

Ask The Captain.....

Can our 15 year old son or daughter take our wave runner, dinghies or powerboat out on their own?

Only if they have a valid Boater Safety Card *in their possession*.

No person born **after** 1-1-1989 may operate **any** motorized watercraft without first passing a boating safety course.

How does my son or daughter get their “Boating Safety Certificate”?

It is very simple. Have them go to <http://www.boat-ed.com/wi/index.htm>. This site contains a study guide, unlimited practice exams and an on-line test. After the test is submitted, their certificate will arrive in 7-10 days. The test is open to persons 12 years of age or older.

I bought a number of those nifty new inflatable life vests for our kids but was told I’m in violation of some law... What are they talking about?

Inflatable vests are growing in popularity because they are more comfortable and less restrictive to wear. Recreational boaters must understand that the Coast Guard **prohibits the use of inflatable vests** by any person **under the age** of 16 or any person operating a PWC.

I’ve heard something about a new law that requires our younger passengers to wear their life jackets at all times while aboard our boat. What is the law?

Children **under** 13 years of age **must** wear a PFD while underway when not **in** a cabin or **below** decks.

Speaking of life jackets, you are required to have a **proper fitting PFD for every passenger** on your vessel. If your vessel is 16 feet or longer you are required to have a Type IV throwable PFD.

Your life vests must be **readily accessible** and not in their original plastic wrap. Be sure **everyone** aboard knows **where** the PFD’s **are stored**. *During a typical Coast Guard stop, they may ask your youngest passenger where the life jackets are stored... If that person cannot answer quickly and correctly, you can be cited!*

Can passengers sit on the bow of my boat while underway?

The configuration of your bow rails will determine if passengers can sit on your bow while underway, regardless of your speed. If your bow guards or rails are of sufficient height to prevent passengers from being lost overboard, then passengers may sit within those guards or rails. Understand that the 3 inch high rails found on your typical cuddy runabout do not qualify. Further understand that you can be cited if you allow any person to sit on the gunwales, tops of seats, or hang any body part over the bow while underway.

I've been told I need a "sound producing device" aboard my boat? What qualifies and do I really need one on my PWC as well?

Vessels under 39.4 feet **must have an efficient sound signally device** that can be heard ½ mile away. Sound producing devices are typically a permanently mounted or portable air horn but can be as simple as a whistle. A whistle **is required on all PWC's** and *should be attached to the operators life vest*. I suggest a whistle be stored in your dinghy as well.

If your vessel is over 39.4 feet, you are required to have, in addition to your standard sound producing device... A bell. The bell must have a minimum diameter of 7 7/8 inches. It **does not** have to be permanently mounted, just readily accessible.

I've had a boating accident. What triggers a report and who do I contact?

An operator involved in a boating accident must stop his or her vessel immediately at the scene of the accident and:

- Assist anyone injured or in danger from the accident, unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her own vessel or passengers.
- Give, in writing, his or her name, address and vessel identification to any person injured and to the owner of any damaged property.

A vessel operator is required to make an oral and written report whenever a boating accident results in:

- Loss of life or disappearance of a person **or...**
- Injury to any person **or...**
- Property damage in excess of (\$2,000 Wisconsin and Michigan, \$500 Illinois)

Oral reports must be made immediately to a conservation warden or a local law enforcement officer.

A written report must be made within 10 days on Department of Natural Resources form 4100-20 to DNR-Boat Safety, Box 7921, Madison, WI 52707.

I'm not real clear on the number of flares or day signals I must carry on my vessel....

Here is the big rule: *All vessels, regardless of length, operated between sunset and sunrise, must carry night signals.*

Of course you understand that your primary vessel must have day and night signals but what about your dinghies when you take those nighttime cruises? The answer is yes, in addition to the proper navigational lights, you are required to carry night distress signals. What about your PWC? The answer is no because PWC's are restricted to day operations and thereby not required to carry night signals.

Here is what the Coast Guard says about day and night signals:

All vessels greater than 16 feet in length must carry day signals in addition to night distress signals. A minimum of three signal devices are required.

Hand-Held Flare	Day/Night
Floating Orange Smoke	Day Only
Pistol Parachute Red Flare	Day/Night
Hand-Held Parachute Red Flare	Day/Night
Hand-Held Orange Smoke	Day Only
Red Aerial Pyrotechnic Flare	Day/Night
Orange Flag (3' x 3' min size)	Day Only

Three hand-held flares meet the requirements for both day and night signals. Remember, your PWC must have a day signal. This could be as simple as an orange flag.

I'm told I might be required to post "Placards" in a prominent location. What placards are they referring to and where must they be displayed?

All vessels 26 feet and above are required to display a "Pollution Placard" and a "MARPOL Trash Placard". The pollution placard (oily waste discharge) should be placed in the machinery or bilge area. The trash placard must be displayed in a prominent location. These placards are available at any marine supply dealer and are usually complimentary.

Someone said I must monitor channel 16 on my marine radio when underway. Is this really true?

Yes, you are required to monitor channel 16 **while underway** when not communicating on another channel.

As a refresher, channel 9 and 16 are for hailing. Channel 16 also serves as your distress channel for both transmitting and receiving Coast Guard alerts.

Mayday	Only use Mayday when you or your vessel is in grave danger.
Pan-pan	(Pronounced pawn-pawn) Urgency signal used when your safety or the safety of your ship is in jeopardy.
Securite	(Pronounced secure-a-tay) Used to share safety, navigation or important weather information with other mariners

Channel 13 is reserved for bridge communications and large ship hailing.

Channels 68, 69, 71, 72 and 78 are working channels or normal communications

I'm aware that not everyone understands, nor follows, the "Rules Of The Road." I still would like to know... *Who has the right of way?*

Under the Rules Of The Road, one boat is the stand-on vessel; the other is the give-way vessel. Generally, the boat on the starboard (right) side is the stand-on vessel (has the right of way). The boat on the port side is the give-way vessel and must yield or alter speed or course. The stand-on vessel is expected to maintain course and speed. While being overtaken, you are the stand-on vessel. The overtaking vessel is the give-way vessel and must Keep Clear. While meeting head-on, both vessels should alter course to starboard and pass port to port. Generally, sailboats (underway by sail alone) have the right of way over powerboats. Sailboats under power are considered powerboats. Vessels engaged in fishing by nets have the right of way over sailing and powerboats.

Note: If your vessel is over 39.4 feet in length, you must have on board a copy of the USCG Inland Navigational Rules.

I've heard many different explanations on who is required to display navigation lights, anchor lights and in what configuration....

Recreational vessels are required to display navigational lights between sunset and sunrise and other periods of reduced visibility.

Kayaks, canoes and vessels under oars must carry a flashlight or lantern that can show a light in sufficient time to prevent a collision.

Power vessels under 23 feet that cannot exceed 7 knots can display an all-around white light.

Most dinghy's will require side lights and an all-around white light.

Vessels 16 feet or more have manufacturer installed navigational lights with the all-around anchor light capable of being lit independently from the running lights.

Vessels greater than 26 feet usually display the standard red and green 112.5 degree sidelights, a 225 degree white masthead light and a 135 degree white sternlight. When you are overtaking a vessel with two visible lights, you know you are coming up on a large vessel.

Sail boats under sail will display sidelights and a stern light. When the sailboat is under power, expect to see a white mastlight $\frac{3}{4}$ up the main mast.

All Vessels anchored (outside a special anchorage or designated mooring) must display an all-around white light visible for two miles exhibited where it can be best seen.

I strongly suggest:

That anyone responsible for the safety of their passengers takes an accredited course in both CPR and Basic First Aid. I would also insist that all vessels maintain an adequate first aid kit aboard.

I strongly suggest that all skippers have a marine radio on board and maintain a watch on channel 16.

That every vessel has a backup manual dewatering device (a bucket or manual pump)

That every vessel has an anchor and rode appropriate for the area they are boating.

That every skipper invests in sufficient fenders and lines, in appropriate sizes and lengths, for his vessel.

That every vessel receives a complimentary Coast Guard Auxiliary or Power Squadron "Vessel Safety Check"

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