
Small Charter Yachts (SCY)

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 charter (commercial) yachts of 12 metres to 24 metres (\approx 39 feet 4 inches to 78 feet 9 inches) length (L)¹ ('Small Charter Yachts' or 'SCY').
- 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. SCYs are not permitted to carry more than 12 passengers.

2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to all SCYs.

3. Revised Policy on Registration of Small Charter Yachts

- 3.1. **Effective 01 July 2025, the BMA will no longer accept charter (commercial) yachts (SCY) of less than 20 metres (\approx 65 feet 7 inches) length (L) for registration.**
- 3.2. Existing SCYs that were registered prior to 01 July 2025 are not affected and will remain registered, subject to continued compliance with registration conditions and this Notice.
- 3.3. Yachts between 20 and 24 metres (\approx 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. New² SCYs are required to comply with the technical standards and mandatory provisions of the Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Code (BSYC) for their size and total number of persons on board.
- 4.2. SCY compliance with the BSYC depends on the area of operation, as indicated in the table below:

Area Category	Permitted Operating Area
0	Unrestricted service
1	Up to 150 miles from a safe haven
2	Up to 60 miles from a safe haven
3	Up to 20 miles from a safe haven
4	Up to 20 miles from a safe haven, in favourable weather and in daylight
5	To sea, within 20 miles from a nominated departure point in favourable weather and daylight.
6	To sea, within 3 miles of a nominated departure point(s), never more than 3 miles from land, in favourable weather & daylight

- 4.3. The depth and extent of the survey for the BSYC will depend upon the type of service that the yacht is used for and the “Area Category” in which it operates.
- 4.4. Existing SCYs³, may continue to comply with the standards they were constructed to.
- 4.5. 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.

5. Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Certificate of Compliance

- 5.1. SCYs are required to be surveyed and certified in accordance with the applicable requirements of the BSYC.

² A new SCY means a yacht, the keel of which was laid or the construction or lay up was started on or after 01 January 2021.

³ An existing SCY means a yacht, the keel of which was laid or the construction or lay up was started before 01 January 2021.

- 5.2. Compliance with the BSYC will entitle an SCY to be issued with a Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Certificate of Compliance.
- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. The initial and renewal surveys shall be carried out by a Bahamas Recognised Organisation⁴ (RO) or by a Bahamas Yacht Survey Organisation⁵ (YSO). On satisfactory completion of the surveys the surveyor will issue a short-term Certificate of Compliance valid for 6 months.
- 5.5. The short-term Certificate 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 Certificate of Compliance.
- 5.6. The full-term Certificate 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.
- 5.7. If surveys are not carried out as required by the BSYC, the Certificate of Compliance ceases to be valid.
- 5.8. Compliance with the stability provisions of the BSYC may be demonstrated by the approval of the BMA Yacht Stability Information Booklet by a RO/YSO.
- 5.9. Templates of the BMA Yacht Stability Information Booklet are available for download on the yacht section on the BMA website or upon request from yachts@bahamasmaritime.com.

6. Statutory Requirements

- 6.1. SCYs 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.

⁴ A list of Bahamas RO is provided in [Marine Notice 002](#).

⁵ A list of Bahamas YSO is provided in Yacht Notice 009.

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 SCYs 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 body⁶.

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

6.6.2. Alternatively, for SCYs 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. A Minimum Safe Manning Document (MSMD) is not required for SCYs, however, owners may voluntarily apply for an MSMD. This will allow the owner to consider a 'range and risk' approach when determining manning levels.

⁶ For The Bahamas this is the [Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority \(URCA\)](#)

- 6.7.2. 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 Information Bulletin No. 115](#).
- 6.7.3. Officer's watchkeeping certificates issued under the STCW Convention⁷ and similar certificates for yachts, such as those of the master, deck and engineer officers referred to in paragraph 5.7.4 must be endorsed by the BMA in accordance with the procedures for Flag State Endorsements in regulation I/10 of STCW, as amended. [BMA Marine Notice 017](#).
- 6.7.4. Watchkeeping Certificates of lower grades than those detailed in the STCW Convention, as amended, may be recognised by the BMA on a case by case basis. Please refer to [BMA Marine Notice 017](#).
- 6.7.5. Seafarer Employment Agreements and the social and employment provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, are mandatory on SCYs.
- 6.7.6. 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](#).
- 6.7.7. SCYs below 500 GT that do not have a Minimum Safe Manning Document must have the minimum manning level in compliance with the requirements of the paragraphs and tables 1 and 2 below this paragraph.
- 6.7.8. At least one person should hold a Radio Operator Certificate appropriate to the equipment on board.
- 6.7.9. Qualifications that differ from those listed, but of equal standing or specialist application, will be considered. The BMA is familiar with qualifications under the IYT brand. Most of these are acceptable, but in the interim specific agreement from The BMA, except as listed in the table is required.
- 6.7.10. Vessels regularly engaged on near coastal voyages from ports outside The Bahamas, have to abide by the manning requirements of the coastal state.
- 6.7.11. RYA/DfT certificates of competency and/or service, and other recognised Yachtmaster certificates, should carry the endorsement - "valid for vessels of up to 24 metres in

⁷ The International Convention on Standards of Training and Certification for Watchkeepers, 1978, as amended

length used for commercial purposes” or some other statement that clearly includes the size and type of yacht.

Table 1

Table 1		6	5	4	3	2	1	0
SKIPPER'S QUALIFICATION ACCEPTABLE FOR GIVEN CATEGORY	Certificate of Competency – Yachtmaster Ocean (MCA Accepted)	Note A	℞	℞	℞	℞	℞	℞
	Certificate of Competency or Service – Yachtmaster Offshore (MCA Accepted)	Note A	℞	℞	℞	℞	℞	
	MCA Boatmasters Licence Grade 1,2 & Modified Grade 3	Note A Note B	℞	℞	℞	℞	℞	
	RYA/DfT Certificate of Competency or Service - Coastal Skipper	Note A	℞	℞	℞	℞		
	RYA/DfT Advanced Powerboat Certificate	2 years relevant experience	℞	℞	℞	℞		
		12 months relevant experience	℞					
	Certificate of competence for appropriate area issued by Competent Authority	Note A Note C	℞	℞	℞	℞		
	RYA/DfT Day Skipper Theory & Practical Certificate	Note A 12 months relevant experience	℞	℞				
	Local Authority Licence for appropriate area	Note A Note D	℞					
	RYA/DfT Day Skipper Practical Certificate	Note A	℞					
RYA/DfT Powerboat Level 2 Certificate	12 months relevant experience	℞						
ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS	Unless operating in the single-handed mode in accordance with Paragraph 7 of this Annex, a second person capable of assisting the Skipper in an emergency should also be on board		℞	℞	℞	℞		
	There should also be on board a second person deemed by the skipper to be experienced.					℞		
	There should also be on board a second person holding at least an RYA/DfT Certificate of Competency or Service as Coastal Skipper.						℞	
	There should also be on board another person holding at least an RYA/DfT Certificate of Competency as either Yachtmaster Ocean or Yachtmaster Offshore.							℞

Note A Certificate should be designated motor or sail as appropriate.

Note B Existing MCA Boatmasters Licence Grade 3 is only acceptable if it has been validated for the specific area in the license prior to this Code coming into force. All Boatmasters licence holders are subject to the area limitations as defined on the certificate.

Note C Competent Authority in respect of manning requirements means either the Maritime and Coastguard Agency or an organisation that issues Certificates of Competence which has been applied for and granted recognition by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as having the appropriate technical and administrative expertise or

such an organisation recognised by The Bahamas Maritime Authority with a certificate issued within 5 years of the date the time of issue.

Note D Local Authority Licence - only those Local Authorities that have the approval of the MCA may issue Licences under this Code.

	CATEGORY	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
ENGINEERING REQUIREMENTS	RYA Diesel Engine Course or satisfied the Maritime and Coastguard as to their appropriate engineering experience and competency						Sail Vessel	Sail Vessel
	Approved Engine Course or satisfied the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as to their appropriate engineering experience and competency					Power vessel W	Power vessel SL	Power vessel SL
	Marine Engine Operators Licence (MN) (Y)						Power vessel W	Power vessel W <1500 Kw
	Senior Marine Engine Operators Licence, STCW C/Eng (Y4)							Power vessel W >=1500 Kw <3000 KW

Note 1 The person holding the engineering requirement may be a crew member listed in table 1.

Note 2 In all cases, one of the crew should be sufficiently familiar with the operation and maintenance of the vessel's machinery to ensure safe passage.

Note 3 Power Vessel W is a Power Vessel employed in towing operations, lifting operations or carriage of cargo greater than 1000 kg.

Note 4 Power Vessel SL is a Power Vessel other than Power Vessel designated by Power Vessel W.

6.8. Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC)

6.8.1. MLC 2006 applies to all seafarers and all yachts, whether publicly or privately owned, ordinarily engaged in commercial activities (i.e. all charter yachts). Please refer to [BMA Marine Notice 031](#) and the BSYC.

6.9. Prevention of marine pollution (MARPOL Convention⁸)

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

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

6.9.3. *MARPOL Annex I (Oil Pollution)*

- i. SCYs 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.

⁸ The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as amended

- 6.9.4. *MARPOL Annex IV (Sewage)*
- i. SCYs 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 SCYs shall comply with the provisions of MARPOL Annex V for the discharge of garbage into the sea.
 - ii. All SCYs 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. SCYs 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. SCYs certified to carry 15 or more persons engaged on voyages outside The Bahamas are required to maintain records in a Garbage Record Book Part I⁹ as described in Regulation 10 of MARPOL Annex V.
- 6.9.6. *MARPOL Annex VI (Air Pollution)*
- i. SCYs are not required to be surveyed, certified or hold any statutory records in compliance with MARPOL Annex VI. However, SCYs shall minimise air pollution.
 - ii. **Engine International Air Pollution Prevention (EIAPP) Certificate**
 - (a) All diesel engines with an output of more than 130kW¹⁰, installed on SCYs 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 SCY 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 recommended for any SCY 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. SCYs 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.

⁹ Available for purchase from the BMA – see [BMA Marine Notice 060](#)

¹⁰ Approximately 177 horsepower

6.11. Safety certificates

- 6.11.1. SCYs shall be surveyed against the BSYC (or equivalent) and hold a valid [Small] Charter Yacht Certificate of Compliance.
- 6.11.2. *International Safety Management Code (ISM Code)*
- i. SCYs shall comply with Section 24 of the BSYC.
- 6.11.3. *International Ship & Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code)*
- i. SCYs 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](#).
- 6.11.4. *Continuous Synopsis Record (CSR)*
- i. SCYs 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 duplicated¹¹; 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. SCYs that use water for ballasting purposes are required to comply with the BWM Convention¹².

7. Classification Requirements.

- 7.1. SCYs 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.

¹¹ See IMO Resolution [MSC.253\(83\) Recommendation on Performance Standards for Navigation Lights](#)

¹² See [BMA Marine Notice 065](#)

7.2. SCYs 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. Queries.

8.1. 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 SCY

Gross Tonnage	Document	Issuing body
All	Certificate of Registry	BMA
	Carving and Marking Inspection	BMA/YSO
	Bahamas Small Charter Yacht Certificate of Compliance	BMA
	Bahamas Safety Inspection Certificate	BMA
	Bahamas Load Line Certificate (if applicable)	RO/YSO/BMA
	International Tonnage Certificate	RO/YSO/BMA
	Ship Radio Licence	BMA
	Engine International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate ($\geq 130\text{kW}$)	Engine Manufacturer
	International Ballast Water Management Certificate (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
Safety Radio Certificate	RO/YSO/BMA	
BMA – Bahamas Maritime Authority RO – Recognised Organisation (Classification Society) YSO – Yacht Survey Organisation		

Revision History

Version	Description of Revision
1.0	First Issue
1.1	Paragraph 4.9 amended to include reference to BMA website; Paragraphs 5.11.2 (LRIT) and 5.14 (Wreck Removal) deleted and reference to those instruments removed from Annex 2 (not applicable to small yachts)
1.2	New paragraph 5.4.3 and updated branding
1.3	Periodic review. New section 8 and links updated
1.4	New section 3