

CHOOSING A MARINE SURVEYOR

Anyone can title him or herself 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 inspection take? A thorough inspection will not be rushed. It will depend on the type of survey required, and based on size, equipment, and onboard systems. There may be additional services available such as engine surveys, oil analysis, galvanic and stray current corrosion testing, ultrasonic testing, moisture testing, as well as other non-destructive tests. There may be additional charges for these and other services.

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

Why should you have the vessel surveyed? The buyer needs to know her condition and approximate fair market value. Most insurance companies and banks will require a current survey on older vessels in order to underwrite and/or finance the vessel. Finally, the most important reason to survey your vessel is for the safety of your crew and guests.

TYPES OF SURVEYS

MARINE SURVEYS ARE PERFORMED FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS AND THE PROCEDURES FOR EACH VARIES 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 the overall operation of the vessel should be examined. This includes such items as structural integrity, out of water inspection, sea trial, electrical systems, propulsion system, fuel system, machinery, navigation, misc. on board systems, cosmetic appearance, electronics, and overall maintenance.

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 vessels 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

This is performed to assess the extent of damage, recommend repairs, estimate repair cost, and if requested, the probable cause.

PREPARING FOR THE SURVEY

Time and additional expenses 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 a captain for sea trial. 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 suspected areas. Random inspection of fasteners on wood boats below water line could be examined for condition. Any dismantling and re-installation of these parts should be performed by qualified personnel, which is the responsibility of the person ordering the survey.

Written authorization from the owner may be needed to board and/or to remove any 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 INTEREST!