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**HOUSE BILL 172: VESSELS - OPERATING WHILE UNDER THE
INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL**

By George Mahffey, Jr.

Prior to the passage of House Bill 172, the results of a blood test were only admissible under Maryland law as to a criminal prosecution for driving under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or controlled dangerous substances. The impetus for this law, set forth in section 10-308 of the Court and Judicial Proceedings Article and section 8-738 of the Natural Resources Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, was the prevention of drinking and driving. House Bill 172 now extends the admissibility of blood tests for criminal prosecutions to those operating or attempting to operate a vessel while under the influence of drugs, alcohol or controlled dangerous substances.

As with the old law, this new Bill seeks to protect the public from those persons operating vessels and cars while intoxicated. Additionally, with the continuing efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, this new Bill will help hold accountable those who cause or may cause accidents resulting in contamination of the Bay or other Maryland waterways by fuel, oil, or other hazardous substances.

This new Bill took effect October 1, 1999, and amends section 10-308 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article and Section 8-738 of the Natural Resources Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.