



GUIDELINES FOR FOR-HIRE FISHING VESSELS TO OPERATE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2020 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to charter boat captains and the public-at-large on complying with the Governor's Executive Orders and ["Safer at Home: Phase Three"](#). These orders were issued because of the emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Any willful violation of these executive orders may be prosecuted as a Class I misdemeanor under Va. Code § 32.1-27.

Thus, this document will also be used to guide the Commission and its staff in the application of the Commission's enforcement authority under EO 61(A)(9) and will serve to inform citizens of the general guidelines that will be applied to charter boat captains operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nothing in this statement, however, restricts or impedes the power of the Commission, Marine Police Officers, or staff to review each circumstance on its individual facts and apply only those conditions considered appropriate or to consider unusual or mitigating circumstances. The Commission generally will prioritize education and correction of issues over criminal enforcement.

Guidance for All Charters:

Before a trip:

- **Post all information on website or inform customer by other means regarding precautions, cleaning plan, and requirements. Pre-screen customers for COVID-19 at time of booking:**
 - Establish policies and practices for physical distancing between co-workers and members of the public, including liberal sick leave policies for employees and allowing customers to cancel their trip with no penalty if they are sick. Such policies and procedures relevant to the customers should be clearly communicated on the charter's website, or otherwise made available at the time of booking.
 - Develop pre-screening criteria for customers based on VDH interim guidance ([VDH Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers During Widespread Community Transmission.](#))
 - Post signage on the vessel and/or on your website that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19, or known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the prior 14 days, is permitted on the vessel.
 - Post signage on the vessel and/or on your website to provide public health reminders regarding physical distancing, gatherings, options for high-risk individuals, and staying home if sick. Samples are provided in the ["Safer at Home: Phase Three"](#) guidance document.
- **Thoroughly clean and disinfect high-contact areas following CDC Reopening Guidance.**
 - At a minimum the plan should include routine cleaning and disinfection of high contact areas and hard surfaces, including check out stations and payment pads, store entrance push/pull

pads, door knobs/handles, handrails, restrooms, floors, safety gear, and fishing equipment. Follow [CDC Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection guidance](#) and use an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) to clean. For high contact areas, routinely disinfect surfaces at least every 2 hours. Certain surfaces and objects in public spaces, such as handrails, fishing rods, and tackle, should be cleaned and disinfected before each use.

- **Screen employees prior to start of shift:**
 - Prior to a shift and on days employees are scheduled to work, the employees should self-monitor their symptoms such as by self-taking of temperature to check for fever before reporting to work. For employers with established occupational health programs, employers can consider measuring temperature and assessing symptoms of employees prior to starting work/before each shift. CDC considers a person to have a fever when he or she has a measured temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or greater, feels warm to the touch, or gives a history of feeling feverish. Implement practices such as those described in [VDH Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers During Widespread Community Transmission](#) for examples of a screening questionnaire. A sample symptom monitoring log is available in this Interim Guidance.

During the trip:

- Whenever possible, employees and customers should wear face coverings over their nose and mouth, such as using [CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings guidance](#). All persons must wear a mask when in an interior space.
- Captain must provide hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) at multiple points on the boat and passengers must use it before they board the boat.
- Surfaces on the boat must be regularly cleaned and disinfected at the beginning and end of each trip.
- Frequent cleanings of common surfaces, such as handrails and fishing equipment during the course of each trip. In public areas, this means every 2 hours using EPA-approved disinfectants.

Social Distancing Requirements for Six Pack and Headboat vessels:

- Trips are limited to parties/groups that book the full vessel capacity together **OR**
- For “splits”: All individual groups/parties that booked a trip together must be separated by at least six feet, from any other group/party that booked a trip together. These guidelines mirror the requirements for businesses such as restaurants or beverage services as outlined in [“Safer at Home: Phase Three”](#).