NZ Customs and Immigration Notes – For those nearing the end of their visa time

Patricia Dallas, Gulf Harbour Radio 6 May, 2017

This applies to those that end up at the end of their 6months and the weather is not suitable for leaving.

Foreign boats entering NZ get a three plus three month visitor visa so it is important that they do not arrive too early, despite how keen they are to get here. It is best to arrive no earlier than mid November as that means you have until mid May to leave. In 2017 there was a cyclone affecting the passage route in early May. In 2016 those boats that left in April were OK but others had to wait until early June.

Customs clear boats in and out of NZ on behalf of Immigration. Customs do not set the immigration rules. Customs officers in places like Whangarei and Opua are understanding of weather situations and have no difficulty clearing a boat that has an expired visa. However they point out that if that person or persons returns to NZ they might have a bit of difficulty with Immigration as they will have a record of overstaying. All things are kept online these days!

There was some thought that there was a 14 day grace period but the word from the very hard nosed Immigration spokesperson I talked to this morning, Sarah, was that this period is only 24 hours. She pointed out that it is easy to get a new visa extension online and that makes you legal.

There are two ways to do this. Online or via post.

The online process:

Go to [www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas)

On the top right click on’ log in’

Just under this is a drop down list and click on 'visitor visa'

Click on log in / create an account

Proceed to the ‘create an account’ with RealMe

Fill in as much as you can. You can use overseas info. It will not hang up if you leave a blank space. The important info is your email address, and you will need to create a username and password as well as the security questions. It is a bit fiddly but can be done!

It will cost nzd165per person.

There is a cheaper way as if you do it by post using the Immigration form IN1111 it is $165 per family When you think about it, $165 is small change in comparison to boat damage bills and crew discomfort, or worse?

Bottom line. As a captain, you do not have to leave the country if you feel the weather and conditions are unsafe to do so. Customs will clear you out when you are ready to go whether your visa is current or not. Your choice, as remember this may make life difficult if you want to return. The option is to get the visa extension.

Thanks to Sharron at Whangarei Marina for the postal option information.

And to Garry at Customs Opua for his level headed information.