



STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD OF PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS

2901 Third Avenue, Suite 400 | Seattle, Washington 98121 | (206) 515-3904 | <https://pilotage.wa.gov>

GUIDELINES

REGARDING: Conditions for Pilotage Exemptions of Foreign Flag Recreational Vessels in Special Exemption Areas and Requirements for Pilot Orientation in the Puget Sound Pilotage District

Under the authority granted in WAC 363-116-360, the Board of Pilotage Commissioners (BPC) may place conditions on exemptions from compulsory pilotage. In addition, the BPC reserves the right to require vessel captains to produce experience documentation upon request. Foreign flag recreational vessels are required to inform the BPC of any changes in vessel command and may be required to re-apply for an exemption or provide additional documentation. In the case of lack of documented experience in Washington waters or if the captain's license level is less than that of the size of the vessel, an interim exemption may be denied. The BPC also reserves the right to require additional restrictions.

When reviewing a Pilotage Exemption Petition, the BPC will take the following criteria into account when determining conditions on pilotage exemptions:

SPECIAL EXEMPTION AREA: DECEPTION PASS (Confined narrows at less than 450', strong currents up to 9 kts, strong whirlpools, lack of navigational aids)

Vessel Size	Captain Experience	Current Limits	Daylight Only
< 65 FT	No requirements	Less than 2kts	Yes
65 FT – 125 FT	No requirements	Less than 2kts	Yes
126 FT – 200 FT	2 Transits*	Less than 2kts	Yes

**Transits must be observed as a Deck Officer*

SPECIAL EXEMPTION AREA: BALLARD (HIRAM M. CHITTENDEM) LOCKS (Confined waters, heavy vessel congestion, operation procedures)

Vessel Size	Captain Experience	Required Transits
< 65 FT	No requirements	None
65 FT – 125 FT	Experience Required	Minimum of 2 Transits or Pilot Orientation
126 FT – 200 FT	Experience Required	Minimum of 2 Transits or Pilot Orientation

RESTRICTED AREA: BALLARD (HIRAM M. CHITTENDEM) LOCKS CONT'D

1. Vessels less than 65 FT have no restrictions.
2. Vessels between 65 FT and 125 FT must have: 2 transits through locks of similar nature or have had a Pilot Orientation trip through the Ballard Locks (documentation of captain's past Pilot Orientation required).

3. Vessels between 126 FT and 200 FT must have: 2 transits through locks of similar nature or have had a Pilot Orientation trip through the Ballard Locks (documentation of captain's past Pilot Orientation required).
4. Captains must certify via the Pilotage Exemption Petition that they have reviewed the Foreign Yacht Familiarization Packet regarding check-in points, holding areas, and Lock procedures.
5. Captains not meeting the requirements above in items 2 or 3 must have a Pilot Orientation through the Ballard Locks.

RESTRICTED: DUWAMISH RIVER (Heavy commercial traffic, bridge requirements, Tribal fishing nets)

Vessel Size	Captain Experience	Required Transits
< 65 FT	No requirements	None
65 FT – 125 FT	No requirements	None
126 FT – 200 FT	Experience Required*	Minimum of 2 Transits or Pilot Orientation

**Transits must be observed as a Deck Officer*

PILOT ORIENTATION

All orientation sessions must occur at first port of entry. The BPC will assign either a Dockside or Ride-along orientation depending on the documentation provided.

1. Dockside Orientation at first port of entry.
2. Ride-along Orientation – Required if transiting a Special Exemption Area.

REQUIREMENTS TO WAIVE PILOT ORIENTATION (Unless required above)

1. Foreign Flag Yachts less than 125 FT.
2. Vessel captain has either a U.S., Canadian, or MCA license suitable to vessel size.
3. Vessel voyage plan does NOT include Restricted Areas (Deception Pass, Ballard Locks, or Duwamish River) if captain has no previous experience in those Special Exemption Areas.
4. All captains shall certify review of the Foreign Yacht Familiarization Packet.
5. Any captain that has proof of having had a Pilot Orientation in Puget Sound Pilotage District may be waived of having another.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Special Exemption Area** – BPC designated geographic areas in the Puget Sound region that are concerning for vessel transits due to unique navigational characteristics.
2. **Pilot Orientation** – involves hiring Puget Sound Pilots to provide a familiarization to the navigational nuances of the applicable pilotage district. While the BPC may require a Pilot Orientation, vessels can always request one directly from Puget Sound Pilots, if desired.
3. **Foreign Yacht Familiarization Packet** – a document provided by the BPC and available on the BPC website at <https://pilotage.wa.gov/pilotage-exemptions.html> which contains valuable information on the local waterways and areas of concern, resources, and communications.
4. **Pilotage Exemption Petition** – the application packet required by the BPC to consider exemptions from pilotage found on the BPC website at <https://pilotage.wa.gov/pilotage-exemptions.html>.
5. **MCA** – Maritime and Coast Guard Agency responsible for setting the minimum requirements for certification for maritime safety. IYT Master of Yachts Certificates (MOY) are MCA compliant.