Common Compliance Issues for Vessel Navigation Lights

The following items are often cause for the issuance of citations by Coast Guard field inspectors:

• On power driven vessels less than 12m (39.4 ft) in length, when choosing the option to replace the masthead and stern lights with a single all-round light, the most common problem is that the combination light is mounted on a staff that is too short.

Make sure the all-round light is at least 1 meter above the sidelights, and is high enough to be visible from ahead in spite of the rise of the bow when underway, and is not obscured by equipment or canvas tops – even if this means having to mount it on a removable pole, rather than a telescoping one.

• Sidelights that are mounted on the hull below the gunwale do not meet the International Rules requirement that they be mounted above the "uppermost continuous deck".

• Inland Rules, however, do allow for sidelights to be mounted on the hull below the gunwale, but they must be visible from dead ahead with the beams not crossed (mounted too far forward) or separated (mounted too far aft). The lights must also be mounted so they are “vertical.”
These are common faults and usually require a mounting block with a tooled surface parallel to the fore-aft centerline.
Those cool-looking, retro, hull-mounted recessed sidelights frequently do not meet these requirements.