

SMALL VESSELS AND MARINE EVENT MANAGEMENT

Action Items:

- Be alert for marine events in progress, especially during the summer months when boating is popular.
- Check with VTS Puget Sound on events that might impact the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS.)
- Make arrangements with VTS for passage near events in progress.

The Coast Guard, under the authority of 33 Code of Federal Regulations, part 100, is given the responsibility of overseeing marine events. The event sponsor has the primary responsibility of ensuring that the event is conducted in a safe and orderly fashion, so as to minimally impact other waterway users. For entities planning to stage marine events, permit applications must be submitted to either Coast Guard Group Port Angeles or Sector Seattle at least 135 days in advance. Upon consultation with the appropriate Group, the Captain of the Port may issue additional restrictions.

Small vessels, tankers, fast containerships, tugs with barges in tow, high speed ferries, and other commercial vessels share the Puget Sound waters. They frequently encounter large wakes and fog. All this creates the potential for serious marine accidents. Small vessel operators must be aware of and comply with their obligations under COLREGS 72 (Rules of the Road), specifically Rule 9, Narrow Channels, and Rule 10, Traffic Separation Schemes. Additionally, small vessel operators should realize that large commercial vessels cannot stop or alter course quickly, and therefore cannot easily avoid a collision with smaller, more maneuverable vessels. Large vessel crews also have trouble seeing small vessels because of wave patterns, a setting or rising sun, physical size of small vessels such as kayaks or outboards or jet skis, the height of eye of the observer on the larger ship, and containers or other cargo carried on deck that can cause blind spots that often extend ahead of the vessel.

The Committee supports continued local efforts to educate small vessel operators about the potential hazards to both themselves and to commercial vessels when they operate in the Puget Sound area, in the port approaches, and near large commercial vessels. The media, Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadrons and Recreational Boating Association of Washington can be used to communicate these Standards of Care to the small vessel operators. Further information for small vessel operators on VTS Puget Sound participation can be found at the Puget Sound VTS website at: <http://www.uscg.mil/d13/psvts/boaters%5Fman/> in the link titled "Recreational Boating Manual."