

# OTHER WATER ACTIVITIES

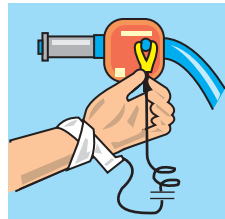
## PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (PWC)

PWCs are defined as vessels less than 16 feet in length that use an inboard engine powering a water jet pump as their primary source of propulsion, designed to be operated by a person sitting, kneeling or standing in other than the conventional manner of boat operation. Other vessels may use jet propulsion, however, they are not considered a PWC.

These boats are fast and maneuverable and can be operated in relatively shallow water. PWC operators are involved in a disproportionate number of boating accidents. Collisions are the most common type of accident reported, and they are usually caused by the operator not keeping a proper lookout or operating the boat in a reckless manner. Many of these accidents are caused by people new to PWC operation, and nearly all of these accidents are avoidable.

PWC operators must follow the same laws and regulations as other boaters. **Pennsylvania regulations require that PWC operators must:**

- Wear life jackets at all times. All passengers must also wear life jackets. Inflatable life jackets are not acceptable.
- Carry a fully charged fire extinguisher on board. (see fire extinguisher section)
- Carry a sound-producing device on board.
- Attach the cut-off switch safety lanyard to clothing, body or life jacket. The purpose of the switch is to stop the engine in case the operator falls off.

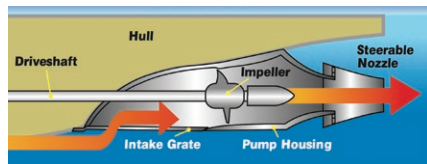


### Furthermore, it is illegal:

- For anyone to operate a PWC without having in one's possession a Boating Safety Education Certificate. See page 2 on how to obtain a certificate.
- To rent a PWC to anyone 15 years of age or younger. No one less than 16 years of age may operate a rented PWC.
- To operate a PWC from sunset to sunrise. See page 16 for timetable.
- To tow a water skier behind a PWC with a capacity of two people or fewer and to tow more than one skier.
- For anyone 11 years of age or younger to operate a PWC.
- For anyone 12 through 15 years of age to operate a PWC with any passengers on board 15 years of age or younger.

## PWC CHARACTERISTICS

- Jet pump propulsion, which eliminates a rudder or exposed propeller.
- A steerable nozzle is located at the stern of the boat.



- A cut-off switch and safety lanyard, which stops the engine when the operator falls off the PWC.
- PWCs are highly maneuverable. Releasing the throttle (or slowing the engine) usually eliminates the ability to steer the craft.



## PWC OPERATION

PWC operators should be responsible and considerate of others around them. Noise is the most common complaint against PWC operators. A PWC must be equipped with an efficient muffling system in good working order, which cannot be bypassed or altered. Courteous PWC operators will vary their areas of operation to reduce repetitive course tracking, stay away from shorelines and be aware of all boats and people in the area of operation.

Everyone who operates a PWC should read the owner's manual and become familiar with the craft before going out on the water. Practice is essential for safe PWC operation. PWC operators must connect the safety lanyard to both the cut-off switch on the PWC and their life jacket, body or clothing. If the operator falls off, he should re-board the craft from the rear. PWCs have both "main" and "reserve" fuel tanks. Switch the fuel selector on your craft to "reserve" when the "main" tank has been used and head to shore to refuel. Safety gear, including gloves, eye protection, footwear, and wetsuit or dry suit for protection against cold water, is not required by law but advisable for PWC operators.

## PADDLESORTS

Canoeing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding are very popular recreational water sports in Pennsylvania. There are dangers that can be lessened with knowledge, preparation and practice. Primary hazards are capsizing, swamping or just falling out of the boat. Keep in mind that paddling is a "get wet" sport.

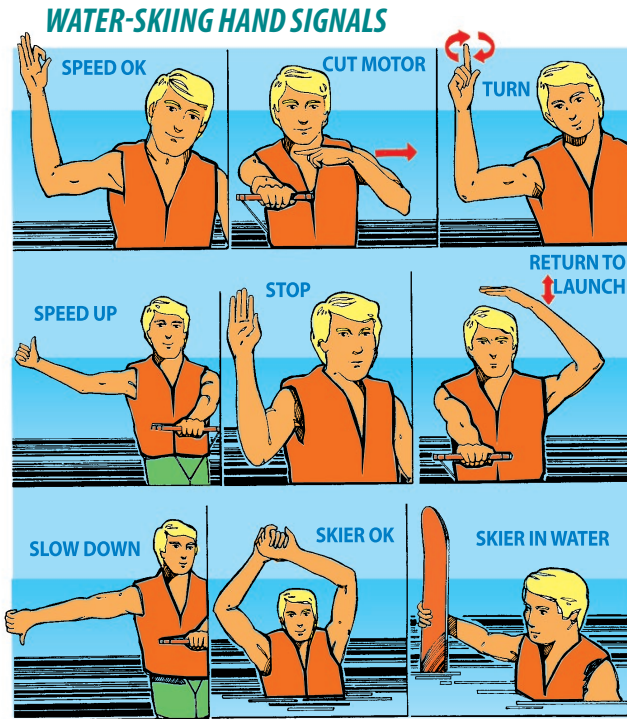


## PADDLING TIPS

- **Wear your life jacket.** On average, 80 percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a life jacket.
- **Expect to get wet and dress properly.** Even the best paddlers sometimes capsize or swamp their boats.
- **Be prepared to swim.** If the water looks too hazardous to swim in, don't go paddling.
- If you capsize, hold on to your boat, unless it presents a life-threatening situation.
- **Scout ahead whenever possible.** Know the river. Avoid surprises.
- **Be prepared for the weather.** Get a forecast before you go.
- Wear wading shoes or tennis shoes with wool, polypropylene, pile or neoprene socks.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.
- Portage (carry) your boat around any section of water about which you feel uncertain.
- **Never boat alone.** Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Keep painter lines (ropes tied to the bow) and any other ropes coiled and secured.
- Never tie a rope to yourself or to another paddler, especially a child.
- Kneel to increase your stability before entering rougher water, like a rapid.
- If you collide with an obstruction, lean toward it.
- **Be sure to leave a float plan.** It's a written statement that details your intended trip and is provided to a friend, neighbor or marina operator. Include specifics about the vessel, equipment, crew and departure and arrival times. *Use the sample float plan located on the outer cover of this handbook.*

## WATER-SKIING AND SIMILAR ACTIVITIES

Water-skiing includes conventional water-skiing, as well as anyone towed behind a boat on aquaplanes, kneeboards, inner tubes, air mattresses, parasails, kite skis, wake boards or any similar device. Participants in all of these types of activities are required to wear a life jacket. Persons engaged in barefoot, jump or trick skiing or wake surfing may elect to wear, at their own risk, a wetsuit designed specifically for that activity. A USCG-approved life jacket must be carried in the boat for each skier electing to wear the special water-ski wetsuit. Inflatable life jackets are not acceptable for anyone towed behind a boat.



In addition to the operator, a competent observer must be in the boat in a position to observe the progress of the person being towed. A competent observer is a person who has the ability to assess when a skier is in trouble, knows and understands the water-skiing hand signals and is capable of helping a skier.

- To prevent propeller-related accidents, turn off your engine before picking up any skier.
- Skiing is prohibited between sunset and sunrise.
- Skiers are also considered passengers and count in the boat's total capacity.
- It's unlawful to operate a boat when it is loaded with passengers (including individuals being towed behind a boat) or cargo beyond its safe carrying capacity.
- Skiers may start from the shore or dock if boat traffic permits. Skiers may not return to the shore or dock under power.
- Installation of ski ramps and jumps requires a permit from the PA Fish & Boat Commission. Mooring or drifting within 100 feet of a ski ramp or jump while it is in use is prohibited.
- Kite skiing and parasailing are permitted only on waters where unrestricted skiing is permitted.

- It is legal to tow more than one skier except when locally prohibited. Ski tow ropes may not exceed the following lengths (as measured from the boat's transom):
 

Conventional water-ski- 80 feet	Parasails- 300 feet
Nonreleasable kite ski- 50 feet	Releasable kite ski- 500 feet
- 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 (as measured from the boat's transom). The minimum tow rope length does not apply to wake surfing.
- Boats engaged in the activity of wake surfing are limited to slow, no-wake speed when within 200 feet of the shoreline, docks, launch ramps, swimmers or downed skiers, persons wading in the water, anchored, moored or drifting boats and other marked areas.
- Motorboats propelled by an outboard motor, inboard/outboard motor or water jet are prohibited from towing a person in or on the wake of the boat.

## SWIMMING AND DIVING

Swimming is prohibited at Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission lakes and access areas. Boaters should keep a sharp lookout for swimmers and divers at all times.

A diver down flag is displayed from a float during diving operations. This flag is red with a white diagonal stripe running from the top of the staff to the opposite lower corner.



The code flag alpha is a blue and white pennant and boats must display this flag during dive operations if they are restricted in their ability to maneuver. Boats not engaged in diving operations shall remain at least 100 feet from areas displaying the diver down flag or boats displaying the code flag alpha.

## SAILING

Sailing is another popular form of boating in Pennsylvania. Sailboaters may have different requirements than other boaters. They should be familiar with the operation and navigation requirements found in this handbook. Navigation lights are required after dusk and during periods of restricted visibility.

Sailboaters should stay off the water during storms and periods of extremely high winds. They should also be aware of overhead power lines. Life jackets should be worn at all times.

Another type of sailing vessel, the sailboard (windsurfer) is a single or double-hulled boat with jointed mast (surfboard with a sail). Sailboard operators in Pennsylvania must wear a life jacket. Inflatable life jackets are not acceptable.

## HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

Hunters and anglers that use a boat as a platform to hunt or fish must remember that they are boaters too. Often these types of boaters get so involved with their sport they forget to follow all boating regulations, such as proper safety equipment, boating laws and the rules of the road. When fishing from a boat, remember to load your boat properly, remain seated, wear a life jacket and keep an eye on the weather. **Never anchor from the stern (back), and stay with your boat if it should capsize.**

Hunting from a boat is fun but can be dangerous. Fall weather is changeable and can be deadly for the boating hunter. Water temperatures are typically much colder during traditional hunting seasons. The hunter usually hunts from a small boat with a flat bottom. These boats are poorly suited for rough water. Life jackets appropriate for hunting should be worn at all times.

**Please be aware of the mandatory cold-weather life jacket wear regulation, effective November 1 through April 30—see page 11.**