12 month period since the last examination must undergo a drydock examination and an internal structural at least once every two years; and

(2) A vessel that is exposed to salt water not more than three months in any 12 month period since the last examination must undergo a drydock examination and an internal structural examination at least once every five years.

(d) Whenever damage or deterioration to hull plating or structural members that may affect the seaworthiness of a vessel is discovered or suspected, the cognizant OCMI may conduct an internal structural examination in any affected space including fuel tanks, and may require the vessel to be drydocked or taken out of service to assess the extent of the damage, and to effect permanent repairs. The OCMI may also decrease the drydock examination intervals to monitor the vessel's structural condition.

(e) For a vessel that is eligible per §115.625, and if the owner opts for an alternate hull examination with the underwater survey portion conducted exclusively by divers, the vessel must undergo two alternate hull exams and two internal structural exams within any five-year period. If a vessel completes a satisfactory alternate hull exam, with the underwater survey portion conducted predominantly by an approved underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV), the vessel must undergo one alternate hull and one internal structural exam, within any five-year period. The vessel may undergo a drydock exam to satisfy any of the required alternate hull exams.

[CGD 85–080, 61 FR 953, Jan. 10, 1996, as amended at 62 FR 51356, Sept. 30, 1997; USCG–2000–6858, 67 FR 21084, Apr. 29, 2002]

§ 176.610 Scope of drydock and internal structural examinations.

(a) A drydock examination conducted in compliance with §176.600 must be conducted while the vessel is hauled out of the water or placed in a drydock or slipway. During the examination all accessible parts of the vessel's underwater body and all through hull fittings, including the hull plating and planking, appendages, propellers, shafts, bearings, rudders, sea chests, sea valves, and sea strainers shall be made available for examination. Sea chests, sea valves, and sea strainers must be opened for examination. On wooden vessels, fastenings may be required to be pulled for examination.

(b) An internal structural examination conducted in compliance with §176.600 may be conducted while the vessel is afloat or out of the water and consists of a complete examination of the vessel's main strength members, including the major internal framing, the hull plating and planking, voids, and ballast, cargo, and fuel oil tanks. Where the internal framing, plating, or planking of the vessel is concealed, sections of the lining, ceiling or insulation may be removed or the parts otherwise probed or exposed so that the inspector may be satisfied as to the condition of the hull structure. Fuel oil tanks need not be cleaned out and internally examined if the marine inspector is able to determine by external examination that the general condition of the tanks is satisfactory.

§ 176.615 Underwater Survey in Lieu of Drydocking (UWILD).

(a) The Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI), may approve an underwater survey instead of a drydock examination at alternating intervals if your vessel is—

(1) Less than 15 years of age;

(2) A steel or aluminum hulled vessel;

(3) Fitted with an effective hull protection system; and

(4) Described in §176.600(b) or (c) of this part.

(b) For vessels less than 15 years of age, you must submit an application for an underwater survey to the OCMI at least 90 days before your vessel's next required drydock examination. The application must include—

(1) The procedure for carrying out the underwater survey;

(2) The time and place of the underwater survey;

(3) The method used to accurately determine the diver's or remotely operated vehicle's (ROV) location relative to the hull;

(4) The means for examining all through-hull fittings and appurtenances;

(5) The condition of the vessel, including the anticipated draft of the vessel at the time of survey;

(6) A description of the hull protection system; and

(7) The name and qualifications of any third party examiner.

(c) If your vessel is 15 years old or older, the cognizant District Commander, may approve an underwater survey instead of a drydock examination at alternating intervals (UWILD). You must submit an application for an underwater survey to the OCMI at least 90 days before your vessel's next required drydock examination. You may be allowed this option if—

(1) The vessel is qualified under paragraphs (a)(2) through (4) of this section;

(2) Your application includes the information in paragraphs (b)(1) through (b)(7) of this section; and

(3) During the vessel's drydock examination, preceding the underwater survey, a complete set of hull gaugings was taken and they indicated that the vessel was free from appreciable hull deterioration.

(d) After the drydock examination required by paragraph (c)(3) of this section, the OCMI submits a recommendation for future underwater surveys, the results of the hull gauging, and the results of the Coast Guards' drydock examination results to the cognizant District Commander for review.

[USCG–2000–6858, 67 FR 21084, Apr. 29, 2002]

§ 176.620 Description of the Alternative Hull Examination (AHE) Program for certain passenger vessels.

The Alternative Hull Examination (AHE) Program provides you with an alternative to drydock examination by allowing your vessel's hull to be examined while it remains afloat. If completed using only divers, this program has four steps: the application process, the preliminary examination, the presurvey meeting, and the hull examination. If a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) is used during the program the preliminary exam step may be omitted. Once you complete these steps, the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI) will evaluate the results and accept the examination as a credit hull exam if the vessel is in satisfactory condition. If divers are exclusively used for the underwater survey portion of the examination process, you may receive credit for a period of time such that subsequent AHEs would be conducted at intervals of twice in every five years, with no more than three years between any two AHEs. If an underwater ROV is used as the predominant method to examine the vessel's underwater hull plating, you may receive credit up to five years. At the end of this period, you may apply for further participation under the AHE Program.

NOTE: The expected hull coverage when using an ROV must be at least 80 percent.

[USCG–2000–6858, 67 FR 21085, Apr. 29, 2002]

§ 176.625 Eligibility requirements for the Alternative Hull Examination (AHE) Program for certain passenger vessels.

(a) Your vessel may be eligible for the AHE Program if—

(1) It is constructed of steel or aluminum;

(2) It has an effective hull protection system;

(3) It has operated exclusively in fresh water since its last drydock examination;

(4) It operates in rivers or protected lakes; and

(5) It operates exclusively in shallow water or within 0.5 nautical miles from shore.

(b) In addition to the requirements in paragraph (a), the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI) will evaluate the following information when determining your vessel's eligibility for the AHE Program:

(1) The overall condition of the vessel, based on its inspection history.

(2) The vessel's history of hull casualties and hull-related deficiencies.

(3) The AHE Program application, as described in § 176.630 of this part.

(c) When reviewing a vessel's eligibility for the AHE program, the OCMI may modify the standards given by paragraph (a)(5) of this section where it is considered safe and reasonable to do so. In making this determination, the OCMI will consider the vessel's overall condition, its history of safe operation, and any other factors that serve to mitigate overall safety risks.

[USCG–2000–6858, 67 FR 21085, Apr. 29, 2002]