



Bald Head Association ~ “The voice for BHI property owners”

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BHI Transportation and Baggage Policies



BHI Transportation (BHIT) has been working to help inform ferry passengers and contractors about the baggage policies “that are in place for the safety and comfort of all ferry passengers.” Regulated by the North Carolina Utilities Commission (NCUC), the baggage order from the NCUC became effective on April 1, 2022, and has been “softly” enforced, as BHIT explains, “as we work to educate the traveling public. As we move into an era of stricter enforcement, adherence to the baggage guidelines will be integral to achieving our goal of more consistent on-time service, especially during the busy season.”

Some main points of the NCUC baggage order include: “Checked-bag limit of three (3) items per ticketed passenger. Size cannot be larger than a standard 48-quart cooler and must weigh no more than 50 pounds.”

Bion Stewart, Chief Operating Officer for Bald Head Island Transportation, explained, “We’re working on consistent enforcement of baggage policies and resolving training issues to alleviate confusion. Our goal is to run a safe and efficient operation while minimizing risk on each ferry across the board. Both the contractor and passenger ferries need to operate for their intended purposes, and we are enforcing measured and reasonable baggage and item carriage standards to provide more reliable service. One thing passengers can do to assist us in serving them more efficiently is placing loose items into a closed container for loading and unloading

onto the dollies. In addition to reducing loading and unloading times, placing items in closed containers also reduces the risk of damage and loss.”

Mr. Stewart continued, “Running a ferry system is a highly complex operation involving multiple layers of interconnected interactions between our employees and our passengers. The unique nature of our baggage handling operation adds significant labor demands and additional complexity. Mistakes will happen, but we are all committed to constantly reviewing our processes and procedures to minimize mistakes, streamline operations and improve the overall customer experience.” Here are some specific examples Mr. Stewart shared.

“The baggage policy is not intended to prevent property owners from bringing small items on board. If an item can fit in an enclosed container and transported on the dollies, that is the best option. However, if you must carry an item onto the ferry, it should be easily managed by a single person and able to be carried on your lap or placed beside you without affecting the safety and comfort of other passengers.”

“Small lamps, plants, home decorations (other than furniture) and strollers carrying the child or accompanied by a child but carrying small personal items are all fine to carry/roll onboard. We have had instances where strollers have been used to transport items like cases of water, tools

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and other large items clearly not meant to be carried in a stroller. We will ask that those items be appropriately packaged in an enclosed container and transported on the dollies. We know some Island residents are home improvement do-it-yourselfers and wish to transport construction items on the passenger ferry. Construction materials are generally not allowed on the passenger ferry, but small boards and materials that can be easily carried and controlled by a homeowner similar to the items previously described may be carried onboard the passenger ferry.

“Other construction materials such as drywall, doors, large tools, wood boards, etc., may be carried onto the contractor ferry if they are under 8’ long and can be carried by a single person, on a single trip. Building supplies and other materials that do not meet the criteria described for the passenger and contractor ferries must be transported by the tug and barge. Due to their hazardous nature, batteries must be shipped on the barge, as well.

“An issue that was increasing in frequency and severity and had to be addressed for the safe and efficient operation of the ferry was the increasing frequency of vendors and contractors using the ferry to transport large quantities of tools, materials and supplies such as paint, table saws, compressors, construction materials, landscaping materials, etc. For ferry efficiency, we had to address the problem of substantial tools, equipment and contractor supplies being dropped off at baggage and either being loaded onto dollies or loaded on the deck by dock hands, which caused both delays and in some instances potentially hazardous conditions on the ferries. Proper use of the contractor ferry and the tug and barge to support these services will allow us to run the entire ferry system more efficiently.”

Deck loads are oversized items such as bicycles, paddleboards, kayaks or other items too large to fit

safely in a dolly. These items carry an additional fee and must be loaded individually on the ferry by baggage handlers.

Mr. Stewart explained, “Handling the large volume of baggage and other items passengers wish to transport to and from the Island is the most labor-intensive component of our operation and has a significant impact on our ability to maintain our schedule. For any effort to improve the efficiency and reliability of the ferry service to be successful, we must enforce a baggage policy that balances the unique needs of the Island with the intended purpose, design, function and capacity of our assets. We appreciate everyone’s patience and understanding as we try to bring the safest, most efficient and enjoyable service to our passengers.”

Did You Know?

Did you know that on the mainland, baggage handlers are called “dock hands.” And on the Island, they’re called “outfitters” because they are also tram drivers.

Here’s another interesting term. A “deck load” is something defined as not being able to be loaded into a dolly. This includes items such as paddleboards, kayaks and bicycles. By definition, these items take extra labor and are more time intensive for moving and handling. To the extent that deck loads can be managed, the better BHIT can keep to its schedule.

Links with Additional Information

To view the full baggage policies list, visit <https://baldheadislandferry.com> and select “Public Baggage Notice” at the bottom of the web page.

For tips to help make trips to BHI easier, BHIT recommends watching its video at <https://baldheadislandferry.com/video>. The video includes detailed information regarding baggage service. Share this video with your family, guests, renters and contractors.

For any questions, contact Bion Stewart, Chief Operating Officer for Bald Head Island Transportation, at 910-363-0527.