
United States Coast Guard QUALSHIP 21 & E-Zero Program

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Technical Alert is issued by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to provide information on the United States Coast Guard (USCG) QUALSHIP 21 and E-Zero programs.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) efforts to eliminate substandard shipping have focused on improving methods to identify poor-quality ships and recognising and rewarding higher-quality ships at Port State Control (PSC) inspections. Therefore, on 01 January 2001 the USCG implemented the QUALSHIP 21 initiative to identify high-quality ships and provide incentives to encourage quality operations.
- 2.2. The USCG introduced the E-Zero designation on 01 July 2017 for ships enrolled in the QUALSHIP 21 program that meet strict additional environmental requirements.
- 2.3. E-zero is an initiative that focuses on compliance with international environmental conventions and United States ballast water regulations. The E-zero designation is intended to provide a higher level of recognition within the existing QUALSHIP 21 program.
- 2.4. Details on the incentives for QUALSHIP 21 ships and new incentives for QUALSHIP 21/E-Zero ships, eligibility, enrolment, and renewal requirements are available on the USCG website at:
<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Prevention-Policy-CG-5P/Inspections-Compliance-CG-5PC-/Commercial-Vessel-Compliance/Foreign-Offshore-Compliance-Division/Port-State-Control/QS21/>.

3. QUALSHIP 21 and The Bahamas

- 3.1. Due to a higher than usual number of detentions in the USA in 2022 (which resulted in a detention ratio of 1.53%), the 3-year rolling average detention ratio for 2020-2022 increased to 1.06% which meant that the Bahamas lost its eligibility for QUALSHIP 21 status for the year 2023-2024.

- 3.2. The Bahamas detention ratio in the USA in 2023 was considerably improved (with a detention ratio of 0.63%), resulting in the 3-year rolling average for 2021-2023 reducing to 1.016%. Unfortunately this remains just outside the qualifying criteria of “less than 1.0%”. Therefore, The Bahamas will not be eligible for Qualship 21 status at least up to June 2025.
- 3.3. It should be noted that there is no longer automatic reenrolment of qualified ships for QUALSHIP 21. Owners must reapply for QUALSHIP21 when the current certificate expires. Applications for enrolment or reenrolment after 01 July 2023 by Bahamas flagged ships will not be accepted by USCG due to the loss of QUALSHIP 21 status.
- 3.4. The Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) continues to actively monitor all PSC inspections and places great importance on maintaining a low rate of detentions in both the USA and elsewhere.
- 3.5. Owners and Managers of Bahamas registered ships are therefore urged to ensure that any ships calling at ports in the USA are fully prepared for the possibility of a PSC inspection by the USCG.
- 3.6. All lifesaving appliances, firefighting equipment and essential equipment should be tested before arrival, be in full working order and ready for immediate use and the crew adequately trained for and familiar with their duties. Please also refer to Marine Notice 93 – Port State Control Inspections and Information Notice 14 - Port State Control Recurring Deficiencies.
- 3.7. Since 01 October 2023, prior to arrival in a US port, the Master and Chief Engineer are required to complete, sign, and submit the PSC Checklist attached to IN014 (available to download as [FORM060](#)) to tech@bahamasmaritime.com. Failure to complete the PSC Checklist may lead to additional audits of the ship and/or Company.
- 3.8. In the event of consecutive US port calls, [FORM060](#) need only be submitted prior to the first US port, but an updated form must be submitted if the condition of the ship changes during these consecutive port calls or after the vessel calls a port outside the USA. Ships making regular US port calls may submit the form monthly.
- 3.9. If the Company has any concerns about the material condition of the vessel, it may engage a Bahamas Approved Nautical Inspector to conduct a special inspection prior to visiting the USA. The BMA may require the attendance of an inspector for any ship that has had a PSC detention in the previous 24 months, or any ship which is thought to be at high risk of detention.

4. Current QUALSHIP 21 Companies and E-Zero ships

- 4.1. The USCG periodically publishes a list of ships that have gained QUALSHIP 21 and/or E-Zero status [on its website](#). The BMA congratulates these Companies, and the Masters, Officers, and crews of their QUALSHIP 21/E-Zero eligible ships, on achieving their awards.

5. Validity

- 5.1. This Technical Alert is valid until further notice.