

PASSENGER SAFETY ORIENTATION

USCG STANDARD



**Professional Protocol
for Skippers and Captains
Compliant with 46 CFR §185.506**

Print-Ready & Interactive

To be read by the Commanding Officer, Skipper or Captain
before conducting the passenger safety briefing



INTRODUCTORY SAFETY NOTICE

– Passenger Safety Briefing – Professional Safety & Emergency Protocol

This Passenger Safety Briefing has been prepared in accordance with **46 CFR §185.506**, the U.S. Coast Guard regulation requiring passenger safety orientation on applicable vessels. This requirement has been in force since 1996 and reflects the captain's duty of care toward all people on board.

The purpose of this briefing is to ensure that all passengers are familiar with essential safety equipment, emergency procedures, and onboard conduct **before getting underway**. This protocol is designed to be clear, practical, and easily understood by all guests, regardless of prior boating experience.

Completion of this briefing with the right authority helps demonstrate that the captain has fulfilled their professional responsibility to inform passengers of safety-critical information, as required by current U.S. Coast Guard enforcement practices.

Safety information may also be provided via **cards or pamphlets near passenger seats** as allowed by USCG regulations.

This editable version of the Passenger Safety Briefing can be shared via smartphone with all guests after the orientation. This ensures everyone has a digital copy of the safety procedures and equipment locations readily available on their own device throughout the voyage.

Passengers boarding after the briefing has begun must be provided (immediately or after brief) with any safety information they may have missed.

USCG Boarding Scenario: In the event of a U.S. Coast Guard inspection or boarding, passengers may be asked whether a safety briefing was conducted and emergency procedures were explained. This document serves as a standardized reference to demonstrate that the briefing has been provided.

While not required by regulation, it is considered best practice for Captains and operators to retain a **signed acknowledgment** confirming that this Passenger Safety Briefing was delivered prior to departure.

Printing and Placement: Keep **one laminated copy of this Passenger Safety Briefing in the dinette** for easy reference by all passengers. If you want to go the extra mile, you can also place a **copy in each cabin**, ensuring that everyone has quick access to safety information at all times.

Onboard Safety Diagrams: In addition to this document, the vessel must display a clear safety diagram showing the location of life jackets, fire extinguishers, EPIRB, flares, life raft, muster station, and emergency exits. The diagram must be printed in a large, legible font that remains readable at night under low light, and posted in a visible common area (typically near the dinette or companionway). Passengers will be shown the diagram during this briefing and encouraged to consult it again at any time.

PASSENGER SAFETY ORIENTATION – USCG STANDARD

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Captain name [_____] Safety Certificate [_____] Vessel type [_____]

Good morning and welcome aboard [Vessel Name_____]; I am [_____] , your Captain for this voyage. **Your safety is my top priority.** Before we cast off, in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard regulations, we will spend a few minutes on a mandatory safety briefing. The topics we're going to discuss now are very important, so I ask for a moment of your full attention.

As the person in command of this vessel, my primary duty of care is to ensure the safety and protection of everyone on board. In accordance with **46 CFR §185.506**, it is a mandatory legal requirement that all passengers receive a safety orientation before we get underway.

Our vessel is a [Length_____] foot yacht, featuring [_____] berths and [_____] bathrooms. It is fully equipped for comfortable ☐ day trips ☐ overnight cruises ☐ ocean passage with all necessary safety equipment on board.

CREW AND PASSENGER LIST / VOYAGE PLAN

We have confirmed [No._____] persons on board (**POB**). Our float plan has been communicated ashore. In case of emergency, authorities know exactly who we are and our intended route. Passengers boarding after this initial briefing will be informed of the same safety procedures.

We Cast off on [_____] at [_____] from [_____] Marina, Pier [_____]

And disembark on [_____] at [_____] at [_____] Marina, Pier [_____]

Captain shows and briefly describes each planned waypoint on nautical map

Wp01 [_____] Wp02 [_____]

Wp03 [_____] Wp04 [_____]

Wp05 [_____] Wp06 [_____]

Wp07 [_____] Wp08 [_____]

Wp09 [_____] Wp10 [_____]

Wp11 [_____] Wp12 [_____]

LIFE JACKETS (PFD – Personal Flotation Devices)

- ☐ Life jackets are located in [_____]
- ☐ Demonstration: Crew member wears a life jacket to show proper fitting to adults and children. **Children under 13 must wear their life jacket at all times while underway, except when below deck or in an enclosed cabin (33 CFR 175.15).**
- ☐ In an emergency: put it on over your clothes, fasten all straps, and **do not inflate automatic models until you are outside the cabin or in the water.**
- ☐ EPIRB (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon): located at [_____]. The EPIRB automatically transmits the vessel's identity and GPS position to search-and-rescue authorities (USCG / international SAR network). It will be activated by the captain or crew in case of imminent danger of sinking, fire out of control, or abandon ship. If the captain is incapacitated and you are instructed to activate it: remove from bracket, follow the printed instructions on the unit, and bring it with you to the life raft — it will float and transmit on its own.
- ☐ Visual Distress Signals (USCG-approved flares & smoke): located at [_____]. Required by 46 CFR §175 for vessels operating in coastal waters and the Great Lakes. They are used only on the captain's command, or by a passenger only if the captain is incapacitated and a vessel or aircraft is visible. Types on board: ☐ Handheld red flares (day & night, ~2 minutes burn) ☐ Aerial red meteors / parachute flares (night, visible at distance) ☐ Orange smoke signals (day only, to mark position for aircraft). Hold handheld flares downwind, over the side, away from the life raft and from fuel; never point aerial flares at people, sails, or the life raft. Check expiration dates before use — expired flares may misfire.

DECK SAFETY AND MOVEMENT

THE VESSEL IS A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT.

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE SAFETY RULES AT ALL TIMES:

- ☐ Unless you are secured to the lifeline follow the rule
One hand for you, One hand for the boat - always hold a handhold or solid structure while moving.
- ☐ Remain **seated during docking, undocking**, and other maneuvers.
- ☐ Keep **hands and feet away** from lines, winches, and fenders.
- ☐ Captain's additional instructions for special conditions as:
[_____]]
[_____]]

ONBOARD SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ **First Aid:** In case of any injury, whether minor or serious, notify the crew immediately. The first aid kit is located at [_____]; follow carefully the crew's instructions before any treatment.
- ☐ **Head / Toilet:** Unless the captain directs otherwise, used toilet paper **must be** disposed of like other waste in the bathroom bin under the sink. For **any other** non-organic waste, including wet wipes, feminine products, or plastic, please use the same dedicated container. **Nothing else should ever go down the toilet.** The toilet system works this way (the captain or crew will explain). Please ask if you are unsure.
- ☐ **Garbage / Waste Disposal:** It is strictly prohibited to throw any trash overboard in U.S. waters. Plastic and other non-biodegradable waste must never be discharged at sea. All refuse should be separated on board and placed in the designated containers for proper disposal ashore.
Please ask the captain or crew if you are unsure about disposal procedures.
- ☐ **Food waste:** Unprocessed food waste may only be discharged at sea at least 12 nautical miles from the nearest land but if your food waste has been ground or comminuted (*to pass through a screen ≤ 25 mm*), it may be discharged at sea outside 3 nautical miles from the nearest land. NOTE: U.S. Special Areas and Great Lakes additional restrictions apply
- ☐ **Smoking:** Allowed only in specified area, [_____] usually downwind aft, and **only** if it does not disturb any other passengers. It is strictly prohibited to smoke below deck or inside any interior space.

☐ **Alcohol Consumption:** Alcohol may be consumed on board **only in moderation**. Excessive drinking that could affect your safety or that of others is strictly prohibited. Passengers **must always follow the captain's instructions regarding alcohol**, especially during departure, docking, or any emergency situation.

☐ **Emergency Engine Shutdown:** If the Captain becomes incapacitated, The engine can be shut down by turning the key to 'OFF' or pressing the red 'STOP' button.

☐ **Gas / Propane:** The gas tank is stored at [_____]; if you detect a gas smell or in any emergency, turn off the cylinder valve right away and inform the crew. Do not use the stove or any gas appliances until the crew has checked and cleared them.

☐ **Fresh Water Usage:** This vessel is equipped with ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 fresh-water tank(s) with a total capacity of approximately [____] **gallons** / [____] liters.

Please use fresh water responsibly: **turn off taps while soaping or brushing your teeth, and keep showers short**. If the water flow **starts to sputter or becomes intermittent**, notify the crew immediately so they can perform a **manual tank switch** if necessary.

☐ **General Conduct:** ☐ No running on deck ☐ No entering restricted areas ☐ Keep the portholes and hatches of your cabin closed while underway ☐ Inform crew before entering the water or leaving the vessel ☐ Stay clear of crew during docking and mooring operations ☐ Do not exceed ____ yards from the vessel during water activities ☐ No sitting on railings or lifelines while underway

Do you have any questions about what we have covered?

Also, please let me know if you have any allergies, dietary restrictions or require daily medication. If you feel unwell or have any concerns during the voyage, notify me immediately.

The following and final section will cover, in a couple of minutes, our essential safety and emergency procedures. Please maintain your full attention.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A) MAN OVERBOARD

IF SOMEONE FALLS OVERBOARD

1. Shout immediately “**MAN OVERBOARD!**”
2. **Never take your eyes off the person** and continue pointing him with your arm.
3. **Throw the life-ring** or life-sling located at [_____]

B) FIRE ABOARD

EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES. If you smell burning plastic, burning insulation, or any unusual electrical or chemical odor on board — do not wait to see flames. Notify the captain or crew immediately and be ready to act. A fire detected by smell is a fire that can still be controlled; a fire detected by sight is already advanced.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS ARE LOCATED AT

1 [_____] 2 [_____] 3 [_____] 4 [_____]

In case of fire, use them as instructed by the crew.

Always Standing Upwind (of the flames) whenever possible to avoid smoke and heat.

- 1 Pull – Pull the safety pin
 - 2 Aim – Aim at the base of the flames
 - 3 Squeeze – Squeeze the handle
 - 4 Sweep – Sweep from side to side
- Use the P.A.S.S. method**

PROPANE / FUEL TURN-OFF: As part of the fire response, the propane cylinder valve and any other fuel shut-offs **must be closed immediately** to cut off the fuel feeding the flames. See "Gas / Propane" above for cylinder location. The crew will normally do this, but any passenger able to reach the valve safely should close it and report to the captain.

C) ABANDON SHIP

IN CASE OF AN ABANDON SHIP ORDER:

- 1 Muster Station is located at [_____]
- 2 In case of an Abandon Ship order, all passengers must wear life jackets and proceed to the Muster Station as indicated by the captain or a crew member. When applicable, follow instructions shown on the onboard diagram/map.
- 3 **The life raft is located** at [_____] and will only be deployed on my command.
- 4 Do **not bring any personal belongings** on board the life raft. Only take **your life jacket** and follow the crew's instructions in case of deployment.

D) EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS (VHF RADIO)

IF I AM UNABLE TO OPERATE THE RADIO you have to do it!

1. TURN-ON THE VHF RADIO AND TUNE TO **CHANNEL 16**.
2. PRESS AND HOLD THE **RED DSC DISTRESS BUTTON** (UNDER THE SPRING-LOADED COVER) ON THE RADIO OR MICROPHONE FOR 3–5 SECONDS UNTIL IT BEEPS.

THIS AUTOMATICALLY TRANSMITS THE VESSEL'S IDENTITY (MMSI) AND GPS POSITION TO THE USCG AND TO EVERY VESSEL WITHIN VHF RANGE.

THEN PICK UP THE MICROPHONE AND SAY: MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY

3. PROVIDE THE **VESSEL NAME, POSITION** (READ FROM GPS), **NUMBER OF PERSONS ON BOARD**.
4. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE EMERGENCY (FIRE, SINKING, MEDICAL, MOB, ETC.)
5. **FOLLOW ALL INSTRUCTIONS RECEIVED FROM USCG OR OTHER RESPONDING AUTHORITIES.**

USCG Boarding Scenario: During a U.S. Coast Guard inspection, passengers may be asked whether a safety briefing was conducted. The signed acknowledgment below serves as verifiable evidence that the orientation was delivered prior to. I acknowledge that **the safety briefing is** mandatory under USCG and that failure to comply with the Captain's instructions may compromise the safety of myself and others on board.

The passenger acknowledges **that maritime activity involves inherent risks that cannot be completely eliminated** without substantially changing the nature of the experience at sea. With this statement, the passenger declares that they understand that, **despite all possible safety measures being taken, some dangers remain unavoidable** because they are part of the nautical activity itself.

Pax 01 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 02 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 03 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 04 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 05 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 06 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 07 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 08 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 09 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 10 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 11 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Pax 12 **Name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

U.S.C.G. Delivered:

Enforcement, Fines, and Common Compliance Failures

Safety and Responsibility of the Captain

Safety remains the captain's foremost duty—passenger lives come first, always; fines serve as a critical second deterrent, while environmental violations demand equal vigilance to safeguard our seas. This sanctions list, compiled from official USCG sites (updated 2025), details common infractions, penalty ranges, and enforcement risks to promote compliance. Good seamanship rests on the skipper's ethics, competencies, and legal duties. Captains must uphold safety protocols, navigate prudently, maintain vessel readiness, and respect marine ecosystems—prioritizing passenger welfare over convenience or profit. Core skills include risk assessment, emergency response, regulatory knowledge (e.g., COLREGs), and leadership under pressure, fostering trust and preventing avoidable incidents.

Simulated USCG Boarding – What Happens First

When the Coast Guard comes on board, the procedure is simple but very structured, so it can take up a lot of your time, especially if you don't have everything at hand and are not well organized. The officers salute, identify themselves and explain that they are conducting a safety and compliance boarding and, in all likelihood, they will get on board. Soon after, they start asking for a series of documents and verifications in a fairly predictable order. To ensure that you are not caught unprepared, it is essential to have everything ready, tidy and easily accessible. A commander who rummages, searches, does not find, or presents crumpled documents immediately conveys a negative impression and can complicate inspection.

What the USCG Asks First (in order)

Review this checklist before taking passengers onboard

- ☐ Vessel Registration / Documentation - ☐ Master / License ID (if required)
- ☐ Passenger-for-hire authorization (if applicable) - ☐ Detailed passenger list
- ☐ Safety equipment check (Life jackets, Fire extinguishers, Flares, etc.)
- ☐ Operational VHF and monitored channel 16 + license when applicable
- ☐ Working navigation lights - ☐ Condition of the vessel (bilges, pumps, sea intakes, etc.)
- ☐ Compliance with any local restrictions or COTP Orders
- ☐ Safety Briefing Record (to be kept on board if passengers are travelling)
- ☐ Insurance policy (liability + pollution) ☐ Waste management plan (for boats that require it)
- ☐ Stability letter of capacity plate clearly visible (when requested)

USCG VIOLATIONS & PENALTIES – 2026

INFRACTION	EXPLANATION	FINE RANGE	SEIZURE
Missing required safety equipment	Missing or non-compliant life jackets, flares, fire extinguishers, or other mandatory gear	\$1,000–\$5,000/ item	No
Incomplete passenger documentation	Passenger list missing, outdated, incomplete, or unavailable during inspection	\$1,000 – \$10,000	No
Failure to maintain required documents onboard	Registration, vessel documentation, or required certificates not carried or accessible	\$500 – \$5,000	No
Failure to report marine casualty	Not reporting collisions, injuries, grounding, significant damage, or other reportable incidents	Varies by case	No
Improper navigation lights	Navigation lights missing, defective, or not COLREG compliant	\$1,500 – \$5,000	No
VHF radio missing or not operational	Required radio missing, malfunctioning, or not monitored	\$1,000 – \$5,000	No
COLREG violations	Failure to comply with navigation rules or right-of-way	Up to \$5,000	No
Failure to maintain proper lookout	Not maintaining a proper lookout as required by COLREG Rule 5	Varies by case	No
Operating beyond allowed limits	Navigating outside permitted areas, conditions, or operational boundaries	\$2,000 – \$6,000	No
Overloading / excess passengers	Exceeding vessel capacity or authorized passenger limits	\$3,000 – \$10,000	No
Negligent or reckless operation	Unsafe maneuvers, excessive speed, hazardous conduct, or endangering persons/property	\$2,000 – \$10,000	Possible
Operating without required certification	Missing required operator license or qualification	\$2,000 – \$10,000	Possible
Unauthorized passenger-for-hire activity	Carrying paying passengers without proper authorization	\$6,000 – \$20,000+	Possible
Illegal charter activity	Commercial operation without required licensing, inspection, or compliance	\$6,000 – \$20,000+	Likely
Environmental violations	Illegal discharge, pollution, waste dumping, or environmental harm	\$10,000 – \$40,000+	Yes
Boating Under the Influence (BUI)	Operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs	\$5,000 – \$10,000 + arrest	Yes
Obstruction of inspection	Refusing, delaying, or interfering with USCG inspection or boarding	Criminal charges + fines	Yes
Failure to comply with Captain of the Port Order	Ignoring, violating, or defying COTP orders	Up to \$117,608 per day	Yes
Unsafe vessel condition	Vessel deemed unsafe; detained until corrected	Detention	Possible

USEFUL OFFICIAL LINKS

USCG regulation on passenger safety orientation

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-46/chapter-I/subchapter-T/part-185/subpart-E/section-185.506>

U.S. Coast Guard Boarding & Vessel Inspections (what to expect during a control)

<https://uscgboating.org/>

Code of Federal Regulations – Title 33 (Navigation & Navigable Waters)

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-33>

Code of Federal Regulations – Title 46 (Shipping & Maritime Safety)

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-46>

Official list of U.S. Coast Guard civil penalties and fines

<https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Civil-Penalties>

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)

<https://www.nasbla.org>

State Boating Laws Directory (laws vary by State)

<https://www.nasbla.org/education/boater-education/state-requirements>

Boater Education Card requirements by State <https://www.boatus.org/study-guide>

International Maritime Organization – STCW Convention

<https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/HumanElement/Pages/STCWConvention.aspx>

U.S. Coast Guard – Approved Maritime Training Courses

<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/training>

COLREG – International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea

<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/navigation-rules>

NOAA Nautical Charts (official and free) <https://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov>

Local Notice to Mariners (navigation warnings & updates)

<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/local-notices-to-mariners>

Reporting a Boating Accident (official procedure)

<https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/accident-reporting.php>

Disclaimer

- **Safety rules**, environmental requirements, equipment standards, and reporting obligations, fines, enforcement procedures and some extra rules could vary by State and **are subject to change**. Even though this document will be periodically updated, operators are responsible for staying current with the latest U.S. Coast Guard and State regulations.
- The **captain retains full authority and responsibility** for the safety of the vessel and all persons on board. Nothing in this briefing limits the captain's decision-making in emergency or operational situations.
- This interactive PDF "**Passenger Safety Orientation**" features editable fields and checkable checklists; view, read and edit it on smartphones/tablets using a PDF reader like Acrobat Reader (free on iOS/Android), not a browser.

Analogic Edition trusts that this material meets your requirements and proves beneficial for your needs. To further enhance your onboard preparation, we invite you to explore our full range of practical guides and operational tools for skippers and captains — covering provisioning, maintenance, and seamanship — at analogic-edition.pro