

# OHIO BOAT OPERATOR'S GUIDE

## Recent Law Updates:

### Float tubes and paddleboards become vessels.

The U.S. Coast Guard has determined that float tubes, (a.k.a. “belly boats”) are vessels and are required to have Hull Identification Numbers (HINS). Because of this, float tubes are required to be registered under Ohio law. Exceptions to this are float tubes with only one air cell, in which case they are not considered a vessel and therefore cannot be registered in Ohio.

Paddleboards have also been determined to be vessels, and under Ohio law are required to be registered. The U.S. Coast Guard, however, has excluded paddleboards from requiring HINS.

Operators of either paddleboards or float tubes are required to comply with the requirements for other hand-powered vessels such as canoes and kayaks. Refer to the charts on page 50 and 51 of this guide for additional information on these requirements.

## Disclaimer:

Ohio and federal boating laws are presented in a summarized form. Ohio laws in their entirety can be found by consulting the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) or the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) [[codes.ohio.gov](http://codes.ohio.gov)]. These laws are subject to change. It is the responsibility of the operator to be aware of the most current laws when using a boat.

Certain bodies of water in Ohio have local restrictions regarding type and size of watercraft or motor horsepower, restricted use areas, boat speed, and times for use. Check with the local authorities for these additional restrictions.



Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Watercraft  
2045 Morse Road, Building A  
Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693

1-877-4BOATER (Ohio Only)  
614-265-6480  
[ohiodnr.com/watercraft](http://ohiodnr.com/watercraft)

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# REGISTRATION & TITLING REQUIREMENTS

## Registration & Titling

Before boating, your boat must be properly titled, if required, and registered. A boat title is similar to an auto title. Both provide proof of ownership. Like an auto title, boat titles are obtained from any county title office. A boat requiring a title may not be registered until a title is issued in the new owner's name.

Sailboards (commonly called windsurfers) are not considered a watercraft by definition. Therefore, the Ohio registration and titling laws do not apply to these vessels.

## Hull Identification Number (HIN) (ORC 1547.65)

The hull identification number (HIN) is the boat's serial number. It is a 12-character number, a minimum of 1/4-inch high, permanently attached to the upper right of the boat's transom or on the starboard (right) side within two feet of the stern (for boats without a transom). Pontoon boats have a visible HIN on the aft crossbeam within one foot of the starboard hull attachment.

Owners of homemade boats, watercraft without a HIN, and watercraft lacking a 12-character HIN, must contact a Watercraft office. An appointment with a State Watercraft Officer may be necessary to inspect the boat and assign a HIN.

Caution must be exercised when buying a boat due to the number of stolen boats. One way to avoid problems is to match the HIN listed on the title to the one attached to the boat. Before purchasing the boat, inspect the HIN to be sure it has not been altered in any way.

## Titling of Watercraft & Outboard Motors (ORC 1548.03 & 1548.01)

**No person is permitted to sell, purchase or otherwise acquire any of the following without a certificate of title:**

- an outboard motor of 10 horsepower or greater,
- a watercraft 14 feet or greater in length,
- a watercraft less than 14 feet in length with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or greater.

### **Watercraft exempt from this requirement:**

- vessels documented by the United States Coast Guard,
- canoes and kayaks,
- watercraft less than 14 feet in length without a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion,
- watercraft less than 14 feet in length with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of less than 10 horsepower,

### *Watercraft exempt from titling, continued*

- ship's lifeboat,
- boats owned by government agencies,
- motors less than 10 horsepower.

If a titled boat is sold by an individual (a casual sale), the seller must complete the transfer section on the back of the title in the presence of a notary public before presenting it to the buyer. The buyer must take the title to a title office to complete the transfer.

**NOTE :** Some watercraft listed above and on the previous page may have not needed a title when they were originally purchased. Prior to selling the watercraft, however, the owner must apply to a title office and obtain a title. These include:

- Watercraft or outboards acquired prior to January 1, 1964,
- Watercraft less than 14 feet long with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or greater and purchased on or before January 1, 2000.

### **Numbering of Watercraft (ORC 1547.53)**

Every watercraft operated on Ohio water shall be numbered by this state or in compliance with their own state numbering system and shall properly display the assigned number.

#### **Watercraft exempt from Ohio numbering are those:**

- documented by the United States Coast Guard,
- numbered by another state and used in this state for not more than 60 days,
- from a country other than the United States temporarily using Ohio water,
- owned by the United States, a state or political subdivision,
- a ship's lifeboat (A "lifeboat" is held aboard another vessel and used exclusively for emergency purposes),
- exempted by the chief of the Division of Watercraft,
- under a waiver issued for a race or special event,
- canoes, rowboats, and inflatable watercraft that are registered under section 1547.54 of the Revised Code (Alternative Registration, see next page) and that an owner chooses not to have numbered.

### **Registration of Watercraft (ORC 1547.531)**

Numbering of watercraft and registering a watercraft are two separate functions. No person shall operate any watercraft without a valid registration. Evidence of registration is shown by displaying two square registration tags or a rectangular tag (Alternative Registration option only for hand powered vessels) and carrying the valid registration certificate on board the vessel. *Refer to the registration/titling flow chart at the end of this booklet for further details.*

Before boating, the new owner of a used boat must take the previous registration form with the transfer section completed by the seller to any watercraft registration agent, even if the registration has not expired. However, if a watercraft requiring a title is transferred to a new owner, it may be operated for no more than 45 days provided the new owner carries aboard either of the following:

- a temporary watercraft registration from an authorized registration agent,
- a bill of sale from a watercraft dealer containing the required information.

The grace period of 45 days provides the new owner adequate time to complete the title transfer process.

### **Alternative Registration Option for Manually Propelled Vessels (ORC 1547.54)**

An owner of a manually propelled canoe, rowboat (including racing shell or rowing scull) or inflatable watercraft may choose to do either of the following:

1. Have it numbered, pay a lesser registration fee, and obtain square tags (traditional registration option).
2. Not have it numbered, pay a higher registration fee, and obtain a rectangular tag (alternative registration option).

The rectangular alternative registration tag shall be securely affixed in one of the following manners:

- in the upper right corner of the transom,
- on a deck on the rear half of the vessel,
- on the outside below the port side gunnel, or
- on the inside of the vessel on the upper portion of the starboard side gunnel so that it is visible from the port side of the vessel.

**NOTE:** Do not use this alternative registration method if there is a possibility of ever using a motor or an affixed sail with the vessel. This registration is issued and renewed through any Division of Watercraft office.

### **Watercraft exempt from registration:**

- those exempt from numbering EXCEPT documented vessels,
- those issued a commercial documentation and used exclusively for commercial purposes,
- vessels meeting another state's registration system requirements which are used in Ohio for less than 60 days.

### **Proof of Documentation Required (ORC 1547.531)**

Documentation is a federal registration system administered by the United States Coast Guard. Boats must be at least 5 net tons to be eligible, which is roughly 25 feet or more in length.

No person shall operate a documented vessel unless the certificate of documentation is valid and available for inspection. The vessel must display the official number, the vessel name, and home port.

Documented vessels must be registered in Ohio and display two Ohio tags, but they are not assigned an Ohio number.

### **Watercraft Identification & Display of Tags and Number (OAC 1501:47-1-07 & ORC 1547.57)**

The number assigned is in three parts beginning with “OH” followed by four numbers and two letters.

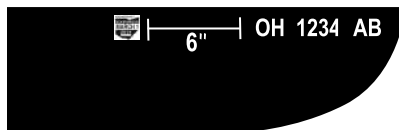
#### **The number shall:**

- be placed on each side of the forward half of the watercraft,
- be read from left to right,
- be in block characters of good proportion,
- be a minimum of three inches in height,
- be one color and contrast with the background or boat color,
- be separated by a hyphen or equivalent space between the prefix and suffix,
- be maintained to be clearly visible and legible.

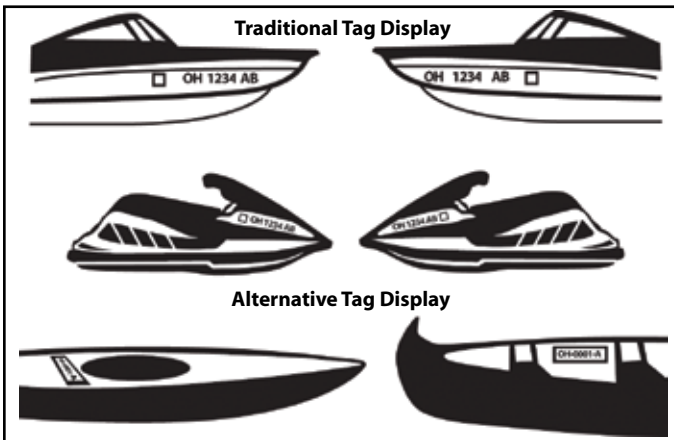
No other numerals or letters may be displayed on the bow.

**OH 1234 AB or OH-1234-AB**

Two registration tags are issued with each traditional boat registration. On numbered boats the owner shall securely affix the tags on each side of the bow six inches toward the stern from the number.



The tags must be clearly visible in normal conditions and affixed prior to operation of the watercraft. Documented boats must display one tag on the port side and one on the starboard side.



## Expiration of Registration

(ORC 1547.54)

Registration certificates and tags are valid up to 3 years and expire on March 1 of the year indicated.

(ORC 1547.57)

All tags shall be removed when they become invalid (expire).



## REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

### Duty of Owner to Provide Equipment

(ORC 1547.38)

No person who lets vessels for hire, or the agent or employee thereof, shall rent, lease, or otherwise permit the use of a vessel, unless the person provides the equipment required under sections of Chapter 1547 of the Ohio Revised Code and rules adopted under the Ohio Administrative Code.

### Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)

(ORC 1547.25)

**Other than commercial vessels, no person shall operate or permit to be operated any watercraft:**

- 16 feet or greater in length without one Type I, II or III wearable PFD per person plus one Type IV throwable PFD,
- Less than 16 feet in length and canoes or kayaks of any length without one Type I, II or III wearable PFD per person.
- A Type V PFD may be carried in place of a Type I, II, or III wearable PFD provided the approval label indicates that the device is approved for the activity or that it can be a substitute for the other types of PFDs. The Type V PFD must also be used in accordance with the requirements on the approval label and the requirements in its owner's manual.

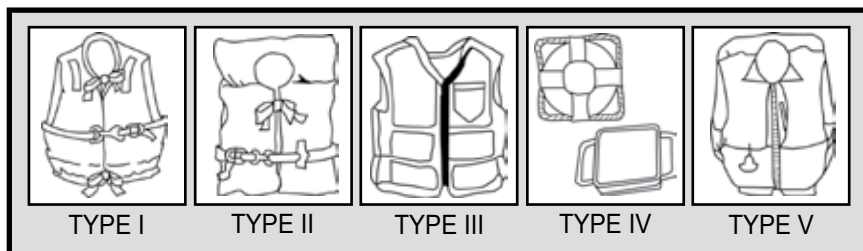


**No person shall operate or permit to be operated any commercial vessel:**

- less than 40 feet in length not carrying persons for hire without one Type I, II or III PFD per person
- 40 feet in length or longer not carrying persons for hire without one Type I PFD per person
- 26 feet in length or longer without at least one Type IV ring life buoy in addition.

**Each PFD shall be:**

- U.S. Coast Guard approved;
- in good and serviceable condition;
- an appropriate size for the wearer;
- readily accessible to each person aboard the watercraft at all times.



**SPLASH FACT**

Be sure to check the Coast Guard approval label before purchasing a life jacket. Not all life jackets are suitable for all uses or all people. The label will tell you the weight and chest size limits, plus any age restrictions for that particular life jacket. It will also tell you what water activities the life jacket is designed for, such as water skiing or riding on a personal watercraft. Some life jackets are not designed for weak swimmers. Others must be worn to meet the requirements.

***Read the label! Wear It Ohio!***

**Child PFD Requirements  
(ORC 1547.24)**

No person shall operate or permit to be operated any vessel under 18 feet long with a child less than 10 years of age on board unless the child is wearing a PFD.

**The PFD must be:**

- United States Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III, or V
- in good and serviceable condition,
- of appropriate size,
- securely attached.





## **PFDs Required for Skiers (and persons towed upon other devices)** **(ORC 1547.18)**

No person shall ride or attempt to ride upon water skis, surfboards, inflatable devices or similar devices being towed by a vessel without wearing a United States Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III PFD or a Type V PFD specifically designed for water-skiing, in good and serviceable condition, and of appropriate size. No operator of a vessel shall tow any person who fails to comply with this law.

## **Barefoot Skiing** **(ORC 1547.18)**

No person shall engage in barefoot skiing without wearing an adequate and effective United States Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III PFD or a Type V PFD specifically designed for water-skiing, in good and serviceable condition and of appropriate size, or a wetsuit specifically designed for barefoot skiing. No boat operator shall tow any person who fails to comply with this law.

## **PFDs Required for Personal Watercraft** **(ORC 1547.41)**

No person shall operate or permit the operation of a personal watercraft unless each person on the watercraft is wearing a Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device.

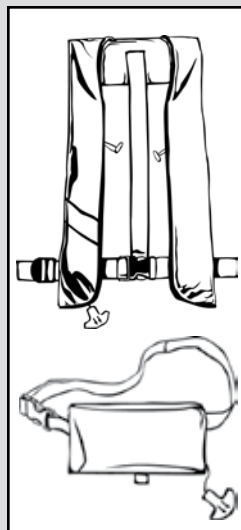
A person operating a personal watercraft that is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cutoff switch shall attach the lanyard to the person, the person's clothing, or personal flotation device as appropriate for the specific watercraft.

A "personal watercraft" is defined as a vessel less than 16 feet in length, propelled by machinery and designed to be operated by an individual sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel rather than by the individual sitting or standing inside the vessel.

### **Inflatable PFDs**

The inflatable PFD's intended use is for many of the same activities as the inherently buoyant types of PFDs. The user must be aware of the differences and read the owner's manual. Inflatable PFDs are:

- Not for water sports like skiing or whitewater boating
- Not for use with personal watercraft
- Not for children younger than 16 years of age
- High visibility when inflated
- More comfortable than foam type
- Not recommended for weak or non-swimmers
- Not throwable Type IV devices
- Made with oral, manual and automatic cartridge inflation devices.





### **SPLASH FACT**

The law says your life jacket must be readily accessible. That means having it where you can reach out and grab it in an emergency. Don't store life jackets in the plastic bag they came in, put them in a closed compartment, or pile other gear on top of them when boating. Keep your life jacket handy at all times.

An even better idea is to wear a life jacket whenever you are on the water. In an accident, you might not have time to put on your PFD. If you end up in the water, putting on a life jacket can be a real struggle.

## **Anchor Requirements**

**(ORC 1547.26 & OAC 1501:47-1-11)**

All watercraft shall carry an anchor and line of sufficient weight and length to anchor the watercraft securely. No person shall operate or permit to be operated any watercraft in violation of this section.

**The following vessels are exempt from requirements to carry an anchor and line:**

- any vessel less than 14 feet in length,
- any canoe or kayak,
- any sailboat less than 21 feet in length.



**Plow Style Anchor**



**Fluke Style Anchor**



**Mushroom Type Anchor**



### **SPLASH FACT**

It is important to choose the correct anchor for the size of boat and the type of lake bottom. A length of chain between the anchor and line will improve the holding ability of most anchors. Use plenty of line, at least 7 to 10 times as much anchor line as depth of the water. This allows horizontal load on the anchor, which will greatly improve the anchor's holding ability.



**10 : 1 or more –  
For rougher conditions**

**5 : 1 – For calm conditions or  
temporary anchoring**

**2 : 1 – Too short. Anchor may  
not hold.**



**Anchor from the Bow...not from the Stern**

## Fire Extinguishers

### (ORC 1547.27)

No person shall operate or permit to be operated any powercraft that does not meet the fire extinguisher requirement.

#### Powercraft exempted from this requirement are those:

- propelled by electric motors,
- less than 26 feet in length, powered by an outboard motor, of "open construction," which are not carrying passengers for hire.

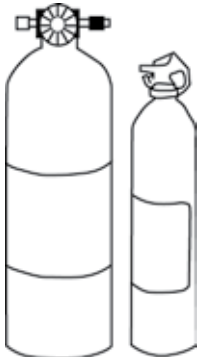
#### Fire extinguishers on powercraft must:

- meet or exceed United States Coast Guard standards,
- be capable of extinguishing a gasoline fire,
- be readily accessible,
- be in condition to be ready for immediate and effective use.

#### Carriage requirements are determined by boat length:

- Powerboats under 26 feet long must carry at least one B-1 fire extinguisher.
- Powerboats 26 feet long but less than 40 feet long must carry at least two B-1 fire extinguishers or the equivalent, such as a B-2 fire extinguisher.
- Powerboats 40 feet long but less than 65 feet long must carry at least three B-1 fire extinguishers or the equivalent, such as one B-1 and one B-2 fire extinguisher.

A United States Coast Guard approved fixed fire extinguisher system installed in the vessel's engine compartment is equal to one B-1 portable fire extinguisher.



## Fire Extinguisher Classification

CLASSIFICATION	TYPE/SIZE	
	B-1	B-2
FOAM (minimum gallons)	1.25	2.5
CARBON DIOXIDE (minimum pounds)	4	15
DRY CHEMICAL (minimum pounds)	2	10
HALON (minimum pounds)	2.5	10

## **Distress Signals**

**(ORC 1547.251)**

**When operating on federally controlled waters (Lake Erie or the immediately connecting bays, harbors, and anchorage areas):**

**No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel:**

- 16 feet or more in length or any vessel carrying six or fewer passengers for hire without carrying United States Coast Guard approved visual distress signals for both day and night use,
- between sunset and sunrise unless carrying United States Coast Guard approved visual distress signals for night use.

**When operating on Ohio waters other than federally controlled waters (other than Lake Erie or the connecting bays, harbors, and anchorage areas):**

**No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel:**

- without carrying a distress flag at least two square feet and international orange in color or a United States Coast Guard approved daytime distress signal.

**The required distress signals shall be:**

- United States Coast Guard approved,
- in good and serviceable condition,
- readily accessible,
- of the type and quantities required (see chart on following page).

**No person shall** display any distress signal unless a vessel or a person is in distress and in need of help.

**Note:** Distress signaling devices must comply with ORC 1547.69 regarding firearm restrictions.




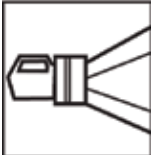



**Exemptions to the visual distress signal requirements:**

Exemptions to the visual distress signal carriage requirement exist; however, on Lake Erie or the immediately connecting bays, harbors and anchorage areas, an exempted vessel must carry approved visual distress signals for night use between sunset and sunrise.

Exempted vessels during daylight hours only include:

- vessels in an organized marine event or race,
- manually propelled vessels,
- sailboats less than 26 feet in length with completely open construction and without propulsion machinery.

## VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNAL OPTIONS

<b>Day and Night</b>		<b>(3) Hand-Held Red Flares</b>
	<i>or</i>	
		<b>(3) Parachute Red Flares</b>
	<i>or</i>	
		<b>(3) Red Aerial Pyrotechnic Flares</b>
<b>Night Only</b>		<b>(1) Electric Distress Signal</b>
<b>Day Only</b>		<b>(3) Hand-Held Orange Smoke</b>
	<i>or</i>	
		<b>(3) Floating Orange Smoke</b>
	<i>or</i>	
		<b>(1) Orange Flag</b>



### **SPLASH FACT**

Some states and Canada consider pistol launchers for meteor pyrotechnics as firearms and restrict or prohibit their use. Check with authorities in the area where you plan to boat.

## **Backfire Flame Arrestor (ORC 1547.28)**

Every gasoline engine installed in a vessel, except an outboard motor, shall be equipped with an acceptable device to control backfire flame.

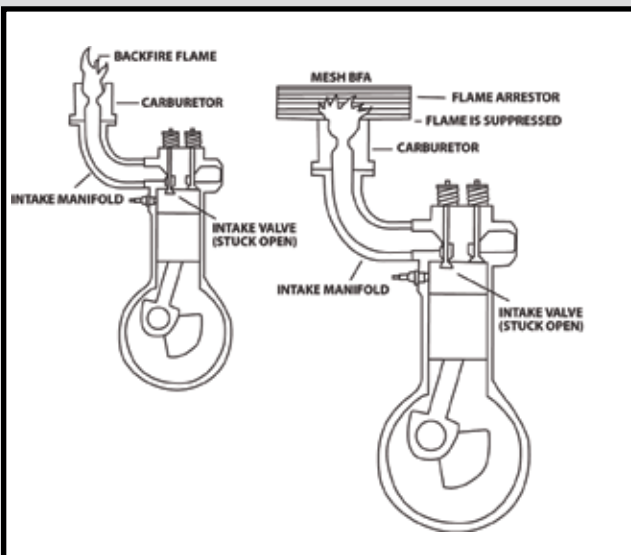
### **The device shall be:**

- securely attached to the air intake with a flame-tight connection,
- in proper working order,
- United States Coast Guard approved or comply with either SAE J1928 or UL1111,
- marked to indicate the approval or compliance.



### **SPLASH FACT**

An unprotected carburetor may allow backfire flames to enter the engine compartment. An explosion could result if any gasoline vapors are present. Properly installing and maintaining a flame arrestor helps prevent backfire flames from escaping from the carburetor.

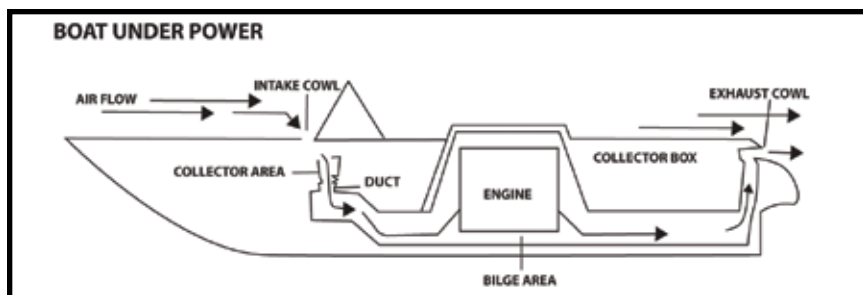


## Ventilation Requirements

(ORC 1547.29)

**Powercraft using gasoline or other liquid fuel having a flashpoint of less than 110° F shall be provided with ventilation as follows:**

- at least two ventilators fitted with cowls or their equivalent for the purpose of properly and efficiently ventilating the bilges of every engine and fuel tank compartment in order to remove any inflammable or explosive gases,
- any type of ventilating system approved for use by the United States Coast Guard.
- Ventilation is not required when the greater portion of the bilges of the engine and fuel tank compartment is open to the natural atmosphere.



### **SPLASH FACTS**

Most boat fires and explosions occur shortly after refueling. Gasoline fumes are much heavier than air and can collect in the lower parts of a boat, such as the bilges. One cup of vaporizing gasoline has the explosive equivalency of 15 sticks of dynamite.

#### ***To reduce the risk of an explosion occurring:***

**Before fueling,** turn off all engines, motors and fans and extinguish open flames. Close all ports, doors, windows and hatches to prevent fumes from entering enclosed areas.

**While fueling,** keep the nozzle or spout in contact with the mouth of the tank to prevent the buildup of static electricity from producing a spark. Tanks for outboard motors should be filled on the dock or on shore. Be careful not to spill any fuel or overfill the tank. Always allow space for expansion of gasoline to prevent overflowing.

**After fueling,** close tanks and wipe up any gasoline spills, properly disposing of the wipe-up rag on shore. Open all ports, doors, windows and hatches and turn on the exhaust blower. Ventilate the boat for at least four minutes and sniff in and around the engine compartment before starting engine. Although your nose is the most reliable detector to determine whether gasoline vapors are present, consult a marine dealer about electronic vapor detectors that prevent the ignition from starting if fuel vapors are detected.

**Maintaining your boat** can also reduce risks. Regularly inspect the condition of fuel lines. Look for loose connections, cracked hoses or other leaks. Keep the flame arrestor clean and securely attached to the carburetor.

## **Exhaust Muffler Required**

### **(ORC 1547.31)**

Every powercraft shall be equipped with a muffler or muffler system that is in good working order, in constant operation and effectively installed to prevent excessive or unusual noise.

### **No person shall operate or give permission to operate a powercraft in a manner to exceed the following noise levels:**

- 90 decibels on the “A” scale in a stationary sound level test prescribed by SAE J2005. (Measured from one meter with engine at low idle speed when at dock or tied to another boat.)
- 75 decibels on the “A” scale measured as specified by SAE J1970. (Measured from shoreline with boat in any level of operation.)

No person shall remove, alter or modify a muffler in a way that prevents compliance with this section. No person shall operate or allow to be operated a powercraft with an altered muffler or muffler cutout or in a manner that bypasses or reduces the effectiveness of any muffler system.

## **Equipment for Sound Signals**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-33)**

A vessel of 12 meters (39.4 feet) or more in length shall be provided with a power whistle or power horn and a bell.

A vessel less than 12 meters in length shall not be obliged to carry the sound devices described in the preceding paragraph. However, the vessel must be provided with a means of making an efficient sound signal.

A vessel that is propelled by human muscular effort, a sailing vessel and a power-driven vessel less than 16 feet in length, when using waters other than Lake Erie, the Ohio River or the Muskingum River, shall not be obliged to carry the sound devices stipulated above or produce the sound signals prescribed in the Ohio Administrative Code.

## **Navigation Lights**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-21 through 1501:47-2-31)**

All vessels are required to display running lights or an anchor light between sunset and sunrise. For power vessels, running lights include a green light displayed on the starboard side, a red light displayed on the port side and all-around white light(s) displaying 360 degrees. An anchor light is an all-around white light. Requirements vary by vessel size and type. Sailing vessels and hand-powered vessels have light display options. Lighting requirements are covered in greater detail under Navigation Rules.



## Discharge of Oil Prohibited & Oil Pollution Placard

(OAC 1501:47-1-27)

All vessels are required to have the capacity to retain oily mixtures on board. A fixed or portable means to discharge oily waste to a reception facility is required. A bucket or bailer is suitable as a portable means of discharging oily waste on recreational vessels. No person may intentionally drain oil or oily waste from any source into the bilge of any vessel. Immediately notify the United States Coast Guard if your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water. Call toll free 1-800-424-8802 to report spills. Violators are subject to substantial civil penalties and/or criminal sanctions including fines and imprisonment. (Oil pollution Placards can be obtained from any Watercraft office.)

### Discharge of Oil Prohibited

The Federal Water Pollution Act prohibits the discharge of oil or oily waste into or upon the navigable waters of the United States or the waters of the contiguous zone if such discharge causes a film or sheen upon, or causes a sludge or emulsion beneath the surface of the water.

Vessels 26 feet or more must display a 5-inch by 8-inch placard near the engine or bilge pump controls.

## Garbage Placard

(OAC 1501:47-1-28)

It is illegal to dump plastics anywhere or to discharge garbage in the navigable waters of the United States including the Great Lakes. Vessels 26 feet or longer must display in a prominent location a durable placard at least 4 by 9 inches in size with lettering at least 1/8-inch high, notifying the crew and passengers of the discharge restrictions. (Garbage Placards can be obtained from any Watercraft office.)

## Inland Navigation Rules

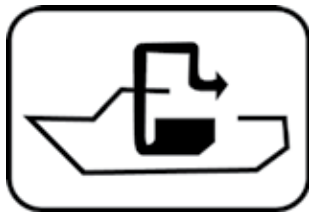
(OAC 1501:47-1-29)

The operators of mechanically propelled vessels 12 meters (39.4 feet) or more in length must carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of the Inland Navigation Rules. (Inland Navigation Rules can be obtained by visiting the United States Coast Guard website at [www.navcen.uscg.gov](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov))

## Vessel Sanitary Systems

(ORC 1547.33)

Except on Lake Erie, the Muskingum River and the Ohio River, no person shall launch, moor, dock, operate or permit to be operated any vessel with a sink, toilet, or sanitary system capable of discharging urine, fecal matter, contents of a chemical commode, kitchen wastes, laundry wastes, slop sink drainage, or other household wastes into the waters in this state. Such a sink, toilet, or sanitary system shall be removed, sealed or made to drain into a tank or reservoir that can be carried or pumped ashore for disposal in an approved sewage treatment works.



## Marine Sanitation Device (MSD) on Lake Erie, the Muskingum River and the Ohio River

All recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable MSD on board. Vessels 65 feet and under may use a U.S. Coast Guard certified Type I, II or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must install a U. S. Coast Guard certified Type II or III MSD. Coast Guard certified devices are so labeled except for some holding tanks, which are certified by definition under federal regulations.

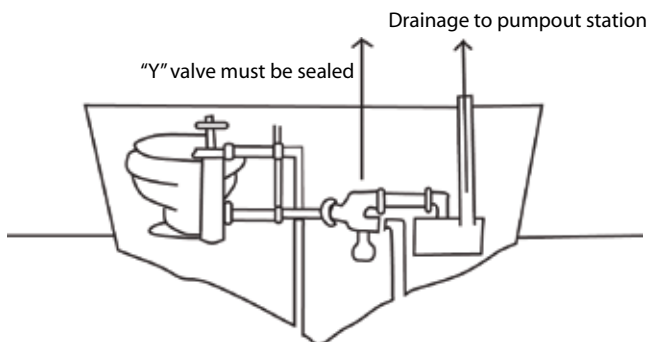


### **SPLASH FACT** **Types of MSDs**

Type III MSD, the simplest and most common, consists of a holding tank. It requires only a small storage space and is simple to operate. Type III MSDs have the least impact on the environment since the waste is to be discharged on shore into a local sewage treatment facility.

Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large vessels. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged. Types I, II and III MSDs with "Y" valves that direct the waste overboard must be secured so that the valve cannot be opened for discharge into the water. This can be done by placing a lock or non-releasable seal on the "Y" valve or by taking the handle off the "Y" valve.

### **Typical I, II & III Marine Sanitation Device**





### **SPLASH FACT**

#### ***Keep Our Waterways Clean From Sewage***

Boat sewage dumped into Ohio waters may affect aquatic plants, fish and other animals. The nutrients, microorganisms and chemicals contained in human waste from boats have a negative impact on coastal and inland waters, particularly in sheltered or shallow areas not naturally flushed by tide or current.

Sewage contains nutrients that fertilize algae in the water. This can make algae grow out of control, reducing the amount of light which reaches underwater grasses. Algae can also settle on the grass, smothering it. These grasses provide nursery areas for young fish and help prevent shoreline erosion. Flow-through treatment devices (Type I or II MSDs) reduce bacteria in the sewage but do not reduce the nutrients or organic matter going into the water.

Organic matter in sewage is decomposed in the water by bacteria. During this process, the bacteria use oxygen. As a result, sewage in the water may deplete the water's oxygen level, stressing fish and other aquatic animals that need oxygen to survive.

Microorganisms from a person's digestive system are found in human waste. Once they are in the water, they can pass diseases like hepatitis to people in contact with the water.

Chemical products used in onboard treatment devices, such as chlorine and formaldehyde, can be toxic to marine and estuarine life and could pose a problem in areas where boats congregate and where there is little wave flushing action.

## **FEDERAL REGULATIONS**

### **FCC Regulations**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires a Ship Station License for some vessels equipped with VHF radios, RADAR, EPIRBs and some other telecommunications equipment. As of 1996, most recreational vessels no longer need the FCC license if operating domestically. "Domestically" means not traveling to foreign ports or transmitting to foreign stations, including Canada.

#### **Vessels still required to carry an FCC Ship Station License:**

- power vessels over 20 meters (65.6 feet) in length,
- vessels certified to carry more than 6 passengers for hire,
- towboats and commercial fishing vessels,
- other vessels required by federal law to carry a VHF radio, radar, etc.

The Ship Station License must be on board the vessel.

A license application (Form 506) can be obtained from any office of the FCC. There is a fee for the license. Call 1-800-418-FORM (3676) for an application and information.

## **Canadian Border Landing Permit**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) requires an inspection of small vessel operators and their passengers when entering into the U.S. from a foreign port, including Canada. Boaters who have landed upon Canadian soil are required to report to a designated U.S. port of entry for inspection or be in possession of proper documentation.

For more information on border crossing requirements between the U.S. and Canada, visit [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) or call 877-227-5511.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection has offices in Ashtabula (440-964-2510), Cleveland (440-891-3800) and Toledo/Sandusky (419-259-6424).

## **U.S. Customs Service Boat Reporting**

### **Customs Procedures for Boaters Traveling To/From Canada**

U.S. citizens traveling to Canada by boat must contact the Canada Border Services Agency at 888-226-7277 for instructions on where to report for a Customs inspection. Currently, a photo ID and U.S. passport or birth certificate are required for each passenger on board the boat. For information on the NEXUS Alternative Inspection Program, go online [www.cpb.gov](http://www.cpb.gov) or call 866-639-8726.

Be advised that border crossing requirements may change at any time. It is the responsibility of each boat operator and passenger to know and understand the requirements for crossing the international border between Canada and the U.S.

All boats entering the U.S. from Canadian waters that have passengers who were on Canadian soil must report to U.S. Customs. This legal obligation may be met by telephone. You can call en route with a cellular phone or immediately upon arrival to the U.S. Have the following information ready when calling to avoid delays:

- Boat registration number and length (and Customs decal if over 30 feet; see below)
- Captain's name and date of birth
- Total number of persons on board and value of all purchases in Canada
- The name of the marina where you first arrived on the U.S. side

Boats 30 feet or more in length must purchase an annual user fee decal from a U.S. Customs office prior to voyage to Canada. U.S. Customs Service has offices in Ashtabula (440-998-3073), Cleveland (440-891-3800), and Toledo/Sandusky (419-259-6424).

## **Waterway Homeland Security**

**Boaters' roles in keeping our waterways safe and secure include the following:**

### **Keep your distance from all military, cruise-line, or commercial shipping.**

Do not approach within 100 yards, and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. naval vessel, including any U.S. military or military supply vessel.

Violators of the Naval Vessel Protection Zone face up to 6 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, not to mention a quick and severe response. Approaching certain other commercial vessels may result in an immediate boarding.

**Observe and avoid all security zones.** Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise-line, or petroleum facilities. Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc. Violators will be perceived as a threat, and will face a quick, determined, and severe response.

**Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in a channel.** If you do, then expect to be boarded by law enforcement officers.

**Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary.** To report activities that seem suspicious, contact the National Response Center at 1-877-24WATCH. If there is an immediate danger to life or property, call 911, the U.S. Coast Guard, or the port or marina security. Do not approach or challenge those acting in a suspicious manner.

**Always secure and lock your boat when not on board.** This includes while visiting marina restaurants, a friend's dock, or other piers. Never leave your boat accessible to others. Always take the keys to the boat with you.

**When storing your boat, make sure it is secure and its engine is disabled.** If it is on a trailer, make the trailer as immovable as possible. Go online to [www.ohiodnr.com/watercraft](http://www.ohiodnr.com/watercraft) and click on safety tips for more information.

# AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Aids to navigation serve much the same purpose as highway signs. Aids such as buoys, signs, lights and beacons are designed to assist boaters by marking hazards and safe channels, helping determine location, controlling traffic, and protecting resources. A variety of colors, shapes, lights, numbers and symbols give each navigation aid distinct characteristics. On charted waters these characteristics enable boaters to locate the aid on a nautical chart (a road map of the waterway) and then determine their position.

A boater can learn much about using navigation aids to operate safely. The following is only an introduction to some of the most common aids. Ohio operating laws require a boater to be familiar with and obey the buoys of the U.S. Aids to Navigation System.

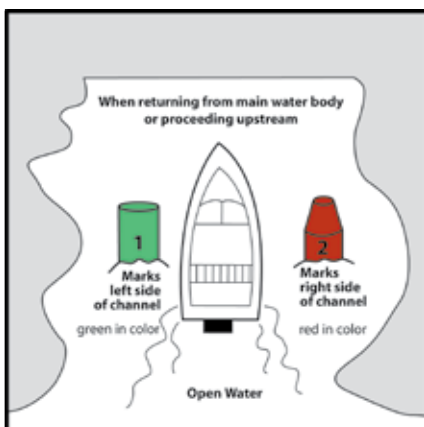
## U.S. AIDS TO NAVIGATION SYSTEM

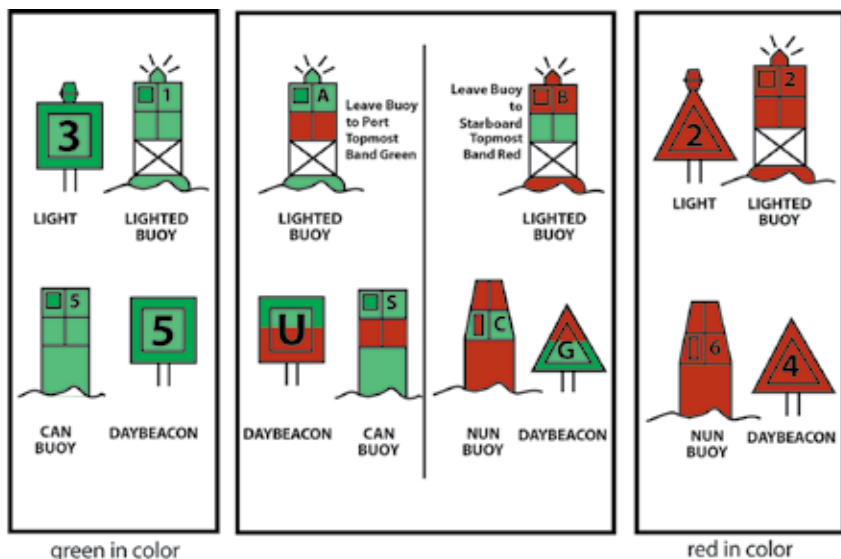
The system was developed so boaters traveling to lakes in various states could become familiar with one standard system. Channel markers are red and green to match the federal Lateral System. Regulatory markers are white with orange markings and may be on buoys or fixed signs.

### Channel Markers

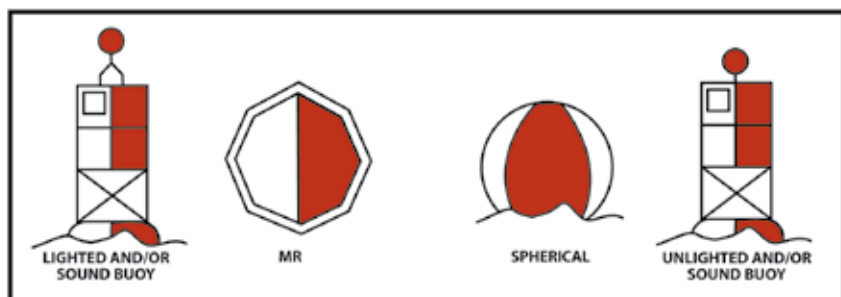
A harbor or marina entrance or a dredged channel may be marked to indicate the deeper, safer channel. When going upstream or into a harbor from open water, the right side of the channel is marked by red “nun” shaped buoys or day beacons with even numbers and the left side is marked by green “can” shaped buoys or day beacons with odd numbers. If a channel or harbor entrance is lighted, a red light will be on the right and a green light on the left as you enter the channel from open water. Mid-channel is marked by red and white vertically striped aids. Remember the phrase “Red Right Returning,” and keep the red markers from your right when returning from open water or traveling upstream.

Coast Guard channel markers  
adopted for use on all state waters.

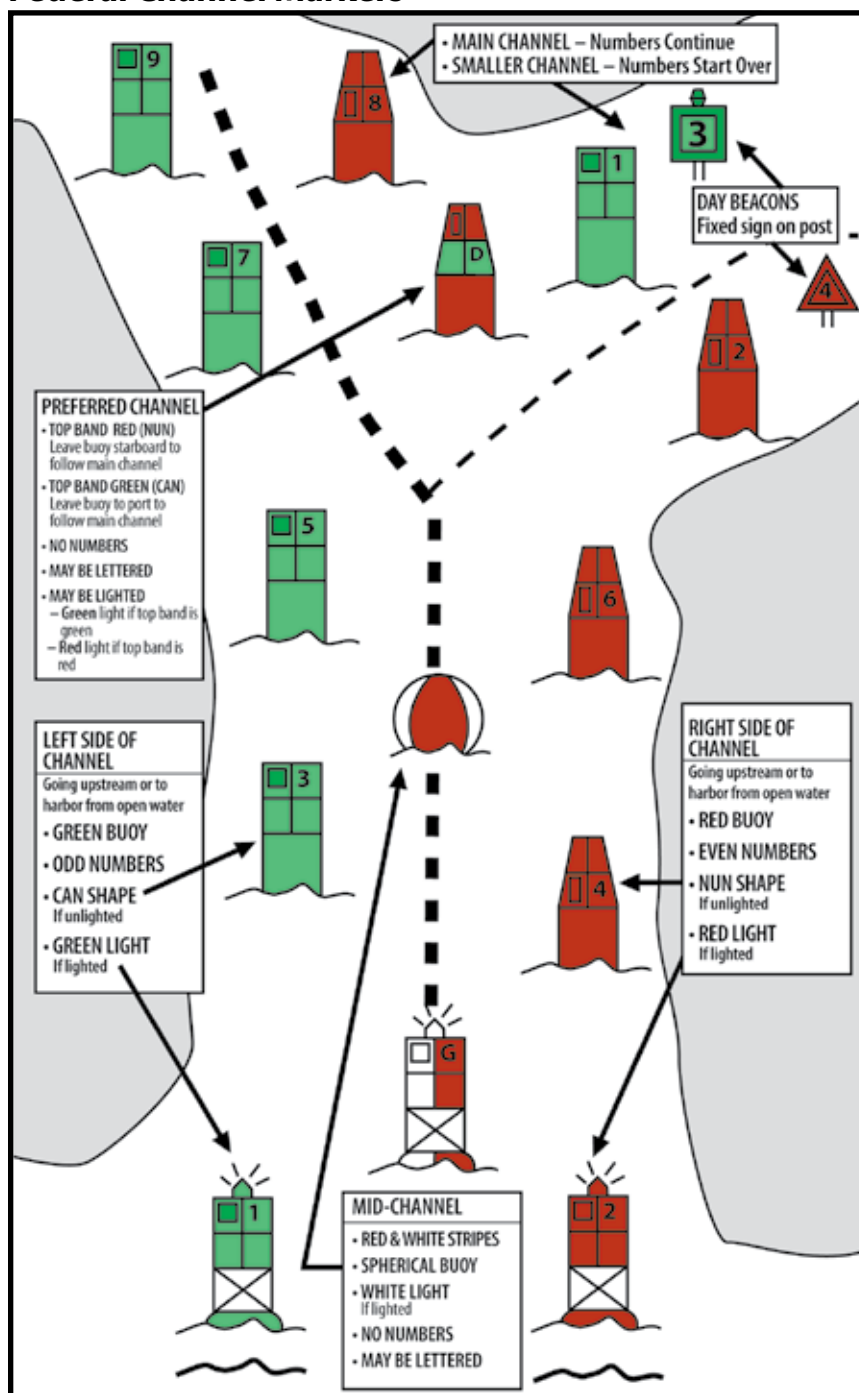




## MID-CHANNEL or SAFE WATER No Numbers – May Be Lettered



# Federal Channel Markers





## Regulatory Markers



**Controlled Area** A circle is the most common symbol used on Ohio waterways and usually regulates operation in the area. The buoy or sign will indicate the nature of the controlled area such as No Wake, Idle Speed, Speed Limit, Ski Zone, Open Zone, Speed Zone, etc.



**Information** A square is used on buoys or signs giving directions to facilities or other information about the area.



**Boats Keep Out** A diamond shape with a cross means boats must keep out. A buoy or sign may show only the symbol or may also indicate Swim Area, Beach, Keep Out, No Boats, Closed Area, Dam, etc.



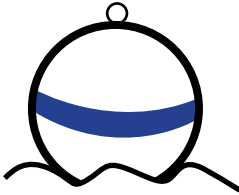
**Danger** A diamond shape is used to mark a hazard to boaters. The buoy or sign may also indicate the nature of the hazard such as Rock, Stump, Shallow Area, Reef, Shoal, Dam, etc.



### **SPLASH FACT**

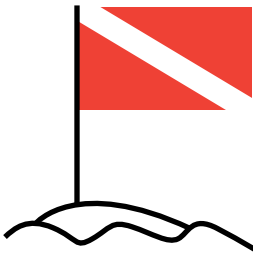
Not all hazards will be marked by a buoy or sign. Usually only hazards near high traffic areas are marked. Water levels on many lakes may rise or fall multiple times during the year, which changes the location of shallow areas or exposes rocks or stumps that had been in deeper water.

## Mooring Buoy



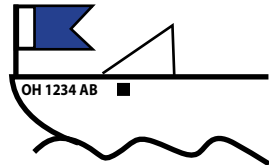
A white buoy with a blue horizontal band indicates a mooring buoy. This is the only type of buoy to which a vessel may be legally tied. However, most mooring buoys are private or are rentals and permission is needed to use them.

## Diver Down: Stay Clear



Diver Down

A red flag with a white diagonal stripe indicates that divers are in the area. Ohio law prohibits operating a vessel within 300 feet of a diver's flag unless tendering the dive operation. A blue and white "alpha" flag is displayed by a vessel tendering a dive operation.



Alpha Flag

# NAVIGATION RULES

The nautical rules are the traffic laws of the waterways and are legally binding for boat operators. These rules dictate the operator's course of action for avoiding collisions and include maneuvering, lighting, and sound signal requirements. The rules are summarized below.

## **Responsibility** **(OAC 1501:47-2-02)**

Nothing in these rules shall exonerate any vessel, operator, owner, master or crew from the consequences of:

- neglect to comply with these rules,
- neglect of any required precaution,
- special circumstances of the case.

In complying with the rules, due regard shall be given to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limits of the vessels involved, which may make a departure from these rules necessary to avoid immediate danger.

## **Definitions** **(OAC 1501:47-2-03)**

- "Vessel" includes every description of watercraft, including nondisplacement craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on the water.
- "Power-driven vessel" means any vessel propelled by machinery, fuel, rockets, or similar device.
- "Sailing vessel" means any vessel under sail provided that all propelling machinery, if fitted, is not being used.
- "Vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver" means a vessel which, from the nature of its work, is restricted in its ability to maneuver and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.
- "Underway" means that a vessel is not at anchor, made fast to the shore or aground.
- "Vessel not under command" means a vessel which, through some exceptional circumstance, is unable to maneuver or to keep out of the way of another vessel.

## **Risk of Collision**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-07)**

Every vessel shall use all available means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine if risk of collision exists. If in doubt, such risk shall exist.

## **Action to Avoid Collision**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-08)**

Any action taken to avoid collision shall be positive and made in ample time and with due regard to good seamanship. Any alteration of course or speed shall be substantial to be readily apparent to another vessel observing visually or by radar. Action taken shall result in passing at a safe distance. If necessary to avoid collision, a vessel shall slacken speed, stop, or reverse.

## **Proper Look-out Required**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-05)**

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

## **Safe Speed**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-06)**

Every vessel shall proceed at a safe speed so that it can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

**In determining a safe speed the following factors shall be taken into account:**

- visibility,
- traffic density,
- maneuverability, including stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions,
- at night, the presence of background light,
- wind, sea, current, and proximity of hazards,
- draft in relation to depth of water,
- additional factors for vessels with radar.

## **Action by Give-Way Vessel**

### **(OAC 1501:47-2-16)**

Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel shall, so far as possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear.

## **Action by Stand-On Vessel**

**(OAC 1501:47-2-17)**

Where one of two vessels is to keep out of the way, the other shall keep its course and speed.

The latter vessel or the stand-on vessel may take action to avoid collision as soon as it becomes apparent the give-way vessel is not taking appropriate action.

When the stand-on vessel finds itself so close that collision cannot be avoided by the give-way vessel alone, it shall take such action as will best aid to avoid collision.

A power-driven vessel which takes action to avoid collision with another power vessel shall not alter course to port for a vessel on its own port side.

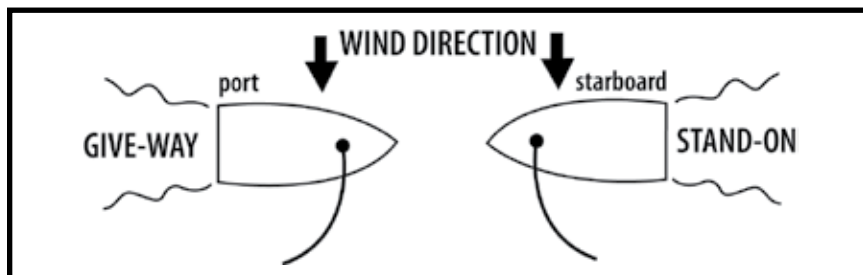
## **Narrow Channels**

**(OAC 1501:47-2-09)**

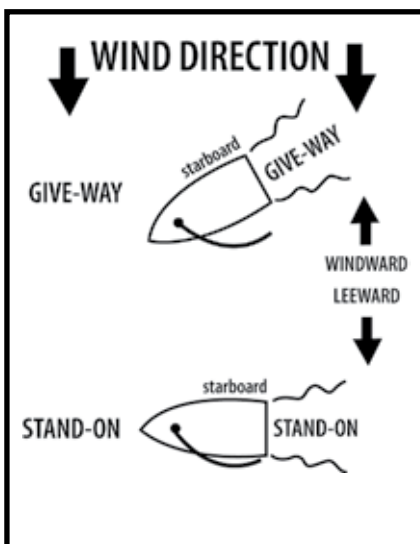
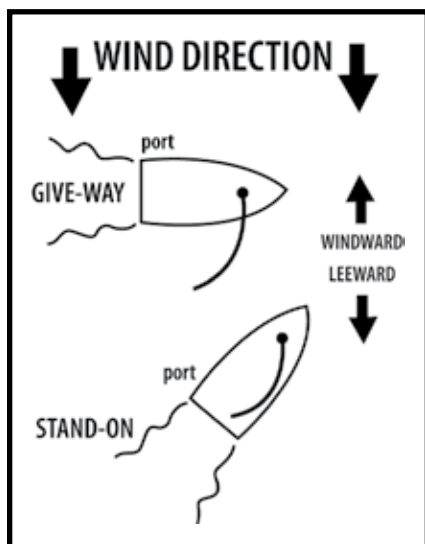
- A vessel in a narrow channel shall keep as near to the right side of the channel as is safe and practical.
- A power vessel proceeding down bound with a following current shall have right-of-way over an upbound vessel.
- Vessels less than 20 meters long, sailing vessels, vessels engaged in fishing, or vessels crossing the channel shall not impede passage of a vessel that can safely navigate only within a channel.
- Vessels shall avoid anchoring in narrow channels.
- An overtaking vessel shall indicate its intention by sounding the appropriate signal and take steps to permit safe passing. The overtaken vessel sounds the same signal if in agreement.
- A vessel nearing a bend or an area where vessels may be obscured by an obstruction shall navigate with caution and sound appropriate signals.
- Vessels leaving a dock, slip, tie-up or mooring shall yield the right-of-way to all vessels approaching.

## Sailing Vessels (OAC 1501:47-2-12)

When two sailing vessels are approaching one another with the wind on different sides, the vessel which has the wind on the port side shall keep out of the way of the other.



When both have the wind on the same side, the vessel which is to windward (upwind) shall keep out of the way of the vessel which is to leeward (downwind).

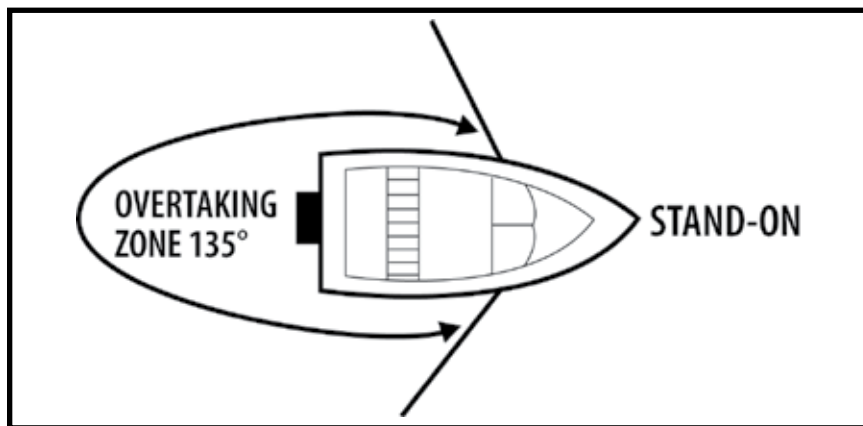
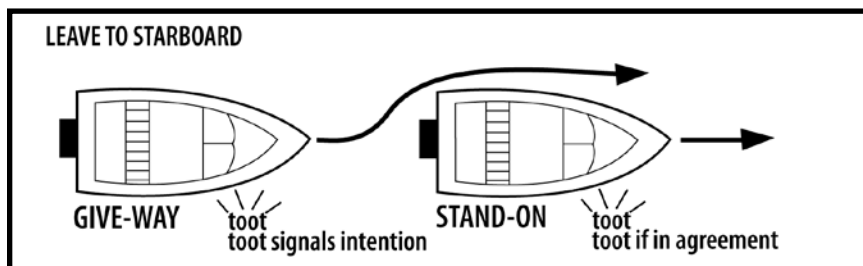
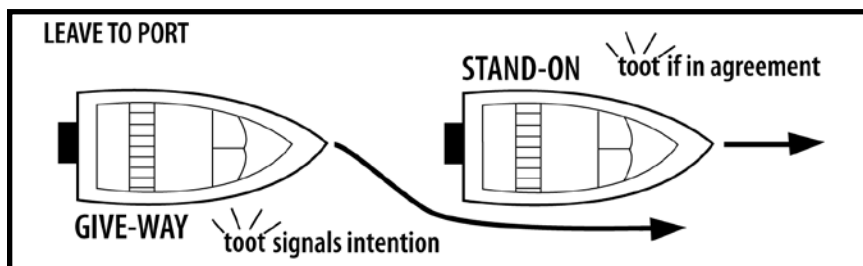


If a vessel with the wind on the port side sees a vessel to windward (upwind) and cannot determine if its wind is on the port or starboard, the vessel shall keep out of the way of the other. The windward side is opposite the side on which the mainsail is carried.

## Overtaking

(OAC 1501:47-2-13)

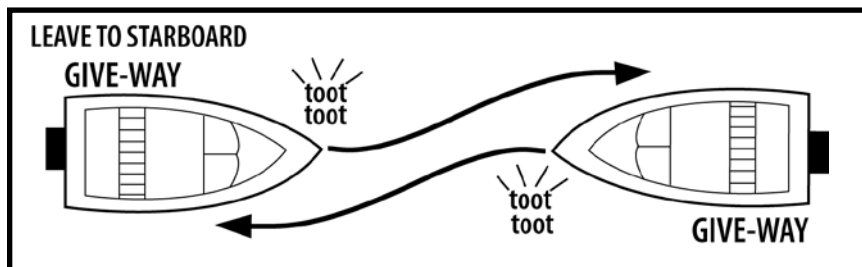
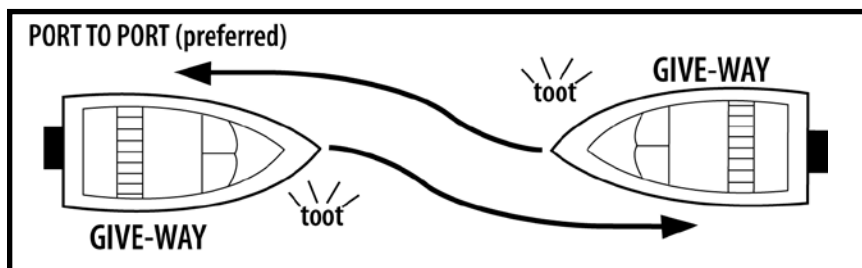
Any vessel overtaking another shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken.



## Head-On Situation

(OAC 1501:47-2-14)

Unless otherwise agreed, when two power-driven vessels approach head-on, each shall alter course to starboard (right) and pass on the port (left) side of the other. A head-on situation exists at night if both red and green sidelights are visible. A vessel in doubt as to whether such a situation exists shall assume that it does and act accordingly.



### SPLASH FACT

Navigation Rules include use of sound signals to communicate with other boaters.

**toot** = 1 second      **tooooooot** = 4-6 seconds

**toot** = I intend to leave you on my port side

**toot toot** = I intend to leave you on my starboard side.

**toot toot toot** = Engine in reverse.

**toot toot toot toot toot** = Danger

**tooooooot** = Coming out of a slip.

Additional sound signals are required during periods of reduced visibility. Consult a copy of the federal publication "Navigation Rules" for more details.

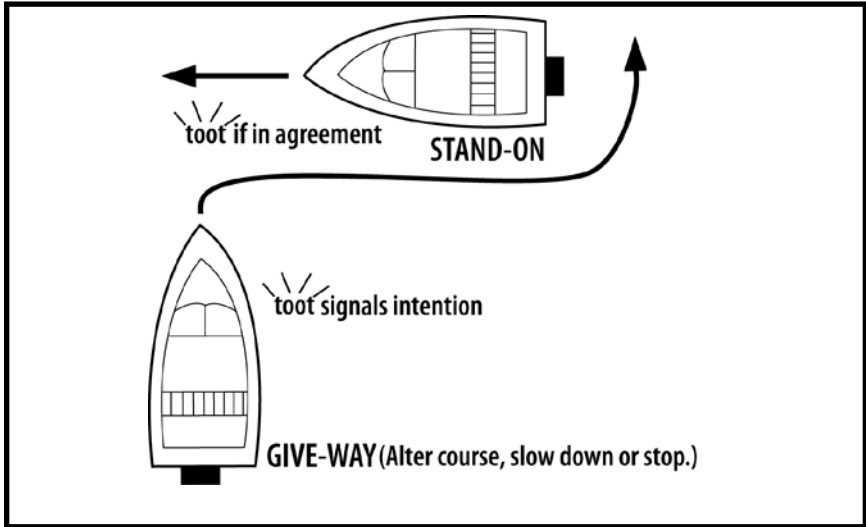


## Crossing Situation

(OAC 1501:47-2-15)

When two power-driven vessels are crossing and risk of collision exists, the vessel which has the other on its starboard side shall keep out of the way and shall avoid crossing ahead of the other vessel.

A vessel crossing a river shall keep out of the way of a power-driven vessel ascending or descending the river.



## Responsibilities Between Vessels

(OAC 1501:47-2-18)

**Except for narrow channel and overtaking rules:**

**A power vessel underway shall keep out of the way of a:**

- vessel not under command,
- vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver,
- vessel engaged in commercial fishing,
- sailing vessel.

**A sailing vessel underway shall keep out of the way of a:**

- vessel not under command,
- vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver,
- vessel engaged in commercial fishing.

**A vessel engaged in commercial fishing shall keep out of the way of a:**

- vessel not under command,
- vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver.

# NAVIGATION LIGHTS

## Visibility of Lights

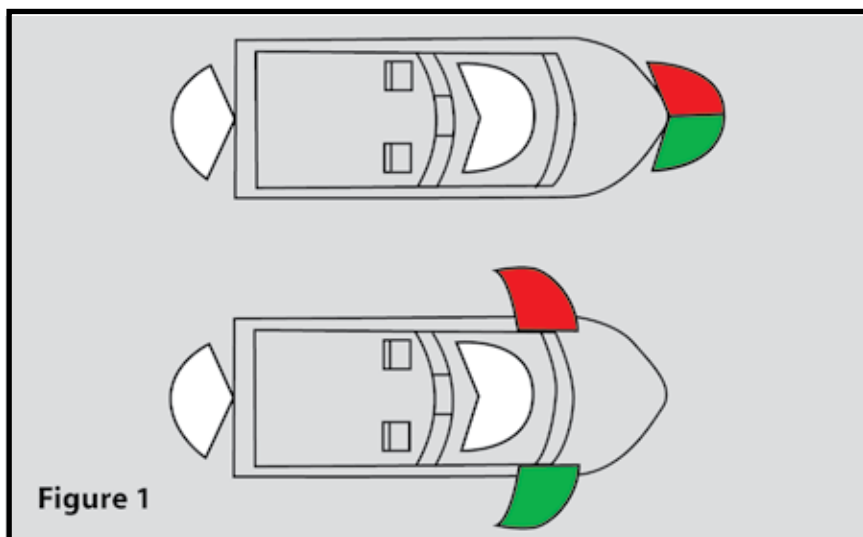
(OAC 1501.47-2-22)

On boats less than 39.4 feet in length (12 meters) the white masthead light and stern light must be visible for two miles. The red and green sidelights must be visible for one mile. Boats greater than 12 meters in length have requirements of greater visibility.

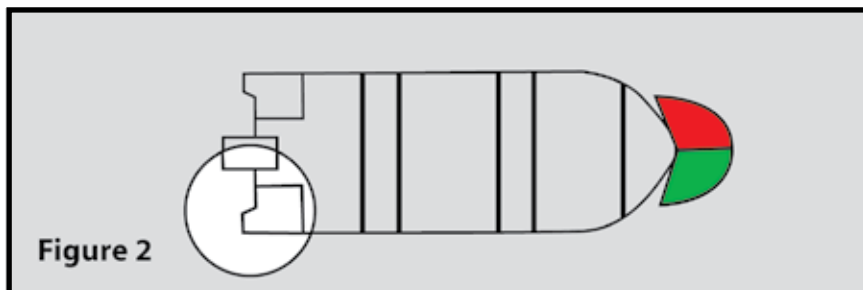
## Power Driven Vessels Underway

(OAC 1501.47-2-23)

Vessels less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 1.



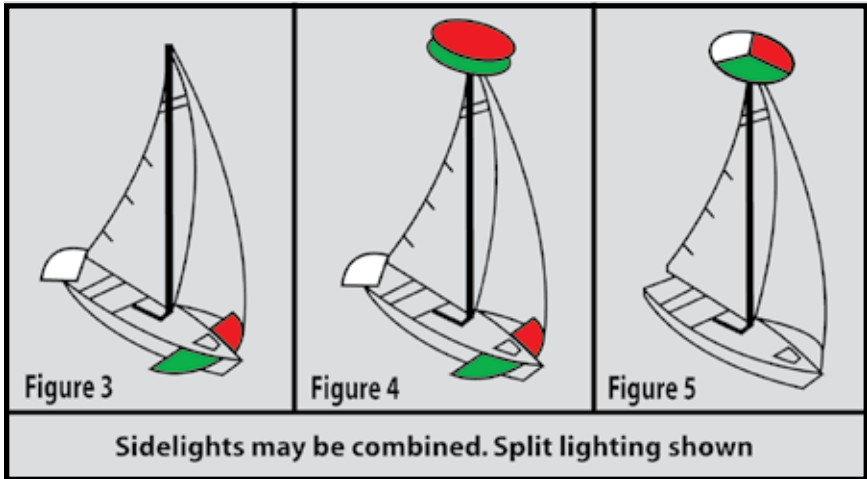
Vessels less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2.



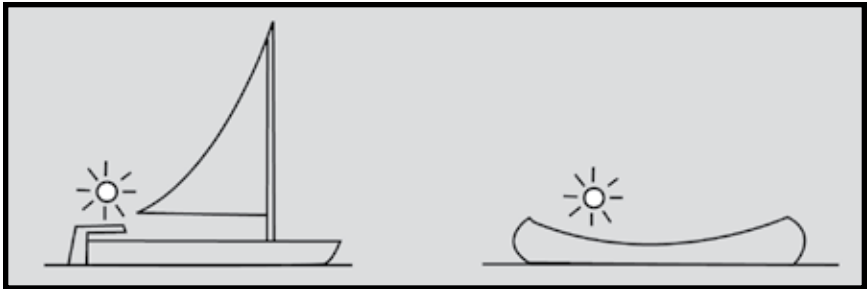
## Sailing Vessels Underway

(OAC 1501.47-2-25)

Sailing vessels less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 3, Figure 4 or Figure 5.



Sailing vessels less than 23 feet (7 meters) shall, if practical, exhibit lights as shown in Figures 3, 4, or 5. If it is not practical, it shall have an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light in sufficient time to prevent collision.



## Vessels Under Oars

(OAC 1501.47-2-25)

A vessel under oars may exhibit lights for sailing vessels, but if not, shall have an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light in sufficient time to prevent collision.

## Anchored Vessels

(OAC 1501.47-2-30)

A white light visible all around the horizon shall be exhibited by vessels while at anchor.

# OHIO OPERATING LAWS

## **Boating Education Requirement**

### **(ORC 1547.05)**

No person born on or after January 1, 1982, shall operate a powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower unless the operator has received a certificate for successful completion of either of the following:

- A boating course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA),
- A proficiency examination approved by the Ohio Division of Watercraft.

### **(ORC 1547.051)**

A person required to have the certificate indicated above and stopped by a law enforcement officer while operating a powercraft more than 10 horsepower shall present to the law enforcement officer the certificate or proof of holding the certificate within 72 hours of being stopped.

### **(ORC 1547.052)**

No rental business shall lease or rent a powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower to a person born on or after January 1, 1982, unless the person meets one of the following:

- The person signs the rental agreement or attachment indicating that they have completed an approved boating course or proficiency exam as indicated above.
- The person receives educational materials from the rental business and passes an abbreviated exam with a score of 90% or better. Achievement of the passing score will be indicated on or attached to the rental agreement.

Any person born on or after January 1, 1982, who operates or supervises the operation of a leased or rented powercraft, shall meet the requirements in the paragraphs above and be named as an operator on the rental agreement.

**NOTE:** Also see ORC 1547.06 - Child Operators: Supervising Person.

## **Child Operators: Supervising Person**

### **(ORC 1547.06)**

Except as provided, no person under 16 years of age shall operate a personal watercraft (PWC). Individuals not less than 12, nor more than 15 years of age may operate a PWC if a supervising person 18 years of age or older is also on board. In the case of a supervising person born on or after January 1, 1982, the supervising person must hold a certificate meeting the requirements of ORC 1547.05 and in the case of rented powercraft, must meet the requirements of ORC 1547.052.

No person under 12 years of age shall operate any vessel unless under the direct visual and audible supervision of a person who is 18 years of age or older. This section does not apply to personal watercraft (see previous paragraph) or other powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower (see following paragraph).

No person under 12 years of age shall operate powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower unless under the direct visual and audible supervision of a person 18 years of age or older who is aboard the powercraft (excludes PWC operation). In the case of a supervising person born on or after January 1, 1982, the supervising person must hold a certificate meeting the requirements of ORC 1547.05 and in the case of a rented powercraft, must meet the requirement at ORC 1547.052.

No supervising person shall allow any person they are supervising to violate any watercraft law.

## **Personal Watercraft (ORC 1547.41)**

No person shall operate or permit operation of a personal watercraft unless each person aboard is wearing a personal flotation device (PFD). Operators on personal watercraft equipped with a lanyard-type engine cutoff switch must attach the lanyard to their clothing, PFD, themselves, or as appropriate for the specific devices.

No person shall operate a personal watercraft between sunset and sunrise.

No person who owns or has charge over a personal watercraft shall permit operation in violation of laws.



### **SPLASH FACT**

"Personal watercraft" is defined as a vessel, less than 16 feet in length, propelled by machinery and designed to be operated by an individual sitting, standing or kneeling on the vessel rather than sitting or standing inside the vessel.

## **Reckless Operation**

**(ORC 1547.07)**

### **No person shall operate a vessel, water skis or similar device:**

- carelessly or heedlessly,
- without due caution,
- in disregard of the rights or safety of any person, vessel, or property,
- at a rate of speed or in a manner so as to endanger any person, vessel, or property.

### **No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in an unsafe manner.**

#### **Unsafe operation includes:**

- becoming airborne while crossing the wake of another vessel within 100 feet or unsafe distance,
- operating at a speed or proximity to a vessel or person being towed so as to require either vessel to swerve to avoid collision,
- operating less than 200 feet behind a water-skier,
- weaving through congested traffic.

### **A vessel shall be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times.**

## **Unsafe Condition & Termination**

**(ORC 1547.071)**

A law enforcement officer may determine that an unsafe condition presents an especially hazardous condition to persons aboard a vessel and may direct the operator to take immediate, reasonable actions to correct the situation. This includes directing the operator to return a vessel to shore until the condition is corrected or has ended. Refusal by an operator to terminate operation after being ordered to do so is a violation of the Ohio Revised Code. An especially hazardous condition exists if a reasonably prudent person would believe that continued operation would create a hazard to persons aboard.

### **The following situations present unsafe conditions:**

- insufficient personal flotation devices,
- insufficient fire extinguishers,
- overloaded, insufficient freeboard for the water conditions in which the vessel is operating,
- improper display of navigation lights,
- fuel leaks, including fuel leaking from either the engine or fuel system,
- accumulation of or an abnormal amount of fuel in the bilges,
- inadequate backfire flame control,
- improper ventilation.

## Failure to Control

### (ORC 1547.072)

No person shall operate or permit the operation of a vessel without sufficient control to avoid an incident that results in:

- property damage
- physical injury
- loss of life
- any combination of the above

## Operation in Restricted Areas

### (ORC 1547.08)

No person shall operate a vessel in designated “swim areas,” areas buoyed off as “no boats,” or within any area buoyed designating it as an area in which boats are prohibited.

Areas marked as “no boats” include the areas above and below dams and endangered species areas.

**No person shall operate a vessel at greater than idle speed or create a wake under any of the following circumstances:**

- within any area buoyed or marked as a “no wake” area,
- within 300 feet of any marina, boat docking facility, boat gasoline dock, launch ramp, recreational boat harbor, or harbor entrance on Lake Erie or on the Ohio River,
- during sunset to sunrise between the Dan Beard bridge and the Brent Spence bridge on the Ohio River (Hamilton County) for any vessel not documented by the U.S. Coast Guard as commercial.

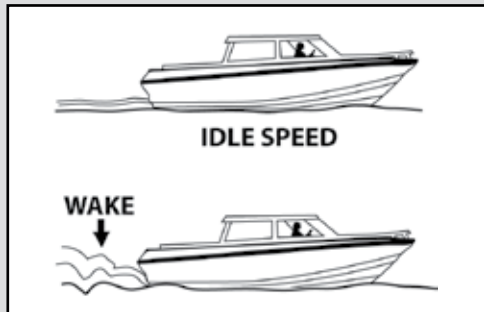


### **SPLASH FACT**

Many Ohio state park lakes have an unmarked 300-foot “idle speed” or “no wake” shore zone, while other lakes have a 100-foot shore zone. To gauge the 300-foot zone, visualize the length of a football field. Check the lake zoning before boating.

“Idle speed” is the slowest possible speed needed to maintain steerage and maneuverability.

“Wake” is defined as a track left in the water by a watercraft, causing waves that may cause discomfort, injury or damage to persons, watercraft or property.



**No person shall operate a vessel within 300 feet of an official diver's flag unless tendering the dive operation.** (See diagrams of dive flags on page 26.)

**No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of these sections.**

## **Mooring and Interference with Buoys Prohibited**

**(ORC 1547.09 & OAC 1501:47-1-10)**

No person shall moor or anchor in any designated speed zone or water ski zone. Unless in distress, no person shall moor, anchor, or tie to any marker, aid, buoy, light, or other aid to navigation. No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

No person shall climb on, swim or hang on, dive off, tie a watercraft to, injure, sink, disconnect from its anchor, damage, deface, or interfere with any buoy or other aid to navigation.

## **Obstructing a Waterway, Securing of Docked & Anchored Vessels**

**(OAC 1501:47-1-13)**

No person shall anchor, moor, tie-up, or raft off to any other vessel, dock, launch ramp, or structure in such a manner that the vessel blocks, impedes, or restricts other vessels in their normal and reasonable use or navigation.

No person shall leave any vessel anchored, or in any dock space, or tie-up space, without first properly fastening and securing the vessel in such a manner as to avoid fouling or collision with any other vessel, or from drifting free.

## **Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs Prohibited / Testing**

**(ORC 1547.11 & ORC 1547.111)**

No person shall operate or be in physical control of any vessel underway, or manipulate any water skis or similar device, if the person is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (including prescription drugs).

**NOTE:** It is an offense to operate a vessel while having a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.08 or more. A BAC less than .08 is admissible in court along with other evidence of impairment to prove operating under the influence. For persons under 21 years of age, it is an offense to operate a vessel while having a BAC of 0.02 or more. Further, it is an offense for persons under the age of 21 to purchase, possess, consume or be under the influence of alcohol.

Any person who operates a vessel, water skis or similar device shall be deemed to have given consent to a chemical test or tests of their blood, breath or urine to determine alcohol or drug content if arrested. If a person under arrest refuses to submit to a chemical test the person is prohibited from operating a vessel or water skis or from registering a vessel for a one-year period. If the person is the owner of the vessel, the registration certificate and tags will be impounded for a one-year period.



### Penalty for Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs

Offense	Minimum	Maximum
First	3 days jail \$150 fine	6 months jail \$1000 fine
Second	10 days jail \$150 fine	6 months jail \$1000 fine
Third	30 days jail \$150 fine	up to 1 year jail \$1000 fine

### Incapacitated Operators Prohibited

(ORC 1547.12)

No person shall operate any vessel if unable physically or mentally to operate in a safe and competent manner. No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

### Complying with Officer; Eluding or Fleeing; Stopping or Yielding to Law Enforcement Vessel

(ORC 1547.13, ORC 1547.131, & 1547.132)

No person shall fail to comply with any lawful order of an officer having authority to direct or regulate the operation or use of vessels. A boat operator shall not purposely elude or flee from an officer after a visible or audible signal to bring the vessel to a stop is given.

Upon the approach of a law enforcement vessel with a blue flashing light, the operator of any vessel shall stop or give-way in any situation until the law enforcement vessel has passed.

No person shall operate a vessel that creates a wake within 100 feet of a stopped law enforcement vessel with a blue flashing light.

No person shall operate a vessel that creates a wake within 100 feet of a public service vessel displaying a red and yellow alternating flashing light.

No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.



#### **SPLASH FACT**

Public service vessels are boats that are escorting or patrolling special water events, traffic control, salvage, fire fighting, medical aide, assisting disabled boats and search and rescue. You are responsible for any damage or injury caused by your wake. Either steer well clear or pass at idle speed.

## **Skiing Confined to Ski or Open Zone**

### **(ORC 1547.14)**

Any person who rides or attempts to ride upon water skis or similar device or who barefoot skis, or any boat operator who tows a skier shall confine that activity within a designated ski zone or open zone.

Exceptions to this section exist on Lake Erie, the Ohio River and their immediately connected harbors and anchorage facilities where these zones have not been established.

This does not apply if the vessel is traveling at idle speed in a designated No Wake zone. As long as it's not within:

- 300 feet of a gas dock, launch ramp or harbor entrance,
- an anchorage area, boat swimming area, or boat camping area
- within 300 feet or under a bridge underpass
- any area designated as a no ski zone

No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

## **Observer Required when Towing Skier**

### **(ORC 1547.15)**

Any person who operates a vessel towing a person on water skis, surfboard, other similar devices or barefoot skier shall have an observer 10 years of age or older in the vessel who shall at all times observe the person being towed. The vessel operator shall observe the traffic pattern. No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

## **Water-Skiing After Dark Prohibited**

### **(ORC 1547.16)**

No person shall water-ski or be towed on any device, or operate a vessel towing a person between sunset and sunrise except upon special permit. Consult an official sunrise-sunset table of the local area for exact times.

## **Sitting, Standing, Walking on Moving Vessels Restricted**

### **(ORC 1547.22)**

No occupant of a vessel underway shall sit, stand, or walk on any area not designed for that movement except when immediately necessary for safe and reasonable navigation or operation. No person shall permit any occupant to violate this section. No person shall operate or permit operation of any vessel in violation of this section.



#### **SPLASH FACT**

The law requires you to always wear your personal flotation device when water-skiing, tubing or any other similar activity.



### **SPLASH FACT**

One of the most common causes of boating fatalities is drowning after falling overboard. One way to reduce the risk of taking a plunge is to sit in seats designed for that purpose. Bow riding is especially dangerous because unexpected movement, large waves or sudden change in course could easily throw the passenger in the water. The risk of injury from being run over by the boat or being struck by the propeller is great in such situations.

## **Capacity Plates**

**(ORC 1547.39 & ORC 1547.40)**

No person shall operate or permit operation of a watercraft in excess of any of the stated limits on the capacity plate. When no capacity plate exists, no person shall operate or permit operation of a watercraft if a reasonably prudent person would believe the total load aboard or the total horsepower of any motor or engine presents a risk of physical harm to persons or property.

No person shall alter, remove or deface any information on the capacity plate.



### **SPLASH FACT**

Overloading is a leading cause of capsizing and swamping, especially in small boats. Capsizing and swamping are leading causes of boating deaths. Be sure not to exceed any of the limitations specified on the capacity plate.

## **Littering Prohibited**

### **(ORC 1547.49)**

No operator or occupants shall discard litter improperly from any vessel regardless of intent. No operator shall allow litter to be discarded.

### **(ORC 1531.29)**

No person shall discard litter on land, in a waterway or on the bank of a waterway where it could be washed into the water.

## **Enforcement**

### **(ORC 1547.63)**

Within the area of their jurisdiction, every sheriff, deputy sheriff, marshal, deputy marshal, municipal police officer, township police constable, wildlife officer, park or conservancy district officer, or other law enforcement officer may enforce the state watercraft laws and has the authority to stop, inspect and board any recreational vessel.

## **Firearm Restrictions / Concealed Carry**

### **(ORC 1547.69 & 2923.12)**

Except for persons legally engaged in hunting, no person shall discharge a firearm while in or on a vessel.

Except for persons legally engaged in hunting OR persons legally licensed to carry a concealed handgun, no person shall transport or have a loaded firearm in a vessel in such a manner that the firearm is accessible to the operator or any passenger.

Except for persons legally licensed to carry a concealed handgun, no person shall transport or have a firearm in a vessel, unless it is unloaded and carried in a closed package, box, or case OR in plain sight with the action open or the weapon stripped.

This section does not apply to the possession or discharge of a United States Coast Guard approved distress signaling device when the device is possessed or used for the purpose of giving a distress signal. Such signaling devices shall only be loaded immediately prior to discharging a legal signal of distress.

No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.



### **SPLASHFACT**

- Surrounding states that do not honor Ohio's Concealed Carry Law (CCL) include Pennsylvania and West Virginia.
- Handguns are restricted in Canada. Know the law before you leave U.S. waters. ([www.cfc-ccaf.gc.ca](http://www.cfc-ccaf.gc.ca))
- Interpretation of Ohio's CCL for handguns (ORC 2923.12) is administered by the Ohio Attorney General's Office. ([www.ag.state.oh.us](http://www.ag.state.oh.us))

# VESSEL ACCIDENTS

## Vessel Accidents

(ORC 1547.10, ORC 1547.59 & OAC 1501:47-1-09)

The operator of a vessel involved in a collision or accident, to the extent possible without risking serious danger to their own vessel, crew, and passengers, shall render assistance as may be practicable and necessary. Any person who renders assistance at the scene of an accident involving a vessel is not liable in a civil action for damages or injury from any act or omission in rendering assistance, except for willful or wanton misconduct.

The operator having knowledge of the accident or collision shall immediately stop and remain at the scene, to the extent that it is safe and practical, and give the operator's name and address and the boat owner's name and address and registration number to any person injured or to the operator, owner, or attendant of any vessel damaged or to a law enforcement officer.

If the accident results in loss of life, injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, damage to property in excess of \$500, or complete loss of a vessel, the operator shall file a full report on a prescribed form. If the operator is incapacitated, an officer shall file the form.



### ***SPLASH FACT***

To receive a copy of the Boating Accident Report form:

- Download it from **[ohiodnr.com/watercraft](http://ohiodnr.com/watercraft)**
- Contact a Watercraft Field Office
- Complete and mail the postcard in the back of this booklet
- Or call **1-877-4BOATER** (Ohio Only).

## **Violation Resulting in Injury or Damage is Evidence of Negligence (ORC 1547.34)**

Violations of watercraft law that result in injury to persons or damage to property shall constitute prima facie evidence of negligence in a civil action.

# **BOATING REGULATIONS SPECIFIC TO OHIO STATE PARK WATERWAYS (OAC 1501:47)**

The following rules apply only to Ohio state park lakes. On state park lakes, watercraft laws may be enforced by state watercraft, park, and wildlife officers; sheriff's deputies; or other law enforcement units having jurisdiction in the area. Boating areas within other jurisdictions may have similar regulations.

## **Snorkel and SCUBA Diving Prohibited: Exceptions**

**(OAC 1501:47-3-04)**

Various requirements exist for snorkeling and scuba diving. Permission may be required by the ODNR Division of Parks and Recreation. Contact the park office.

## **Special Activities Permit**

**(OAC 1501:47-3-05)**

No person shall conduct any special activity on Ohio state park water without obtaining a permit 30 days prior to the anticipated event.

## **Speed Limits; Speed & Ski Zone Operation**

**(OAC 1501:47-3-08 & 1501:47-3-09)**

The speed limit for all Ohio state park lakes is 10 miles per hour, except from sunrise to sunset in designated speed zones, ski zones or open zones.

No person shall operate a powercraft within a speed zone, ski zone or open zone at a greater speed than is reasonable, or in a manner without due regard to traffic, surface conditions and any other hazardous conditions.

## **Airfoils Prohibited**

**(OAC 1501:47-3-10)**

While being towed by a watercraft, no person shall have any airfoil or balloon for the purpose of becoming airborne over Ohio state park waters.

## **Air Propelled Powercraft, Hovercraft**

**(OAC 1501:47-3-11)**

No person shall use or operate any air propelled powercraft or hovercraft on Ohio state park water except in the speed or ski zone and the water leading directly from a ramp or dock to these zones at Indian Lake, Grand Lake St. Marys, Buckeye Lake, Mosquito Lake and Rocky Fork Lake.

## No Wake Zones & Restricted Areas

(OAC 1501:47-3-14)

No person shall operate a powercraft within or through a shore zone, danger zone, or any area marked as a no wake zone at a speed that produces a wake.

## Sleeping on Watercraft Prohibited

(OAC 1501:47-3-21)

No boat operator shall sleep at night aboard a vessel adrift, at anchor, docked, moored, tied-up or beached on Ohio state park waters except in designated locations.

Some parks have designated boat camping areas. Inquire about locations at the park office. Go online to [ohiodnr.com/parks](http://ohiodnr.com/parks) to find out more.

## Swimming Prohibited

(OAC 1501:47-3-33)

No person shall swim, bathe, dive, or wade from any watercraft in Ohio state park water except in officially designated boat swimming areas.

Most state parks have an area for boats to pull up to the public beach and many parks have designated boat swim areas.

## Intoxicating Beverage

(OAC 1501:47-3-35)

No person shall overtly and publicly consume or display the presence of any beer or intoxicating liquor in any area administered by the Division of Parks and Recreation, except within the confines and privacy afforded in a cabin, lodge room, tent, or camping vehicle or in areas authorized by the Chief of the Division of Parks and Recreation.



### **SPLASH FACT – LOCAL RULES & ORDINANCES**

Local jurisdictions may have additional boating laws, rules or ordinances. The operator of any vessel is obligated to know the laws. Local jurisdictions may include but are not limited to neighboring states, Ohio Division of Wildlife, Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and city, village, county or township governments.

Local rules may include horsepower or speed limits, vessel type and size restrictions, zoning restrictions or traffic patterns, additional equipment requirements or other general prohibitions.

# BOATING & THE ENVIRONMENT

The recreational boating experience is made richer when operating in clean water, bordered by pristine shoreline. How we operate and maintain our boats and deal with debris can significantly affect the marine environment. Careless actions can be harmful to boats, boaters, wildlife and the environment. Potentially damaging debris includes fishing line, plastic nets, plastic wrap and utensils, Styrofoam, gas, oil and bottom paint. Toxic chemicals from cleaning agents and equipment produced using chlorofluorocarbons also pose threats to the environment.

**Here are some tips boaters should consider:**

## **Responsible Operation**

- Educate yourself about products and practices that are safe for the environment. Share the information with your boating friends.
- Laws prohibiting speeding, littering, and discharging sink waste into the water are designed to protect the environment. Obey these laws.
- Proceed slowly in shallow areas to avoid disturbing the environment. Stirring up sediment affects the natural life cycle.
- Watch your wake. Boat wake erodes shoreline and encourages silt build up.

## **Fuel and Engine Maintenance**

- Keep your boat's engine well tuned for fuel efficiency. Use engine cleaners minimally. Make sure your motor doesn't leak gas or oil into the water.
- Remove all oil from the bilge. An oil absorbent bilge cushion can help. New products are being created that can remove petroleum hydrocarbons from bilge water.
- Do not drain engine fluids into the water.
- Flush winterizing agents and antifreeze from the engine prior to launching each season. Do not use ethylene glycol antifreeze in your boat; use only propylene glycol winterizing agents.
- Don't top off your tank when fueling. This reduces the risk of fuel overflow and allows for expansion in the tank. Make sure you wipe up all gasoline and oil spills.

## **Boat Painting and Cleaning**

- Use environmentally friendly products on your boat – non-phosphate liquid detergents, biodegradable soaps, and non-acidic teak cleaner to name a few.
- Properly dispose of hazardous products with high concentrations of toxins. Avoid using wood preserver, turpentine, paint thinners, and dangerous cleansers on or near the water.
- Know and use legal bottom paints. Treat paint chips as hazardous waste when scraping bottom paint and dispose of them properly. Avoid using toxic tributyltin (TBT) paints.



## Waste Disposal

- Use onshore rest room facilities or carry a portable toilet or marine head with a holding tank. Use the nearest pumpout or dump station for waste disposal.
- Secure trash and dispose of it properly on shore. Recycle when possible.
- Minimize disposable plastic products brought on board. Do not dispose of them in the water or let them get blown overboard. Fishing line, six-pack rings, and plastic bags are harmful to fish, birds, vegetation, and wildlife. They also tangle boat props, clog intakes and litter shorelines.
- Support marinas that are environmentally conscious. They will assist you in recycling oil, antifreeze, aluminum, and plastic bottles and provide a pump-out facility for your sanitary system.
- Recycle old fire extinguishers and marine batteries.



***Keep our water clean – use pumpouts!***

*Look for this symbol*

## Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)

- Educate yourself on the increasing threat of these uninvited guests. Milfoil, zebra mussels, and other ANS are being increasingly regulated to prevent their spread.
- Remove all visible aquatic plants and animals from your boat, motor, trailer and other equipment before leaving the access area.
- Always drain live wells and transom wells before leaving the water.
- Never dump live bait into any lake, river or stream.

## Ohio Clean Boater/Clean Marina Program

The basic goal of these programs is to increase environmental stewardship by making boaters and marinas more aware of environmental laws, rules and regulations and pumpout facilities. A priority is to get as many marinas as possible to “take the pledge” and follow the Clean Marinas Guidebook for best management practices, thus earning the “Ohio Clean Marina” certification.

Ohio’s recreational boaters play a critical role by adopting the environmental boating practices listed above. Doing so will help preserve and protect the natural resources that we depend on – clean water and fresh air.

Information regarding aquatic nuisance species and the Ohio Clean Boater/Clean Marina Program is readily available from a variety of sources including the World Wide Web. Take the “pledge” by contacting the Ohio Sea Grant College Program at 419-609-4120 or [ohioseagrant.osu.edu/cleanmarinas](http://ohioseagrant.osu.edu/cleanmarinas).

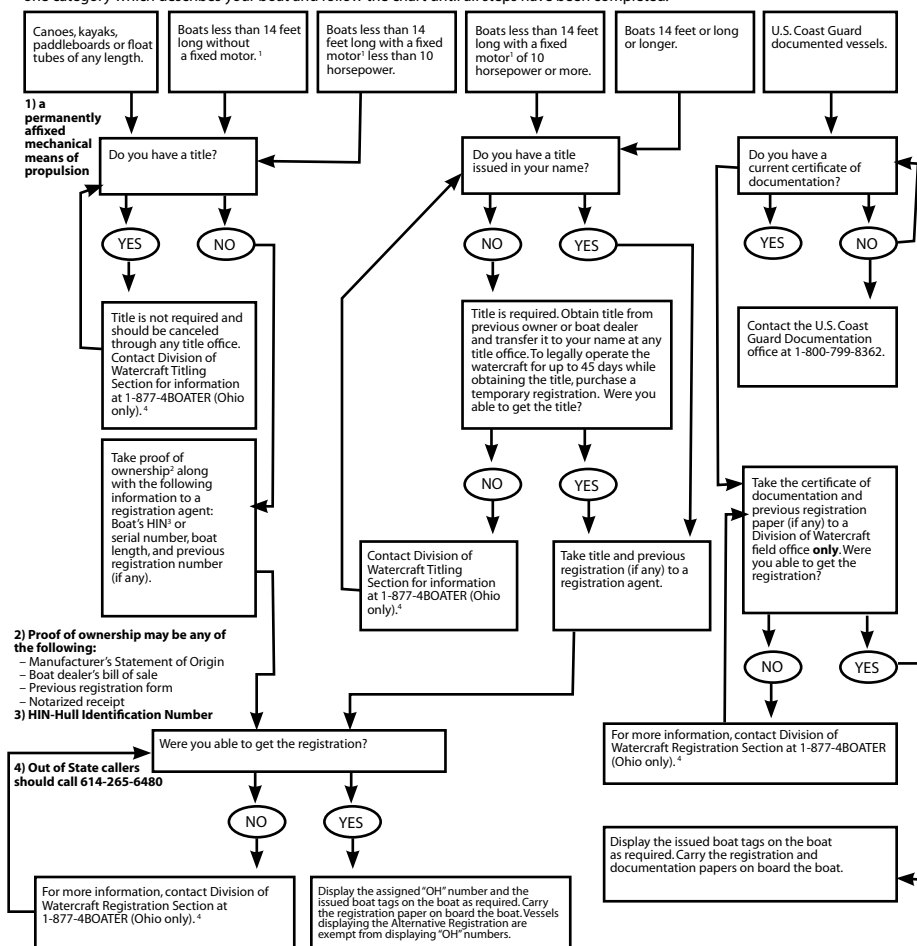


### **SPLASH FACT**

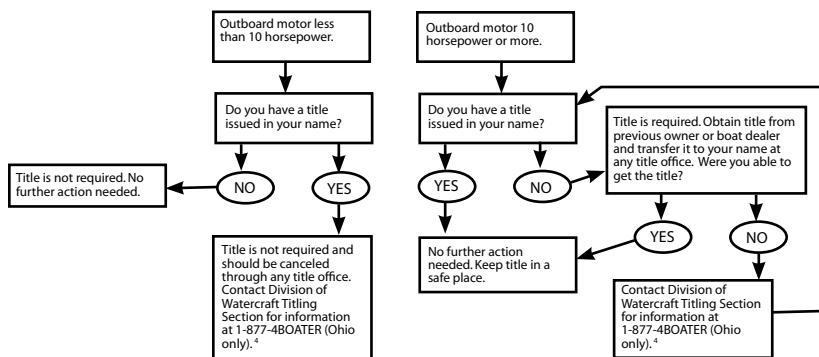
Collectively, we are all responsible for protecting the environment. Ultimately each of us is responsible for doing our part. By doing your part, you can ensure pleasurable boating experiences for the future.

# Ohio Vessel Registration & Titling Flow Chart

Select only one box in the top row that best describes your boat. To find the steps required to title and/or register your boat, select one category which describes your boat and follow the chart until all steps have been completed.



# Ohio Outboard Motor Titling Flow Chart



OHIO REQUIRED EQUIPMENT		POWERBOATS (Including electric motors)					SAILBOATS (If any type of propulsion machinery is attached see powerboats)				MANUALLY PROPELLED (No motor or sail)		
Find the column to the right that applies to the vessel you are outfitting. The dots in that column indicate which equipment items are required. The numbers beside the dots refer to footnotes that explain any exceptions for vessels in that column. NOTE: This chart is intended for quick reference only and is not a substitute for knowledge of the specifics of Ohio boating laws. Refer to the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) and the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) for complete boating laws or this Ohio Boat Operator's Guide for a summary of criteria for each equipment item to be legally acceptable. WARNING: If a vessel is exempted from carrying specific equipment, that does not mean that a wise skipper would not carry it anyway! BOAT SMART OHIO!		Personal Watercraft (PWC) Less than 16 feet	Less than 16 feet in length (Class A)	16 feet but less than 26 feet in length (Class 1)	26 feet but less than 40 feet in length (Class 2)	40 feet but less than 65 feet in length (Class 3)	Less than 16 feet in length (Class A)	16 feet but less than 26 feet in length (Class 1)	26 feet but less than 40 feet in length (Class 2)	40 feet but less than 65 feet in length (Class 3)	Canoe, kayak, float tubes or paddleboards	Rowboats	Inflatable Boats
TITLE (ORC 1548.03) (not required to be carried onboard)		●	●1	●	●	●	●1	●	●	●		●1	●1
REGISTRATION & NUMBERS (ORC 1547.53)		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●2	●2	●2
PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (ORC 1547.25)	One Type I, II, III or V wearable device for each person on board.	●12	●3	●3			●3	●3	●	●	●3	●3	●3
	One Type IV throwable device as an extra.			●	●	●		●	●	●			
FIRE EXTINGUISHER(S) (ORC 1547.27)	One Type B-1	●	●4	●4									
	Two Type B-1 or one B-2				●								
	Three Type B-1 or one B-2 plus one B-1					●							
VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS (ORC 1547.251)	On Lake Erie a USCG approved signal for both day and night use	13		●	●	●			●	●			
	On Lake Erie (sunset to sunrise) a USCG approved signal for night use	13	●				●	●			●	●	●
	On waters other than Lake Erie a distress flag or USCG approved signal for day use	●	●	●	●	●	●5	●5	●	●			
SOUND SIGNALING DEVICES (ORC 1501:47-2-33)	On *Federal waters and inland waters a power whistle or horn and a bell				●6				●6	●			
	On *Federal waters a whistle, horn or other device	●	●	●	●7		●	●	●7		●	●	●
	On inland waters a whistle, horn or other device			●	●	●							
ANCHOR & LINE (ORC 1547.26 & 1501:47-1-11)		●8	●8	●	●	●		●8	●	●		●8	●8
LIGHTS (ORC 1501:47-2)	Running lights as prescribed by federal and state law	13	●	●	●	●		●9	●	●			
	Running lights or electric torch or lighted lantern	13					●	●10			●	●	●
	Anchor light	13	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
VENTILATION: Engine & fuel tank compartments (ORC 1547.29)		●11	●	●	●	●							
BACKFIRE FLAME ARRESTOR: Inboard engines (ORC 1547.28)		●11	●	●	●	●							
MUFFLING DEVICE or underwater exhaust (ORC 1547.31)		●	●	●	●	●							
ENGINE CUTOFF SWITCH LANYARD (ORC 1547.41)		●											
INLAND NAVIGATION RULES (OAC 1501:47-1-29)					●6	●							
GARBAGE PLACARD (OAC 1501:47-1-28)					●	●			●	●			
OIL POLLUTION PLACARD (OAC 1501:47-1-27)					●	●			●	●			

- 1) A title is not required for any vessel less than 14 feet long without a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or more.
- 2) Exemption of OH numbers for those with alternate registration for handpowered vessels.
- 3) On vessels less than 18 feet in length, any child less than 10 years of age must wear a properly fitted type I, II, or III flotation device at all times.
- 4) Exception for vessels propelled by an electric motor and vessels less than 26 feet in length designed for use with an outboard motor, of "open construction".
- 5) Exception for sailboats less than 26 feet in length with completely "open construction" and without propulsion machinery.
- 6) Applies to any vessel of 12 meters (39.4 ft.) or more in length.
- 7) Applies to any vessel less than 12 meters (39.4 ft.) in length.

- 8) Exception for any vessel less than 14 feet in length, any canoe, and any sailboat less than 21 feet in length.
- 9) Applies to sailing vessels of 7 meters (23.0 ft.) or more in length.
- 10) Applies to sailing vessels less than 7 meters (23.0 ft.) in length.
- 11) Some varieties of Personal Watercraft may be exempted by the U.S. Coast Guard. Consult your watercraft dealer or the manufacturer to verify requirements for these devices.
- 12) Every person on board a personal watercraft must wear a properly fitted Type I, II, III or V flotation device.
- 13) Prohibited from operating between sunset and sunrise.

\* Federal waters in Ohio include Lake Erie and connecting bays and harbors, the Ohio River and the Muskingum River.

## WATERCRAFT OFFICES

### CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS

2045 Morse Road, Building A  
Columbus, Ohio 43229  
(614) 265-6480  
watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### ALUM CREEK

3305 S. Old State Road  
Delaware, Ohio 43015  
(740) 548-5490  
alumcreek.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### AKRON

2756 S. Arlington Road  
Akron, Ohio 44312  
(330) 644-2265  
akron.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### ASHTABULA

1 Front Steet  
Ashtabula, Ohio 44004  
(440) 964-0518  
ashtabula.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### CAMBRIDGE

1225 Woodlawn Avenue  
Cambridge, Ohio 43725  
(740) 439-4076  
cambridge.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### CLEVELAND

1150 E. 49th Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
(216) 361-1212  
cleveland.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### EAST FORK

3292 Ellick Road  
Bethel, Ohio 45106  
(513) 734-2730  
cincinnati.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### MAUMEE BAY

1400 State Park Road  
Oregon, Ohio 43618  
(419) 836-6003  
maumeebay.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### SANDUSKY

1407 Cleveland Road  
Sandusky, Ohio 44870  
(419) 621-1302  
sandusky.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### SCIOTO COUNTY

3261 Kenyon Road  
Franklin Furnace, Ohio 45629  
(740) 353-7668  
portsmouth.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### SPRINGFIELD

1976 Buck Creek Lane  
Springfield, Ohio 45502  
(937) 323-1582  
springfield.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

### WAPAKONETA

110 Industrial Ave. Suite B  
Wapakoneta, Ohio 45895  
(419) 738-6189  
wapakoneta.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

## Help Protect Scenic Rivers

Scenic Rivers license plates support conservation of endangered species in Ohio's most pristine paddling waterways. \$15 of your purchase goes directly toward scenic river protection.



[www.oplates.com](http://www.oplates.com)

The Scenic Rivers Program has a long history of river protection and conservation. To learn more go to [ohiodnr.com/watercraft](http://ohiodnr.com/watercraft).