



16790 / AUX-PL-006(A)  
BSX Policy Letter 20-01  
03 Jun 20

From: S. L. JOHNSON, CAPT /s/  
COMDT (CG-BSX)

Reply to CWO K. Franklin  
Attn of: (202) 372-1052

To: Distribution

Subj: VESSEL SAFETY CHECK - PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHER GUIDANCE

Ref: (a) Auxiliary Vessel Safety Check Manual, COMDTINST M16796.8 (series)

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this policy letter is to provide updated guidance to Vessel Examiners on portable fire extinguisher requirements for recreational vessels.
2. ACTION. All Vessel Examiners must comply with the provisions in this policy letter. Internet release is authorized
3. BACKGROUND. Section 3.B.5. of reference (a) identifies portable fire extinguisher requirements on recreational vessels. These requirements have changed for such vessels constructed after August 22, 2016.
4. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. These changes will be incorporated into the next revision of reference (a).
5. MAJOR CHANGES.

a. The Coast Guard now uses the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) performance-based classification system for portable fire extinguishers. Most extinguishers already have Coast Guard approval and UL rating classification, and all approved extinguishers installed prior to August 22, 2016 are allowed to remain on recreational vessels as long as they are still serviceable. The new classification system requires portable and semi-portable extinguishers to be marked with a combined number and letter designation. The letter designates the general class of fire for which the extinguisher is suitable as identified in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 10. The number indicates the relative extinguishing potential of the device as rated by UL 711.

b. Vessel Examiners shall use the following tables for vessel safety checks:

Length (X feet)	Vessels built after August 22, 2016 (minimum number of 5-B portable fire extinguishers required <sup>1</sup> )	
	No fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space	Fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space
X < 16	1	0
16 ≤ X < 26	1	0

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Length (X feet)	Vessels built after August 22, 2016 (minimum number of 5-B portable fire extinguishers required <sup>1</sup> )	
	No fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space	Fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space
$26 \leq X < 40$	2	1
$40 \leq X \leq 65$	3	2

<sup>1</sup>One 20-B portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B portable fire extinguishers.

Length (X feet)	Vessels built before August 22, 2016 (minimum number of B-I portable fire extinguishers required <sup>1</sup> )	
	No fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space	Fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space
$X < 16$	1	0
$16 \leq X < 26$	1	0
$26 \leq X < 40$	2	1
$40 \leq X \leq 65$	3	2

<sup>1</sup>One B-II portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two B-I portable fire extinguishers.

6. **DISCLAIMER.** This policy letter is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it a rule. It is intended to define requirements for Auxiliary personnel and is not intended to, nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

7. **QUESTIONS.** Questions concerning this policy letter should be directed to the Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety, Auxiliary Division (CG-BSX-1) at [CGAUX@uscg.mil](mailto:CGAUX@uscg.mil). This policy letter and other policy documents are posted on the CG Auxiliary website at: <http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=T-DEPT&category=risk-mgt>

8. **REQUEST FOR CHANGES.** Units and individuals may recommend changes in writing via the chain of command to Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, ATTN: Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety, Auxiliary Division (CG-BSX-1), U. S. Coast Guard Stop 7501, 2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE, Washington DC 20593-7501.

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