



STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD OF PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Concerning the Washington State Pilot Training Program

How does a pilot trainee obtain Federal Pilotage for their preferred district?

Applicants are not required to have local knowledge or federal endorsements for an area before they begin training in either of Washington's pilotage districts. While federal pilotage is not part of the State's pilot training program, a trainee can work on their federal pilotage endorsements alongside their state training. Successful candidates on the Pilot Training Program waiting list are encouraged to begin work on their federal endorsements as soon as feasible, however. Information about required trips in this area can be obtained from the USCG or from BPC staff. All Federal pilotage for the district must be completed before state licensure.

How do pilot trainees get training program trips?

Trainees have access to the PSP dispatch list and will communicate with both the pilot assigned to a particular assignment and fellow trainees to schedule trips. In Grays Harbor trainees have access to ship arrivals and departures through the Port of Grays Harbor or the licensed pilot.

Is Washington State and the USCG working on making a plan for having testing more accessible for pilot trainees, especially during COVID?

The USCG Regional Exam Center (REC) Seattle reopened to the public from their COVID-19 closure on September 14, 2020. They are processing exams and charts as quickly as possible. The BPC appreciates our USCG partners for recognizing their vital role in getting pilot trainees licensed.

How do pilot trainees balance family life and training life during the training program?

Although this is a rigorous training program, one of the best features is that pilot trainees set their own schedule. As long as they can complete the training program in the maximum 36 months, they can build the program to reflect their needs. We have had trainees plan a wedding during their training, we have

single parents, and “training babies” born throughout trainees’ programs.

What is the stipend for pilot trainees in Washington State?

The current stipend is between \$4,000.00 and \$6000.00 per month, depending on the number of trips a trainee takes during that month. Regular, full-time training is 18 trips/month which provides the full \$6000 stipend. During the COVID pandemic the BPC has provided a full stipend even though training trips have been limited.

Does Washington State provide medical insurance to trainees during the training program?

Trainees are not employees of Washington State. Therefore, medical insurance is not available through the BPC. We encourage aspirants and applicants of the Puget Sound Pilotage District to look through health insurance options at Washington Health Plan Finder. The Grays Harbor Pilotage District is different. Trainees have the option of becoming employees of the Port of Grays Harbor during training, which provides access to the Port’s medical insurance and other benefits.

For captains coming from US Flag Vessels, how was entering the trainee program, boarding foreign flag vessels, and adjusting to their protocol and communication practices?

There is always an adjustment period in the beginning of the training program. The good news is that no matter your experience, the volume and variety of different vessels and waterways will prepare trainees for all the various protocols and styles.

Do the GH pilots live locally or are they coming in from afar when on duty?

Grays Harbor pilots have both lived local and also traveled in from other areas when on duty.

Is there a strategic location pilot trainees should choose to live for best access to jobs?

Washington State pilots (and current pilot trainees) live across the region. We encourage pilot candidates to get to know the area and find what is best for them and their circumstances.

How do pilots handle having up to four trainees on a job? Is this the maximum number or is there an effort to limit trainee numbers aboard?

We have always limited the number of trainees onboard a vessel and limited it even further to maintain COVID-19 protocols. We continue to monitor the progress of trainees in the training program at any given time. Under normal circumstances there are about ten trainees at a time.