



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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Washington, DC

Alert 09-09

NAVIGATION LIGHTS - "MAINTAINING DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER"

The Coast Guard recognizes that many vessel owners choose to place decorative lights onboard their vessels during the Holiday season. The Coast Guard **strongly reminds** vessel owners not to illuminate such lights during routine navigation unless operating in a Holiday boat parade or when the vessel is secured dockside. This issue was highlighted during a recent casualty whereby the owner of a passenger vessel had installed decorative Holiday type LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting around the periphery of the vessel. The LEDs were contained in a clear flexible hose and securely attached. Near the bow of the vessel the lighting was adjacent and slightly above the port and starboard navigation lights. At night this installation, can impair the "distinctive character" of the navigation lights as set out in Rule 20 of the Navigation Rules. (Photograph below shows daytime view.)

Additionally, Rule 22 of Navigation Rules states that vessel sidelights have a two mile range for vessels 12 meters or more in length but less than 50 meters in length. In this particular casualty a side light navigation fixture was found installed on the passenger vessel that was stamped 1 nautical mile vice two miles. Vessel owners and operators and marine inspection personnel should ensure that the proper navigation lighting fixtures are installed, that all components operate correctly and that regulatory requirements with respect to Navigation Lighting are met.



This safety alert is provided for informational purposes only and does not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational or material requirement. This information does not assign culpability of any kind, to any involved party with respect to the aforementioned casualty. Developed by the Office of Investigations and Analysis, United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC. Questions can be addressed to Mr. Ken Olsen at:

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