

# so you want to be a **captain?**

The Definitive Guide to  
Becoming a Licensed Captain



**mariners**  
LEARNING SYSTEM

*Your Knowledge Knows No Bounds*

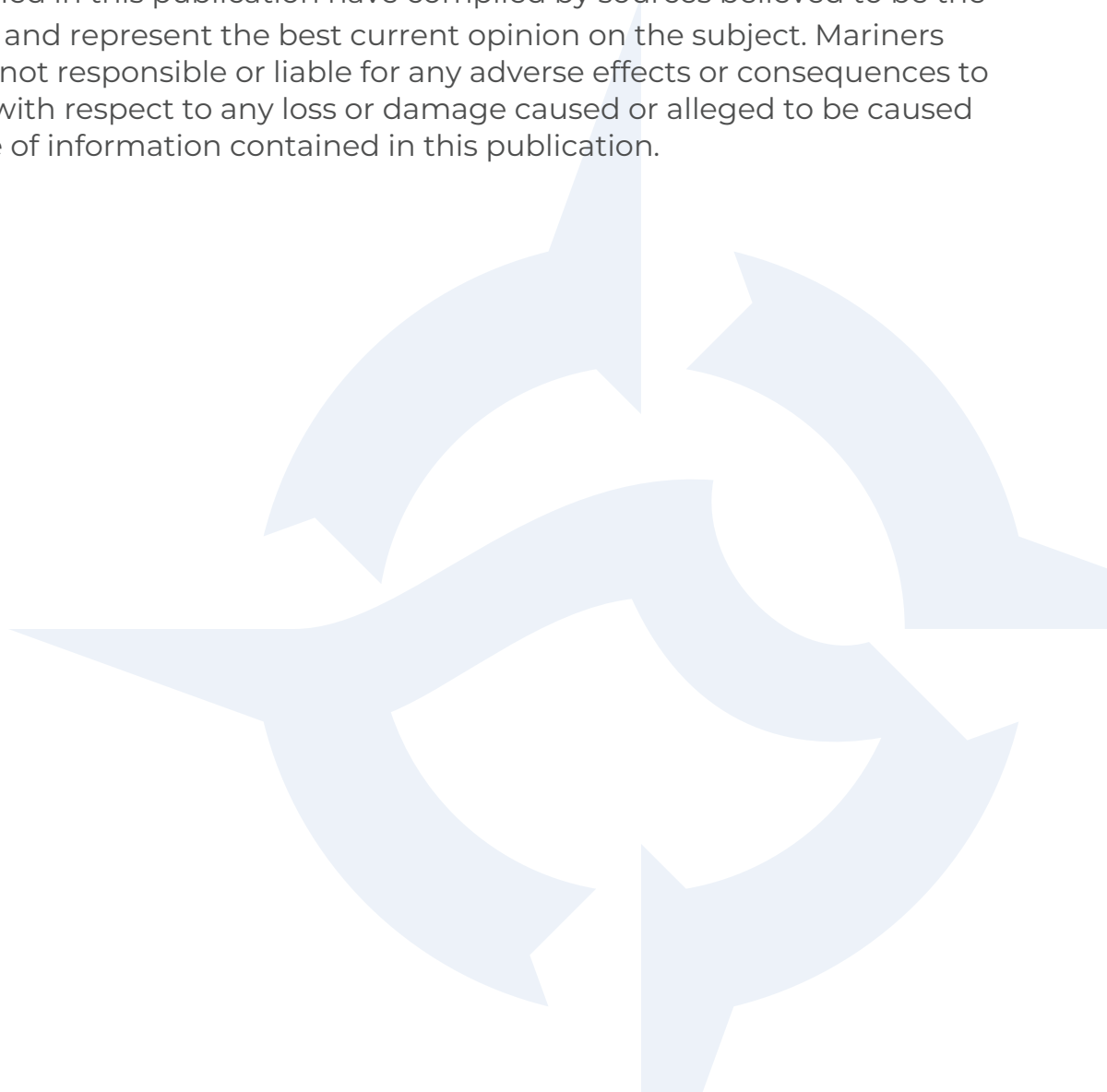
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## Acknowledgements

This Definitive Guide is designed to provide a wide variety of information on becoming a licensed Captain. This publication contains data and associated information produced and obtained from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). This title is published by a private company and any appearance of the USCG name, seal, or initials does not indicate endorsement of title.

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# INTRODUCTION

If you are thinking of becoming a boat captain, you are not alone. Becoming a captain is a dream shared by many people for a variety of reasons, both personal and financial. For some, it is the idea of earning a living as a sea captain. For others, it is the skill and mastery they achieve by becoming a captain. For many sea lovers, it is the respect, admiration, and personal satisfaction that come from being a licensed captain.

Thousands of people each year apply to become boat captains. The fact that so many people have taken the steps to become a captain speaks volumes about the allure, attraction, and aura of being a captain. If the idea of becoming a captain appeals to you, be assured it is a goal you can achieve with a reasonable amount of effort and focused study.

But how exactly does one become a captain? And what do people do with their captain's licenses? And just where are the commercial opportunities? This eBook will give you the essential answers to all these questions. Read on...

## WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE BECOME BOAT CAPTAINS?

People become boat captains for many different reasons and from all walks of life. Many are recreational boaters who want to obtain a captain's license to increase their seamanship skills, for their own knowledge and a personal sense of accomplishment. This includes power boaters and sail boaters. Divers also obtain captain's licenses to operate diving boats and businesses.

Many want to take steps to improve their boating knowledge and knowhow to address concerns about their family's safety. Some boat owners become captains to reap tax and insurance advantages. Many people obtain a captain's license as a source of income. This includes retirees interested in a second career and those who would like to turn their passion for boating into a money-earning endeavor. Others become captains to improve their resumes as a licensed expert.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WITH THEIR CAPTAIN'S LICENSE?

Having a captain's license enables people to engage in a wide range of activities and business ventures - including hosting dinner cruises or running tour boats, charter boats, diving boats, and water taxis. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

# WHAT TYPES OF BOATS CAN I CAPTAIN?

There are two main types of captain's licenses you can obtain. The Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels license allows you to captain a boat with up to six paying passengers, and so is known as a "Six-Pack" or Charter Boat Captain's License. The second type, called a Master's License, allows the holder to operate uninspected vessels up to 100 gross tons and inspected vessels of 25, 50, or 100 gross tons. Any vessel that is certified by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry more than six paying passengers plus a crew must have a captain who holds a Master License.

There are two additional types of "endorsements" that can be added to your license:

- 1) The Towing Endorsement, which enables Six-Pack or licensed masters to tow vessels for a fee, and
- 2) The Sailing Endorsement, which authorizes the holder to operate inspected sail boats or auxiliary sailing vessels and is required when carrying seven or more passengers under sail.

## THE FOLLOWING CHART IS A COMPARISON OF THE 6-PACK VS. MASTERS LICENSE:

SIX-PACK LICENSE	MASTERS LICENSE
Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels License (OUPV)	25, 50 or 100 Ton Master License
Can carry up to six paying passengers on an uninspected vessel up to 100 gross tons (about 75-90 feet long), both power and sail.	Can operate inspected and uninspected vessels. Any vessel that is certified to carry more than six paying passengers plus crew must have a captain who holds a 25/50/100 Ton Master license.*
Charter fishing boats, scuba diving boats and tour cruises are examples.	Ferry boats, harbor tours boats, whale watch boats are examples of inspected vessels.
Three types of OUPV Licenses: Inland, Near Coastal & Great Lakes + Near Coastal	Four main types of Master Licenses: Inland, Near Coastal, Great Lakes + Inland, Great Lakes + Near Coastal.
Sea time required: at least 360 days since age 16, 90 days in the last three years; for Near Coastal, 90 days seaward of the boundary line, and for Great Lakes, 90 days on the Great Lakes.	Sea time required: at least 360 days from age 16 for Inland types, and 720 days for Near Coastal, with 360 days outside the boundary lines. Include 90 days out of 360 for Great Lakes + Inland and 360 days out of 720 for Great Lakes + Near Coastal.
An Inland License can be upgraded to a Near Coastal License with 90 days experience seaward of the boundary line and an additional written requirement.	You are not required to advance through the different licenses 25/50/100 tons one at a time.
Proof of residency required.	Proof of citizenship required.
Can have Towing Endorsement attached.	Can have Towing and Sailing Endorsements attached.

\*Note: You do not need to first earn your OUPV/Six-Pack license before becoming a licensed Master.

# WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR COMMERCIAL CAPTAINS?

As the economy and tourism recover and the government looks to create more green solutions for transportation, operators of water vessels will be in higher demand. That means those with a captain's license may be able to find work very easily in the near future.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there should be a 15 percent growth in water vessel occupations within the next 10 years. The sectors with the most job opportunities will most likely be the tourism and transportation industries.

## OTHER COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAPTAINS ARE:

### YACHT DELIVERY

The cost of transporting a boat more than 8-feet wide by land can be very high, making boat delivery by water a very attractive option for boat owners. Wealthy boat owners employ licensed captains to move their boats from port to port, and every boat on display at an in-water boat show was likely transported using a delivery captain. Insurance companies typically require that a delivery captain be a licensed master. Yacht delivery can be a lucrative profession and compensation usually includes a set daily fee, travel expenses to and from vessel, and a per diem for meals.

### SEA TRIALS

Many boat brokers and dealers use licensed captains to take potential customers on demonstration rides, or sea trials. Although regulations do not require that a boat broker or salesperson must be a licensed captain, it is wise business practice to provide the safest and most conducive sea experience to buyers.

### FISHING BOATS

Fishing boats for hire that charge per person are known in the industry as head boat or party boats, and are always in demand. The typical head boat carries 24-49 passengers. Most captains of head boats begin as a mate, in many cases working for tips alone (which on a good trip can earn as much or more than the captain). Once you have your captain's license, you will have an opportunity to work into the regular rotation of captains demonstrating that you are competent and responsible.

### WATER TAXI

This is a great way to get your foot in the door. While not the highest paying opportunities, water taxi businesses are always looking for extra captains to fill their ranks. Besides skippering the boat, most water taxi captains serve guides who entertain passengers by imparting local knowledge. Water taxi captains are usually paid by the hour and, like their land counterparts, also depend on tips.

### INSTRUCTOR

There are a large number of people who purchase boats who have no idea how to operate them safely, let alone get them in and out of the dock. Experienced captains can give these new boat owners the necessary knowledge and skill to operate their boats. (Think of the famous movie "Captain Ron" with Kurt Russel playing the role of instructor/delivery captain.



# WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE BECOME BOAT CAPTAINS?

Those who would like to turn their passion for boating into a **MONEY EARNING ENDEAVOR**.



Recreational boaters who want to increase their **SEAMANSHIP SKILLS** or more knowledge and personal accomplishment.

Boaters whose family members have concerns about **SAFETY**.

Boat owners who can gain **TAX ADVANTAGES OR LOWER INSURANCE COSTS**.



Boat owners who would like to improve their resume and **BECOME A LICENSED EXPERT**.

**POWER BOATERS, SAIL BOATERS, DIVERS.**

Retirees who would like a **SECOND CAREER**.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WITH THEIR CAPTAIN'S LICENSE?

The activities people perform as boat captains can be personal or commercial — hosting fishing parties, dinner cruises, tour boats, charter boats, diving boats, and many more.





# WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR COMMERCIAL CAPTAINS?

## YACHT DELIVERIES

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## FISHING BOATS

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## WATER TAXI

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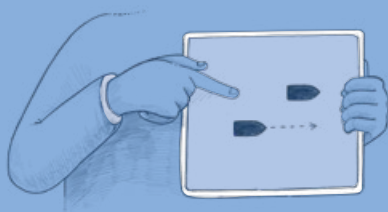


## SEA TRIALS

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## INSTRUCTOR

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## NETWORKING AND WORD OF MOUTH

Is an effective way of finding the best jobs within the marine industry. Most jobs are never advertised.



## BOAT BROKERS AND DEALERS

Are a great source for finding delivery and instructor work.

## GET YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR WORKING AS A MATE

You'll get invaluable local knowledge and allow you to become familiar with the ports and marina's in your area.

You can earn the right to move into the wheelhouse and operate the vessel as a captain.



## TIP:

No matter what type of license you carry or how much experience you have, to a new employer you are an unknown commodity. Most employers want to get to know their prospective captains over time before allowing passengers' lives to be placed under their command.

**BECOMING A CAPTAIN IS A GOAL YOU CAN REACH!**

STUDENTS ENJOY A 98.7% PASS RATE  
WHICH IS UNRIVALED IN THE INDUSTRY



**MORE THAN  
200,000+**

STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN A MARINERS  
LEARNING SYSTEM COURSE SINCE 2005

## WHERE ARE THE JOBS?

As in most industries, networking and word of mouth are one of the most effective ways of finding the best jobs within the marine industry. Most jobs are never advertised, and the ones that are tend to be the least desirable.

Boat brokers and dealers are a great source for finding delivery and instructor work. For yacht delivery and instructor opportunities, you can find jobs by becoming friendly with your local boat dealers, brokers, and marinas. For sea trials, brokers and sales agents are a great source for this type of work.

Be aware that no matter what type of license or how much sea experience you may have, you typically cannot waltz in as an unknown entity and gain command of a boat, but must first prove yourself and win the confidence of an employer.

It is a big responsibility to captain a vessel, and employers want to minimize their risk and those of their passengers by hiring competent captains they know and trust. If you are serious about breaking into the industry and do not have any inside connections, do not be afraid to start by working as crew.

Another excellent way to gain experience, make connections, and earn the opportunity to captain vessels is by beginning as a mate. Working as a mate will give you invaluable local knowledge and allow you to become familiar with the ports and marinas in your area. It will also give you the chance to demonstrate your ability as a captain.

## HOW DO I GET MY CAPTAIN'S LICENSE?

There are six basic steps to obtaining a captain's license. In a nutshell: pass a written test, show time at sea, pass a drug test, pass a physical exam, pass a CPR and First Aid course, and pass a security clearance review (TWIC card).

## WHAT AGENCY OVERSEES AND CERTIFIES CAPTAIN'S?

The U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center oversees the licensing of captains, and authorizes training centers and certified courses. Mariners Learning System™ is an authorized trainer and course provider.

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET A CAPTAIN'S LICENSE?

Upon completion of an approved course, you submit, within one year, the application package to the National Maritime Center and upon their review and approval, they will issue the License. The National Maritime Center is committed to delivering quality products and services by setting a licensing processing goal of 4 - 6 weeks.

## WHICH LICENSE SHOULD I GO FOR?

The staff at Mariners Learning System™ recommends that you go for the highest license for which you qualify. We counsel each of our students to consider skipping the OUPV/Six-Pack license and go directly to the Master level license if they can.

In general, the amount of sea service time and size of the vessels on which you have sea time will influence the license for which you are eligible. The tonnage you are awarded for a Master level license is determined by the size of the vessels you have gained experience on. During the last 3 years, you must be able to show 90 days of on-water time, which is called "recency experience."

You are not required to advance through the different classes of tonnage licenses (25, 50, 100) one at a time. If you meet the U.S. Coast Guard requirements for the 100-Ton Master Near Coastal license, for example, you can obtain that license as your first one.

## WHAT DOES THE WRITTEN TEST COVER?

Exam topics include Navigational Rules of the Road, Deck General and Safety, Navigation General, and Chart Plotting. The total number of questions and minimum passing score depends on the type of license you wish to obtain.

### THE GRADING STANDARDS FOR THE OUPV/SIX-PACK ARE SHOWN IN THE FOLLOWING CHART:

EXAM MODULES	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	MINIMUM SCORE REQUIRED	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS A STUDENT CAN GET WRONG AND STILL PASS
NAVIGATIONAL RULES OF THE ROAD	50	90%	5 WRONG
DECK GENERAL AND SAFETY	50	70%	15 WRONG
NAVIGATION GENERAL	50	70%	15 WRONG
CHART PLOTTING	10	90%	1 WRONG

Once you complete the course quizzes and Module Exam(s), you will test online through Mariners Learning System™. No testing at the Coast Guard Regional Exam Center is required.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TESTING?

To receive a certificate of course completion each student is required to pass a proctored exam. This certificate will be accepted by the Coast Guard in lieu of taking one of their exams for licensing purposes.

All online proctored captain's license tests with Mariners Learning System™ are Coast Guard-approved and provided in an on-demand format.

## HOW DIFFICULT IS THE TEST?

Passing the test requires study, but you can do it. Taking a course will help you pass the test (for example, more than 200,000+ students have taken a Mariners Learning System™ online course since 2005, with a 98.7% success rate). A big benefit of taking the exam through an authorized trainer like the Mariners Learning System™ is that the course and final exam are written by Mariners Learning System™, so your preparation will enable you to pass the course with flying colors and you will know where you stand during each stage that you prepare for the exam.

## WHAT IF I FAIL THE TEST?

Students have one year from course activation to complete the course and pass all sections of the final exam online. If a student does not pass one or more modules, he or she may retest twice more on the failed modules. Those who do not pass an exam module after three attempts must wait a period of 45 days to retest. The student will be required to complete the entire course prior to being allowed another three attempts at each module. In this case, the student must retest and pass all four exam modules.

## HOW MANY DAYS OF SEA TIME DO I NEED?

Sea service requirements will vary depending on which license you are applying for. But in general, you are required to have a minimum of 360 days experience on board a boat since you were 16 years old, with 90 of those days occurring within the last three years. As little as four hours on a boat can be considered one day, and within one 24-hour period you can claim one day of sea service. Time spent on the boat counts towards your total, and you do not have to be operating the boat yourself for the time to count.

## HOW DO I DOCUMENT MY SEA TIME?

Accounting for sea time is basically an honor system in which the Coast Guard will accept your best estimate on the application. You are not required to submit log books, rather you will reconstruct to the best of your ability the total number of days you have been on the water in any given month and year. If you serve time on a boat you own, you sign for your own time. If your sea time was spent on boats of friends or family, they can verify the time for you. Your time does not need to be confirmed or accounted for by a licensed captain.

## CAN MILITARY TIME COUNT AS A SEA SERVICE REQUIREMENT?

Sea service you acquired in the military may count towards your captain's license. Generally, military sea time will be creditable at a rate of 60% credit for each qualifying day of military service towards a merchant license or document. To be considered qualifying, the time must have been served in a capacity relevant to the type of license for which you are applying.

## MUST I TAKE A DRUG TEST?

You **MUST** pass a Department of Transportation (DOT) drug screening that tests for marijuana, cocaine, opiates, phencyclidine, and amphetamines. This is the same drug test that most truck drivers must pass to get their commercial driver's license.

## WHAT IS THE SECURITY REVIEW?

To become a captain, you must obtain a Transportation Worker Identification Credential, or TWIC card. TWIC cards are tamper-resistant biometric credentials issued to workers who require unescorted access to secure areas of ports, vessels, outer continental shelf facilities, and all credentialed merchant mariners.

## HOW DO I OBTAIN A TWIC CARD?

To obtain a TWIC card, you must provide information such as fingerprints, sit for a digital photograph, and successfully pass a security threat assessment conducted by TSA.

## WILL A CRIME CONVICTION AFFECT RECEIVING A TWIC CARD?

When applying for a deck license you will be required to answer a series of questions on various forms. The topics will include issues that relate to your use of any dangerous drugs or convictions by any court for offenses other than minor traffic violations. If there are issues in your past, the U.S. Coast Guard will evaluate any offense using its published guidelines, which set out the minimum and maximum "assessment periods" that will affect when your license application may be processed.

## MUST I PASS A PHYSICAL EXAM TO QUALIFY?

You are required to take and pass a physical exam within 1 year of applying for your license.

## WHO GIVES THE PHYSICAL EXAM?

A physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner can fill out and record their findings on the Merchant Marine Personnel Physical Examination.

## WHAT MEDICAL CONDITIONS PREVENT ME FROM QUALIFYING?

There are certain medical conditions that may disqualify you for a license or require a waiver such as cardiac disease, diabetes, psychiatric disorders, sleep apnea, and chronic use of narcotics.

## WHAT IF I AM COLOR BLIND?

The color blindness test conducted by your physician or optometrist is a pass/fail examination. There are no intermediate levels of color blindness. If you are unable to pass this test, the U.S. Coast Guard will impose a daytime restriction on your license.

## WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE CPR AND FIRST AID COURSE?

You are required to complete an approved adult CPR and First Aid course within six months of submitting your application. This is a four-hour course that many community hospitals offer for little or no charge.

## WHERE CAN I GET THE CPR AND FIRST AID TRAINING?

The American Red Cross and Heart Association offer four-hour courses that will meet this requirement. These should be an in-person class. If they are hybrid or online classes please get approval with the Coast Guard before signing up for the course.

## HOW DO I SUBMIT MY APPLICATION PACKET?

You will need to compile all of your required documents into one application packet and submit it to the National Maritime Center.

## FOR HOW LONG IS A CAPTAIN'S LICENSE VALID?

Your license is good for five years from the date of issuance.

## HOW DO YOU RENEW A LICENSE?

You may renew your license any time within 12 months prior to its expiration date. If you have maintained 360 days on the water during this five-year period, you may submit a renewal application to the U.S. Coast Guard, including your sea service forms. You have a choice of sending your original license or copies of the front and back of your valid license. If you would like your original license returned, you must send a letter requesting that the dated license be returned to you.

If the expiration date of your license exceeds five years, you have one additional year (the "grace period") to renew. However, you may not operate a vessel under the authority of your license during this "grace period." You must then submit the original license to the U.S. Coast Guard along with the application to obtain a renewal license.

If you have not maintained 360 days on the water during the five-year period from the date of issuance of your license, you must either take an approved U.S. Coast Guard Deck License Renewal course or complete and return the U.S. Coast Guard "take home" examination.





# NOTES

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# WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

**Mariners Learning System™** is the go-to place for education and information for obtaining a captain's license. Fully certified by the U.S. Coast Guard, Mariners Learning System™ has helped thousands of students pass their captain's exam each year.

As an unrivaled alternative to traditional testing methods, the approved courses are designed to give you the knowledge and know-how to earn your captain's license conveniently from anywhere you have access to the Internet.

This learning method, refined and perfected by years of experience, has proven remarkably effective and is the reason Mariners Learning System™ has one of the highest success rates in the industry.

What students find especially helpful about The Mariners Learning System™ is you don't have to go it alone. Each course comes with access to the advanced knowledge and real-life experience of seasoned professionals who will guide you on your path to success. You can tap into the support of these expert online instructors 24/7.

By assuming you know nothing to start, Mariners Learning System™ teaches you the basics while gradually building on that foundation to give you the complete breadth of knowledge you need to become a master seaman and pass your captain's exam.

Mariners Learning System™ course materials include eBooks, training videos, and broadcast-quality audio lectures that are available on-demand for every major device, including PC, MAC, iPhone, Android, and tablets. This "Anytime and Anywhere" learning approach allows you to learn wherever and whenever you have time to study—at home, on a train, on a boat, or just sitting in traffic.

At Mariners Learning System™, we understand the sacrifices our veterans, active personnel, and LEOs make. To show our support and say thanks for your bravery and sacrifice we've partnered with ID.me to provide a discount through our American Hero Fund.

## CONTACT A LICENSING SPECIALIST TODAY!

**PHONE: 609-303-0664**

**WEB: [www.MarinersLearningSystem.com](http://www.MarinersLearningSystem.com)**

**EMAIL: [CustomerService@MarinersLearningSystem.com](mailto:CustomerService@MarinersLearningSystem.com)**

## SHOP NOW!

