



The United States Coast Guard history began on **August 4, 1790**, when President George Washington signed the **Tariff Act** authorizing the construction of 10 vessels, referred to as "cutters," to enforce federal tariff and trade laws and to prevent smuggling.



The first federal licensing of mariners was required by the **Steamboat Act of 1852**, which authorized the Steamboat Inspection Service to issue licenses to engineers and pilots of steamers carrying passengers.



On **February 14, 1903**, congressional action transferred the Steamboat Inspection Service to the newly created United States Department of Commerce and Labor. When that department was split in 1913, the service came under the control of the new United States Department of Commerce.



The **Morro Castle** fire off the coast of New Jersey in 1934, which killed 124 people, paved the way for the **Act of May 27, 1936**. It reorganized the Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection and renamed it the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation.



The **Motorboat Act of 1940** was enacted to cover safety requirements for every vessel propelled by machinery and not more than 65 feet (19.8 meters) in length, with the exception of tugboats and towboats of this length propelled by steam, which were covered under other laws. In addition to covering safety equipment, running lights, and reckless or negligent operations, this law gave the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation the authority to examine the operators of these boats and issue licenses provided they carried passengers for hire.



After the United States entered World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a wartime measure signed Executive Order 9083 on **February 28, 1942**. It transferred the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation's inspection duties, among other things, temporarily to the control of the United States Coast Guard.



# History of the National Maritime Center



On **July 16, 1946**, Reorganization Plan Number 3 abolished the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation and transferred all of its functions permanently to the United States Coast Guard. This marked the first time **in the nation's history** that all functions of maritime safety came under one agency.



In **1982**, the United States Coast Guard establishes Regional Exam Centers (REC) throughout the United States to process mariner licenses and documents. There are currently 17 RECs strategically located throughout the United States.



In **1997**, the United States Coast Guard creates the National Maritime Center in Arlington, VA, to manage the **Coast Guard's Merchant Mariner** licensing program.



In **2008**, the National Maritime Center moves to its new home in Martinsburg, WV. The United States Coast Guard centralizes its Mariner License Document (MLD) program and changes its name to the Merchant Mariner Credentialing (MMC) program. The 17 RECs operate as **"storefronts and advocates"** for mariners.



The United States Coast Guard issues the first consolidated Merchant Mariner Credential Thursday, during the Towing Safety Advisory Committee meeting held on **May 7, 2009**, at Dania Beach, FL.

