

Personal Watercraft

Personal Watercraft or PWCs are small Class A inboard vessels that are run by a water jet pump. Operators of PWCs either sit, stand, or kneel. Some PWCs carry 2 passengers or more. PWC operators are subject to the same rules and requirements as powerboats.

LAWS AND ORDINANCES: PWC owners must also be aware of local laws and ordinances that further restrict PWC operations. They may include:

- speed limits
- age of the operator
- sunrise to sunset limitations
- special no wake zone provisions
- assigned operating areas and restrictions



Follow the federal and state regulations for registering PWCs and displaying registration numbers.

SAFETY TIPS: Use common courtesy when on the water. Never interfere with fishing vessels, swimmers, or other watercraft. Follow these safety tips:

- ✓ If your PWC is equipped with a start/stop switch, attach it to your wrist or PFD. If you fall off, the engine will stop and your PWC will stay near so you can easily swim to it.
- ✓ Remember that PWC engines are propelled by moving water. If you approach a dock, shore, or other vessel at a rapid speed and shut it off, you may not be able to maneuver it.
- ✓ A PWC operator should wear protective eyewear, a wetsuit, footwear, and gloves.
- ✓ No wake jumping. It is extremely dangerous. You could get hurt or damage your vessel.
- ✓ Carry a sound-signaling device such as a whistle or horn and a tow rope in case you break down, run out of gas, or need help.



Other Water Sports Safety Tips

Before participating in a water sport, know how to swim and be sure to check weather and water conditions. Never participate in water sports alone; use the buddy system.

SURFING: Take lessons from an experienced surfer.

- Beginners should use a foam board.
- Surfers should use a board with a rounded nose & fins and silicone tips.



- Surfers should wear an ankle leash to keep their boards from drifting away.

- If you start to fall, curl up in a fetal position with your arms overhead. Stay underwater until the board surfaces to keep from getting hit by it.
- Keep a watchful eye out for rip currents which look like a strong flow of water rushing back out to sea. They are the major cause of surfing accidents.

- Check weather and water conditions.

RAFTING:

- Never overload the raft.
- If on a rafting tour, make sure your rafting guide is qualified.

SAILBOARDING:

- Sailboarders and windsurfers should wear a PFD.
- Wear a wet suit if the water is cold.
- Take lessons from a qualified instructor.



Boating Safety

Water Sports Tips for Families



Boating Safety

Americans increasingly head to the water for recreation and relaxation.

It is essential that everyone in or near the water, both the novice and the experienced, practice water safety habits, including wearing life jackets.

Drowning is the leading cause of fatalities involving recreational boating. Approximately 88% of people who died in boating accidents were not wearing life jackets at the time.

80% of those who drown in boating or water accidents would be alive today if they had been wearing a personal flotation device.



Personal Flotation Devices

Everyone in a boat must have a Coast Guard approved PFD (personal flotation device) or life jacket that is either worn or easily accessible. Each boat should also have a PFD that can be thrown.

Anyone participating in a water sport, with the exception of surfing and diving, must wear a PFD as well.

A PFD provides flotation to keep your head above water, helps you stay face up in the water, and increases your chances for survival and rescue.

A PFD should:

- ✓ fit secure enough so a child does not slip through when picked up by the shoulders.
- ✓ have a strap between the legs and extra neck support for younger children.
- ✓ not be considered a substitute for swimming ability.



Blow-up toys, water wings, and air mattresses are **NOT** substitutes for a PFD.

Practice Safe Boating Habits:

- Anyone participating in a water sport should know how to swim.
- Never boat alone. Only allow children to go boating when an adult is with them.
- When getting in, step into the middle of the boat to keep it from tipping and stay seated.
- Never sit on the edge of a boat or hang your arms or feet over the edge, it could tip over. If the boat tips over and it floats, hold on to it until help arrives.
- Never carry more people than the stated capacity.
- Keep decks and spaces clear of clutter and trash.



Waterskiing

Water-skiers should know how to swim.

- Water-skiers must wear a PFD.
- Make sure you have an observer or spotter other than the driver and use the proper hand signals to signal the spotter.



- Ski in an area that is 200 feet wide leaving a safety area of 100 feet on each side of the boat. Ski parallel to shore and come in slowly when landing. Sit down if you are coming in too fast.
- Never ski near swimming areas, mooring lanes, channels, or near people who are fishing.
- Keep a clear distance away from other boats, especially boats that require a low wake to maneuver, such as sailboats and canoes.
- Always turn the boat motor completely off when approaching a fallen skier.
- Make sure your towline is not frayed, cut, or weak and is at least 75 feet long with a handle attachment.

- Check weather and water conditions before boating. If you hear thunder or see lightning, head for shore. Never boat in the dark.
- Follow the 1/3 rule for fuel: plan on 1/3 of the gas to get to where you are going; 1/3 to get back, and the remaining 1/3 to use.
- Never consume alcohol when swimming, boating, or participating in any water sport.
- All boats should be equipped with operational lights, a horn, and fire extinguisher.
- Follow the federal and state regulations for registering your boat and displaying registration numbers.