EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE

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So you were cited for a vessel safety violation, and without delay you corrected the discrepancy. According to the pamphlet you received in the mail from the Hearing Office, you may submit written statements, photographs, receipts, diagrams or other evidence relating to the case. However, before you decide to include evidence to support your statement that the discrepancy has been corrected, take the time to consider what you're sending, and whether it will persuasively show that you and your vessel are in compliance.

First, how can you show that you now have the previously missing item? They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, but make sure that the picture is meaningful. For example, only providing a picture of the item by itself is not very convincing. More helpful would be an additional picture of the item next to or on board your vessel, with the name and/or state number of the vessel prominently displayed.

Second, what if the item has an expiration date (Certificate of Number, hydrostatic release, life raft, visual distress signals, etc.)? It would be most advantageous to your cause if you included a close-up picture or copy of the document or item that clearly shows the non-expired expiration date.

Finally, how can you show that you corrected the discrepancy in a timely manner? Obviously, if a receipt or invoice is available, you'll want to provide a copy that clearly shows the date of purchase, for comparison to the date of the violation. Another possibility is to arrange for a vessel safety inspection/exam. You may contact a local Coast Guard unit to arrange a follow-up boarding, or a Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel Safety Check using the following website: http://SafetySeal.net. You should receive a dated document

afterwards that you can copy and include with your response letter. Hearing Officers give substantial weight to a mariner's timely compliance efforts, and such efforts will often result in a mitigation of the final penalty amount.