



Senator Josh Hawley's Duck Boat Safety Enhancement Act of 2019

Amphibious Passenger Vessels (APV): History of Fatal Accidents

APVs are passenger vessels viable on both land and on water. The most common APVs are amphibious tour buses or DUKWs (commonly referred to as duck boats). Duck boat tours have become popular as tourist attractions in cities near rivers, lakes, and harbors. In the past 20 years, more than 40 people have been killed and dozens more injured in duck boat related accidents. Most recently in July 2018, 17 people died and 11 were injured when a duck boat capsized in a thunderstorm on Table Rock Lake near Branson, Missouri.

What does Senator Hawley's Bill do?

Vessel Buoyancy Requirements

- The purpose of the bill is to implement safety recommendations from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) for amphibious passenger vessels.
- The bill directs the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to require APVs to be outfitted with passive reserve buoyancy to ensure that duck boats remain buoyant even in the event of flooding.

Enhanced Safety Requirements

- The bill specifies interim requirements for operators of APVs which are not outfitted with passive reserve buoyancy:
 - Removal of canopies that can restrict horizontal or vertical escape in the event of sinking and require personal floatation devices to be worn.
 - Install independently powered electric bilge pumps able to remove water
 - Install not fewer than four independently powered bilge alarms
 - Verify watertight integrity of any vessel at the outset of each waterborne departure
 - The bill prohibits the further operation of non-compliant APVs.
 - Operators must inform passengers that seat belts may not be worn during waterborne operations and a crew member must visually check that each passenger has unbuckled his or her seatbelt

Weather Preparedness

- The bill also directs the USCG to implement severe weather emergency preparedness requirements for APV operators including:
 - Limiting the weather conditions in which APVs may operate
 - Requirements for vessel operators to check the National Weather Service forecast before getting underway and periodically while underway
 - Requiring operators to leave the water or proceed to safe harbor if the National Weather service issues a watch or warning for wind speeds exceeding the vessel's certification
 - Vessels must have a weather radio at the operator station which can be activated by a National Weather Service warning