



USCG Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance (CG-CVC) Mission Management System (MMS) Work Instruction (WI)



Category	Port State Control				
Title	Qualship 21 & E-Zero Programs				
Serial	CVC-WI-002(1)	Orig. Date	22APR24	Rev. Date	N/A
Disclaimer:	This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party. It represents the Coast Guard's current thinking on this topic and may assist industry, mariners, the public, and the Coast Guard, as well as other federal and state regulators, in applying statutory and regulatory requirements. Internet release is authorized.				
References:	(a) CVC-WI-021(series) – Targeting of Foreign Vessels for Port State Control (PSC) Examination (b) Application For QS21 Initial/Renewal and E-Zero Designation (Excel) (c) Application for Adding E-Zero Designation to An Existing QS21 Certificate (Excel)				

- A. Purpose. This WI provides guidance regarding the Coast Guard's Qualship 21 and E-Zero programs. Wherever conflict of guidance exists related to previously released guidance, this WI shall be given precedence.
- B. Action. The Coast Guard's port state control (PSC) program applies to foreign-flagged vessels which call upon ports in U.S. waters. This WI provides guidance for owners, operators, and agents of these vessels who are enrolled, or will consider future enrollment in the Coast Guard's Qualship 21 and E-Zero programs. Additionally, this WI provides guidance for Coast Guard Sector Commanders, Captains of the Port (COTPs), Officers in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMIs) and Port State Control Officers (PSCOs) for conducting examinations onboard vessels which are enrolled in the Qualship 21 and E-Zero programs respectively.
- C. Background. The Coast Guard continuously evaluates and builds upon efforts to eliminate substandard shipping by focusing on methods to identify low quality vessels, as evidenced by the employed targeting program (please see reference (a) for additional information). This mechanism identifies lower quality vessels which are then incentivized to improve performance by being subjected to more frequent and thorough port state control exams. However, the Coast Guard recognizes that a significant number of vessels are typically found with few or no deficiencies. These higher quality vessels needed be recognized and rewarded for their commitment to safety and quality. On January 1, 2001, the Coast Guard implemented an initiative to identify high quality vessels and provide incentives to encourage quality operations. This initiative is termed, "Qualship 21," and stands for quality shipping in the 21st century. This program rewards those companies, operators, and vessels that demonstrate the utmost commitment to quality and safety through the highest level of compliance with international standards and applicable U.S. regulations.

Beginning on July 1, 2017, vessels enrolled in the Qualship 21 program became eligible to seek the E-Zero designation if certain requirements were met. The E-Zero program is in addition to the existing Qualship 21 program and is intended to recognize exemplary vessels that have consistently adhered to environmental compliance, while also demonstrating an increased commitment to environmental stewardship.

D. Discussion.

1. Application and Enrollment. For those companies that believe their vessel(s) qualify for the Qualship 21 program, applications must be made using reference (b). For vessels with existing Qualship 21 certificates and wishing to add an E-Zero designation, applications must be made using reference (c). In order to receive the E-Zero designation, a vessel must have been enrolled in the Qualship 21 program for a minimum of three (3) consecutive years preceding the E-Zero application. All applications should be emailed to portstatecontrol@uscg.mil. After receiving the application, the Coast Guard will screen the information and make a determination of eligibility. If accepted into the program, a Qualship 21 certificate will be issued to the vessel. The vessel will then be listed on the Coast Guard's Qualship 21 vessel list located on the [Qualship 21 webpage](#). If owners/operators believe that their vessels are enrolled in Qualship 21 but are not located on this list, they should notify the Coast Guard via portstatecontrol@uscg.mil. Applications for enrollment are processed in the order in which they are received. The Coast Guard strives to process each application within 30 days of receipt.
2. Incentives. The Coast Guard seeks to ensure high quality vessels are given appropriate recognition, and thereby encourage the worldwide shipping community to strive for higher levels of compliance. By allowing high quality vessels to be examined less frequently and with reduced examination scope, the Coast Guard can more effectively allocate its workforce to examine lower quality vessels. These incentives are subject to change at the discretion of CG-CVC.
 - a. Qualship 21
 - 1) All vessels.
 - a) Qualship 21 enrollment valid for 3 years.
 - b) Vessel name posted on the Coast Guard's [Qualship 21 webpage](#) and Electronic Quality Shipping Information System (EQUASIS).
 - c) Qualship 21 certificate issued to the vessel.
 - 2) Tank Vessels.
 - a) Certificate of Compliance (COC) annual examination reduced in scope. (For tank vessels, the COC annual examination occurs at the mid-period of the COC's two-year validity.)
 - 3) Passenger Vessels
 - a) No reduced PSC examination, but vessel will receive Qualship 21 certificate and recognition on [Qualship 21 webpage](#) and EQUASIS.
 - b. E-Zero
 - 1) All vessels.
 - a) Special recognition denoted on Qualship 21 certificate.
 - b) Vessel name posted on Coast Guard's [Qualship 21 webpage](#) and EQUASIS.
 - 2) Tank Vessels.
 - a) Permitted to conduct cargo operations within six (6) months of both the COC annual examination due date and the COC expiration date. OCMI's must, at a minimum, verify cargo-specific statutory documents (e.g., International Oil Pollution Prevention Certificate, International Certificate of Fitness) and confirm all cargo systems are operational with the master prior to allowing cargo operations. Tank vessels must still

receive a full COC renewal examination prior to the issuance of the COC and the vessel's departure from the COTP zone.

3. Eligibility Criteria. Qualship 21 is a PSC-based initiative, that seeks to reward the highest quality vessels calling on ports in U.S. waters. As the shipping industry continues to evolve in the 21st century, the program manager (CG-CVC) reserves the right to update criteria as may be required to ensure that the highest quality vessels continue to be recognized by this initiative. Criterion is calculated by CG-CVC-2 as part of preparing the Coast Guard's annual report. The list of qualified flag administrations is then published in the annual report and comes into effect annually on June 30th. This date marks the closure of the enrollment for vessels registered to flags that are no longer qualified for the program. Flags will remain eligible to have their vessels apply for Qualship 21 status for a one-year period beginning on July 1st. Once qualified, a flag can remain qualified if their eligibility status does not change based on the calculation of the annual PSC data. If a flag administration is no longer qualified for the program, any of their vessels currently enrolled in Qualship 21 may remain in the program until their Qualship 21 certificate expires. The following eligibility criteria must be met by vessels applying for Qualship 21 and E-Zero respectively. All documentation should be submitted to CG-CVC-2 at portstatecontrol@uscg.mil:

a. Qualship 21

- 1) Must be a non-U.S. flagged vessel.
- 2) The vessel must be registered to a Qualship 21 qualified flag administration. Eligible flag administrations will be listed each year in the Port State Control Annual Report.
 - a) A qualified flag administration must:
 - i. Not have a three-year rolling detention ratio greater than 1.0%
 - ii. Have at least 10 PSC examinations in the U.S. in each of the previous three (3) years.
 - iii. Submit a copy of the most recent Audit Final Report for the Flag's IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) audit.
 - iv. Provide Any flag comments related to the Progress in Implementation of the CAP (CPICAP).
 - v. Submit a Self-Assessment of flag administration (State) Performance to the IMO and provide a copy to the Coast Guard.
- 3) No vessel detentions by the Coast Guard within the previous 36 months.
- 4) No marine violations or serious marine casualties and no more than one (1) Notice of Violation (NOV) ticket in the U.S. within the previous 36 months.
- 5) A successful U.S. PSC safety exam within the previous 24 months.
- 6) Not owned or operated by any company (as listed on the vessel's Continuous Synopsis Record) that has been associated with more than one PSC detention in U.S. waters within the previous 24 months.
- 7) Vessels cannot have their statutory convention certificates issued by a targeted RO. Targeted ROs are those that are listed in the most recent PSC annual report, available on the Coast Guard's [PSC website](#).

- 8) The Coast Guard reserves the right to restrict eligibility in the Qualship 21 program to any vessel because of special circumstances. This includes, but is not limited to, significant overseas casualties or detentions and pending criminal or civil investigations.

b. E-Zero Designation

- 1) Must be a vessel enrolled in Qualship 21, have maintained certification for the past three (3) years, and be eligible for re-enrollment.
- 2) Zero worldwide MARPOL detentions for the vessel in the past three (3) years.
- 3) Zero environmental deficiencies in the U.S. over the past three (3) years. This includes but is not limited to deficiencies stemming from non-compliance with requirements associated with MARPOL, Vessel General Permit, ballast water management, or anti-fouling practices.
- 4) Zero Letters of Warning, Notices of Violation or Civil Penalties related to Right Whale Mandatory Ship Reporting or speed restriction violations over the past five (5) years.
- 5) Installed a CG type-approved ballast water management system (BWMS).

4. Exit Criteria. Entry and retention into the Qualship 21 program is an indicator that the vessel is of a high quality. Certain occurrences, however, indicate that the ship is no longer of a high quality. A non-exhaustive list of criteria which will individually result in a vessel being removed from the Qualship 21 program is provided below. A company may request reconsideration from the Coast Guard to remain in the Qualship 21 program or retain its E-Zero designation if it disagrees with the adjudication of one of the exit criteria.

- 1) The vessel is detained and determined to be substandard in U.S. waters.
- 2) The vessel has a marine violation, more than one unpaid NOV ticket, or a reportable marine casualty that meets the definition of a serious marine incident of major marine casualty.
- 3) The vessel is found with serious deficiencies (e.g., deficiencies that are considered serious enough to warrant the detention of the vessel) that are not being monitored by the vessel's flag administration or RO acting on behalf of the flag administration, or if the vessel is found to not have reported a hazardous condition prior to arrival. If the vessel is within the time limits imposed by the flag administration or RO to correct deficiencies, the vessel will not lose eligibility for incentives.
- 4) The vessel transfers to a targeted RO.
- 5) The vessel changes its flag administration to one that has a detention ratio greater than 1.0%, or to a flag administration that does not have at least ten (10) distinct arrivals in each of the previous three (3) years.
- 6) The vessel is associated with a company that is required by the U.S. Department of Justice or U.S. Coast Guard to have and follow an Environmental Compliance Plan due to criminal prosecution or the vessel has any other pending criminal investigations.

5. Renewing Eligibility. Vessel owners are required to renew their enrollment in the program upon the expiration of their Qualship 21 certificate. There is no automatic reenrollment into the program. Furthermore, renewal of eligibility is established under the same conditions as initial certification, including the requirement to have completed a successful U.S. PSC safety exam within the previous 24 months. When vessels are renewing eligibility with current Qualship 21 flag administrations whose three (3) year rolling detention ratio has gone above 1.0%, they will be given a one-year extension to apply for renewal into the program, provided that the flag administration's detention ratio is below 1.05%. This allows vessels under those flag

administrations to renew their certificate for the normal three-year term, during the one-year extension for the flag state.

- E. Certification Numbers on Qualship 21 Certificates. In March 2015, the Coast Guard began issuing Qualship 21 program certificates to flag administrations, and vessels with a unique identification number. New certificates to vessels with these identification numbers will not be issued until the vessel is reenrolled in Qualship 21. The lack of an identification number on an existing current certificate does not make the certificate invalid. Questions regarding the validity of a certificate associated with the Qualship 21 program should be directed to portstatecontrol@uscg.mil.
- F. Additional Information. As the foreign-flagged fleet calling on ports in U.S. waters continues to change, the program manager (CG-CVC) will continue to evaluate and make necessary updates to maximize the effectiveness of this incentive-based program. Questions or concerns regarding this document, the Qualship 21, or E-Zero programs should be directed to the PSC branch at portstatecontrol@uscg.mil.

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By direction