

Coast Guard issues statement to clarify status of new Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel regulations

The Coast Guard released a statement to remove confusion and correct misinformation concerning new regulations on the Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel (ROUPV) credential Friday.

This statement represents an effort to assist mariners understand the implementation of the regulations change. Coast Guard Sector Anchorage is working with the fishing and hunting guide industry in Western Alaska to refine local implementation of new federal regulations regarding ROUPV endorsements. The federal regulations change took effect on March 24, 2014. Sector Anchorage met with industry representatives in Anchorage on April 10, 2015 to discuss how the changes are being implemented in Western Alaska.

The details of Sector Anchorage's implementation plan will be set forth in Marine Safety Information Bulletin 04-15. This document is available in draft form on the Sector Anchorage's website at <https://www.uscg.mil/d17/SectorAnchorage/msib.asp>.

In response to multiple questions from guides and lodge owners, Sector Anchorage has developed the following Q & A:

Q: Is the US Coast Guard holding off on implementing the new Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel regulations?

A: No. A change to 46 Code of Federal Regulations 11.467 is in effect now. Sector Anchorage is working with the local guide industry to implement those regulations in Western Alaska.

Q: Are there special exceptions to the new regulations for Alaska?

A: No. The new regulations are applicable throughout the United States. However, the new regulations allow the local Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection to make certain decisions when implementing locally. Sector Anchorage is working with industry to clarify the

implementation of the regulations in Western Alaska. Marine Safety Information Bulletin 04-15 explains the proposed details of local implementation.

Q: Does the regulatory change affect guides who hold the previous “Freshwaters of Western Alaska” Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel endorsement?

A: No. Guides who currently hold “Freshwaters of Western Alaska” Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel endorsement may continue to work under that endorsement. The endorsement is good on all freshwater rivers and lakes in Western Alaska.

Q: Some holders of the previous “Freshwaters of Western Alaska” Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel endorsement were unable to renew in 2014 as the Coast Guard Anchorage Regional Exam Center and Coast Guard National Maritime Center implemented the new regulations. Can previous holders with expired credentials renew under the old terms?

A: Yes. Holders of the previous “Freshwaters of Western Alaska” ROUPV endorsement who tried to renew in 2014 or 2015 and were denied should resubmit their applications to the Anchorage Regional Examination Center before December 31, 2015.

Q: Does the regulatory change affect new guides who have never held the previous “Freshwaters of Western Alaska” Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel endorsement?

A: Yes, new applicants are subject to the new requirements. Significantly, the new regulations state that applicants must have “at least 3 months of service in the operation of the type of vessel and on each body of water for which the endorsement is requested.”

Q: Is there a phase-in period for the new requirements?

A: Yes. Up until March 24, 2019, applicants who accrued at least one day of experience on the water (not necessarily on waters in Alaska) before March 24, 2014 may apply for a Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel endorsement after gaining 120 days of experience (not necessarily on waters in Alaska). However, new applicants under this phase-in procedure will be restricted to obtaining an endorsement to operate on only three bodies of water (river drainages of their choice in Alaska).

Q: How can guides and lodge owners ask questions and provide feedback to the Coast Guard on this issue?

A: Sector Anchorage and the Coast Guard Regional Examination Center are happy to receive questions on this topic. Questions can be directed to either o the Assistant Chief of Inspections at 907-428-4164/inspections.anchorage@uscg.mil or the Anchorage, AK Regional Examination Center at 907-271-6736, option 5. More information about the current status of the Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel endorsement process in Western Alaska is available at: <https://www.uscg.mil/d17/SectorAnchorage/roupv.asp>.

Q: Is Sector Anchorage planning any other public meetings?

A: Yes, Sector Anchorage is planning to send a representative to the Dillingham area in early June. The specific date, time and place will be announced in a future press release.