

EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED

- **Oars or paddles.** They are helpful to get back to shore if the boat's engine fails.
- **Anchor and line.** An appropriately sized anchor with good-quality nylon line is an essential piece of equipment for boaters. All boaters on rivers with locks should carry a mooring line at least 75 feet long.
- **Bailing device.** All boats should have on board some kind of bailer to remove water from the boat.
- **Marine radio.** This is essential for communicating with other boaters, U.S. Coast Guard, commercial vessels, drawbridge tenders and lock operators. Marine weather stations broadcast the latest available weather conditions, forecasts and advisories.
- **Cell phone.** A cell phone is an excellent way to call for help if the operator knows the emergency numbers for the area in which he or she is boating.
- **Float plan.** Leave a float plan and let others know where and when with details about your trip.
- **Boating maps or charts.** These items are useful for planning outings. They can help boaters avoid problems.
- **Other useful items.** Sunscreen, flashlight, visual distress signals (required on Lake Erie), compass, throw (rescue) bag, extra gas can, first aid kit, boat fenders, tool kit, spare spark plugs, propeller pins, spare propeller and extra light bulbs and fuses.

HAZARDS TO BOATERS

Dams. Boats must stay clear of dams. Failure to do so often results in tragedy. Hazards exist both above and below the dam.

State law now requires that many low-head dams in the Commonwealth be marked with signs and, when practical, buoys upstream and downstream. The signs detail restrictions for boating, swimming and wading, and hazards posed by the dam. These restrictions are enforced by Commission waterways conservation officers.

Strainers. A tree or tree limb is a typical strainer that can trap and flood boats. Water flows through these obstructions, but solid objects do not. Strainers can pin victims underwater.

Current. Never underestimate the power of moving water. A boater who is not sure if his or her boat or ability is up to the prevailing conditions should stay off the water.

Cold water. It kills! When boating on cold water, always wear a life jacket, dress in layers, and always tell someone where you are going.

Submerged objects. Rocks, stumps, logs and other objects can greatly damage a hull or motor. Keeping a sharp lookout and reducing speed in unfamiliar areas is a good idea.

Alcohol and boating. Alcohol use increases the chances of having an accident. Alcohol affects balance, coordination and judgment. It is illegal to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. **Penalties include loss of boating privileges, significant fines and imprisonment.**

Other boaters. Steer clear of other boaters, stay alert, keep a sharp lookout and report violations to a waterways conservation officer. Don't assume other operators are paying attention or that they know the rules.

BOATING ACCIDENTS

Boating accidents must be reported in writing by the boat operator or owner to the Fish & Boat Commission when:

- A person dies or disappears.
 - A person is injured and requires advanced medical treatment beyond first aid.
 - Damage to the boat and other property totals more than \$2,000, or there is a complete loss of the vessel.
- Boating accident reports can be downloaded from the Commission's website or obtained from any Commission regional law enforcement office.

SPECIALLY REGULATED WATERS

Additional regulations such as speed limits and slow, no-wake areas affect boaters on specific waterways. Boaters should read all regulations posted on the bulletin boards at access areas. Know the waters you plan to boat before you go.

REGISTRATION & TITLING

- Boats propelled by machinery must be registered, and they must properly display numbers and a boat registration validation decal. This includes all motorboats regardless of the boat's length and type of motor (includes electric motors).
- Unpowered boats using Commission lakes and access areas must be registered OR display a Commission use permit OR display a State Parks launch or mooring permit.
- Boat titles are issued when a boat is sold or when ownership is conveyed. Titles are required for motorboats with a model year of 1997 and newer, except for those that are powered by an outboard motor that are less than 14 feet in length. All 1997 or newer personal watercraft are also subject to the titling requirement. Voluntary titling is available for any other boat.

PHONE NUMBERS

Fish & Boat Commission Boating Course Hotline:
1-888-PAFISH-1 (1-888-723-4741)

Boating Safety Education: 717-705-7833

Law Enforcement: 717-705-7861

Boat Registration Office:
TOLL FREE 1-866-BOATREG (1-866-262-8734)



Regional Offices:

NW 814-337-0444
NC 814-359-5250
NE 570-477-5717

SW 814-445-8974
SC 717-486-7087
SE 717-626-0228

2012

BOATING REGULATIONS RECAP

A Supplement to the *Boating Handbook*
Information All Boaters Must Know



The following information includes highlights of laws and regulations that affect recreational boaters in Pennsylvania. This short summary is not intended to be a complete listing of all boating regulations. Consult the ***Pennsylvania Boating Handbook*** for more detailed information on boating laws and regulations or call the nearest Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission regional law enforcement office.

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's website is the place to go for a wealth of up-to-date information on Pennsylvania fishing and boating programs. Point your browser to

www.fishandboat.com

MANDATORY BOATING EDUCATION

HP of Motor	Restrictions of Use
PWC*	All PWC (personal watercraft) operators must obtain and have in their possession a Boating Safety Education Certificate. Persons 11 years of age or younger may NOT operate. Persons 12 through 15 years of age may NOT operate with any passengers on board 15 years of age or younger or rent a PWC. *Also known as Jetski®, Sea-Doo®, WaveRunner®, Tiger Shark® and others.
0 - 25 hp	None
Greater than 25 hp	Persons 11 years of age or younger may NOT operate. Persons born on or after January 1, 1982, may not operate unless they have obtained and have in possession a Boating Safety Education Certificate.

HOW CAN I GET A BOATING SAFETY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE?

To obtain a Boating Safety Education Certificate, boaters must successfully complete an approved boating course (a fee may be charged). Pennsylvania residents must have a certificate issued by the Commission. Approved courses include classroom courses offered by the Commission, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons and Commission-approved Internet and video/correspondence courses.

For boating course opportunities, contact:

Fish & Boat Commission website: www.fishandboat.com

Fish & Boat Commission Boating Course Hotline:

1-888-PAFISH-1 (1-888-723-4741).

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFDs)

• A U.S. Coast Guard-approved wearable PFD (life jacket) is required for each person on board. In addition, one throwable PFD (seat cushion or ring buoy) is required on boats 16 feet in length or longer.

• Children 12 years of age and younger must wear an approved wearable PFD while underway on Commonwealth waters on any boat 20 feet or less in length and in all canoes and kayaks.

• All water skiers and anyone towed behind a boat, personal watercraft operators and passengers and sailboarders must wear a life jacket. Inflatable PFDs are not acceptable for these activities.

• Wearable life jackets must be "readily accessible" or in the open where they can be easily reached. Throwable PFDs (cushions and ring buoys) must be immediately available or within arm's reach. A PFD stowed in a compartment or sealed in its original packaging is not readily accessible or immediately available.



MANDATORY COLD WEATHER LIFE JACKET WEAR

• Beginning November 1, 2012, boaters must wear a life jacket on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak during the cold weather months from November 1 through April 30. Recreational boating fatalities that occur in Pennsylvania from November through April are primarily due to the effects of cold water immersion. When water temperatures are less than 70 degrees F, cold water shock is a major factor in boating fatalities. Victims who wear a life jacket when exposed to cold water have potentially life-saving advantages such as

insulation from the cold, buoyancy for victims who are unable to tread water and reduced risk of aspiration of water. In an effort to reduce the number of fatalities related to cold water immersion, the Commission has amended regulations to require life jackets to be worn on small and unstable boats during the period most noted for cold water temperatures.

LIGHTS

• All boats must show required running lights between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility. Check the *PA Boating Handbook* for details.

• All boats must display anchor lights when they are anchored on any boatable Commonwealth waters (except in special anchorage areas).

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

• Coast Guard-approved fire extinguishers must be carried on all motorboats 26 feet or more in length. Motorboats less than 26 feet in length with gasoline engines are required to carry a fire extinguisher if they have one or more of the following: closed compartments, permanently installed fuel tanks, double bottoms not sealed to the hull or completely filled with flotation materials or closed living spaces. Note: Open boats such as johnboats where an after-market solid wood or metal floor is installed and is not completely sealed to the hull are **NOT** required to carry a fire extinguisher.

• Fire extinguishers must be installed so that they are immediately available within arm's reach of the operator or passengers on board.

• Fire extinguishers must be maintained and fully charged.

CARBURETOR BACKFIRE FLAME CONTROL

• Gasoline engines, except outboards, must have an approved (USCG, SAE or UL) backfire flame control on the carburetor to prevent ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

SOUND-PRODUCING DEVICES

• Motorboats less than 40 feet in length must carry some mechanical means of making a sound signal. This device may be hand-, mouth- or power-operated. An athletic coach's whistle is an acceptable sound-producing device for small motorboats.

• Operators of unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboards) are required to carry a device capable of sounding a prolonged blast for 4-6 seconds that can be heard by another boat operator in time to avoid a collision. An athletic coach's whistle is an acceptable sound-producing device.

• Sound signaling devices must be readily accessible to the boat operator.

VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS (VDS)

• Visual distress signals are required for boats operating on Lake Erie.

• Visual distress signals must be U.S. Coast Guard-approved, have legible approval numbers, be in serviceable condition and be readily accessible. An expiration date must be stamped on flares.

MUFFLING DEVICES

• Boat motors must be equipped with an efficient muffling system or device in good working order. Cut-out devices are prohibited.

• Boat exhaust systems may not be modified in any manner that reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of the muffler or muffler system.

MARINE SANITATION DEVICES (MSD)

• Marine sanitation devices must be installed on all vessels with installed toilet systems. They must be approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.

• Types I and II MSDs are approved for use on Lake Erie, the Delaware River, the Three Rivers area and other flow-through waters. Type III holding tanks are required only on non-navigable waters. Discharge of untreated sewage in any Commonwealth water is prohibited.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

It is illegal to:

• operate a boat at greater than slow, no wake when within 100 feet of the shoreline, floats, docks, ramps, swimmers, downed skiers, anchored, moored or drifting boats or in areas marked with "slow, no wake" buoys.

• operate faster than slow, no wake when within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another boat that is underway, unless in a narrow channel.

• operate within 100 feet of any person towed behind another boat.

• cause a boat to become airborne or to leave the water completely while crossing another boat's wake when within 100 feet of the boat creating the wake.

• operate a watercraft in a reckless, negligent or dangerous manner. Boats must be operated at a rate of speed that does not endanger the life or property of any person.

• fail to keep a proper lookout or fail to maintain a safe speed, so that the boat operator cannot take proper and effective action to avoid a collision.

• weave through congested traffic.

• operate a motorboat less than 20 feet in length at greater than slow, no wake speed while a person is standing on or in the boat.

• operate a motorboat not equipped with railings or other safeguards at greater than slow, no wake while a person is riding on the bow decking, gunwales, transom or motor cover.

• tow more than one person at a time behind a PWC or tow anyone behind a PWC with a capacity of two persons or fewer.

• operate a pontoon while a person is riding outside the passenger-carrying area.

• operate a PWC from sunset to sunrise.

• operate or be a passenger on a PWC without wearing a life jacket.

• operate a PWC without having in your possession a boating safety education certification.

• operate a boat using docking lights while underway, except when docking and the boat is traveling at slow, no wake speed and is within 100 feet of approaching a dock, a mooring buoy or the shoreline. A docking light is a flood or spotlight type of light permanently installed or permanently mounted on a motorboat that is used to illuminate a boat's forward course of travel.

WATER-SKIING

(includes similar activities such as wakeboarding, towing inner tubes, etc.)

• It is unlawful to operate a motorboat at any speed with a person or persons sitting, riding or hanging on a swim platform (*teak surfing*) or swim ladder attached to the motorboat, except when launching, retrieving, docking or anchoring the motorboat.

• It is unlawful to operate a motorboat at any speed when towing a person on water skis or other devices using a tow rope of 20 feet or less.

• Skiing is illegal between sunset and sunrise.

• In addition to the operator, a competent observer must be in the boat in a position to observe the towed person.

• Tow ropes may not exceed a length of 80 feet.