

**The following steps are necessary to obtain a Sportfishing Charter Boat Operator permit from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).**

- A. You must have a current and valid U.S. Coast Guard license. If you do not have one, go to the following website for information for your merchant mariner credential: [www.uscg.mil/Homeport/](http://www.uscg.mil/Homeport/). Before applying for your USCG license you must have a TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Credential). You can access this link on the USCG website or go directly to: [www.tsa.gov/twic](http://www.tsa.gov/twic).

Please note the requirements for a mariner's license require you to submit the results of a current physical examination and results from drug testing done by a certified medical review officer (MRO) in good standing. These MROs can be found on the following websites:

- a. [www.mrocc.org/](http://www.mrocc.org/) (All MROs are in good standing)
- b. [www.aamro.com/](http://www.aamro.com/) (MROs with the purple "In Good Standing," icon)

If you have any questions regarding the USCG application process, you can call 888-427-5662. Completed applications are accepted electronically, by mail, by fax, or in person at any of the 17 local Coast Guard National Maritime Centers throughout the United States. The two nearest offices to Illinois residents are in St. Louis, Missouri and Toledo, Ohio.

- B. If you own a vessel that will be used for chartering purposes, the vessel must have a current registration completed with your state. For Illinois residents, go to the IDNR website at [dnr.illinois.gov/boating.html](http://dnr.illinois.gov/boating.html) or call our Watercraft registration office at (866) 716-6550.
- C. A Passenger Boat License from the IDNR is required for each vessel that will be used for chartering purposes on Lake Michigan. This license must be renewed each year prior to obtaining a Lake Michigan Charter Operator Permit. The Passenger Boat License costs \$50.00. For additional information and application forms, go to: [dnr.illinois.gov/boating/passengerrentalboatlicense.html](http://dnr.illinois.gov/boating/passengerrentalboatlicense.html) or call (217) 557-6804. A U.S. Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection must be completed and sent along with the Passenger Boat License application. The Marine Inspection Reports (either for 6 passengers or less or for over 6 passengers) can also be found online at the website link above.
- D. A Lake Michigan Charter Boat Operator Permit can be obtained by selecting the following link, [Lake Michigan Sportfishing Charter Operator Permit Application](#), or by contacting the IDNR Lake Michigan Program office at (847) 294-4134. Print and fill out the application as instructed. **All of steps listed above must be completed and finalized before applying for this permit.** The Passenger Boat License must be valid through the entirety of the operating year (current year). We will not issue an Operator's Permit if the Passenger Boat License for the vessel you will be operating expires in the current calendar year.

An Operator's Permit is valid until December 31st of the current year. It is issued without fee to Illinois residents. Nonresident fees are as follows:

Indiana: \$100.00  
Michigan: \$100.00  
Wisconsin: \$400.00

Contact the Lake Michigan Program office for nonresidents fees in a state other than those listed above.

After obtaining an operator's permit, persons operating sport fishing charter boats in the Illinois waters of Lake Michigan must submit daily catch reports to the Lake Michigan Program on forms furnished by the Lake Michigan Program. All daily catch reports for a given month must be submitted, on or before the 15th day of the following month. Charter boat operators who fail to comply shall be subject to penalties as provided in Section 20–35 of the Illinois Fish and Aquatic Life Code, and noncompliance may be grounds for denial of future charter boat permits.

For further information, please view the Illinois Compiled Statutes (515 ILCS 5/10-135 and 5/20-35) at [Fish and Aquatic Life Code](#).

- E. If an operator will be using one of the harbors in the City of Chicago, a City of Chicago Commercial Passenger Vessel License (CPV) must be obtained. The fee is \$600.00. For City of Chicago CPV information go to the [City of Chicago CPV License page](#) or call the City of Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection at (312) 744-6249. Additional fees and requirements for operators using Chicago harbors may apply. For additional information please visit [Chicago Harbors](#) or call (312) 741-3601.
- F. In addition, commercial operators using Chicago harbors are required to have a \$1,000,000 Liability Insurance policy naming the City of Chicago as additional insured. Go to the [City of Chicago CPV License page](#) or call (312) 744-6249 for further information.
- G. Vessels that use MF/HF single side-band radios, satellite communications, or telegraph must be licensed with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission). The license is for the boat (not the operator). The license fee can be determined by calling the FCC office at (888) 225-5322 or visiting the FCC website at [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov).