

High-Intensity Lights Illegal

JUNEAU — The Coast Guard is investigating the illegal use of high-intensity lights aboard vessels. The lights have been reported in use on fishing vessels, as well as vessels not engaged in fishing, while underway at night, during daytime, and while moored.

According to Commander B.V. Billingslea, Chief, Marine Safety Division for the Coast Guard in Alaska, federal laws set forth rules relating to the use of searchlights or other blinding lights.

Commander Billingslea quotes the law as saying: "Flashing the rays of a searchlight or other blinding light onto the bridge or into the pilot house of any vessel is prohibited. Any person who shall flash or cause to be flashed the rays of a blinding light in violation of the above may be proceeded against..."

According to the law, persons found guilty of illegal use of bright lights on the water face possible loss or suspension of their license or certificate and a \$500.00 fine. Violations by unlicensed or uncertified persons could result in a penalty of \$500.00.

Commander Billingslea urges all boat operators to use extreme caution when using high-intensity lights on or near the water. "As a rule of thumb," he explains, "it takes 2-5 minutes to regain night vision. During this time a person could miss a buoy or misjudge the distance to a moorage."

Mariners are advised to either turn off these lights or suitably screen them so as not to be a hazard to other vessels. For further information contact your nearest Coast Guard unit.