

USCG Boundary Lines / License Upgrade



Editor's Note: The Kenai MSO developed this article. CWO Ron Bennett, along with the computer talents of PO1 Donald Combs, made this possible. DCCA sincerely thanks them both for their efforts!

Does your Coast Guard license allow you to work outside the “Boundary Line”? A Coast Guard inland license only allows operation inside the boundary line. In Resurrection Bay the boundary line is a line drawn from the southernmost extremity of Cape Resurrection to the Aialik Cape. These same issues apply to Deep Creek/Anchor Point also. In Cook Inlet the boundary line is drawn from the southernmost tip of the Kenai Peninsula at longitude 151 44.0 W. to East Amatuli Island Light; thence to the north-westernmost extremity of Shuyak Island at Party Cape; thence to the easternmost extremity of Cape Douglas.

First, Boundary lines for the entire United States are listed in 46 Code of Federal Regulations Part 7. Boundary lines have existed for many years and are referenced in regulations ranging from load line requirements to inspections of sea-going barges to licensing. In the previous newsletter we only listed the specific ones we thought applied to local operators; there are many others including Prince William Sound - contact our office if you want to know specifics.

You can click on the following links to see a map of the area denoting the boundary lines. In our area, from Shelikof Strait to Prince William Sound there are three separate boundary lines delineating “[Inland Waters](#)”. Starting from the East, these are: [Prince William Sound](#), [Resurrection Bay](#), and [Cook Inlet](#). Click on the link for a chart and description of each area.

Without getting into tonnage/size considerations, there are basically three types of licenses held by local operators. These are:

1. “Fresh Waters of Western Alaska”, which means what it says- you must operate only in fresh waters, i.e. Rivers or Lakes.
2. “Inland”, which means you can operate in the three areas listed above, shoreward of each respective boundary line.
3. “[Near Coastal](#)”, which is good for outside the boundary lines not more than 200 miles offshore.

Just remember, if you are not INSIDE one of the three above listed boundary lines, you are

OUTSIDE and need a “Near Coastal” License.

License Upgrade

So, if you have a Coast Guard issued Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel “Inland” license and want to upgrade it to “Near Coastal”, what do you need to do? Here are the biggest hurdles:

1. Be able to document **three months** sea time on Ocean or Near Coastal waters. This time can be recreational fishing, serving as deckhand, commercial fishing, etc. There is no recency requirement for this time.
2. If it has been over 3 years since you either received your original license or renewed, you must submit certification from a licensed physician or physicians assistant that you are in good health and have no physical impairment or medical condition which would render you incompetent to perform the ordinary duties of the license applied for. Use the form provided in the licensing package.
3. In almost all cases there is no additional testing required. The Regional Exam Center will inform you when they review your application if you need to take any additional tests, but, again, there most likely will not be any testing required.
4. If you are within one year of your license expiration date you can renew at the same time and save yourself a little time and money down the road.

If you hold an “Inland” Master’s license for inspected vessels (25-100 ton) and want to upgrade to “Near Coastal”, you have a couple of options.

1. You can complete the requirements listed above and have an endorsement added to your license for “Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels Near Coastal”.
2. Or, you can document **one-year** Ocean or Near Coastal operation and upgrade your Master’s license to Near Coastal.

The fee is \$50.00 for the evaluation and \$45.00 for issuing, total of \$95.00. If there is testing required add \$45.00, total \$140.00.

If this doesn’t clear things up, feel free to give us a call. We have license application packages available at our office in Kenai, or you can contact the licensing office at Marine Safety Office Anchorage. Phone numbers, web addresses and mailing addresses are in last month’s newsletter.

(Ron Bennett, USCG, Kenai)