

How Should I Prepare for a Marine Survey?

Time and additional expense can be saved by preparing the vessel for inspection and making her more accessible.

Arrange to present a clean, shipshape boat, and have all papers and miscellaneous gear ready. If applicable, you will need to make arrangements with the marina to haul the vessel for bottom inspection, and retain a captain for sea trials. Lockers and cabin areas should be cleared of all miscellaneous gear.

The surveyor should never be asked to prepare a boat for inspection. The surveyor may request minor dismantling of interior ceilings, headliners, flooring, etc. in order to gain access to the suspected areas. Random removal and examination of below-the-waterline fasteners on wood boats may be required. Any dismantling and re-installation of parts should be performed by qualified personnel and is the responsibility of the person ordering the survey.

Written authorization from the owner may be needed to board and/or to remove part of the vessel.

ONCE YOU RETAIN THE SURVEYOR, HE OR SHE WORKS ONLY FOR YOU AND REPORTS TO NO ONE ELSE. THE SURVEYOR IS THERE TO PROTECT **YOUR** INTERESTS!

What Type of Survey Do I Need?

Marine Surveys are performed for a number of reasons, and the procedures for each vary to best suit your needs

Pre-Purchase Survey

This is the most comprehensive type of inspection, and is strongly advised when purchasing a new or used vessel. Condition and overall operation of the vessel should be examined. This covers structural integrity, electrical systems, the propulsion system, the fuel system, other machinery, navigation equipment, miscellaneous on-board systems, cosmetic appearance, electronics, and overall maintenance as well as an out-of-water inspection and a sea trial.

Insurance Survey

This inspection is performed so that the insurance company can determine whether or not the vessel is an acceptable risk. They are interested in structural integrity and safety for its intended use. Most insurance companies require a survey on older boats. They will also want to know the vessel's fair market value.

Appraisal Inspection

This inspection is performed to gather enough information to justify or determine the fair market value of the vessel. This is normally needed for financing, estate settlements, donations and legal cases.

Damage Inspection

The surveyor can be retained by an insurance company to determine the cause of a loss and determine the extent of loss related damage and may be asked to recommend repairs, review estimates, and determine the pre-loss value of a vessel. A vessel owner can retain a surveyor for the same purposes, but for the owner's behalf.

How Do I Choose a Marine Surveyor?

Anyone can title him or herself as a Marine Surveyor and start a business. Certain marine surveyors are permitted to use a designation denoting membership in accrediting organizations that require members to meet strict professional, technical and ethical standards.

Surveyors should provide you with a professionally prepared report that can be accepted by your bank and/or insurance company. Talk with prospective surveyors and ask questions! What does the survey include and what type of reporting format is used? Do they use ABYC, NFPA and USCG standards in their surveys? How much will the inspection cost? How long will the on-board inspection take?

A thorough inspection will not be rushed and will depend on the type of survey required based on vessel size, equipment and on-board systems. There may be additional services available such as engine surveys, oil analysis, galvanic and stray current corrosion testing, ultrasonic testing, moisture testing and other non-destructive tests. There may be additional charges for these and other services.

Well conducted surveys can provide good information on the vessels' condition, but they are not guarantees. The surveyor reports the condition in accessible areas only as it exists at the time of inspection.

Why should you have a vessel surveyed? Most insurance companies and banks will require them on older vessels. They will need to know her condition and fair market value in order to finance and/or underwrite the vessel. Knowing her condition and fair market value before you purchase is also important. However, the most important reason to survey your vessel is for the safety of the passengers and crew.

Information from Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors® <http://www.marinesurvey.org/>

ACCREDITED MARINE SURVEYOR®

1. Candidates must be currently practicing marine surveyors with at least five (5) years surveying experience, accumulated within the past ten (10) years, in the field of expertise which accreditation is desired. Credit of up to three (3) years of the five (5) years required may be granted for related marine experience. Acceptability of related marine experience shall be determined by the membership committee and/or Board of Directors.
2. Applicants must affirm that they will abide by the By-Laws Code of Ethics, Standards, official decisions and amendments to such of the Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors (SAMS®).
3. Candidates must complete an application form, supply a complete resume and submit for review a number of surveys as may be required by the Membership Committee.
4. Candidates must successfully complete a written exam on their selected field of accreditation as prescribed by the Testing Committee and conducted by that Committee or their designated representative. Cost related to administration of said examination shall be borne by the candidates. Examinations will be reviewed by the Testing Committee and submitted to the Membership Committee.
5. Applicants must agree to participate in and meet all requirements of the Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors' (SAMS®) program of continuing education as established by the Education Committee and/or Board of Directors.