMATION BULLETIN (MSIB) 19-04



November 22, 2019

U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Francisco
Department of Homeland Security



Illegal Charter Operations Awareness

In preparation for the 2019-2020 Mavericks Surf Competition, the Captain of the Port is releasing this bulletin to further educate the public on the risks and dangers of illegal passenger for hire charter operations throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and surrounding harbors.

A vessel carrying "passengers for hire" (i.e., someone who contributes any economic benefit, monetary contribution, or a donation as a condition of carriage) requires a U.S. Coast Guard licensed or credentialed operator. In addition, if carrying more than six passengers, the vessel must have a valid Certificate of Inspection issued by the U.S. Coast Guard. These requirements provide proof that the U.S. Coast Guard has verified both the operator and vessel meet specific minimum federal safety standards. Operations that do not meet these standards threaten public and environmental safety and are a major concern for the U.S. Coast Guard.

With the recent advent of online boat rental services, it is easier than ever to rent a vessel for personal use. However, this also provides more opportunity for owners to knowingly or unknowingly conduct a commercial operation without meeting the established charter vessel requirements. When reserving trips, online or otherwise, prospective passengers are encouraged to ask the operator in advance for proof the vessel is compliant with U.S. Coast Guard requirements. They may also request for a vessel's captain to show his or her valid U.S. Coast Guard issued merchant mariner credential. If passengers wish to verify a captain's credential or the inspected status of a commercial passenger vessel, report an illegal charter operation, or if a vessel operator desires more information on how to meet federal requirements, please contact U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Francisco using the contact information below.

As always, the U.S. Coast Guard maintains its presence on navigable waterways in order to ensure compliance with all federal requirements. This includes partnering with local law enforcement agencies to promote safe and legal charter operations being conducted on federal waterways. Operators found to be in violation of these requirements are subject to voyage termination and/or civil penalty action. As this exciting surf competition opens, we encourage the public to exercise caution and safely enjoy the season of "Big Wave" surfing. U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Francisco also urges boat owners and potential passengers to be cognizant of legal boating practices, allowing for continued safe enjoyment of our waterways.

For further information on how to apply for an appropriate license or credential, visit <http://www.uscg.mil/nmc>. For additional information regarding this bulletin, please contact the U.S. Sector San Francisco Investigations Division at SectorSF.Investigations@uscg.mil / (510) 813-9636 or the Domestic Vessel Inspections Branch at SectorSF.Domestic.Insp@uscg.mil / (510) 207-1495.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. B. Byrd".

M. B. BYRD

Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Captain of the Port of San Francisco & Northern California
U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Francisco