

Question 1: Why are passengers required to show ID on the northern routes?

Answer 1:

BC Ferries supports the Transportation Canada Fire and Boat Drill Regulation ‘Measures Respecting Vessels that Carry Passengers – Passenger Count and Details’ to collect the names, gender and passenger types for every passenger on board. Identification is required to confirm the customer’s identity at check-in and boarding and for disembarking/embarking at mid-point stops along the route.

The sailings that are subject to this requirement are between: Port Hardy-Prince Rupert (10), Prince Rupert-Skidegate (11) and Port Hardy-Discovery Coast (40).

Question 2: Why is ID not required on southern routes?

Answer 2:

The Transport Canada Fire and Boat Drill Regulation ‘Measures Respecting Vessels that Carry Passengers – Passenger Count and Details’ currently only applies to the routes identified above.

Question 3:

A: What direction is given to employees for dealing with a passenger who is unable to produce an ID card?

B: Are there any allowance in the policy for residents returning to their homes, or for minors or seniors?

C: Is any consideration given when refusal to board a passenger might involve one or more days of being stranded away from home?

Answer 3A:

Customers are advised when booking the reservation that photo ID is required to board the vessel. Posters and handouts are available in our Northern Route terminals to advise customers of the requirement to present ID.

Employees are unable to check-in or board customers without ID but can provide information on why the regulation is in place and what we accept as identification.

Answer 3B:

Minors without ID will be allowed to travel – an accompanying adult (with ID) must fill out an information form at the terminal for the minor travelling. Other than the exception

made for minors, BC Ferries does not treat customers differently based on their age or travel purpose.

Answer 3C:

Safety is our first priority. These measures are in place for the safety of our customers and are followed under the Transport Canada Fire and Boat Drill Regulations. As such we are unable to make exceptions – regardless of the circumstances.

Question 4: Why are Status Cards rejected as acceptable ID, noting that some First Nation passengers don't have other forms of ID, such as a passport, drivers license, or credit card?

Answer 4:

Status Cards are accepted as ID for the check-in and boarding requirements. However, Status Cards are not accepted as confirmation that the customer is eligible for the resident discount. The Status Card does not display the customers address. We ask that customers present a BC Hydro bill, Telus or cellular phone bill or other document with their name and address to prove residency.

Question 5: What is the policy for dealing with passengers who arrive less than 15 minutes before the last sailing of a day, or for a sailing on routes where there are only a few sailings per week?

Answer 5:

Cut-off times for ticket sales are in place in order to ensure we safely execute our shore closure procedures in advance of a vessel departing a port. They also ensure that we have an accurate passenger count prior to departure and support our commitment to customers by facilitating our vessels departing on time.

Major Terminals: Ticket sales are cut off at 10 minutes for foot passenger traffic and 5 minutes for vehicle traffic.

NOTE: Horseshoe Bay has a 10 minute cut off for BOTH vehicles and foot passengers due to the unique configuration of the terminal.

Minor Terminals: Ticket sales for foot passengers are cut off at five minutes prior to the scheduled sailing time, ticket sales for vehicles are cut off at three minutes to.

NOTE: There are some exceptions to this:

- When traffic is lined up at the booth or in the holding compound at the cut off time and there is sufficient deck space, the traffic will be processed and loaded.

- When the vessel is late arriving, the cut off time will be the vessel's arrival time.
- If a school bus is late, traffic will continue to be processed until it arrives. The length of time the vessel will wait is to be determined by the Master.
- For delays caused by ticketing problems, mechanical issues and emergencies, the cut off time will be determined by the Master.

Northern Terminals: Ticket sales for foot passengers are cut off at 20 minutes prior to the scheduled sailing time.

Sailings on our Northern Routes, with the exception of Skidegate to Alliford Bay, are fully reservable. Reservations unclaimed prior to the reservation cut-off are cancelled (see attachment for specific cut-off times). Customers arriving without a reservation have no travel guarantee on these fully reserved routes.

If an unreserved customer arrives less than 20 minutes prior to the scheduled departure time they will not be sold a ticket (see attached memo).

Question 6: Why are passengers required to arrive 2 hours before a sailing? What are the penalties for passengers who do not arrive 2 hours in advance?

Answer 6:

The 2 hour check-in is only required for commercial vehicles, tour groups or vehicle and foot passengers travelling on our Northern Routes from Port Hardy or Prince Rupert to our mid-Coast destinations.

On the Northern Routes more time is needed to process reservations, verify customer's ID, verify residency (when applicable for resident discount) and to load vessel. Following this process ensures safe and on-time departure.

Reservations that are unclaimed 1.5 hours (times vary by terminal – see below) prior to scheduled sailing time will be cancelled. Customers will have the option to travel standby if space is available on a 1st come 1st serve basis.

CHECK-IN TIMES:

For our **Port Hardy-Prince Rupert** and **Prince Rupert-Skidegate** routes, the recommended check in time is 1.5 – 2 hours in advance of the sailing. Reservations unclaimed 1.5 hours prior to the scheduled departure time will be cancelled.

For travel **from Port Hardy or Prince Rupert to a mid-coast destination**, the recommended check in time is 2.5 hours before scheduled departure. Reservations unclaimed 2 hours before sailing will be cancelled.

From the mid coast to Port Hardy or Prince Rupert, customers should be at the terminal 1.5 – 2 hours prior to departure. Reservations unclaimed 1 hour prior to the scheduled sailing time will be cancelled.

Commercial vehicles should check in 3 hours prior to sailing time. Reservations unclaimed 2 hours prior to the scheduled departure will be cancelled.

Hostled vehicles and Commercial Drop trailers should check in **4 hours** prior to sailing time. Reservations unclaimed and unpaid 3 hours prior to the scheduled departure will be cancelled. Commercial load plans must be faxed to the Prince Rupert terminal a minimum of 5 hours prior to scheduled departure for all Haida Gwaii reservations.

Question 7: Is it correct that passengers traveling for health care reasons, on a Travel Assistance Pass, are required to arrive at the terminal 3 hours before a sailing?

Answer 7:

We recommend customers travelling the Northern Routes with a TAPs pass visit the terminal in advance of departure to process the Travel Assistance Form required by the government. If the form is pre-processed, regular check in times apply. If the form is being processed on the day of sailing, we do recommend an additional 1 hour in advance of check in.

Question 8: Why does the experience card require a minimum pre-payment?

Answer 8:

The Experience Card replaced pre-paid paper tickets in 2008. The old pre-paid discounted commuter tickets had been sold in books of 5 or 10 tickets (vehicle only, passenger only or vehicle and driver) since 1961.

The current minimum payment required for the Experience Card (\$90 for car + driver discount / \$50 for passenger only discount) in all cases (except Route 13) is less cash output than purchasing books of paper tickets in the past.

The requirement to pre-pay in order to gain access to discounted fares ensures that the Experience Card is only used by frequent travelers.

Question 9: Is there a policy for people whose financial circumstances do not allow for an experience card prepayment?

Answer 9:

Discounted fares are not sold individually (consistent with how pre-paid paper tickets were sold in books of 5 or 10) but customers can purchase regular fare. There is also the option for several customers to share the same Experience Card via card pooling.

The minimum buy in level is kept below the cost of the 5 ticket multiple. This decision was made with general affordability in mind.

Question 10: Why are passengers unable to make reservations up to a year in advance to align with airline reservations and travel planning?

Answer 10:

Currently customers are able to access schedule information on our website for planning purposes up to March 31, 2013.

To book a reservation a fare must be attached to it in our reservation system. This enables us to facilitate a reservation confirmation with the price of travel. Until the Performance Term 3 Coastal Ferry Services Contract is confirmed our fares for the fiscal year 2012/2013 and beyond are not available and reservations can not be booked.

Question 11: Why are passengers, including international passengers, told they will have to go standby when making bookings weeks ahead of a sailing? We've heard numerous examples of people being refused an assured reservation and finding the ship with unused space at the time of sailing.

Answer 11:

If this question is specific to the Northern Routes during the summer season, which are 100% reservable, it is possible that a sailing is fully booked when a customer contacts us to book a reservation. BC Ferries does not maintain a practice of overbooking space as the airline industry does. If a sailing is sold out when a customer contacts us we would offer to put them on a waitlist. While this doesn't guarantee travel, the customer would be contacted should another customer cancel their reservation, freeing up space.

On the date of departure, our general experience is, some customers don't show up for their reservation. This frees up space for non-reserved customers who show up at the terminal hoping to travel.

Question 12: Why are over-height charges applied on ships which don't have height limitations for over-height vehicles?

Answer 12:

On April 1, 2010, BC Ferries responded to a long standing concern customers expressed over being charged for vehicles over 7' in height by eliminating the over height fare on most routes. At the same time, the per foot charge for additional length (over 20 feet) was aligned with the commercial per foot rate.

These changes were made for all routes with the exception of the North Coast (Routes 10, 11, 40 and 26) after extensive consultation with the Ferry Advisory Committees. The Northern Routes fares remain unchanged as the North Coast Ferry Advisory Committees did not feel that the over height charges were a major issue on their routes, at the time. As the changes were very complex for these routes, the initiative was deferred. The North Coast Ferry Advisory Committee has recently expressed interest in revisiting the issue.

Question 13: Is it correct that over-height vehicles pulling a trailer are charged over-height rates for the trailer if they pull it on the ship themselves, but not charged the over-height premium if they unhitch and have a hostler pull it aboard?

Answer 13:

To be clear, the over-height fare only applies to the Northern Routes due to the reasons outlined above.

Assuming the trailer is under 7' in height then this statement is correct.

With a truck and trailer combination the vehicle is assessed as being over 7' in height for the entire unit if the truck is over 7' in height. This would be the same if the truck was under 7' in height and the trailer was over 7' high. The fare is based on the historical pricing model when the vehicle deck had height restrictions – the combined unit can't be parked in two separate areas of the ship. Over-height space was charged at a premium. As mentioned, BC Ferries has attempted to rectify this pricing anomaly, however has not been successful to date.

Current practice would be if a trailer was hostled onto the vehicle deck and was under 7' in height it would be charged at the underheight rate and a hostling fee of \$40.

Question 14: What is the policy for prioritizing the runs which will occur after a weather delay, and specifically when the choice is Haida Gwaii vrs Port Hardy?

Answer 14:

When any delay occurs, regardless of the reason (Operational/Weather) the Senior Management Team reviews the impact to customers and best solution to restore scheduled service.

Many factors are taken into account such as the safety of customers and crew; next scheduled sailing to Haida Gwaii or Port Hardy; connections to mid-coast ports; perishable goods – last delivery; seasonality; potential risk of stranding passengers; medical travel needs/impact and the weather forecast.

After taking the above mentioned facts into consideration a decision is made to ensure the best outcome for the majority of customers impacted. Unfortunately, we can not mitigate the impact of delays and/or cancellations for all customers equally – but we understand early and frequent communication is key to assist customers in making alternate arrangements.

Question 15: Does the company have a policy for priority handling of trailers loaded with perishable products destined for isolated communities after a weather delay?

Answer 15:

Yes, if a cancellation occurs and we need to combine sailings we prioritize customers with medical needs and the delivery of essential services (commercial perishable goods, fuel, supplies) ahead of individual customers once service resumes.

That said, our goal is to impact the least number of customers possible when service is restored. The northern terminal management teams work closely with the local commercial operators and businesses to ensure their needs are met as soon as possible.

Question 16: What is the policy for giving priority to freight shipments of perishable product, such as seafood, being transported from ferry dependent communities to market?

Answer 16:

Communication is the key to ensuring success when it comes to the transportation of live or perishable products in the event of a delay or cancellation. We prefer to work with these customers on an individual basis to ensure their needs are met to the best of our ability, given the circumstances.

We have experienced challenges in this area, because the reservation holder isn't identified at the time of booking as transporting live/perishable goods. Many northern route customers in this situation are unreachable by phone or email – eliminating the communication opportunities in the event of a cancellation. We must rely on them to call us to confirm the status of their reserved sailing – giving us the opportunity at that time to update them on the status and work with them to transport their goods as soon as possible.

Question 17: What is the policy for boarding seniors who need elevator service to get to the seating decks? We have been informed that the policy is to board them last. Is this the case?

Answer 17:

No, we do not have a policy that requires staff to delay the loading of customers with mobility needs until all other customers have embarked.

Our services for customers with mobility needs is outlined on our website at this link from our home page: http://www.bcferries.com/travel_planning/disabilities.html

Customers requiring mobility assistance are loaded when our terminal staff have completed their other duties and have the ability to assist the customer onboard the ship. This frequently occurs after the loading of vehicles or able-bodied customers have started to embark.

Question 18: There is a dogleg on the ramp in Prince Rupert, and vehicles towing trailers are required to back onto the ship. We understand is a difficult maneuver which requires a fair bit of skill. We understand that passengers are expected to manage this without backup assistance from ferry employees. We heard reports that in at least some cases the traveler decides not to make the trip because the requirement is too daunting. What is the policy for assisting drivers who are not sufficiently skilled to back a trailer down and ramp and through a dogleg turn?

Answer 18:

To clarify, the situation described where a customer would be required to back onto the ship would only occur on the Northern Adventure.

Customers would be asked to back onto the ship under the direction and guidance of a terminal attendant. In some cases, if the customer is not confident with the maneuver or is struggling, the hostler would offer his services (at no charge) to back the vehicle onto the vessel for the customer.

Question 19: What is the policy for taking reservations from passengers who do not possess a credit card, which we understand creates a hardship for people who don't qualify for a credit card, including some first nations people, as well as others who may be on income assistance?

Answer 19:

Payment for the fares on the Northern Routes can be made:

- In cash at one of our northern terminals, or
- By visiting a local travel agency, or
- By postal money order.

Full payment is required at the time of booking for the routes that are 100% reservable. This helps lessen the frequency of the situation that occurs in Question 11.

Question 20: Is there a policy that would give priority reservation access to people with medical urgency, and particularly for women in labour?

Answer 20:

On any of BC Ferries routes, customers with a medical emergency or requiring urgent medical attention (eg. woman in labour) should contact BC Ambulance. Once the patient is in the care of BC Ambulance professionals, BC Ferries works with the BC Ambulance dispatch to ensure that priority loading and off loading occurs.

For non-emergency medical travel, BC Ferries facilitates travel on behalf of the Ministry of Health through the Travel Assistance Program (TAPs form attached). This program provides free travel (as designated by the customers physician) to receive medical care that is not available in their local community. The Ministry of Health's TAPs program does not cover the cost of a reservation or provide assured loading.

BC Ferries has established a program to provide free Medical Assured Loading to customers with special medical needs (i.e. immune compromised children travelling to Children's hospital, heart transplant patients, cancer treatment). BC Ferries works with the medical community to facilitate this program in conjunction with a TAPs passes.

Question 21: Is there a policy to provide either priority reservation access or reduced fares to people who are traveling with a person who has medical urgency, for example, assisting a women in labour who is en route to a medical facility?

Answer 21:

Please see response to Question 20.

In addition to the above response, if free travel would be provided through the Ministry of Health's TAPs program and an Escort is required and designated by the authorizing physician, the Escort would also travel for free.

Question 22: What is the policy for baggage or carry-on limits for walk on passengers?

Answer 22:

On our Northern Routes walk-on customers (without a vehicle) are permitted to bring up to 30kg (66lbs) of baggage per person. If a customer's baggage exceeds this limit they will need to rent a baggage cart.

Question 23: Why does the carry-on limit and associated extra charges apply to residents who are making the ferry trip to purchase groceries and other household supplies? We are told that the fees to bring back purchases cancel out the savings, and eliminate the reason for making the trip. Is it considered to be in the company's interests to apply a policy which removes the reason for a person to use the ferry?

Answer 23:

Each baggage cart takes up the space of one underheight vehicle. Allowing for unlimited baggage reduces the available deck space for fare paying vehicle customers. This can have a significant impact on Northern Routes customers with less frequent sailings than the South Coast.

- The charge to rent a baggage cart is equivalent to the underheight vehicle for the route the passenger is travelling.
- If a customer arrives with 1 or 2 extra bags, it is suggested that a few customers share a cart and often the customers on the routes are travelling with family or friends.

Question 24: What is the policy for notifying businesses that support the ferry business (eg hotels, tour operators, connecting transportation providers, taxis, car rentals), about changes to the schedule, about sailing cancelations, and about planned service interruptions for refits or maintenance?

Answer 24:

BC Ferries uses several communication tools to inform customers, communities, business operators and commercial partners about changes to the published service (see below). The most effective way for businesses to receive updates is to sign up to receive our Service Notices by email.

- The general public would be notified by a Service Notice published on our website and carried in the local newspapers;
- Customers/businesses signed up to receive service notifications through our website would receive an email containing a link to the posted Service Notice;
- Reserved customers are informed via an automated voicemail system;
- Local business are informed either through the service notification email or by fax or phone through our local terminal staff;
- Communication also occurs through the local Ferry Advisory Committee members;
- Public Open Houses;
- Terminal Handouts, Newspaper Ads;
- News Releases.

Question 25: What is the policy for fares for students who are traveling for sporting events or school sanctioned field trips?

Answer 25:

Through the Coastal Ferry Services Contract, the Provincial Government subsidizes ferry travel for BC seniors, students and passengers with a permanent disability, BC Ferries administers these discounted fares and enforces the policies on behalf of the Province.

B.C. students ages 18 and under with acceptable I.D. (excluding Post Secondary students) can travel on school sponsored events at a special reduced fare.

Note that a letter from a school official confirming the nature of the event must be presented. The applicable routes are:

Port Hardy - Prince Rupert
Prince Rupert - Skidegate
Port Hardy - Mid-Coast
Tsawwassen - Swartz Bay

Tsawwassen - Duke Point
Tsawwassen - Gulf Islands
Horseshoe Bay - Departure Bay
Horseshoe Bay – Langdale
Powell River - Comox
Saltery Bay - Earls Cove

Qualifying B.C. students ages 18 and under with acceptable I.D. (excluding Post Secondary students) can travel between their residence and school, and/or attend or participate in school and junior association education and sporting events for **free** on the following routes:

Swartz Bay - Southern Gulf Islands
Nanaimo Harbour - Gabriola Island
Brentwood Bay - Mill Bay
Buckley Bay - Denman Island - Hornby Island
Crofton – Vesuvius
Powell River - Texada Island
Chemainus - Thetis Island - Penelakut Island
Campbell River - Quadra Island - Cortes Island
Horseshoe Bay - Bowen Island
Port McNeill - Alert Bay - Sointula
Langdale - Gambier - Keats (residents only)
Skidegate - Alliford Bay

Question 26: What is the policy for the fares of adults who are supervising students who are traveling to sporting events or on school sanctioned field trips?

Answer 26:

Coaches, teachers, parents, escorts and vehicles are charged full fare.

Question 27: What is the policy regarding on time departure? Are there any bonuses, incentives or penalties associated with on-time departure?

Answer 27:

Customers have clearly communicated to BC Ferries that on-time performance is important to them. BC Ferries measures on-time performance to ensure we are delivering customer satisfaction. While the senior executive incentive program may include metrics related to on-time performance, there is no financial compensation provided to our ship or terminal based employees for on-time performance.