
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 the Bahamas lost its eligibility for QUALSHIP 21 status for the year 2023-2024. The detention ratio was improved in both 2023 and 2024, resulting in the 3-year rolling average for 2022-2024 reducing to **1.01%**. Unfortunately, this remains just outside the qualifying criteria of *"less than 1.0%"* for 2025-2026.

- 3.2. As of 30 June, The Bahamas has had nil detentions in the USA in 2025 (from approximately 300 inspections). Accordingly, provided that the improving performance is maintained, The Bahamas expects to regain Qualship 21 status for 2026-27.
- 3.3. The 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.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. 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.
- 3.9. 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. Validity

- 4.1. This Technical Alert is valid until 31 December 2025.