



OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

PASSENGER FERRY SERVICE TO FORT SUMTER NATIONAL MONUMENT MET FEDERAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS




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Memorandum

NOV 06 2018

To: P. Daniel Smith
Acting Director, Exercising the Authority of the Director
National Park Service

From: Mary L. Kendall 
Deputy Inspector General

Subject: Final Inspection Report – Passenger Ferry Service to Fort Sumter National
Monument Met Federal Safety Requirements
Report No. 2018-FIN-056

This report presents the results of our unannounced inspection on August 14, 2018, of passenger ferry safety at Fort Sumter National Monument, Charleston, SC. The objective of our inspection was to determine whether Fort Sumter Tours, Inc., a National Park Service (NPS) concessionaire, operated its ferry service to Fort Sumter in compliance with Federal safety requirements.

Fort Sumter Tours met all the safety requirements that we tested on three of its four vessels (the fourth was out of service): each had a U.S. Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection on board, and none of the ferries carried more passengers than allowed. Furthermore, the ferries carried enough life vests for all passengers, had fire extinguishers available that had been inspected regularly, and carried first aid kits on board. In addition, crew members possessed current operating licenses and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certifications and passed random drug tests.

Background

Fort Sumter National Monument, accessible only by boat, is a popular tourist destination that hosted more than 305,000 visitors in 2017.

Fort Sumter Tours, a small, family-owned company established in 1961, has transported visitors to the fort for more than 50 years, according to NPS officials. In May 2017, the NPS awarded Fort Sumter Tours its most recent 10-year contract (Contract No. FOSU001-17) to provide passenger ferry service to the fort.

The concessionaire operates four ferries to Fort Sumter from two locations—Liberty Square in Charleston and Patriots Point in Mount Pleasant, SC. The vessels in use at the time of our inspection included the *Spirit of the Carolinas*, the *Spirit of Charleston*, and the *General Beauregard*. The fourth ferry, the *Spirit of the Lowcountry*, was temporarily out of service and we did not inspect it.

Inspection Results

Fort Sumter Tours met safety requirements established by the Coast Guard and detailed in the Code of Federal Regulations. As of August 14, 2018, the date of our inspection:

- Each of the operating vessels had a valid Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection on board, in compliance with 46 C.F.R. § 176.100(a).
- None of the ferries carried more passengers than the Coast Guard's Certificates of Inspection allowed.
- The ferries each carried more life vests than required on the Certificates of Inspection, and they had enough adult- and child-sized life vests for each adult and child on board.
- Each vessel carried the number of fire extinguishers stated on the Certificates of Inspection, and all fire extinguishers received regular inspections, as required by 46 C.F.R. § 176.810(b)(1).
- Each of the ferries carried at least one first aid kit containing such items as bandages, aspirin, and ammonia inhalants, in accordance with 46 C.F.R. § 160.041-4(b).
- Boat captains possessed current operating licenses to comply with 46 C.F.R. § 26.20-1.
- All crew members passed random drug tests, as required by 46 C.F.R. § 16.230(a), and a sufficient number possessed CPR certifications, in accordance with the Coast Guard's Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular No. 1-91, Enclosure 1, Paragraph II.E.
- Although not required, the vessels each carried a defibrillator.

We also found that the NPS and Fort Sumter Tours collaboratively determine whether service to Fort Sumter should be suspended due to weather conditions. The NPS staff members who we interviewed stated that they never felt pressured by Fort Sumter Tours to allow ferry service to continue under unfavorable conditions, and they expressed no overall concerns regarding the concessionaire.

The legislation creating the Office of Inspector General requires that we report to Congress semiannually on all audit, inspection, and evaluation reports issued. Since there are no recommendations, a response to this report is not required.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the inspection. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call me at 202-208-5745.

Attachment

cc: Robert "Bob" Vogel, Regional Director, Southeast Region, NPS
Tracy Stakely, Superintendent, Fort Sumter National Monument, NPS

Scope and Methodology

Our inspection focused on whether Fort Sumter Tours, Inc., complied with Federal safety requirements for passenger vessels as of August 14, 2018, the date of our unannounced inspection. We also reviewed the number of passengers who traveled to Fort Sumter on each vessel from August 7 to 14, 2018, to determine if the concessionaire kept an adequate number of life vests on board during that period. We did not inspect safety related to the *Spirit of the Lowcountry*, because that vessel was not in service at the time of our review.

We conducted our inspection in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation as put forth by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. We believe that the work performed provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed background information on Fort Sumter National Monument and Fort Sumter Tours' ferry service
- Reviewed Federal safety criteria for passenger vessels
- Rode each of Fort Sumter Tours' three ferries that were in operation on August 14, 2018, prior to notifying the National Park Service and concessionaire of our inspection
- Listened to the safety instructions provided on board each of the ferries and determined whether life vests were stored in the locations noted in the safety briefing
- Counted life vests, fire extinguishers, and first aid kits stored on the ferries and compared the results to the Code of Federal Regulations' requirements and the list of required items from the U.S. Coast Guard's Certificate of Inspection for each vessel
- Compared the number of ticketed passengers from August 7 to 14, 2018, with (1) the number of life vests counted during our inspection and (2) the number of authorized passengers from each vessel's Certificate of Inspection
- Interviewed National Park Service staff at Fort Sumter National Monument headquarters on Sullivan's Island, SC, and concessionaire staff on board each of the three vessels and at Fort Sumter Tours headquarters in Charleston

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