

Board of Pilot Commissioners for the Bays of San Francisco, San Pablo, and Suisun

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July 27, 2020

Captain Marie Byrd
Commander, Sector San Francisco
United States Coast Guard
One Yerba Buena Island
San Francisco, California 94130

Re: Regional Examination Center Closure Update dated 08JUL20

Good day Captain Byrd:

The Board of Pilot Commissioners for the Bays of San Francisco, San Pablo, and Suisun (BOPC) administers a pilot training program, whose graduates eventually become BOPC-licensees that navigate vessels on the San Francisco Bays, tributaries to Stockton and Sacramento and Monterey Bay. The BOPC's pilot training program has been significantly impacted by the, the closure of the Regional Exam Center (REC) in Oakland due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, BOPC pilot trainees have experienced pilotage route endorsement testing delays that are impacting the a trainee's progress in the program, and delaying graduation from the program and eventual State pilot licensure.

As you are aware, BOPC pilot trainees are required to hold federal pilotage endorsements for pilotage routes prior to beginning hands-on piloting under the tutelage of BOPC-licensees who hold both Federal and State pilot licenses. This hands-on piloting is the most important aspect of the pilot training program. Of the current eight trainees in the pilot training program, five trainees have not tested for all of the required pilotage routes. Exceptions have been made in the pilot training program to allow trainees some hand-on experience for routes that they do not have the required endorsement. However, these trainees will be unable to advance to the final stage of training and graduate to be a BOPC-licensed pilot without the appropriate pilotage route testing.

The BOPC has set the maximum number of licensed pilots at 60 to ensure a sufficient number of trained and rested pilots, and there is currently a deficit in the number of licensed pilots with 54 BOPC pilot licenses issued. As such, it is important to the health and safety of the SF Bays and the economy of the State of California that pilot trainees not be delayed in completing their pilot training program.

Toward that end, the BOPC respectfully requests that the current 5 trainees needing pilotage route endorsement exams be prioritized when the REC reopens for testing. Prior to that time, the BOPC is willing to make its facility available to an REC proctor to conduct testing for BOPC trainees, subject to all current required health and safety protocols such as mask wearing, social distancing and applicable sanitization procedures. I sincerely appreciate your favorable response to this request.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allen Garfinkle".

Allen Garfinkle
Executive Director

cc: RECOAKLAND@uscg.mil