Rocks, stumps, logs and other objects

- 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.

- It is unlawful to operate a motorboat at any speed with a person or persons sitting, riding or hanging on a swim platform or swim ladder attached to the motorboat, except when launching, retrieving, docking or anchoring the motorboat.
- In addition to the operator, a competent observer must be in the boat in a position to observe the towed person.
- Skiing is illegal between sunset and sunrise.
- Conventional water-ski tow ropes may not exceed a length of 80 feet.
- 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.
- Wake surfing is excluded from the 20-foot tow rope requirement.
- 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 (wake surfing).

EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDED, NOT REQUIRED
- Anchor and line
- Bailing device
- Boating maps or charts
- Cell phone
- Float plan
- Marine radio
- Paddles or oars
- Marine radio
- Paddles or oars
- Cell phone

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 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 PFBC 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.
MANDATORY BOATING EDUCATION

HP of Motor Restrictions of Use
PWC* All PWC (personal watercraft) operators, regardless of age, must 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 Jet Ski®, Sea-Doo®, WaveRunners®, Tigerhawk® 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.

MANDATORY COLD WEATHER LIFE JACKET WEAR
• From November 1 through April 30, boaters are required by law to wear life jackets on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak. This regulation went into effect in 2012 and is intended to protect boaters from the dangers of cold water shock if they fall into the water. Recreational boating fatalities that occur in Pennsylvania from November through April are primarily due to the effects of cold water shock if they fall into the water.

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 PFBC. Approved courses include classroom courses offered by PFBC, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons and PFBC-approved Internet and video correspondence courses.

For boating course opportunities, visit www.fishandboat.com/Boat/BoatingCourses/Pages/default.aspx or call 1-888-PAFISH-1 (1-888-727-3471).

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT
PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFDs)
• A U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket is required for each person on board. In addition, one throwable device is required on boats 16 feet in length or longer.
• Life jackets must be the appropriate size for the persons wearing them.
• Life jackets must be appropriate for the activity for which they are worn. See the U.S. Coast Guard approval label for information.
• Children 12 years of age and younger must wear an approved life jacket on Commonwealth waters when underway on any boat 20 feet or less in length and in all canoes and kayaks.
• All water skiers and anyone towed behind vessels, personal watercraft operators and passengers and sailboarders must wear a life jacket. Inflatable life jackets are not acceptable for these activities.
• Wearable life jackets must be “readily accessible” or in the open, where they can be easily reached. Throwable devices must be “immediately available” or within arm’s reach of the operator or passengers on board.
• Wearable life jackets are required to carry a fire extinguisher.

SEASONAL REQUIREMENTS
• All vessels must show required running lights between sunset and sunrise during periods of restricted visibility. Check the Pennsylvania Boating Handbook for details.
• All boats must display anchor lights when they are anchored on any boatable Commonwealth waters (except in special anchorage areas).
• Unpowered boats must display a white light either handheld or installed in time to avoid a collision.

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.
• Fish 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.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS
• 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, closed living spaces or closed storage compartments in which flammable materials are stowed. Note: Open boats such as jonboats 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.
• Owners of powered boats (cruisers, sailboats, sailboarders, personal watercraft) must have a U.S. Coast Guard-approved fire extinguisher on board.

SOUND-PRODUCING DEVICES
• Motorboats less than 40 feet in length must carry some means of making an efficient sound signal audible for 1/2 mile. 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 emitting an efficient sound signal audible for 1/2 mile. This device may be hand-, mouth- or power-operated. An athletic coach’s whistle is an acceptable sound-producing device.

SONAR EQUIPMENT
• Operators of fishing vessels are required to have on board a sounder capable of producing an audible signal.

VESSEL REGISTRATION
• All boats must be registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Go on line to www.fishandboat.com and select “Register My Boat” for details.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS
• It is illegal to:
  • operate a boat at greater than slow, no-wake speed within 100 feet of the shoreline, docks, launch ramps, swimmers, downed skiers, persons wading in the water, anchored, moored or drifting boats and floats or in areas marked with “slow, no wake” buoys.
  • operate faster than slow, no wake between 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 26 feet in length at greater than slow, no-wake speed while a person is standing on or in the boat.
  • operate a motorboat at greater than slow, no-wake speed with a person riding outside of the passenger carrying area or while a person is riding on the bow deck, gunwales, transom or motor covers.
  • 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 boat 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.

PADDLESPORTS
Canoeists, kayakers and paddleboarders must adhere to life jacket, sound-producing device and registration/launch permit requirements. A white light either hand-held or installed to is to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.

PADDLING TIPS
• Expect to get wet/dress properly
• Always wear your life jacket

• Never boat alone
• Prepare for the weather
• Know your limits
• Scout ahead

• Leave a float plan
• Prepare to swim
• After a collision
• Exceed water
capacity
• Do not exceed
capacity
• Never attempt
to rescue
• Do not attempt
to rescue
• Expect to get
tugged by
• Do not tug
• Expect to get
• Do not get
• Exceed wind
capacity
• Do not exceed
wind capacity
• Do not attempt
rescue
• Do not attempt
rescue
• Use only
appropriate
life jacket
• Use only
appropriate
life jacket
• Exceed drift
capacity
• Do not exceed
drift capacity
• Exceed weight
capacity
• Do not exceed
weight capacity
• Use only
appropriate
life jacket
• Use only
appropriate
life jacket

• Boats are not
equipped
• Boats are not
equipped
• Use only
appropriate
life jacket
• Use only
appropriate
life jacket

• 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)
• MSDs are required on all vessels with installed toilet systems. They must be U.S. Coast Guard approved.
• 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 sewage is prohibited in all Commonwealth waters.

PADDLESPORTS
Canoeists, kayakers and paddleboarders must adhere to life jacket, sound-producing device and registration/launch permit requirements. A white light either hand-held or installed to is to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.

PADDLING TIPS
• Expect to get wet/dress properly
• Always wear your life jacket

• Never boat alone
• Prepare for the weather
• Know your limits
• Scout ahead

• Leave a float plan
• Prepare to swim

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