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CG-BSX-23 Policy Letter 26-01

15 JUL 2026

Acting,  
for

From: B. R. SCHMADEKE  
COMDT (CG-BSX)

To: Distribution

Subj: ACCEPTANCE OF REQUIREMENTS FOUND IN ABYC S-7, BOAT CAPACITY  
LABELS, AS EQUIVALENT TO THE REQUIREMENTS FOUND IN 33 CFR 183  
SUBPART B DISPLAY OF CAPACITY INFORMATION

Ref. (a) 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 183 Subpart B  
(b) DHS Delegation #00170.1 Rev. 01.4  
(c) 46 United States Code § 4305(b)  
(d) ABYC S-7, Boat Capacity Labels (2026)

1. Purpose.

This policy letter accepts, in accordance with conditions described below, a substitution for the requirement that capacity information be displayed IAW reference (a).

2. Background.

- a. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has been delegated under reference (b) and the statutory authority under references (c) to accept a substitution for associated equipment, performance, or other safety standards for a recreational vessel if the substitution provides an equivalent level of safety.
- b. Reference (a) prescribes how manufacturers display capacity information. Commonly referred to as "capacity labels" these labels provide critical safety information to the operator and occupants of the vessel.
- c. Capacity labels developed and installed IAW reference (a) have been required since 1980. The design was based on best practices of that time to maximize legibility and comprehensibility of the information for the operators of the vessel when getting underway. Since then, there have been significant improvements in design and installation of safety labels and warnings.
- d. The American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) recently undertook a rigorous review of boat capacity label standards. The newly updated reference (d) addresses many aspects of design and installation of capacity labels, including labels that are installed on boats covered by reference (a). In designing the revised S-7 capacity labels, ABYC utilized

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current industry best practices and conducted thorough comprehensibility studies to ensure that the reader can understand the information being conveyed.

3. Substitution.

Reference (d) provides at least an equivalent level of safety to reference (a), and the Coast Guard accepts reference (d) as a substitute for the requirements of reference (a). Recreational boat manufacturers may utilize capacity labels compliant with reference (d) in lieu of those required in reference (a). If a manufacturer chooses to use reference (d) for a vessel required to display capacity per reference (a), then reference (d) must be used in its entirety.

4. Contact Us.

No notice for use of this substitution needs to be made to the Coast Guard. However, requests for equivalency determinations to other requirements found in 46 United States Code Chapter 43 or 33 CFR Subpart S or questions concerning recreational vessel regulatory compliance should be directed to COMDT (CG-BSX-23) Office of Auxiliary & Boating Safety at [rbscompliance@uscg.mil](mailto:rbscompliance@uscg.mil).

Dist: COMDT (CG-BSX)  
COMDT (CG-CVC)  
COMDT (CG-ENG)  
COMDT (MSC)  
Transport Canada  
American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC)  
National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA)