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# U.S. Coast Guard Amends Licensing for Small Commercial Vessel Regulations in USVI

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**U.S. Coast Guard vessel in Christiansted, St. Croix in May, 2015. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM**

The U.S. Coast Guard on Dec. 8 2020 announced an amendment to section 319 of the “Howard Coble Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation act of 2014 (Pub. L. No.113-281 (S.2444)” relative to uninspected passenger vessel operations within the USVI.

According to a release issued by Commercial Vessel Licensing Authority (CVLA), a new company that is based in the USVI, vessels under 24 meters may now carry up to a maximum of 12 passengers if they receive certificates of inspection and letters of compliance. CVLA said it has been named as the certifying authority by the USVI Coast Guard and all owners and operators

should contact CVLA to receive their certifications. CVLA can be reached via email: [Info@mycvla.com](mailto:Info@mycvla.com), by phone: 1-855-340-0009 (extension 6), or head to [mycvla.com](http://mycvla.com) for more information.

"These are mandates that were already in place, and these boats need these licenses to operate properly, but since BVI (British Virgin Islands) has been closed no one has been able to get the proper certification. Through a joint effort between us here at CVLA and the US Coast Guard, it's now possible for boats here in the US to get these licenses. This makes it much more convenient for boats overall," CVLA said.

According to the release, the new amendment states that vessels under 24 meters can now only carry up to twelve total passengers if the U.S. Coast Guard determines that the vessel complies with the requirements established by the United Kingdom Code of Practice for the Safety of Small Commercial Motor or Sailing Vessels. Previously, U.S.-flagged vessels would have obtained a Yellow Code (for motor vessels) or a Blue Code (for sailing vessels) from the British Virgin Islands to show their compliance.

These are mandates which were already in place and commercial vessels need them to operate within the USVI. The British Virgin Islands are no longer issuing these licenses and so there has been no way to obtain the proper certifications in the U.S., the release stated.

"Through a joint effort between the US Coast Guard and CVLA, it is now possible to obtain these licenses and by using modern-day automated web technologies and systems it is also easier than ever," CVLA said. "While the Coast Guard issued a statement saying that they have determined this change will be "substantially self-implementing" (Marine Safety Information Bulletin 03-15 Change 01), there are specific steps that need to be taken if owners and operators wish to carry seven to twelve passengers."

In order to respect the new changes, the vessels must be in compliance with the Yellow or Blue Codes, according to the release. To verify compliance with these codes, a vessel must be examined by a certifying authority, with CVLA stating it is the official certifying authority on behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard and have designed the process with convenience in mind. To begin the process, visit [mycvla.com](http://mycvla.com) to find out more. Once a valid copy of the Small Commercial Vessel Certificate demonstrating compliance has been issued it must be kept on board the vessel to which it is relevant, according to the release.