



United States Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

News Release

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Coast Guard Reminds the Public to Watch for Illegal Passenger Vessel Operations

ST. LOUIS – Following reports of illegal commercial vessel services including water taxis, excursion vessels and transportation services reserved from smartphone applications, the Coast Guard is advising the public to avoid unlawful operations. Unlawful operations include but are not limited to:

- Charter services that carry a “Passenger for hire” without a valid Coast Guard issued Merchant Mariner’s Credential suitable for the vessel’s service. “Passenger for hire” is defined as an operator that takes or accepts compensation, including donations, in exchange for services aboard a vessel.
- Bareboat charter services that provide a vessel with a crew/master or carry more than 12 passengers onboard. A "bareboat charter" is defined as paying only for the use of a vessel.
- Charter services that carry more than six passengers, at least one of which are for hire, and are not certificated by the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard continues to address potential illegal charters on a case-by-case basis in an effort to bring them into compliance with applicable rules and regulations. Charter services that are found to be operating illegally can be subject to criminal or civil penalties.

The basic laws and definitions governing charter services can be found in Title 46 United States Code 2101 and Title 46 Code of Federal Regulations 175.400.

“Passengers on board any charter service are reminded to be alert for deceptive practices and should not hesitate to require the vessel operator to produce a valid Coast Guard issued Merchant Mariner’s Credential suitable for the vessel’s service.” explained Captain Martin Malloy, Coast Guard Captain of the Port, “Credentialed mariners have met rigorous training requirements and inspected vessels have met high safety standards. Passengers are taking an unnecessary safety risk by riding on a vessel without a credentialed mariner in charge or an uninspected vessel that needs to be inspected.”

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