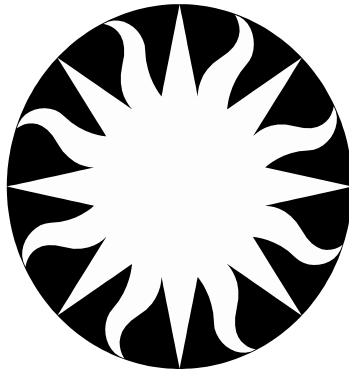


Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute



Small Boats Operator Guide

Requirements for using Naos small boats

When is a STRI-qualified boat operator required?

- A STRI-qualified small-boat operator is required for any boating activity.
- A qualified operator will stay on board during diving operations.
- A qualified operator will stay onboard throughout the night as a watch-keeper when the boat is anchored at night.

Naos small-boats are mainly used as “day boats”. If the boat is to be kept away from the lab overnight a night-watchkeeper is necessary. Arrangements for overnight cruises need to be made in advance so agreement on fees for boat operator/watchkeeper, food, fuel and water can be reached before the cruise.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A STRI SMALL-BOAT OPERATOR

To become a qualified operator, a person must:

1. Have a boat liscence from the Panama Nautical School (see below)
2. Have successfully complete an approved course in basic seamanship. (ACP, Coast Guard, ENP)
3. Demonstrate proficiency in basic seamanship, navigation, communications and emergency procedures.
4. Demonstrate proficiency with operational and safety equipment on each vessel used.
5. If relevant, demonstrate proficiency in the deployment and recovery of divers.
6. Obtain certification in basic first aid and CPR from STRI Diving Office.
7. Be certified as a STRI small-boat operator by the STRI Vessel Superintendent’s Office.

To obtain a small boat operators’ license from the Panama Nautical School

1. Complete the Nautical School of Panama’s training course (Half day, no cost, reservation is required; training schedule is available at Nautical School).
2. A health certificate, issued by a certified physician, MD.
3. Two passport size photos.
A letter from STRI’s Vessel Superintendent stating the maximum boat size operator is certified to operate.
4. Take items 1-4, plus \$10 to Autoridad Maritima de Panama Office: license will be issued approx 1 week later.

NOTE: STRI’s Vessel Superintendent (Pierre Fuentes fuentesp@si.edu) has the ultimate authority over all aspects of STRI small-boat operations.

These regulations cover STRI boats up to 40ft in length.

SMALL-BOAT OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A small boat can only be operated by a certified “STRI small-boat operator”, and a boat must have such an operator onboard at all times.
2. The boat operator has ultimate authority and full responsibility for the safety of the vessel and the personnel. The STRI diving officer maintains responsibility for the safety of the divers, but the ultimate responsibility rests with the boat operator.
3. A “Boat guide” aboard each boat describes the boat, its systems and equipment location and includes an inventory of all safety equipment onboard.
4. Before the cruise, the operator is responsible for loading the boat to insure proper trim and stability and for stowing and securing gear.
5. During the cruise, the operator will ensure that the boat is equipped with a life jacket for each person aboard.
6. After the cruise, the operator is responsible for washing down and cleaning the boat, and, if used, trailer and vehicle.
7. The boat operator must notify promptly Naos support personnel of any problems that have arisen with the boat, accessories or equipment, or the dock crane in relation to the cruise.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

A. Scheduling:

- a. The Principal Investigator is responsible for submitting requests.
- b. Boat use requests should be submitted as far in advance as possible, but minimally 5 works days before usage.
- c. Reservations will be administered by the Marine Operations Office. Operating schedules are posted at the Naos Small boats website:
http://stri.org/english/research/facilities/marine/small_boats/index.php
- d. The principal investigator or vessel operator will file an online Cruise Plan for each scheduled operation at least 24 hours prior to that operation. The boat will not leave the Naos dock if an online cruise plan is not on file.

B. Operation rules:

- Departure is contingent upon suitable weather conditions.
- The vessel operator must inform the Naos contact person regarding any change of scheduling, sea conditions, and operating sea, and operating area, dive plan, or other factors, which affect the cruise plan.

- Failure to maintain scheduled radio contact may initiate search and rescue procedures. If scheduled radio contact is missed, the contact person will attempt to make contact via channel 16, or other predetermined working frequencies, or by the cell phone provided for use with the boat. If contact is not established within two hours after a scheduled contact, search and rescue procedures will be initiated.
- The operator of a returning boat will check in with the staff in charge of receiving the boat at Naos dock and log in the return time.
- Negligent operation will result in the suspension of operating privileges by the operator concerned.
- Defensive boating is the key to safe boating. It may be necessary to depart from standard procedures under the navigation rules to avoid an accident.
- Boating and Alcohol: No alcohol shall be consumed on a STRI boat at any time

SCUBA DIVING ACTIVITIES

All SCUBA diving activities must be approved in advance by STRI diving officer, Edgardo Ochoa ochoae@si.edu.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Operators may deviate from established procedures only in order to prevent injury, loss of life or serious environmental damage. Following an incident, a written report must be submitted to the Vessel Superintendent's Office as soon as possible describing the events, weather, passengers onboard, date, time, operator, etc.

Due to liability concerns, operators will not render aid to other vessels unless there is imminent danger of injury, death or major property damage. For example, do not tow vessels that are out of fuel or stuck on a sandbar. If another vessel requests aid, it is appropriate to radio the authorities and standby until help arrives.

Never give another vessel navigational advice because you could be held liable in the event of an accident.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

A hazardous material is any substance, which, because of its chemical properties, can cause the deterioration of other materials or injury to living organisms. Hazardous materials may be grouped into five major classes: Flammable or explosive, corrosive, reactive, toxic or poisonous, and cryogenic.

A list of any hazardous materials to be taken on STRI small-boats must be sent in advance to Vessel Superintendent's Office for prior approval.