



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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WATER JET DEVICES

The Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance has recently received numerous inquiries concerning operations involving water jet devices (WJD). For the purposes of this bulletin, the acronym “WJD” includes Jetpaks™, Jetlevs™, Flyboards™, Jetovators™, Hydrolift™, and Jetsurf™, and other similar devices where individuals ride a hydro-powered apparatus above the surface of the water while connected to a personal watercraft (PWC) or other power source that supplies thrust to the WJD through a hose connecting the two devices. When the PWC and WJD devices are connected they are considered to be one vessel. This MSIB identifies where a passenger for hire operation exists, the licensing requirements and the safety-related procedures specifically for navigable waters over which the Coast Guard has jurisdiction (see Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 2). The safety-related guidance provided can, however, be applied wherever a WJD is used including purely recreational applications.

Typical commercial passenger for hire operations involve one passenger riding the levitation portion of the WJD who controls the directional movements and another individual or an operator controlling the thrust of the WJD either from the PWC or remotely via wireless control. In many cases, the individual riding the WJD has provided economic benefit or profit also known as “consideration”, to ride the device. Where consideration is present as a condition of carriage, the individual riding the WJD is considered a “passenger for hire” as defined in 46 USC 2101¹ and therefore the operator must hold a Coast Guard-issued Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC), endorsed at a minimum as Operator, Uninspected Passenger Vessel (OUPV) per 46 CFR Part 15.605². An Uninspected Passenger Vessel is defined as a vessel less than 100 Gross Tons, carrying not more than 6 passengers, including at least one passenger for hire. This type of operation will be discussed further below. Exceptions to the passenger for hire situation are when the WJD is (a) leased, rented or chartered to an individual for noncommercial personal use; (b) operated by the WJD owner for their personal noncommercial use; and (c) used by the WJD owner for demonstration purposes. In these instances the vessel is considered a recreational vessel, and recreational boating safety requirements should be applied. Per existing regulations, no person may use a recreational vessel unless at least one wearable Personal Flotation Device (PFD) is onboard the WJD for each person.

As a Coast Guard MMC is required when a passenger for hire situation exists, at a minimum the following three endorsements may be acceptable depending upon the location and type of operation: OUPV, OUPV Limited, and OUPV Restricted. The local Coast Guard Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI) determines which of the three licenses are appropriate for the particular operation in question. If an operator does not have sufficient service time to obtain an unrestricted OUPV credential they may consider applying for either an OUPV Restricted or OUPV Limited license. For more information on these types of licenses, see CG-543 Policy Letter 10-04 of 10 MAY 2010, including enclosures (1) through (3) (on the internet at:

¹ Current versions of the United States Code (USC) can be found at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

² Current versions of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) can be found at www.ecfr.gov

Due to WJD vessel's novel design and configuration, current and conventional vessel safety regulations may not fully address safety concerns unique to these vessel types and their operation. It is recommended that safety procedures and training for both the operators and passengers should be developed to address circumstances unique to these operations that are not addressed in special operating requirements for Uninspected Passenger Vessels. Specific procedures should include but are not limited to items such as:

- i. Emergency procedures for injuries, drowning, loss of vessel control, retrieval of conscious persons in the water, inadvertent dragging of passengers, and subsequent notifications to the company office, family members, and Coast Guard.
- ii. Assessment of adequate gear quick release(s), power shut offs, and other disengagement mechanisms.
- iii. A safety briefing is provided to the passenger by the vessel operator or crew explaining communications, WJD passenger operated controls, permitted and prohibited operations and how to use safety equipment.
- iv. Adequate communications including a clear two-way communication arrangement between the vessel operator and passenger when a WJD vessel utilizes a two-person operation
- v. Establishment of safe environmental operating conditions such as weather, sea state, and operating area (e.g. surrounding vessel traffic, obstructions above and below the water, water depth, etc.)
- vi. Assessment of the need for an additional person(s) and/or a chase boat to provide assistance and maintain situational awareness of the WJD operation and surrounding/oncoming traffic, particularly in congested areas.
- vii. Assessment of PFD flotation adequacy, particularly when any equipment worn could overcome the PFD's buoyancy. Some WJD backpacks are designed with built in positive flotation and some are not.

Operators of WJD vessels are reminded that they must comply with the Navigation Rules³ at all times. Operators of other vessels should also be aware that while the WJD is in operation the PWC has limited maneuverability. It is recommended that vessels operating in the vicinity of the WJD take this into consideration and maintain a safe distance from the connected PWC.

With passengers for hire embarked, WJDs powered by PWCs are considered to be Uninspected Passenger Vessels, and must meet 46 CFR Subpart C requirements as well as all marine casualty reporting and chemical testing requirements found in 46 CFR Parts 4 and 16. Keep in mind certain States may have additional requirements with regard to regulations concerning PWC and, by extension, devices (WJDs) connected to a PWC. As a result, a State may require additional equipment for these operations that may exceed Coast Guard requirements.

This information bulletin was developed with input from numerous field commands and compiled by Coast Guard Atlantic Area with the assistance of the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, Commandant (CG-CVC). Questions concerning this bulletin may be directed to 202-372-1251 or cg-cvc-1@uscg.mil.

³ The current version of Navigation Rules can be found at www.navcen.uscg.gov