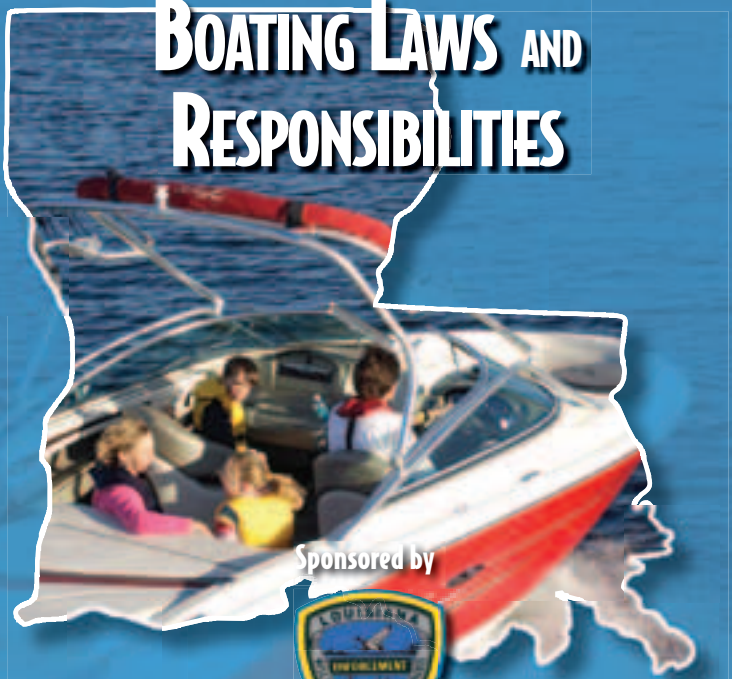
the HANDBOOK!

of Louisiana Boating Laws and Responsibilities



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the HANDBOOK! OF LOUISIANA BOATING LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

State of Louisiana
Bobby Jindal, Governor
Robert Barham, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Col. Winton Vidrine, Chief of Enforcement

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This icon is used to indicate a U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Rule. You are legally required to adhere to all Navigation Rules.

Boater Education Required!

Persons born after January 1, 1984, may not operate a motorboat or PWC powered by a motor in excess of 10 horsepower unless he or she has successfully completed a boating safety course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA). Read more about this law on page 28.

Stay up-to-date on new boating laws

- Call the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries: **225-765-2984**
- or visit our website: **www.wlf.louisiana.gov**

Information in this handbook does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in Louisiana, which is found in the Louisiana Revised Statutes and federal laws.

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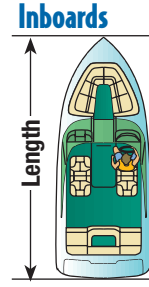
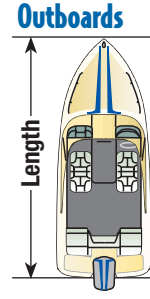
Before Going Out

Before going out on the water, take steps to make the outing safe and enjoyable.





Vessel Length Classes

- A vessel's length class determines the equipment necessary to comply with federal and state laws.
- Vessels are divided into length classes:
  - Less than 16 feet
  - 16 feet to less than 26 feet
  - 26 feet to less than 40 feet
  - 40 feet to less than 65 feet
- Length is measured from the tip of the bow in a straight line to the stern. This does not include outboard motors, brackets, rudders, bow attachments, or swim platforms and ladders that are not a molded part of the hull.

Vessel Capacity

- Always check the capacity plate, which is usually found near the operator's position or on the vessel's transom. This plate indicates the maximum weight capacity and maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely.
- PWCs and some other vessels are not required to have a capacity plate. Always follow the recommended capacity in the owner's manual and on the manufacturer's warning decal.

Fueling a Vessel

Never fuel at night unless it is an emergency. If you must refuel after dark, use only electric lights. Try to refuel away from the water or on a commercial fueling ramp.

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- **Before beginning to fuel:**
  - Dock the boat securely and ask all passengers to exit.
  - Do not allow anyone to smoke or strike a match.
  - Check all fuel lines, connections, and fuel vents.
  - Turn off anything that might cause a spark—engines, fans, or electrical equipment.
  - Shut off all fuel valves and extinguish all open flames, such as galley stoves and pilot lights.
  - Close all windows, ports, doors, and other openings to prevent fumes from entering the boat.
  - Remove portable fuel tanks and fill them on the dock.
- **While filling the fuel tank:**
  - Keep the nozzle of the fuel-pump hose in contact with the tank opening to prevent producing a static spark.
  - Avoid spilling fuel into the boat's bilge or the water.
  - Never fill a tank to the brim—leave room to expand.

The most important safe fueling practice …
If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes after fueling and before starting your engine to remove gas vapors in the bilge.

- **After fueling:**
  - Wipe up any spilled fuel.
  - Open all windows, ports, doors, and other openings.

Additional Safety Procedures for PWCs

- Do not tip the PWC in order to fill it all the way up. If the tank is overfilled, the fuel may expand and spill into the water.
- After fueling, open the door of the engine compartment and sniff to check for any evidence of gas fumes. Do this before starting the engine. If you do smell gas fumes, determine the source and make repairs immediately.

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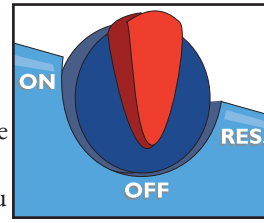
Fuel Selector Switch on a PWC



This switch can help you avoid becoming stranded without fuel.

- Use the "Off" position when the PWC's engine is turned off.
- Use the "On" position while you are underway.
- Use the "Reserve" position if you run out of fuel while underway. This will allow you to return to shore. Don't forget to switch back to "On" after refueling.

Preventing Theft

Defend against theft of your vessel and equipment.

- Store your vessel so that it is not easily accessed.
  - Store your vessel and trailer in a locked garage or storage area.
  - Park another vehicle in front of the trailer, or lock the trailer to a fixed object in a well-lighted area.
  - Secure the vessel and trailer to a fixed object with a good quality chain and lock. If moored, secure the vessel to the dock with a steel cable and lock.
  - Remove a trailer wheel if parked for an extended time.
  - Purchase a quality trailer hitch lock and use it.
- Chain and lock the motor and fuel tanks to the vessel.
- Mark or engrave all equipment with an identifier such as your driver's license number.
- Photograph or videotape the interior and exterior of your vessel, showing all installed equipment and additional gear and equipment. Make a complete inventory of your equipment, vessel, and trailer.
- Remove expensive electronics or other valuables if the vessel is left unattended.
- Cover your vessel and always remove the keys.
- Title and register your vessel.

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Filing a Float Plan

Before going out on a vessel, it is always a good idea to leave a float plan with a relative or friend, or at least with a local marina. A float plan should:

- Describe the vessel, including its registration number, length, make, horsepower, and engine type.
- State where you are going, the detailed route, your planned departure time, and your expected return time.
- Give the name, address, and telephone number of each person on board and an emergency contact.

Pre-Departure Checklist

You can assure a good time while operating your vessel by performing this pre-departure check.

- ✓ Check the weather forecast for the area and timeframe during which you will be boating.
- ✓ Make sure that the steering and throttle controls operate properly and all lights are working properly.
- ✓ Check for any fuel leaks from the tank, fuel lines, and carburetor.
- ✓ Check the engine compartment for oil leaks.
- ✓ Check hose connections for leaks or cracks, and make sure hose clamps are tight.
- ✓ Drain all water from the engine compartment, and be sure the bilge plug is replaced and secure.
- ✓ Check to be sure you have a fully charged engine battery and fire extinguishers.
- ✓ If so equipped, make sure the ignition safety switch and wrist lanyard are in good order.
- ✓ Make sure you have the required number of personal flotation devices (PFDs), and check that they are in good condition.
- ✓ Leave a float plan with a reliable friend or relative.

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On the Water

Safe navigation on Louisiana waterways is the responsibility of everyone. All operators are equally responsible for taking action to avoid collisions.

Encountering Other Vessels

Even though no vessel has the "right-of-way" over another vessel, there are some rules that every operator should follow when encountering other vessels. It is the responsibility of both operators to take the action needed to avoid a collision. The next page shows what to do when encountering another vessel.

To prevent collisions, every operator should follow the three basic rules of navigation.

Nav Rule *Practice good seamanship*—Nothing in the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Rules exonerates any vessel, or the owner, master, or crew, from the consequences of neglecting to comply with these rules. In complying with these rules, regard must be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to compliance with these rules.

Nav Rule *Keep a sharp lookout*—Every vessel must maintain a proper lookout by sight and sound as well as by all available means appropriate to make a full appraisal of the situation and to avoid risk of collision.

Nav Rule *Maintain a safe speed and distance*—All vessels must be operated at reasonable speeds for given conditions and situations and must be under the complete control of the operator at all times so that the vessel can be stopped within a safe distance.

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Navigation Rules

There are two terms that help explain these rules.

Stand-on vessel: The vessel that should maintain its course and speed

Give-way vessel: The vessel that must take early and substantial action to avoid collision by stopping, slowing down, or changing course

Power vs. Power

Meeting Head-On

Power vs. Power: Neither vessel is the stand-on vessel. Both vessels should keep to the starboard (right).

Power vs. Sail: The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail

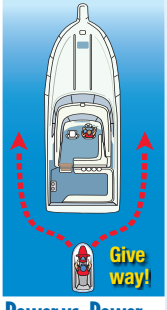
Power vs. Power

Crossing Situations

Power vs. Power: The vessel on the operator's port (left) side is the give-way vessel. The vessel on the operator's starboard (right) side is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail: The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail

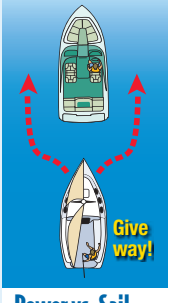


Power vs. Power

Overtaking

Power vs. Power: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



Power vs. Sail

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Additional Rules for All Vessels

Nav Rule Vessels approaching a landing dock or pier must give way to any departing vessel. All vessels must operate to avoid collision.

Nav Rule A vessel departing a shoreline or tributary must give way to through traffic and vessels approaching the shoreline or tributary. When leaving a dock, a vessel must keep out of the way of vessels traveling the waterway.

Nav Rule Vessels must not change course abruptly without first determining that it can be done safely without risk of collision with another vessel.

Nav Rule If an operator fails to fully understand the course of an approaching vessel, he or she must slow down immediately to a speed barely sufficient to maintain headway and steering until the other vessel has passed.

Nav Rule Vessels must use the proper sound signals to indicate their course and to issue warning signals in fog or other weather conditions that restrict visibility. See page 36 for sound signals.

Nav Rule No vessel may obstruct or interfere with the takeoff, landing, or taxiing of seaplanes. Seaplanes on the water must, in general, keep well clear of all vessels and avoid impeding their navigation. If risk of collision exists, the seaplane must comply with all Navigation Rules.

Nav Rule No vessel or person may obstruct or block a navigation channel, entrance to a channel, mooring slip, landing dock, launching ramp, pier, or tributary by drifting, anchoring, fishing, or mooring.

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Rules for Power-Driven Vessels

If operating a power-driven vessel, you must give way to unpowered vessels unless you are:

- Being overtaken by an unpowered vessel
- Operating a deep draft vessel that must remain in narrow channels
- Towing another vessel

If operating a power-driven vessel, you must maintain a direct course when passing sailboats that are under sail alone. Power-driven vessels must give these vessels sufficient room to pass safely.

If operating a power-driven vessel, you must steer around any other vessel underway or any person swimming.

Rules When Encountering Vessels with Limited Maneuverability

You must give way to:

- Any vessel not under command, such as an anchored or disabled vessel
- Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver, such as a vessel towing or laying cable, or a vessel constrained by its draft, such as a large ship in a channel
- A vessel engaged in commercial fishing

Rules When Operating in Narrow Channels

If operating a vessel in a narrow channel, you must:

- Keep as far to the right of the channel as is safe and practical.
- Use the appropriate sound signals, use caution when overtaking another vessel, and take steps to permit safe passing.

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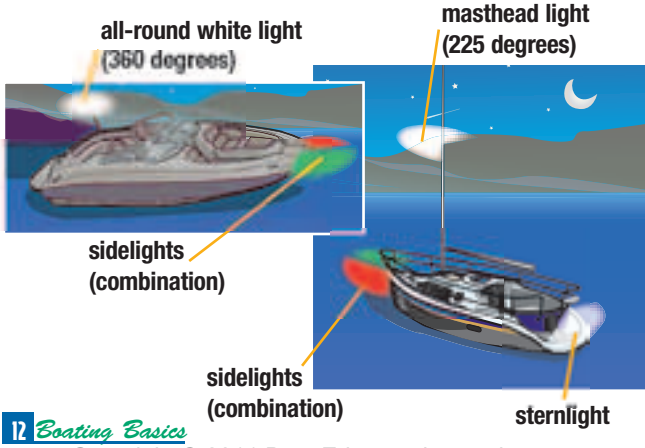
Nighttime Navigation

Be on the lookout for the lights of other vessels when boating at night. Several types of lights serve as navigational aids at night. There are four common navigation lights.

- **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (also called combination lights) because they are visible to another vessel approaching from the side or head-on. The red light indicates a vessel's port (left) side; the green indicates a vessel's starboard (right) side.
- **Sternlight:** This white light is seen from behind or nearly behind the vessel.
- **Masthead Light:** This white light shines forward and to both sides and is required on all power-driven vessels. A masthead light must be displayed by all vessels when under engine power. The absence of this light indicates a sailboat under sail.
- **All-Round White Light:** On power-driven vessels less than 39.4 feet in length, this light may be used to combine a masthead light and sternlight into a single white light that can be seen by other vessels from any direction. This light serves as an anchor light when sidelights are extinguished.



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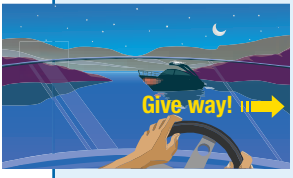
Encountering Vessels at Night

Nav Rule When you see only a white light, you are overtaking another vessel. It is the stand-on vessel whether it is underway or anchored. You may go around it on either side.

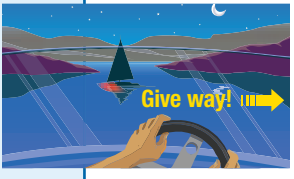
Nav Rule When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.

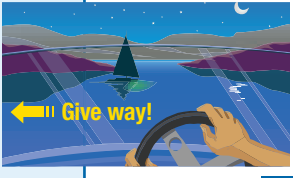


Nav Rule When you see a red and a white light, you must give way to the other vessel! Slow down and allow the vessel to pass, or you may turn to the right and pass behind the other vessel.

Encountering a Sailboat at Night

Nav Rule When you see **only a red light or only a green light**, you may be approaching a sailboat under sail and you must give way. The sailboat under sail is always the stand-on vessel!





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U.S. Aids to Navigation System (ATON)

Buoys and markers are the "traffic signals" that guide vessel operators safely along some waterways. They also identify dangerous or controlled areas and give directions and information. As a recreational boat or PWC operator, you will need to know the lateral navigation markers and non-lateral markers of the U.S. Aids to Navigation System.

Lateral Markers

These navigation aids mark the edges of safe water areas; for example, directing travel within a channel. The markers use a combination of colors and numbers, which may appear on either buoys or permanently placed markers.

Red colors, red lights, and even numbers indicate the right side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.

Green colors, green lights, and odd numbers indicate the left side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.

Red and green colors and/or lights indicate the preferred (primary) channel. If green is on top, the preferred channel is to the right as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream; if red is on top, the preferred channel is to the left.

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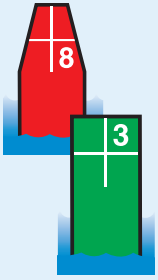
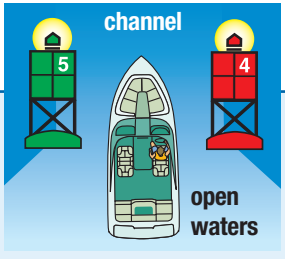
Nuns are red cone-shaped buoys marked with even numbers.

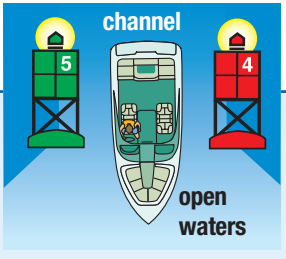
Cans are green cylindrical-shaped buoys marked with odd numbers.



Lighted Buoys use the lateral marker colors and numbers discussed above; in addition, they have a matching colored light.

Daymarks are permanently placed signs attached to structures, such as posts, in the water. Common daymarks are red triangles (equivalent to nuns) and green squares (equivalent to cans). They may be lighted also.





Red Right Returning

is a reminder of the correct course when returning from open waters or heading upstream.

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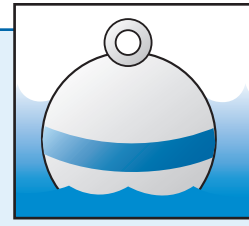
Intracoastal Waterway System

- The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is chain of channels that provide an inland passage along the U.S. coast. Buoys and markers used in this system are identified by yellow symbols and serve a dual purpose—they are navigational aids for the lateral system and are markers for the ICW.
- If you are following the ICW from New Jersey to Brownsville, Texas, in a clockwise direction:
  - Any marker displaying a yellow triangle should be passed by keeping it on the starboard (right) side of your vessel.
  - Any marker displaying a yellow square should be passed by keeping it on the port (left) side of your vessel.

Mooring Buoy



Mooring buoys are white with a blue horizontal band and are found in marinas and other areas where vessels are allowed to anchor.

Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigational aids that give information other than the edges of safe water areas. The most common are regulatory markers which are white and use orange markings and black lettering (shown on the next page). These markers are found on lakes and rivers.

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Information

Squares indicate where to find food, supplies, repairs, etc. and give directions and other information.

Controlled

Circles indicate a controlled area such as speed limit, no fishing or anchoring, ski only or no skiing, or "slow, no wake."

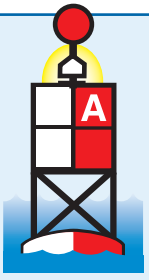
Exclusion

Crossed diamonds indicate areas off-limits to all vessels such as swimming areas, dams, and spillways.

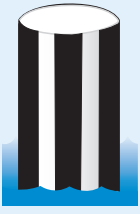
Danger

Diamonds warn of dangers such as rocks, shoals, construction, dams, or stumps. Always proceed with caution.

Other Non-Lateral Markers



Safe Water Markers are white with red vertical stripes and mark mid-channels or fairways. They may be passed on either side.



Inland Waters Obstruction Markers are white with black vertical stripes and indicate an obstruction to navigation. You should not pass between these buoys and the nearest shore.

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Weather Emergencies

Weather can change very rapidly and create unexpected situations for boat operators. Even meteorologists have trouble predicting rapid weather changes. You should always monitor weather developments. One way is to tune into the frequencies listed on the next page on a VHF radio.

What To Do If Caught in Severe Weather

- **Prepare the boat to handle severe weather.**
  - Slow down, but keep enough power to maintain headway and steering.
  - Close all hatches, windows, and doors to reduce the chance of swamping.
  - Stow any unnecessary gear.
  - Turn on your boat's navigation lights. If there is fog, sound your fog horn.
  - Keep bilges free of water. Be prepared to remove water by bailing.
  - If there is lightning, disconnect all electrical equipment. Stay as clear of metal objects as possible.
- **Prepare your passengers for severe weather.**
  - Have everyone put on a USCG–approved life jacket (PFD). If passengers are already wearing their PFDs, make sure they are secured properly.
  - Have your passengers sit on the vessel floor close to the centerline for their safety and to make the boat more stable.
- **Decide whether to go to shore or ride out the storm.**
  - If possible, head for the nearest shore that is safe to approach. If already caught in a storm, it may be best to ride it out in open water rather than try to approach the shore in heavy wind and waves.
  - Head the bow into the waves at a 45-degree angle. PWCs should head directly into the waves.

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- If the engine stops, drop a "sea anchor" on a line off the bow to keep the bow headed into the wind and reduce drifting while you ride out the storm. In an emergency, a bucket will work as a sea anchor.
- If the sea anchor is not sufficient, anchor using your conventional anchor to prevent your boat from drifting into dangerous areas.

VHF Frequencies Broadcasting NOAA Weather Reports

162.400 MHz	**162.450 MHz**	**162.500 MHz**	**162.550 MHz**
162.425 MHz	**162.475 MHz**	**162.525 MHz**	

These are the most commonly used VHF channels on United States waters.

Channel 6 Intership safety communications.
Channel 9 Communications between vessels (commercial and recreational), and ship to coast (calling channel in designated USCG Districts).
Channel 13 Navigational use by commercial, military, and recreational vessels at bridges, locks, and harbors.
Channel 16 Distress and safety calls to U.S. Coast Guard and others, and to initiate calls to other vessels; often called the "hailing" channel. (Some regions use other channels as the hailing channel.) When hailing, contact the other vessel, quickly agree to another channel, and then switch to that channel to continue conversation.
Channel 22 Communications between the U.S. Coast Guard and the maritime public, both recreational and commercial. Severe weather warnings, hazards to navigation, and other safety warnings are broadcast on this channel.
Channels 24-28 Public telephone calls (to marine operator).
Channels 68, 69, and 71 Recreational vessel radio channels and ship to coast.
Channel 70 Digital selective calling "alert channel."

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Other Boating Emergencies

A safe boater knows how to prevent and respond to other boating emergencies.

Falling Overboard

- **To prevent persons from falling overboard:**
  - Don't sit on the gunwale, bow, seat backs, motor cover, or any other area not designed for seating.
  - Don't sit on pedestal seats when underway at greater than idle speed.
  - Don't stand up in or lean out from the boat.
  - Don't move about the boat when underway.
- **If someone on your boat falls overboard:**
  - Reduce speed and toss the victim a throwable PFD.
  - Turn your boat around and slowly pull alongside the victim, approaching the victim from downwind or into the current, whichever is stronger.
  - Turn off the engine. Pull the victim on board over the stern, keeping the weight in the boat balanced.

Capsizing or Swamping

- **To reduce the risk of capsizing or swamping:**
  - Don't overload your boat. Balance the load.
  - Slow your boat appropriately when turning.
  - Secure the anchor line to the bow, never to the stern.
  - Don't boat in rough water or in bad weather.
- **If you capsize or swamp your boat, or if you have fallen overboard** and can't get back in:
  - Stay with the boat.
  - Try to reboard or climb onto it in order to get as much of your body out of the cold water as possible.
- **If the boat sinks or floats away,** don't panic.
  - If wearing a PFD, remain calm and await help.
  - If you aren't wearing a PFD, look around for one or for other buoyant items to use as a flotation device.
  - In cold water, float rather than tread.

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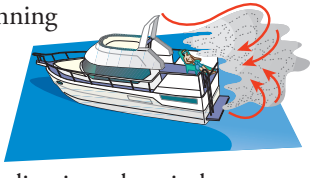
Hypothermia

- **If you are boating in cold water:**
  - Dress in several layers of clothing under your PFD or wear a wetsuit or drysuit.
  - Learn to recognize the symptoms of hypothermia. Symptoms begin with shivering and bluish lips and nails, and progress to a coma and, ultimately, death.
- **To reduce the effects of hypothermia:**
  - Put on a PFD if not wearing one. It helps you to float without excessive movement and insulates your body.
  - Get as much of your body out of the water as possible.
  - Don't take your clothes off unless necessary—clothes can help you float and provide insulation.
  - Don't thrash or move about. Excess motion consumes energy and increases loss of body heat.
  - Draw your knees to your chest and your arms to your sides, protecting the major areas of heat loss.
  - If others are in the water with you, huddle together with your arms around their shoulders.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas that can be deadly. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, keep air flowing through the boat and take extreme caution when running a generator at a dock or at anchor.

- Whenever people are using a swim platform or are in the water close to the stern, turn off all gasoline-powered generators with transom exhaust ports.
- Swimmers should never enter the cavity between the swim platform and the stern of the boat.
- When boating, be careful running downwind as exhaust gases may blow back on board. On cabin cruisers, be aware that exhaust gases can blow back into the stern when traveling into the wind.



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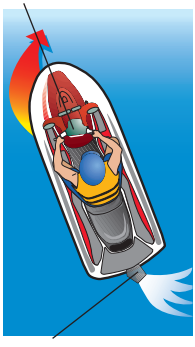
Specifically for PWCs

Although a personal watercraft (PWC) is considered an inboard vessel and comes under the same rules and requirements of any other vessel, there are specific considerations for the PWC operator.



Steering and Stopping a PWC

- PWCs are propelled by drawing water into a pump and then forcing it out under pressure through a steering nozzle at the back of the unit. This "jet" of pressurized water is directed by the steering control—when the steering control is turned, the steering nozzle turns in the same direction. For example, if the steering control is turned right, the nozzle turns right and the jet of water pushes the back of the vessel to the left, which causes the PWC to turn right.

Remember—no power means no steering control … Most PWCs and other jet-drive vessels must have power in order to maintain control. If you allow the engine on these PWCs to return to idle or shut off during operation, you lose all steering control. The PWC will continue in the direction it was headed before the engine was shut off, no matter which way the steering control is turned. New PWCs allow for off-throttle steering.

- **A PWC has no brakes.** Always allow plenty of room for stopping. Just because you release the throttle or shut off the engine does not mean you will stop immediately.

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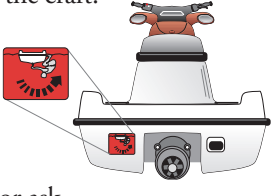
Ignition Safety Switches

- Most PWCs and powerboats come equipped by the manufacturer with an important device called an emergency ignition safety switch. This is a safety device that is designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown from the proper operating position.
- A lanyard is attached to the safety switch and the operator's wrist or PFD. The safety switch shuts off the engine if the operator falls off the PWC or out of the powerboat. If your vessel does not come equipped with an ignition safety switch, you should have one installed.
- In many states, it is illegal to ride your PWC without attaching the lanyard properly between the switch and yourself.

Reboarding a Capsized PWC

After a fall, the PWC could be overturned completely. You should be familiar with the proper procedure to right the PWC and to reboard from the rear of the craft.



- Most manufacturers have placed a decal at the rear or bottom of the craft that indicates the direction to roll your PWC to return it to an upright position. If no decal exists, check your owner's manual or ask the dealer. If you roll it over the wrong way, you could damage your PWC.
- Practice reboarding with someone else around to make sure you can handle it alone. Don't ride your PWC if you are very tired because reboarding would be difficult. Also, avoid riding where there are strong currents or winds, which could hamper your reboarding efforts.

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Courtesy When Encountering Other Vessels

- Jumping the wake of a passing boat, or riding too close to another PWC or boat, creates risks and is restricted or even prohibited in some states. The vessel making the wake may block the PWC operator's view of oncoming traffic and also conceal the PWC operator from approaching vessels.
- Excessive noise from PWCs often makes them unwelcome with other vessel operators and people on shore. Be a courteous PWC operator.
  - Vary your operating area, and do not keep repeating the same maneuver.
  - Avoid congregating with other PWC operators near shore, which increases annoying noise levels.
  - Avoid making excessive noise near residential and camping areas, particularly early in the morning.
  - Avoid maneuvers that cause the engine exhaust to lift out of the water because that increases noise levels.
  - Do not modify your engine exhaust system if it increases the noise. Improperly modified exhausts will not make your PWC faster and may raise the noise to an illegal level.

Environmental Considerations

When operating your personal watercraft, consider the effect you may have on the environment.

- Make sure that the water you operate in is at least 30 inches deep. Riding in shallow water can cause bottom sediments or aquatic vegetation to be sucked into the pump, damaging your PWC and the environment.

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- Avoid causing erosion by operating at slow speed and by not creating a wake when operating near shore or in narrow streams or rivers.
- Do not dock or beach your PWC in reeds and grasses. This could damage fragile environments.
- Take extra care when fueling your PWC in or near the water. Oil and gasoline spills are very detrimental to the aquatic environment. Fuel on land if possible.
- Never use your PWC to chase or harass wildlife such as birds feeding near shore, water fowl, or other animals.

Other PWC Considerations

- Remember that everyone on board a PWC must wear a life jacket (PFD).
- Keep hands, feet, loose clothing, and hair away from the pump intake area. Before cleaning debris away from the pump intake, be sure to shut off the engine.
- Keep everyone clear of the steering nozzle unless the PWC is shut off. The water jet can cause severe injuries.
- Frequently inspect your PWC's electrical systems (e.g., starter and engine gauge connections) to ensure there is no potential for electrical spark. Gas fumes could collect in the engine compartment and an explosion could occur. After fueling, sniff the engine compartment for any evidence of gas fumes.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity for your PWC.
- Know your limits, and ride according to your abilities.
- See page 44 for other requirements specific to PWCs.

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Before Going Out

All operators are required to obey laws that regulate your vessel's registration and operation.

Registering Your Vessel

- You must have a Louisiana Certificate of Number (registration) and validation decals to operate a motorboat or sailboat legally on public waters. A motorboat is defined as any vessel equipped with or propelled by any type of machinery whether or not such machinery is the principal source of propulsion. The only exceptions are:
  - A sailboat 12 feet or less in length
  - A sailboard
  - Motorboats/Sailboats documented with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), unless it is a recreational use vessel
  - Motorboats/Sailboats with valid registration in another state or country, on the waters of Louisiana for 90 or fewer consecutive days
- *The Certificate of Number must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.*

- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.
  - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow.
  - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  - Number must be in at least three-inch-high, plain **BLOCK** letters.
  - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen equal in width to a letter; for example: **LA 3717 ZW** or **LA-3717-ZW.**

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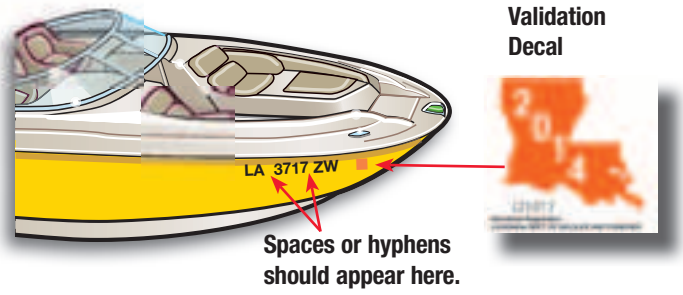

- Number's color must contrast with its background.
- No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
- Decals must be affixed on both sides of the vessel within six inches of the registration number.

◆ If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

Where to Register Registration application and renewal forms can be obtained from:

- The Boat Registration Office of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF)
- LDWF's website, **www.wlf.louisiana.gov**
- Any LDWF district office

You can submit your registration application and fee to:

Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, Boat Registration
P.O. Box 14796
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Registration Questions? Call the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Boat Registration Office at **225-765-2898**. Also, you can call or visit one of the LDWF offices listed on the back of this handbook, or visit LDWF's website at **www.wlf.louisiana.gov** on the Internet.

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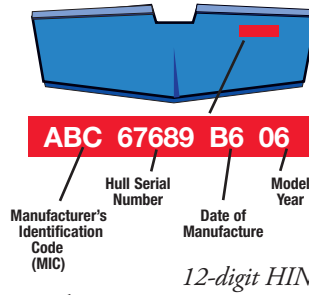
Hull Identification Number



12-digit HIN

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit or 17-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- Hull Identification Numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- You should write down your HIN and put it in a place separate from your vessel in case warranty problems arise or your vessel is stolen.
- Owners of vessels manufactured after October 1, 1972, or of homemade vessels that do not have a HIN must request an inspection by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Upon favorable inspection, an agent of the LDWF will stamp an identification number on the hull.
- It is illegal to remove or alter the HIN.

Who May Operate a Vessel

- Persons born after January 1, 1984, may not operate a motorboat or PWC powered by a motor in excess of 10 horsepower unless he or she has successfully completed a boating safety course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).
  - These persons must be in possession of evidence of completion of the approved course whenever operating such a vessel.
  - *Note: Previously, only persons born after January 1, 1988, were required to take a boating safety course. Due to this change in the law, persons born between January 1, 1984, and January 1, 1988, have until July 1, 2010, to complete a course successfully.*

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- It is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 years to operate a personal watercraft (PWC).
- It is also unlawful for a person who owns or has charge of a personal watercraft to knowingly permit a person under the age of 16 years to operate the PWC. It is illegal for a rental company to rent a personal watercraft to anyone under 16 years of age.

Marine Events

- In order to hold a race, regatta, tournament, or any other marine event that may impede access to a navigable waterway, you must notify the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries prior to the event.
- If the event is being held on federally controlled waters, you must apply for a permit from the U.S. Coast Guard at least 30 days prior to the event.

Local Regulations

Some waterways in Louisiana have special regulations such as horsepower restrictions or speed limits. Be sure to check for special restrictions on a waterway before you go boating.

Enforcement

- The boating laws of Louisiana are enforced by Wildlife Agents of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, U.S. Coast Guard, and any other authorized peace officer of the state.
- They have the right to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with federal and state laws.

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Required Equipment

When preparing to go out on a vessel, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- All boats must have at least one U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III personal flotation device that is, wearable, and of the proper size for each person on board or being towed.
- Each person on board must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD while underway on a motorboat less than 16 feet long using an outboard motor that is steered by a hand tiller or steering arm attached to the motor. This requirement does not apply to electronic trolling motors.
- In addition to the above requirement, boats 16 feet in length or longer must have one U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type IV cushion or ring-buoy on board and readily accessible.
- Each person riding on a personal watercraft (PWC) must *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device.
- Louisiana law requires that all children 16 years of age and younger *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD while underway on a vessel less than 26 feet long. The personal flotation device must be fastened and of the proper size for the child.
- Besides being USCG–approved, all PFDs must be:
  - *In good and serviceable condition.*
  - *Readily accessible,* which means you are able to put the PFD on quickly in an emergency.
  - *Of the proper size for the intended wearer.* Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

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TYPE I: Offshore Life Jackets

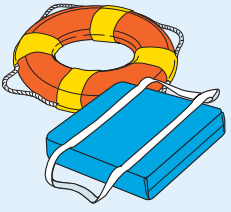
These vests are geared for rough or remote waters where rescue may take awhile. They provide the most buoyancy, are excellent for flotation, and will turn most unconscious persons face up in the water.

TYPE II: Near-Shore Vests

These vests are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. A Type II may not turn some unconscious wearers face up in the water.

TYPE III: Flotation Aids

These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. They are not recommended for rough waters since they will not turn most unconscious persons face up.



TYPE IV: Throwable Devices

These cushions and ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. Since a Type IV is not designed to be worn, it is neither for rough waters nor for persons who are unable to hold onto it.

TYPE V: Special-Use Devices

These vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs, and others are designed for specific activities such as windsurfing, kayaking, or water-skiing. *To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their label.*

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Navigation Lights

The required navigation lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility.

Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

If less than 65.6 feet long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:

- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

Unpowered vessels are sailboats or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed.

- **If less than 65.6 feet long**, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2. The required lights are:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile.
  - A sternlight visible from at least two miles away.
- **If less than 23.0 feet long**, these vessels should:
  - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 65.6 feet in length.
  - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight shining a white light as in illustration 3.

All Vessels When Not Underway

All vessels are required to display a white light visible in all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area between sunset and sunrise.

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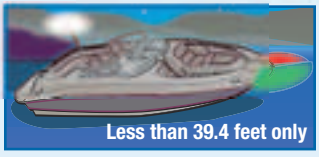
1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

The masthead light and sternlight may be combined as an all-round white light on vessels less than 39.4 feet long.



2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

An alternative to the sidelights and sternlight is a combination red, green, and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23.0 Feet

Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.

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Fire Extinguishers

- All vessels are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher(s) on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Inboard engine
  - Closed compartments where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Double-bottoms which are not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation material
  - Closed living spaces
  - Closed storage compartments in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks
- Approved types of fire extinguishers are identified by the following marking on the label—"Marine Type USCG Approved"—followed by the type and size symbols and the approval number.
- Extinguishers should be placed in an accessible area where they can be reached immediately. Be sure you know how to operate them, and inspect them regularly.

Fire Extinguisher Requirements

Classification type & size	Foam minimum gallons	Carbon Dioxide minimum pounds	Dry Chemical minimum pounds
B-I	1¼	4	2
B-II	2½	15	10

Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*
Less than 26 ft.	one B-I	None
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	two B-I ***or*** one B-II	one B-I
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	three B-I ***or*** one B-II and one B-I	two B-I ***or*** one B-II

** refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system*

Mufflers

All vessel engines must be equipped with an efficient muffler, underwater exhaust, or other effective muffling device. Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.

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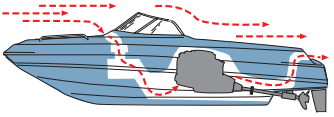
Ventilation Systems

The purpose of ventilation systems is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases.



- All gasoline-powered vessels, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls to remove the fumes.
- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine.
- If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a PWC), open the engine compartment and sniff for fumes before starting the engine.

Backfire Flame Arrestors

Backfire flame arrestors are designed to prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

- All powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have a U.S. Coast Guard–approved (or comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards) backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor.
- Backfire flame arrestors must be in good and serviceable condition. Periodically clean the flame arrestor and check for damage.

Emergency Ignition Safety Switch

An emergency ignition safety switch is required to be operating and attached to the operator's person, clothing, or PFD by a lanyard on any motorboat less than 26 feet long that:

- Is powered by an outboard motor in excess of 10 horsepower ***and …***
- Is steered by a hand tiller or steering arm attached to the motor ***and …***
- Has or is designed to have a safety switch.

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Sound-Producing Devices

In periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position, a sound-producing device is essential.

- Vessels 16 feet or longer, but less than 26 feet in length, are required to carry a whistle or some other mechanical means (horn) to make a sound.
- Vessels that are 26 feet or more in length are required to carry a whistle or some other mechanical means (horn) to make a sound, *and* an efficient bell.

Some sound signals that you should be familiar with are:

Restricted Visibility

- ***One prolonged blast*** at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by power-driven vessels when underway.
- ***One prolonged blast plus two short blasts*** at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by sailboats under sail.

Warning

- ***One prolonged blast*** is a warning signal (for example, used when coming around a blind bend or exiting a slip).
- ***Five (or more) short, rapid blasts*** signal danger or signal that you do not understand the other boater's intentions.

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency. VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night), or both day and night signals.

- Vessels on federally controlled waters must be equipped with visual distress signals that are U.S. Coast Guard–approved, in serviceable condition, and readily accessible.
- All vessels, regardless of length or type, are required to carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise. Most vessels must carry day signals also.

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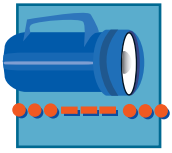
- Exceptions to the requirement for day signals are:
  - Recreational vessels that are less than 16 feet in length
  - Non-motorized open sailboats that are less than 26 feet in length
  - Manually propelled vessels
- If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, a minimum of three must be carried in the vessel.
- It is prohibited to display visual distress signals on the water unless assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board.

Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

Orange Smoke
Day Signal

Red Meteor
Day and Night Signal

Red Flare
Day and Night Signal



Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

Electric Light
Night Signal

Orange Flag
Day Signal

Arm Signal
Although this signal does not meet VDS equipment requirements, wave your arms to summon help if you do not have other distress signals on board.

Federally Controlled Waters

Vessels must observe federal requirements on these waters:

- Coastal waters (includes territorial waters, harbors, and bays and rivers as far as they are affected by the tide)
- The Great Lakes
- Territorial seas
- Waters which are two miles wide or wider and are directly connected to one of the above

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On the Water

In addition to the laws mentioned previously, here are some other Louisiana regulations that apply when vessel operators are on the water.

Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

Louisiana law states that these dangerous operating practices are illegal.

Reckless Operation is operating any vessel in a criminally negligent or reckless manner. Examples of illegal, reckless operation are:

- Boating in a restricted area such as a marked swimming area
- Weaving through congested waterway traffic
- Swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision
- Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife

"Idle Speed" or **"No Wake" Speed:** This is the slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering and which does not produce a wake.

"No Wake" Zones: "No wake" zones have been established on all Louisiana waterways within 300 feet of:

- A boat ramp that is open to the general public
- A dock adjacent to a boat ramp that is open to the general public. Vessels must be operated at "bare steerage speed" and produce no wake

Careless Operation is failing to operate a vessel in a careful and prudent manner and thereby endangering the life, limb, or property of any person. Examples of careless operation are:

- Causing danger or damage from the wake of your vessel

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- Operating a vessel at speeds that may cause danger, injury, or damage; be aware of and obey all regulatory markers, including those marked as "no wake."

- **Riding on the Bow or Gunwales** is allowing passengers to ride where there may be a chance of falling overboard while underway on a powerboat 26 feet or less in length. Specifically, this means allowing passengers to ride on a covered bow or gunwales, unless the powerboat has adequate guards or a railing to prevent falls overboard.
- **Overloading** is loading the vessel beyond its safe carrying capacity, taking into consideration the weather and other operating conditions.
- **Overpowering** is equipping the vessel with a motor that is beyond its safe power capacity, taking into consideration the type and construction of the vessel and other operating conditions.
- **Unsafe Condition** is operating a vessel in a condition that causes a hazard to the occupants or others on the waterways. Enforcement officers may instruct the operator to immediately take corrective action or return to port if there are insufficient personal flotation devices, fire extinguishers, backfire flame arrestors, ventilation, or navigation lights; if the vessel is overloaded or overpowered; or if the vessel is leaking fuel.

Remember—vessel owners are responsible …
As an owner of a vessel, you are responsible for any injury or damage caused by the negligent operation of your vessel by others you knowingly allow to operate it. It will be assumed that you have given consent if your vessel is being operated by an immediate family member.

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Obstructing Navigation

It is illegal to:

- Moor or attach a vessel to a buoy (other than a mooring buoy), beacon, light, or any other navigational aid placed on public waters by proper authorities.
- Move, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.

Homeland Security Restrictions

- Do not approach within 100 yards and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Naval vessel. If you need to pass within 100 yards for safe passage, you must contact the vessel or the U.S. Coast Guard escort vessel on VHF-FM channel 16.
- Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port areas, especially those that involve military, cruise-line, or petroleum facilities. Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc.
- Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in channels.
- Report all activities that seem suspicious to the local authorities or the U.S. Coast Guard.

Alcohol and Drugs

Louisiana law prohibits anyone from operating a vessel of any kind while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

- A person is considered to be intoxicated if he or she:
  - Has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or greater and is 21 years of age or older ***or . . .***
  - Has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.02% or greater and is under 21 years of age.
- The law also prohibits the owner or person in charge of a vessel from knowingly allowing a person who is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs to operate the vessel.
- Penalties for operating a vessel of any kind while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs include a fine of up to $1,000, imprisonment up to six months, or both.

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- By operating a vessel on Louisiana waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if arrested by a law enforcement officer.
- Any arrest for DUI while boating will affect your automobile driving privileges.
- Persons operating a vehicle or vessel who commit a DUI offense and have their automobile driver's license suspended or revoked also will have their boating privileges suspended or revoked.

Boating Crash Incident

- An operator involved in a boating crash incident or other casualty must:
  - Stop his or her vessel *immediately* at the scene of the boating crash incident ***and …***
  - Give assistance to anyone injured in the boating crash incident or minimize any danger caused by the boating crash incident unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her vessel or passengers ***and …***
  - Give his or her name, address, and the identifying number of his or her vessel in writing to anyone injured from the boating crash incident and to the owner of any damaged property.
- Boating crash incidents must be reported if they result in the death or injury of anyone or in property damage over $500.
- The operator must give notice of the boating crash incident immediately, by the quickest means possible, to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the nearest law enforcement agency, or the State Police. To contact LDWF in an emergency, call **1-800-442-2511**.
- The operator also must file a written report on a boating crash incident report form within five days of the boating crash incident. Boating crash incident report forms are available from any LDFW office or may be downloaded from the LDWF's website, **www.wlf.louisiana.gov**.

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Diver-Down Flags

Nav Rule Scuba divers or snorkelers must display a diver-down flag that marks their diving area. Vessels should remain at least 100 feet away from the flag.

Divers Flag

A rectangular red flag with a white diagonal stripe is used on Louisiana state waters.

Alfa Flag

A blue and white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag) is used on federally controlled waters.

Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

- It is illegal to discharge oil or hazardous substances into the water.
- You are not allowed to dump oil into the bilge of the vessel without means for proper disposal.
- You must dispose of oil waste at a reception facility. On recreational vessels, a bucket or bailer is adequate.
- If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a 5 x 8-inch placard near the bilge pump control station, stating the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water:

- Call the U.S. Coast Guard at **1-800-424-8802**.
- Also notify the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality at **1-888-763-5424** (answered 24/7).

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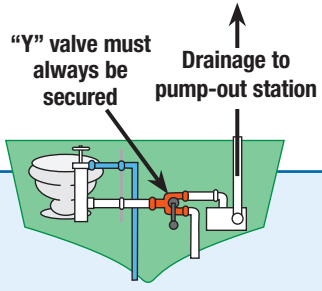
Discharge of Sewage and Waste

- State and federal law prohibits vessels from discharging any untreated sewage into the waters of Louisiana.
- All recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD).
- Vessels 65 feet in length and under may use a Type I, II, or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must install a Type II or III MSD.
- It is illegal to discharge waste, oil, or trash into any federally controlled or Louisiana state waters.



Types of MSDs

- Type III MSDs consist of holding tanks or portable toilets. Waste is discharged on shore into a pump-out facility.
- Types I and II MSDs treat waste with special chemicals to kill bacteria. Types I and II MSDs with "Y" valves that direct the waste overboard must be secured by placing a lock or non-reusable seal on the "Y" valve or by taking the handle off the "Y" valve.

Discharge of Trash

It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into any state or federally controlled waters. Many forms of litter can kill birds, fish, and marine mammals.

- You must store trash in a container while on board and place it in a proper receptacle after returning to shore.
- If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a Garbage Disposal Placard that is at least 4 x 9 inches and notifies passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.

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Specifically for PWCs

PWC operators must obey laws that apply to other vessels as well as obey additional requirements that apply specifically to the operation of personal watercraft.

Requirements Specific to PWCs

- Each person riding on a PWC must *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (life jacket).
- An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ignition safety switch must attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC between sunset and sunrise.
- PWCs must be operated in a careful and responsible manner. For example, it is illegal for PWC operators to:
  - Weave the PWC through congested waterway traffic.
  - Jump the wake of another vessel when visibility is obstructed.
  - Operate in a manner that requires swerving at the last possible moment to avoid collision.
- PWC operators have age and boater education requirements. See page 28 for details.
- It is illegal to chase, harass, or disturb wildlife with your PWC.
- PWC operators should avoid operating around fishermen, anchored vessels, or swimmers.

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Specifically for Skiing

It's the LAW!

Vessel operators (including PWC operators) towing a person(s) on water skis, surfboards, or any other devices have additional laws.

Requirements for Towing Skiers

- Each person being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
  - Inflatable PFDs are not approved for use by persons being towed.
  - This law does not apply to persons participating in a marine permitted barefoot or trick water-skiing event. An approved PFD must be on board the vessel for each of these skiers.

- A vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or any other device must have at least two competent persons on board—one to operate the vessel and a second person to observe the towed person(s).
  - This law does not apply to vessels that are operated by a person at least 16 years old and that are equipped with a wide-angle, convex rearview mirror, at least 7 x 14 inches in size, positioned so that the operator can observe the towed person(s).
  - This law does not apply to vessels engaged in authorized water-skiing tournaments or competitions.
- It is illegal to tow a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or similar device between the hours of one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.
- The operator of the towing vessel and the skier must operate in a safe manner. A reasonable distance from other vessels, people, and property must be maintained so as not to endanger the life or property of others.

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Hand Signals for Skiers

Knowing proper hand signals will help the skier(s) communicate with their boat operator or the observer.

Skier OK

Back to dock

Skier down—watch!

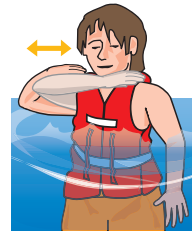
Speed up

Slow down

Speed OK

Turn left

Turn right



Stop

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Avoiding Propeller Strike Injuries

Most propeller strike accidents result from operator error. Victims include swimmers, scuba divers, fallen water-skiers, and boat operators or passengers. Most propeller accidents can be prevented by following basic safe boating practices.

- Maintain a proper lookout. The primary cause of propeller strike accidents is operator inattention.
- Make sure the engine is off so that the propeller is not rotating when passengers are boarding or leaving a boat.
- Never start a boat with the engine in gear.
- Slow down when approaching congested areas and anchorages. In congested areas, always be alert for swimmers and divers.
- Learn to recognize warning buoys that mark swimming and hazardous areas.
- Keep the boat away from marked swimming and diving areas. Become familiar with the red and white or blue and white diver-down flags signaling that divers are below the surface.
- Make sure that passengers are seated properly before getting underway. Some operators of larger boats with several passengers have caused injuries by putting the engine in gear while people were still swimming or diving from the boat.
- Never ride on a seat back, gunwale, transom, or bow.

Devices that Reduce Propeller Strikes

There are several new technologies designed to reduce propeller strikes. The effectiveness of the devices varies, depending on the boat and the operating environment. For more information, read the article "Propeller Injury Intervention" on the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety website: **www.uscgboating.org**.

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Protecting Louisiana's Waterways

Aquatic hitchhikers can spread in many ways such as on aquatic plants, on recreational equipment, and in water. Fortunately, there are a few simple actions you can take to prevent them from spreading.

To prevent spreading aquatic nuisance species:

- Inspect your boat, trailer, and equipment and remove visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud before leaving the area. Carefully remove all plant fragments to ensure you are not transporting an invasive plant species or attached zebra mussels.
- Drain water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells, and bait containers before leaving the area. Many types of invasive species are very small and easily overlooked and can be carried in water.
- Report new sightings. If you suspect a new infestation of an invasive plant or animal, save a specimen and report it to a local natural resource or Sea Grant office.
- Spray, rinse, or dry boats and recreational equipment to remove or kill species that were not visible when leaving a body of water and again before going to another waterway.
- Dispose of unwanted bait and other animals or plants in the trash. Releasing live animals and plants in a lake, river, or along the shore often causes invasive species to become established.
- Consult the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries for information on controlling aquatic invasive species. Do-it-yourself control treatments could be illegal and can make matters worse by harming native fish, wildlife, and plants.
  Call **225-765-2328** or visit **www.wlf.louisiana.gov**.

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Louisiana Required Equipment Checklist

	PWCs	Boats Less Than 16 Ft.	Boats 16 Ft. To Less Than 26 Ft.
Registration on Board	✓	✓	✓
Validation Decals Displayed	✓	✓	✓
PFDs: Type I, II, or III	✓ 1	✓ 2, 4, 6	✓ 2, 6
PFD: Type IV			✓
Engine Cut Off Device	✓	5	5
Type B Fire Extinguishers	✓	✓	✓
Navigation Lights	3	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell			✓
Daytime Visual Distress Signals			✓ 8
Nighttime Visual Distress Signals	3	8	8
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓	7	7
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓
Muffler/Underwater Exhaust	✓	✓	✓

1. Those on personal watercraft (PWC) must wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (PFD) at all times.
2. Children 16 years of age and younger must wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD while underway on a vessel less than 26 feet long.
3. Certain items are not applicable to PWCs because PWCs are not allowed to operate between sunset and sunrise.
4. All persons onboard a motorboat less than 16 feet which is being propelled by a hand tiller outboard motor are required to wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD while the motorboat is underway.
5. A motorboat less than 26 feet with a hand tiller outboard motor in excess of ten horsepower designed to have or having an engine cut-off switch must have the engine cut-off switch link attached to the operator, the operator's clothing, or if worn, the operator's PFD, while the motor is running and the vessel is underway.
6. Persons engaged in water sports, which includes but is not limited to water skiing, being towed on a tube, wake boarding, wake surfing, etc., must wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD. An inflatable PFD does not meet the requirements.
7. Required on inboards and stern drives only.
8. Required on federally controlled waters (offshore, tidal coastal areas).

BOATER EDUCATION

All persons born after January 1, 1984 are required to complete a NASBLA–approved boating education course to operate a motorboat over ten horsepower and carry proof of such when operating the motorboat. A motorboat may be operated if any person on board or participating in any boating activity from the motorboat is over the age of eighteen and, if required to have completed a boating safety course, has completed the required boating safety course.

TO REPORT MISSING/OVERDUE BOATERS, REPORT A BOAT CRASH INCIDENT, OR REPORT VIOLATIONS, PLEASE CALL 1-800-442-2511.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES
LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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Minden, LA 71055
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368 Century Link Dr
Monroe, LA 71203
318-362-3102

Region 3
Alexandria Office
1995 Shreveport Hwy
Pineville, LA 71360
318-487-5634

Region 4
Opelousas Office
5652 Highway 182
Opelousas, LA 70570
337-948-0257

Region 5
Lake Charles Office
1213 N Lakeshore Dr
Lake Charles, LA 70601
337-491-2580

Region 6
Thibodaux Office
1102 Highway 3185
Thibodaux, LA 70301
985-447-0821

Region 7
Baton Rouge Office
2000 Quail Dr
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
225-765-2999
Mail:
P O Box 98000
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Region 8
New Orleans Office
Region 8 Enforcement
2021 Lakeshore Drive
Suite 204
New Orleans, LA 70122
504-284-2023

Boating Accident Assistance or Operation Game Thief:
call 1-800-442-2511 ext 0

For information on boating education courses, classroom or online visit:
www.wlf.louisiana.gov
and select Boating Information.

Visit our website: www.wlf.louisiana.gov
Everything you need to know about boating in Louisiana!

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