**WATER-SKIING AND SIMILAR ACTIVITIES**
(wake surfing, 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.
- 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 swimmers, 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
- Portable fire extinguisher

**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 the 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. An officer can stop a boat and arrest.
- 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 PFBC 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 report forms can be downloaded from the PFBC’s website or obtained from any of our regional law enforcement offices.

**SPECIALY 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 AND 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 (canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards) using the PFBC’s lakes and access areas or Pennsylvania State Parks or Forest waterways must be registered OR display a PFBC 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**
Boating Safety Education:
1-888-PAFISH-1 (1-888-723-4741)
Law Enforcement:
717-705-7861
Boat Registration:
1-866-BOATREG (1-866-262-8734)

**REGIONAL OFFICES**
Northwest 814-337-0444
Southwest 814-445-8974
Northcentral 814-359-5250
Southcentral 717-486-7087
Northeast 570-477-5717
Southeast 717-626-0228

**See WATER POLLUTION or POACHING? REPORT IT!**
PFBC TOLL-FREE HOTLINE 855-FISH-KIL
Boat registration renewal and fishing license purchase:
www.HuntFish.PA.gov
The PFBC social media:
www.fishandboat.com/socialmedia
The PFBC free mobile app:
www.fishandboat.com/mobile.htm

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 Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook for more detailed information on boating laws and regulations or call the nearest Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) regional law enforcement office.
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®, Tigrishat®, 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 PFBC. Approved courses include classroom courses offered by the PFBC, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, the United States Power Squadrons, and the 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 (1-888-723-4741).

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFDs)

- A United States 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 United States 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, kayaks, and paddleboards.
- 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. A PFD that is stored in a protective covering or sealed in its original packaging is not readily accessible. An expiration date must be stamped on flares.
- 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.
- MSDs must be installed on all vessels with installed toilet systems. They must be United States 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.

MANUFACTURED BOAT MUFFLING DEVICES

- Boat motors must be equipped with an efficient muffling system or device in good working order. Cut-out devices are illegal in Pennsylvania.
- Boat exhaust systems may not be modified in any manner that reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of the muffler or muffler system.