

Guide to USCG Endorsements

For a long time, mariners applied for “Licenses,” but recently the Coast Guard shifted vocabulary. Now, mariners are issued a red passport-sized book called a “Merchant Mariner Credential,” in which “endorsements” are printed. Read on to learn about the OUPV, Masters, Mates, Sail, and Assistance Towing endorsements, as well as what is required to apply for your credential.

Getting an OUPV/Mate/Master Endorsement

Officer endorsements are determined by the tonnage of the vessels you have sea service on as well as the waters that you sailed on (Great Lakes, Inland, Near Coastal or Oceans).

Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels (Six-Pack)

This endorsement qualifies you to operate uninspected vessels with up to six paying passengers aboard. This is often used by owners/operators looking to offer charter, fishing, dive, and excursion trips. You must be 18 years old and have a **minimum of 360 days** of documented boating experience. 90 days of the 360 must be within the past three years. You must also pass a physical and drug test, obtain a TWIC card (this serves as a background check), and take an approved First Aid/CPR course. Finally, you must pass your exams.

[Link to USCG OUPV checklist](#)

OUPV - Required Sea Service on waters of:

- **Inland** – 360 days total and 90 days in the last 3 years
- **Great Lakes and Inland** - 360 days total, of which 90 days is on Great Lakes waters and 90 days in the last 3 years
- **Near Coastal** (out to 100 miles offshore): 360 days total, of which 90 days is on Ocean, Near Coastal, or Great Lakes waters and 90 days in the last 3 years

25/50/100 Ton Master Inland

A USCG Master’s license qualifies you to operate inspected (commercial) vessels and is given in tonnage increments based on your documented boating experience. The operating area is shoreward of the boundary line. The “boundary line” is generally a line drawn between the most seaward points of land at the entrances to rivers, harbors, bays, etc. You don’t need to get an OUPV before you get a Master’s license, so if you qualify, you should consider going right to your Masters. You must be 19 years old and have a **minimum of 360 days** of documented boating experience. 90 days of the 360 must be within the past three years. You must also pass a physical and drug test, obtain a TWIC card (this serves as a background check), and take an approved First Aid/CPR course. Finally, you must pass your exams.

[Link to USCG Master Checklist – Great Lakes and/or Inland](#)

Master Inland – Tonnage Calculations:

- **100 GRT** – 90 days on vessels of 51 GRT or above OR 180 days on vessels of 34 GRT or above
- **50 GRT** – 90 days on vessels of 26 GRT or above OR 180 days on vessels of 17 GRT or above
- **25 GRT** – 90 days on vessels 1-25 GRT OR 180 days on vessels 1-16 GRT.

25/50/100 Ton Mate Near Coastal

The Mate license qualifies you to operate as a mate on an inspected (commercial) vessel and is given in tonnage increments based on your documented boating experience. The operating area for near coastal is ocean waters not more than 200 miles offshore. **This endorsement is a great step for mariners who do not have the number of days needed for a Master Near Coastal.** You must be 18 years old and have a **minimum of 360 days** of documented boating experience. 90 days of the 360 must be within the past three years. 180 days must be on Ocean, Near Coastal, or Great Lakes waters. You must also pass a physical and drug test, obtain a TWIC card (this serves as a background check), and take an approved First Aid/CPR course. Finally, you must pass your exams.

[Link to USCG Mate Checklist – Near Coastal](#)

Tonnage calculations are the same as for Master – Inland (see above)

25/40/100 Ton Master Near Coastal

A USCG Master's license qualifies you to operate inspected (commercial) vessels and is given in tonnage increments based on your documented boating experience. The operating area for near coastal is ocean waters not more than 200 miles offshore. You don't need to get an OUPV before you get a Master's license, so if you qualify, you should consider going right to your Masters. You must be 19 years old and have a **minimum of 720 days** of documented boating experience. 90 days of the 720 must be within the past three years. You must also pass a physical and drug test, obtain a TWIC card (this serves as a background check), and take an approved First Aid/CPR course. Finally, you must pass your exams.

[Link to USCG Master Checklist – Near Coastal](#)

Master Near Coastal – Tonnage Calculations:

- **100 GRT** – 180 days on vessels of 51 GRT or above OR 360 days on vessels of 34 GRT or above
- **50 GRT** – 180 days on vessels of 26 GRT or above OR 360 days on vessels of 17 GRT or above
- **25 GRT** – 180 days on vessels 1-25 GRT OR 360 days on vessels 1-16 GRT

Sail Endorsement

Mariners with 180 days of sea time on sailing vessels (inland) or 360 days (near coastal) may qualify for a sail endorsement. There is also an exam required for this endorsement. See the USCG checklists linked above for sail endorsement details.

Assistance Towing

Assistance towing is an optional endorsement that qualifies an individual to work on an assist vessel such as Sea Tow or TowBoatUS. There is an exam requirement for this endorsement.

Apply for a Merchant Mariner Credential

Once you have determined which endorsement(s) you qualify for, you will need to compile your application materials to submit to the Coast Guard. Here is a list of items needed:

- Apply for a TWIC card
- Get a physical using form CG-719K
- Pay application, exam and issuance Fees
- Complete a drug screen
- Complete application form CG-719B Provide letters of Sea Service
- earn course certificates
- Submit all materials to your Regional Exam Center as an “application package”

Apply for a TWIC card

1. To apply for a TWIC Card, complete this [online application](#). As part of the application, you will be asked to schedule an in-person appointment and will be given a list of TWIC centers to choose from in your area. You only need a TWIC card for your first application. If you are renewing or upgrading, it's ok if your TWIC card is expired.
2. At your appointment, you will need to provide [required documentation](#), be fingerprinted and take a photo. The cost for a TWIC card is \$125.25, valid for five years.
3. You can submit your application package before you receive your TWIC card. If you choose to do this, you must include a copy of the paperwork given to you at the TWIC center following your in-person appointment to prove you have completed this step. If you have your TWIC card in-hand, submit a photocopy of the card with your application.

Get a physical using form CG-719K

- Here is the link to the current USCG [Application for Merchant Mariner Medical Certificate](#).
- [Concentra](#) (until recently U.S. HealthWorks) is an occupational health clinic in Long Beach that has experience completing the USCG physical form. If you decide to go to your own doctor, make sure they are able to perform the vision and hearing tests.
- On the [NMC website](#) you can find a list of errors commonly made on the medical form. If you send your form in with errors, it will delay the processing of your application.

Submitting your completed medical form: The NMC very recently (2018) created a method to submit the medical form directly to the medical evaluation team. When your Medical form is complete, email it to MEDAIP@uscg.mil . Include your full name in the subject line and make sure all attachments are in PDF format. Do not submit any other parts of your application to this address. All of the other parts need to be sent together to a different email address.

Pay application, exam and issuance Fees

1. Visit pay.gov
2. Go to “Common Payments” on the right side of the page, then choose USCG Merchant Mariner User Fee Payment.
3. Fill out the payment form, selecting the type of endorsement that you are applying for. You can choose to pay for all fees at once or wait to pay for your exam and issuance fees later.
4. Save the email receipt that you get to include in your application submission.

Complete a drug screen

1. If you are drug tested because you are an employee on a boat, ask for a letter from the company or organization that states you are part of a USCG approved testing program.
2. If you are not already part of a drug testing program, you can go get tested at an approved facility. [This website](#) can set you up with a location to do your drug test. Bring the Coast Guard’s [Periodic Drug Testing Form GC-719P](#).

Complete application form CG-719B

1. Print or download the [Application for Merchant Mariner Credential Form CG-719B](#)
2. Instructions for how to complete this form are on the first three pages of the form itself. In addition, the National Maritime Center has a helpful [YouTube video on how to fill out the form](#).
3. If this is your first time applying for an MMC, you will need to take the [Mariner’s Oath](#) in front of a certified witness (located on page 4, section 4 of form CG-719B). This can be any Notary Public (banks often have this service), or you can take the oath at the [Long Beach Regional Exam Center](#). The same person who witnesses your oath also needs to witness you signing the application form so wait to sign until you are present at the Notary Public or REC.
4. In the section that asks if you’d like to include a “Third Party,” it is recommended that you list someone here who can help move your application along in the case that you are at sea or otherwise unable to contact the Coast Guard yourself. By selecting someone to act on behalf of you, you are giving them permission to call the Coast Guard to talk about your application.

Provide letters of Sea Service

1. If you were an employee or volunteer for a boat, ask the owner or company for a sea service letter. It is recommended that you ask for this before leaving the vessel at the end of the season/contract.

2. If you have time on a privately owned boat, including a boat you own yourself, you can document it using the [Small Vessel Sea Service Form CG-719S](#).

First Aid/CPR certification

You must have a valid (within one year) First Aid card, as well as valid CPR. You can take a USCG approved First Aid/CPR class, or any American Red Cross First Aid/CPR class. We offer a Red Cross blended (online with in-person skills check) class regularly.

[OCC School of Sailing and Seamanship First Aid/CPR class schedule](#)

Course Certificate

Mariners are required to show proficiency in the following exam topics. The USCG approves schools such as ours to teach these topics and then administer proctored, in-person exams. Once you have passed all exams, you are issued a course certificate that can be turned in with your application. If you don't take a class, you will have to take your exams at the Regional Exam Center.

Exam topics:

- Deck General – 70% required to pass
- Navigation General – 70% required to pass
- Deck Safety – 70% required to pass
- Plotting – 90% required to pass
- Rules of the Road – 90% required to pass

Submit all materials to your Regional Exam Center as an “application package”

1. Select a Regional Exam Center (you can find REC locations and email addresses on [the National Maritime Center](#) website). You don't have to go into the REC to submit your application – you can do it online (if you wish to go in person to the REC, that's fine too – then you will need to bring all of the paperwork that's been discussed).
2. Email your application to Long Beach Regional Exam Center: RECLB@uscg.mil

Include the following items in your email:

- Application form (CG-719B)
 - Scan of TWIC card or receipt
 - Pay.gov user fee receipt
 - Drug test results or employer letter
 - Sea Service forms and/or letters
 - Course certificate (unless you want to test at the REC)
 - First Aid/CPR certification
3. Completed applications must be scanned at a resolution not exceeding 300 dpi, saved in PDF format, and cannot exceed 8 MB in size. If e-mail size (including attachments) exceeds 8 MB, send documents in multiple e-mails.



4. The subject line of your e-mail must be: Last name, First name, Middle name, mariner reference number. NOTE: New applicants will not have a reference number.
5. Ensure all attachments are included, then send. Please use the minimum number of e-mails to send your application and attachments.