

Sport and recreation vessels (Pleasure vessels)

Unlike commercial vessels which are licensed, numbered and surveyed annually by SAMSA, pleasure vessels are subject to a lesser regime generally administered by sporting bodies.

The Merchant Shipping (National Small Vessel Safety) Regulations, 2007 requires an "approved marking" to be displayed on certain sport and recreation vessels.

In addition, a "certificate of fitness" has to be issued to certain vessels annually by an "Authorised Agency".

These markings (numbers) are currently obtainable from authorised agencies, which are generally sporting bodies authorised by SAMSA to carry out inspections, examine skippers and issue certificates of fitness.

Certificates of competence are required by the operators of certain pleasure vessels.

Principles

Briefly, the main principles applying to recreational vessels are as follows:

1. All vessels, excepting power driven vessels of 15 HP or less, sailing vessels of 9 metres or less in length and vessels propelled by human power alone must be marked with a single traceable 'approved number';
2. Pleasure vessels being sailing vessels of more than 9 metres in overall length or power driven vessels of more than 15 HP require a Small Vessel Certificate of Competence in accordance with the regulations.

(Note: all previously seagoing small vessel certificates of competence will be acceptable on inland waters, but certificates issued for inland waters only, may not to be used at sea.)

3. All vessels excepting power driven vessels of 15 HP or less, sailing vessels of 9 metres or less in length and vessels propelled by human power alone must be inspected and certified as seaworthy annually (*i.e. obtain a Certificate of Fitness*);
4. All vessels must carry the appropriate and relevant safety equipment according to the vessel category and type;
5. All vessels must have sufficient buoyancy.

Application of the regulations to "very small" pleasure vessels

The regulations apply equally to all vessels used in South African waters accessible to the public and are not so onerous that they cannot be reasonably applied.

The smaller pleasure vessels such as kayaks, canoes, sailing dinghies and other sailing vessels under 7 metres, rowing boats and other vessels powered by human-power, power driven vessels powered by engines ≤ 15 HP, jet skis and the like are either exempted from parts of the regulations or have special provisions which apply to them, briefly as follows;

Vessels under 3 metres may not go to sea except in areas designated by a regulating authority, but in any event no more than 1000 metres offshore. This restriction might not apply on inland waters as they are not "going to sea" but they must still be operated in the areas designated for their use by the regulating authority.