
Small Private Yachts (SPY)

Notice to yacht owners, managers, Masters, officers, crew, Recognised Organisations, Yacht Survey Organisations and Approved Nautical Inspectors

This Notice supersedes BMA Information Bulletin No. 133

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Yacht Notice (YN) is issued by The Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to provide guidance on the technical standards, statutory and classification requirements for private (non-commercial) yachts of 12 metres to 24 metres (≈ 39 feet 4 inches to 78 feet 9 inches) length (L)¹ ('Small Private Yachts' or 'SPY').
- 1.2. This Yacht Notice shall be read in conjunction with YN002.
- 1.3. Information on yachting in The Bahamas is provided in YN001.
- 1.4. SPYs are not permitted to carry more than 12 passengers.

2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to all SPYs.

3. Revised Policy on Registration of Small Private Yachts

- 3.1. **Effective 01 July 2025, the BMA will no longer accept private (non-commercial) yachts (SPY) of less than 20 metres (≈ 65 feet 7 inches) length (L) for registration.**
- 3.2. Existing SPYs that were registered prior to 01 July 2025 are not affected and will remain registered, subject to compliance with registration conditions and this Notice.
- 3.3. Yachts between 20 and 24 metres (≈ 65 feet 7 inches and 78 feet 9 inches) may be accepted at the BMA's discretion.

¹ Length (L) or "Load Line length" means 96% of the total length on a waterline of a ship at 85% of the least moulded depth measured from the top of the keel, or the length from the fore-side of the stem to the axis of the rudder stock on that waterline, if that be greater. In ships designed with a rake of keel the waterline on which this is measured shall be parallel to the designed waterline.

4. Technical standards

- 4.1. SPYs are not required to comply with the provisions of the Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Code (BSYC) or any other specific Codes or standards. However, for the safety of the owner and guests, the BMA recommends all SPYs at least comply with the standards of the BSYC in respect of lifesaving and firefighting standards.
- 4.2. The BMA will consider Codes that provide equivalent standards to the BSYC. A list of recognised standards is provided in Annex 1 to this YN.
- 4.3. Owners who require the flexibility to easily change their yacht's use between "private" and "charter" should maintain compliance with the provisions of YN005 *Small Charter Yachts (SCY)*, on a continuous year on year on basis in order to enable quick and easy transfer of the yacht's status.
- 4.4. Full compliance with the provisions of the BSYC (or similar standards acceptable to the BMA) is mandatory for SPYs that operate for short periods in restricted charter status. Please refer to YN007 *Private Yacht Restricted Charter (PYRC)*.

5. Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Statement of Compliance

- 5.1. Voluntary compliance with the BSYC will entitle an SPY to be issued with a Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Statement of Compliance.
- 5.2. Compliance with the standards required by the BSYC will entitle yachts to also be issued with the certification required by the international conventions applicable to the vessel, upon satisfactory completion of the corresponding surveys and inspections.
- 5.3. The initial and renewal surveys shall be carried out by a Bahamas Recognised Organisation² (RO) or Bahamas Yacht Survey Organisation³ (YSO). On satisfactory completion of the surveys the surveyor will issue a short-term Statement of Compliance valid for 6 months.
- 5.4. The short-term Statement of Compliance and survey report shall be forwarded to the BMA by the surveyor. Upon satisfactory review and payment of the applicable fee, the BMA will issue a full-term Statement of Compliance.
- 5.5. The full-term Statement of Compliance is valid for five years, subject to annual survey by an RO/YSO within the three-month period before or after the anniversary date.

² A list of Bahamas RO is provided in [Marine Notice 002](#).

³ A list of Bahamas YSO is provided in [Yacht Notice 009](#).

- 5.6. If surveys are not carried out as required by the BSYC, the Statement of Compliance ceases to be valid.
- 5.7. Compliance with the stability provisions of the BSYC may be demonstrated by the approval of the BMA Yacht Stability Information Booklet by an RO/YSO.
- 5.8. Templates of the BMA Yacht Stability Information Booklet are available upon request from yachts@bahamasmaritime.com.

6. Statutory requirements

- 6.1. SPYs shall comply with applicable Bahamas regulations and international conventions as appropriate to their length, gross tonnage and number of persons carried on board.
- 6.2. The statutory requirements for surveys and certification are summarised below and a list of statutory documents to be carried is shown in Annex 2 to this YN.

6.3. Carving and Marking

- 6.3.1. All yachts shall be permanently and conspicuously marked with the name, port of registry, official number, net tonnage, and draft marks in accordance with the Merchant Shipping Act. Please refer to paragraph 5.11 of YN002.

6.4. Tonnage

- 6.4.1. All SPYs shall be measured against the Tonnage Regulations currently in force by a Bahamas RO or YSO and issued with a Tonnage Certificate.
- 6.4.2. Tonnage is calculated and issued at construction or when a yacht is altered such that the tonnage is increased or decreased. The Tonnage Certificate should include the method of calculations used to determine the tonnage.
- 6.4.3. Alternatively, tonnage can be recorded on Form Y001 *Certificate of Survey and Tonnage*.

6.5. Ship Radio Licence

- 6.5.1. All yachts are required to hold a Bahamas Ship Radiocommunications Licence, which is issued by the BMA on behalf of the responsible communications regulatory body⁴.

⁴ For The Bahamas this is the [Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority \(URCA\)](#)

6.5.2. A Ship Station Radio Licence Application [Form R108](#) is to be submitted at the time of registration and when any of the radio equipment is replaced, including Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs).

6.5.3. **EPIRBs must be registered** – see [BMA Marine Notice 45](#).

6.6. **Load Line**

6.6.1. SPYs shall have freeboard and freeboard markings assigned and marked in compliance with the BSYC.

6.6.2. Alternatively, for SPYs that cannot comply with the BSYC, the freeboard may be assigned in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Load Lines) Regulations 1998.

6.7. **Manning and Minimum Safe Manning Document**

6.7.1. There are no mandatory requirements for manning levels of SPYs, but the owner should ensure that the manning level is adequate for the yacht's proposed operation.

6.7.2. A Minimum Safe Manning Document (MSMD) is not required for SPYs; however, owners may voluntarily apply for an MSMD.

6.7.3. The MSMD is valid for 5 years and is subject to the fee indicated in [BMA Marine Notice 50](#). Further details including the application procedure are provided in [BMA Marine Notice 018](#)

6.7.4. Seafarers working on Bahamian yachts may apply for and be issued with Seaman's Record Books (SRBs), which are available on request. It should be noted however that a Bahamas SRB is NOT an identity document and is unsuitable for immigration purposes or as an authoritative identity document - such documents should be issued by the relevant agency in seafarer's home country. Please refer to [BMA Information Bulletin No. 107](#).

6.8. **Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC)**

6.8.1. MLC 2006 does not apply to yachts in non-commercial use. [Please refer to Marine Notice 31](#)

6.9. **Prevention of marine pollution (MARPOL Convention⁵)**

6.9.1. SPYs shall comply with the provisions of the MARPOL Convention as detailed below.

6.9.2. **SPYs shall not pollute the sea with oil-based products, sewage, or garbage.**

6.9.3. *MARPOL Annex I (Oil Pollution)*

- i. SPYs are not required to be surveyed, certified or hold any statutory records under MARPOL Annex I. However, yachts shall minimise marine oil pollution from machinery and shall limit the production of oil residues and oily mixtures and their discharge at sea.

6.9.4. *MARPOL Annex IV (Sewage)*

- i. SPYs certified to carry more than 15 persons are required to be surveyed and provided with an International Sewage Pollution Prevention (ISPP) Certificate.

6.9.5. *MARPOL Annex V (Garbage)*

- i. All SPYs shall comply with the provisions of MARPOL Annex V for the discharge of garbage into the sea.
- ii. All SPYs shall display placards which notify the crew and passengers of the discharge requirements of regulations 3, 4, 5 and 6 of MARPOL Annex V.
- iii. SPYs certified to carry 15 or more persons, **OR** of 100 gross tonnage and above, are required to carry a Garbage Management Plan in accordance with Regulation 10 of MARPOL Annex V.
- iv. SPYs certified to carry 15 or more persons engaged on voyages outside The Bahamas are required to maintain records in a Garbage Record Book Part I⁶ as described in Regulation 10 of MARPOL Annex V.

6.9.6. *MARPOL Annex VI (Air Pollution)*

- i. SPYs are not required to be surveyed, certified or hold any statutory records in compliance with MARPOL Annex VI. However, SPYs shall minimise air pollution.
- ii. **Engine International Air Pollution Prevention (EIAPP) Certificate**
 - (a) All diesel engines with an output of more than 130kW⁷, installed on SPYs on or after 01 January 2000, are to be certified in accordance with the IMO NO_x Technical Code and provided with an EIAPP Certificate and an approved Technical File.
 - (b) A marine diesel engine installed on a SPY is not required to comply with the Tier III NO_x requirements specified in Regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI. However, compliance with Tier III requirements is strongly

⁵ The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as amended

⁶ Available for purchase from the BMA – see [BMA Marine Notice 060](#)

⁷ Approximately 177 horsepower

recommended for any SPY that is intended to change between “private” and “charter” status.

6.10. ***International Anti-Fouling System Convention (AFS Convention)***

- 6.10.1. The AFS Convention applies to *all* vessel types operating in the marine environment, irrespective of tonnage, including every yacht.
- 6.10.2. SPYs are not required to have an International Anti-fouling System Certificate, however, evidence that the type of anti-fouling coating used is compatible with the AFS Convention shall be carried onboard.

6.11. ***Safety certificates***

- 6.11.1. SPYs are not required to be surveyed and hold safety certificates, unless operating as Private Yacht Restricted Charter, as described in paragraph 3.4.
- 6.11.2. Voluntary safety construction, safety equipment and navigation equipment compliance are as per BSYC or equivalent.
- 6.11.3. *International Safety Management Code (ISM Code)*
- i. SPYs are not required to comply with the ISM Code but are encouraged to comply with Section 24 of the BSYC.
- 6.11.4. *International Ship & Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code)*
- i. SPYs are not required to comply with the ISPS Code but are required to be vigilant regarding both the security of their own yacht, to prevent it being used without authorisation, and the activities of other vessel in their vicinity, reporting any suspicious activity to the authorities.
 - ii. Advice for non-ISPS vessels is provided in IMO Circular [MSC.1/Circ.1283](#).
- 6.11.5. *Continuous Synopsis Record (CSR)*
- i. SPYs are not required to comply with Continuous Synopsis Record requirements.

6.12. ***Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended (COLREG)***

- 6.12.1. Navigation lights and shapes shall comply with the applicable provisions of COLREG, including the following provisions:
- i. all navigation lights shall be provided with main and emergency power supply;

- ii. all navigation lights required to be shown whilst underway shall be duplicated⁸; and
- iii. approved LED Lights may be used providing they comply with paragraph 4.3 of MSC.253(83).

6.13. ***Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004, as amended (BWM 2004);***

- 6.13.1. SPYs that use water for ballasting purposes are required to comply with the BWM Convention⁹.
- 6.13.2. Notwithstanding the generality of paragraph 5.13.1, SPYs of less than 50 metres length overall with a maximum ballast water capacity of eight cubic metres may comply with the IMO G3 guidelines. Overall length means the length of the hull excluding bowsprits, booms, bumpkins, pulpits, etc. Please refer to [MEPC.123\(53\) Guidelines for Ballast Water Management Equivalent Compliance \(G3\)](#).

7. Classification requirements.

- 7.1. SPYs are not required to be “in class” with a Bahamas RO, but class is encouraged to ensure compliance with regulatory standards and ensure that the yacht is safe and seaworthy. It should also be noted that ROs may not be willing to undertake statutory surveys for unclassified yachts.
- 7.2. SPYs should be built in compliance with class rules where possible. If an SPY is built to other standards, the BMA should be consulted prior to registration.
- 7.3. Bahamas ROs are authorised to examine plans, perform surveys and issue statutory certificates on behalf of The Government of The Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

8. Bahamas safety inspections

- 8.1. For the safety of the owner and guests and to ensure the yacht is seaworthy, SPYs shall undergo a safety inspection by a Bahamas YSO or inspector at least once every 5 years, with effect from 01 April 2025.
- 8.2. All yachts have a safety inspection “anniversary date”. The anniversary date is usually three months after the date of provisional registration. The anniversary date is generally fixed for the duration of time that the yacht remains registered with The Bahamas.

⁸ See IMO Resolution [MSC.253\(83\) Recommendation on Performance Standards for Navigation Lights](#)

⁹ See [BMA Marine Notice 065](#)

- 8.3. A list of anniversary dates is available on the BMA website at:
<https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/services/inspections-surveys/vessel-anniversary-dates/>
 - 8.4. Yachts that are already registered are required to undergo the safety inspection at any time between 01 April 2025 and 31 March 2030. The Anniversary Date will be fixed at 5 years from the date of the first inspection.
 - 8.5. The Company is responsible for arranging the inspection and should make arrangements for inspection directly with the Bahamas Approved Nautical Inspector (ANI) that is nearest to the port at which the ship is lying. Bahamas ANIs are listed on the BMA website at <https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/inspectors/>.
 - 8.6. Cost of the Inspection is to ship manager/ owner's account and shall be settled directly with the attending inspection/survey Company.
 - 8.7. Upon satisfactory completion of the safety inspection, a Certificate of Inspection will be issued. Please refer to paragraphs 9-14 of [Marine Notice 91](#) for further information.
 - 8.8. The BMA can provide a safety checklist for the master/skipper to carry out a self-assessment to ensure that the lifesaving and firefighting equipment is properly maintained and in good order between inspections.
- 9. Queries.**
- 9.1. Any queries on this Notice may be addressed to yachts@bahamasmaritime.com or any BMA office.

Annex 1 – Recognised standards

The following standards are recognised as providing an equivalent level of safety as the Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Code. Other standards will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Issuing Body	Name of Standard
UK MCA	MGN 280 <i>Small Commercial Vessels & Pilot Boat Code of Practice</i>
ISO	ISO12215 Series <i>Small Craft less than 24 metres</i>

Annex 2 – List of statutory documents to be carried by a SPY

Gross Tonnage	Document	Issuing body
All	Certificate of Registry	BMA
	Form Y301 - Declaration of Non-commercial use	BMA & Owner
	Carving and Marking Inspection	BMA/YSO
	Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Statement of Compliance (Optional)	BMA
	Bahamas Safety Inspection Certificate or Bahamas Safety Check List	BMA Owner
	Bahamas Load Line Certificate (if applicable)	RO/YSO/BMA
	Tonnage Certificate	RO/YSO/BMA
	Ship Radio Licence	BMA
	Engine International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate (≥130kW)	Engine Manufacturer
	International Ballast Water Management Certificate/Statement (if applicable)	RO/YSO/BMA
	International Sewage Pollution Prevention Certificate (for yachts carrying more than 15 persons)	RO/YSO/BMA
	Garbage Management Plan and Garbage Record Book Part I (Yachts carrying more than 15 persons)	Owner
	Certificate of Class (if applicable)	RO
	International Anti-Fouling System Convention hull coating evidence of compliance	Owner
	Minimum Safe Manning Document (optional)	BMA
BMA – Bahamas Maritime Authority RO – Recognised Organisation (Classification Society) YSO – Yacht Survey Organisation		

