

NEW YORK STATE

# BOATER'S GUIDE

**A handbook of registration,  
operation and safety information  
for the prudent boater**

**WE**  **R IT!**



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic  
Preservation**

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

**New York State Office of Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation,** for information about boating education courses, hull identification numbers, regatta permits, floating object permits, and boating related question please visit our website at: [www.parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating](http://www.parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating)

**New York State Canal Corp,** for information and maps of the canal as well as lock information. Call 1-800-422-6254 or visit their website at: [www.canals.ny.gov](http://www.canals.ny.gov)

**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation,** for information about New York State fishing license, pump out locations and New York State clean water initiatives please visit the DEC website at: [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

To report an accidental release of petroleum, toxic chemicals, gases or other hazardous materials call the NYS Spill Hotline 1-800-457-7362 Or USCG Oil Spill Hotline at 1-800-424-8802

**Lake George Park Commission** for information about Lake George and the Lake George Park Region. Contact the LGPC at (518) 668-9347 or visit their website at: [www.lgpc.ny.gov](http://www.lgpc.ny.gov)

**Adirondack Park Agency,** for information about the Adirondack Park and lakes contact the Adirondack Park Agency at (518) 891-4050 or visit their website at: [www.apa.ny.gov](http://www.apa.ny.gov)

**United States Coast Guard,** for information about federal requirements please visit the United States Coast Guards website at: [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)

**New York State Department of Motor Vehicles,** for information about registering boats, PWC, trailers and titling please visit the Department of Motor Vehicles website at: [www.dmv.ny.gov](http://www.dmv.ny.gov)

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Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

# NEW YORK STATE BOATER'S GUIDE

Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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



Department of  
Motor Vehicles



**BOAT SAFE! BOAT SMART!  
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Free online paddle sport safety course

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

# Introduction

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Interest in recreational boating continues to be an increasing diversion for many New Yorkers. With the large number of registered boats in the state, it's obvious that recreational boating is very popular. Whether it's an extended fishing trip on one of our many beautiful still water lakes, or a weekend on the Great South Bay, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers participate in waterborne recreational activities annually. The Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation is one of the many sources of this type of public recreation, as well as the office administering boating safety programs.

New York is particularly well known for its marine coastline, upstate lakes, scenic rivers, and extensive canal system. Because of these many waterborne recreational opportunities, NYS Parks is continually providing boater safety information in the hopes of reducing accidents, injuries, and fatalities upon the waterways. The New York State Boater's Guide is one means of providing such useful safety information.

This guide provides basic boating safety information on such topics as registration, operation, equipment and rules of the road, however we strongly encourage every boater to sign up for some formal boating instruction before venturing out on their own. Courses on safe boating are available through NYS Parks, US Coast Guard Auxiliary, America's Boating Club, US Powerboating and approved NYS online courses.







For additional specific information about boating requirements in New York State contact the Office of the State Boating Law Administrator at:

**Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation  
Marine Services Bureau**

Albany, NY 12238

518-474-0445

or visit our web site at

[www.parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating](http://www.parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating)

This publication, which was produced under a grant from the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, your motorboat fuel taxes, is intended to provide a summary of the more important laws, legal requirements, and suggested safety information governing boating within New York State, as well as assist in the enjoyment of safe recreational boating. For legal purposes, the U.S. Federal Code and the New York State Navigation Law should be consulted.

*The preparation of this guide was financed through a grant to NYS OPRHP from the US Dept. of Transportation; United States Coast Guard, under provisions of the State Recreational Boating Safety programs. The United States Coast Guard requires strict adherence to Title VI of the Civil Right Law which prohibits discrimination in departmentally federally funded programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap. Any person who believes that he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Office of Equal Opportunity: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington, DC 20013-7127.*



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Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation



The Empire Pass: Unlimited day-use vehicle entry to state parks, Dept. of Environmental Conservation forest preserves, boat launches, arboretums and park preserves too! Single and multi-year and lifetime options available.

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# Table of Contents

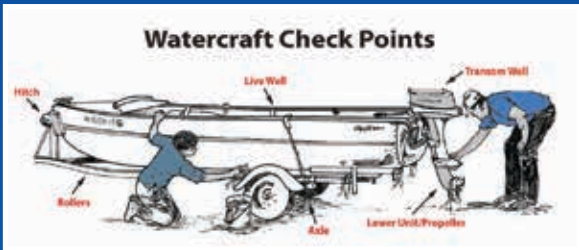


Introduction .....	2
<b>Part One:</b>	
Registration.....	7
<b>Part Two:</b>	
Trailing.....	13
<b>Part Three:</b>	
Equipment.....	19
<b>Part Four:</b>	
Rules of the Nautical Road.....	29
<b>Part Five:</b>	
General Boating Requirements.....	37
<b>Part Six:</b>	
Getting Underway .....	43
<b>Part Seven:</b>	
Specific Recreational Boating Activities.....	52
<b>Part Eight:</b>	
Personal Watercraft.....	59



# PROTECT YOUR WATERS

From aquatic invasive plant and animal species.



## Clean. Drain. Dry. Boating and Fishing Equipment



**Clean** and remove all visible mud, plants, animals, and other debris from your boat, trailer, and other equipment. Dispose of it in a suitable receptacle on land.



**Drain** all water holding compartments (bilge, live wells, ballast tanks) and any other equipment that may hold water.



**Dry** boats, trailers, and all other equipment completely or let air dry for 5-7 days before use in another waterbody.



**NEW YORK**  
STATE OF OPPORTUNITY  
**Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**

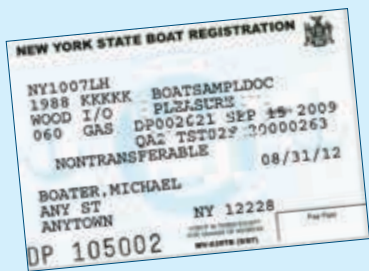
[parks.ny.gov](http://parks.ny.gov)

**Department of Environmental Conservation**

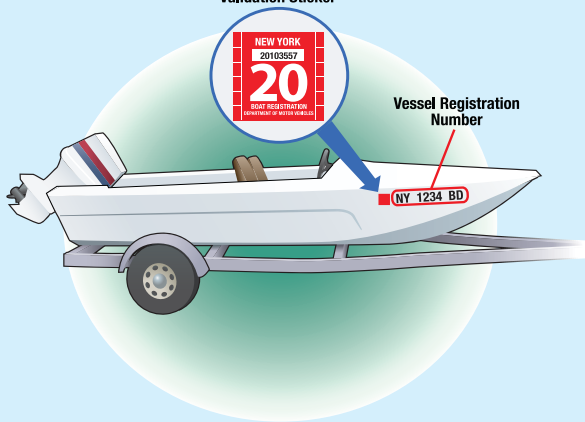
[dec.ny.gov](http://dec.ny.gov)

# PART ONE

# Registration



Validation Sticker



## Registration Requirements

Both Federal and State law require that any pleasure vessel, whether propelled wholly or in part by mechanical means, which is operated on the waters of the state of New York, be registered with the NYS Dept. of Motor Vehicles. Owners of vessels which are documented exclusively for pleasure with the federal government and which operate principally within NYS, must also apply to Motor Vehicles for a registration certificate and are required to display validation stickers. The following vessels are exempt from state registration requirements: vessels operating commercially with either a U.S. or foreign document; vessels legally registered in another state (up to 90 consecutive days maximum); lifeboats (not including tenders and dinghies); competition race boats; and non mechanically propelled vessels.

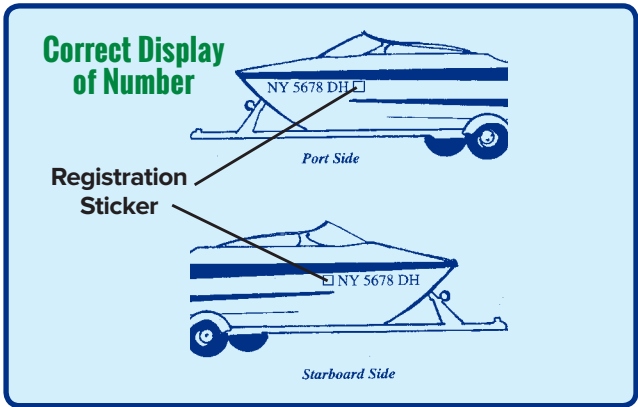
## Certificate of Registration

The registration certificate is your proof of current registration. It may also be your only proof of ownership unless the vessel is titled or documented. Vessel operators must carry the vessel's original certificate of registration on board at all times. Likewise, the documented vessel must also carry its documentation at all times when the vessel is in use.



## Correct Display of Number

The registration number consists of the letters NY followed by four numbers and two letters. A space, or a hyphen, the width of a letter, must separate the first and last two letters from the four middle numbers (NY 1234 AB). The numbers must be painted or permanently attached to both sides of the vessel's bow. It should read from left to right, be of block letters not less than three inches in height, and of a color that contrasts with that of the hull. The registration number should be the only number on the forward half of the vessel and should be clearly visible and readable from at least 100 feet during daylight hours. This number may not be transferred to another vessel.



## Validation Stickers



Two validation stickers will be issued at the time of registration. These stickers will display the month and year of registration expiration. Validation stickers are to be affixed to the hull, in line with, and no further than three inches aft of, the registration number. On vessels documented for pleasure with the U.S. Coast Guard, the validation stickers should be placed

approximately in the same location.

## Hull Identification Number (HIN)

Federal regulations require all vessel manufacturers to permanently affix a HIN to every vessel produced. This 12 character identification, not to be confused with the vessel's registration number, is not only required in order for you to have your vessel registered, it also assists in product safety notifications as well as lost or stolen vessel recovery, much the same as the VIN on your car. Make sure that the HIN found on the transom of your vessel matches the number printed on your registration certificate. If there is a discrepancy, notify the Department of Motor Vehicles.

## Documented Vessels

Some larger vessels owned by U.S. citizens may be documented with the U.S. Coast Guard. In New York, all documented pleasure vessels must apply for registration and display the appropriate validation stickers. The Department of Motor Vehicles will not issue a title or a number to a documented vessel, however you will receive a registration certificate and a set of validation stickers. Registration fees and taxes are paid at time of registration.

## Titles

The Department of Motor Vehicles issues titles to all 1987 model year and newer vessels which are at least 14 feet in length. The title is your clear proof of ownership which must be surrendered to a new owner at time of transfer. If your vessel is less than 14 feet, then the registration certificate serves as the proof of ownership and must be signed over to a new owner.

## How Do I Register My Boat?

Simply complete Motor Vehicle's form MV-82B (application for registration), have the appropriate registration fee, provide proof of ownership, proof of payment of sales tax (may be paid to Motor Vehicles at time of registration), along with a bill of sale and you're all set. If this is a new boat, or a vessel being registered for the first time, you will also need to bring the original certificate, or statement, of origin from the manufacturer with you to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

## Proof of Ownership

### Acceptable proofs of ownership area as follows:

1. A manufacturer's statement or certificate of origin (MSO or MCO).
2. A N.Y.S. or out-of-state title.
3. A N.Y.S. or out-of-state transferable registration.
4. A marine document.
5. A statement of ownership for non-titled vehicles (MV-51B)

Any transfer information must be properly completed. Proof of ownership must be accompanied by the bill of sale which contains both the seller's and purchaser's names; a description of the boat including hull identification number (HIN); year, make and length;



New York State Department of Motor Vehicles						FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
<b>BOAT REGISTRATION/TITLE APPLICATION</b>						Batch File No.	
PLEASE PRINT WITH BLUE OR BLACK INK IN THE WHITE BOXES						FOR RPN RAC RDP	
<b>ACTION WANTED:</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/> REGISTER this boat for the first time		<input type="checkbox"/> REPLACE registration		<input type="checkbox"/> DOCUMENT / <input type="checkbox"/> STICKERS		<input type="checkbox"/> CHANGE registration (see back)	
<input type="checkbox"/> RENEW a registration		<input type="checkbox"/> TITLE ONLY a 1987 or newer boat that is 14 feet or longer				<input type="checkbox"/> CHANGE title (see back)	
NAME OF REGISTRANT (Last, First, Middle)				DATE OF BIRTH		SEX	
				NAME CHANGE? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (See Back)		Month Day Year	
				Is this registration for a corporation or a partnership? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> O	
MAILING ADDRESS (Include Street Number and Name, Rural/Delivery, Box, and/or Apartment Number)				ADDRESS CHANGE? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		DAY PHONE NO. (Optional)	
						Area Code	
CITY OR TOWN		STATE		ZIP CODE		COUNTY	
LEGAL ADDRESS IF DIFFERENT THAN MAILING ADDRESS (Include Street Number and Name, Apartment Number, City, State, Zip Code)				COUNTY			
HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER				YEAR		MAKE	
						LENGTH Feet    Inches	
HULL MATERIAL:		PROPULSION		FUEL		USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> WOOD <input type="checkbox"/> METAL		<input type="checkbox"/> OUTBOARD <input type="checkbox"/> INBOARD		<input type="checkbox"/> GAS <input type="checkbox"/> DIESEL		<input type="checkbox"/> PLEASURE <input type="checkbox"/> MANUFACTURER <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	
<input type="checkbox"/> PLASTIC <input type="checkbox"/> INFLATABLE		<input type="checkbox"/> HD (OUT/INBOARD)		<input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRIC		<input type="checkbox"/> RENTAL    COMM. PASS. <input type="checkbox"/> UNDER 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 OR MORE	
<input type="checkbox"/> FIBERGLASS <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER		<input type="checkbox"/> SAIL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER		<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> NONE		<input type="checkbox"/> DEALER <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> FISHING - COMM.	
COUNTY OF PRIMARY USE				Does this boat now have a NY REGISTRATION No.?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES, enter NY REGISTRATION No.	
				<input type="checkbox"/> No			
HOW WAS BOAT OBTAINED?				Is this boat now DOCUMENTED by you? (See Back)		<input type="checkbox"/> YES, enter DOCUMENT No.	
<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Leased New				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes			
<input type="checkbox"/> Used <input type="checkbox"/> Leased/Used				<input type="checkbox"/> No			
PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTIONS THAT APPLY TO YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS FORM							
Reg. No.	Reg. Type	BOAT	3 of Name	Proof Submitted (Name and Ownership)		Dealer Response	
Prior Owner	Title Date	DL Owner	Lienholder Number			Operator Signature	
Old Owner	Dealer Date	Approved by	Date			Dealer Facility Number	
SPECIAL CONDITIONS		NF	OV	PA	SV	XR	
<b>TO BE COMPLETED ONLY BY A REGISTERED NEW YORK STATE BOAT DEALER</b>							
IF A TEMPORARY REGISTRATION WAS ISSUED: If you assigned a registration number to this boat, place the registration number sticker over this box. If the boat already has a valid New York registration number, enter the information below.				LIENHOLDER INFORMATION - If none, enter "NONE". If more than one, also use space on back.			
Registration Number		Date Temp. Reg. Issued		Lienholder Number			
Dealer Name		Dealer Facility Number		Lienholder Name			
				Mailing Address - Number and Street			
				City		State    Zip Code	

purchase price and registration number (if previously registered in N.Y.S.). If the boat passed through the hands of more than one purchaser since it was last registered, you must supply valid bills of sale from one purchaser to the next showing continuity of ownership from the last registrant to yourself.

## Change of Ownership

When a vessel is sold, the certificate of registration or title must be signed over to the new owner. At the same time, the original owner should also notify the Department of Motor Vehicles of the name and address of the new owner, as well as the date of trans-

fer and the registration number of the vessel. To protect yourself when transferring ownership of any vessel, you should remove the validation stickers from the hull prior to turning the boat over to the new owner. This will ensure that the new owner won't use the vessel until it has been properly registered with Motor Vehicles in his or her name.

## Change of Address

The owner of any registered vessel must notify the Department of Motor Vehicles within ten (10) days of a change in address. This change should also be noted on the registration certificate.

If a boat is **stolen, lost, abandoned, or destroyed**, the owner must notify the Department of Motor Vehicles in writing within 15 days. You should notify your local law enforcement agency and the DMV Registration Records Bureau immediately if a lost or stolen boat is recovered.

## Renewals

The Department of Motor Vehicles will send you a registration renewal at the appropriate time. Check to see that all information on the renewal is correct, then sign and return the renewal notice along with the specified fee. If you don't hear from Motor Vehicles within a couple of weeks prior to expiration, it is recommended that you go down to a local Motor Vehicle office with your current registration and renew in person.

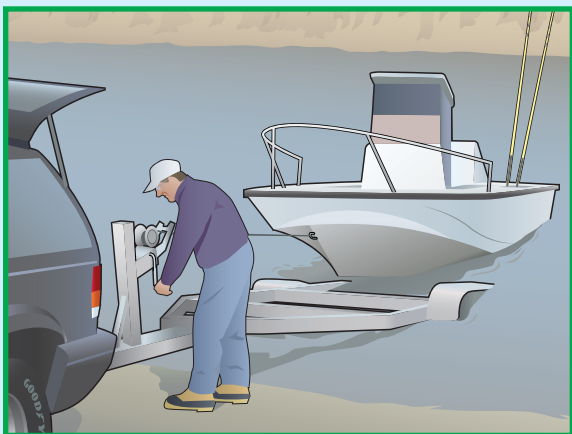
## Registration Fees

New York's three year registration is amongst the least expensive in the northeast. Current fees are as follows: less than 16 feet - \$22.50 registration fee and \$3.75 surcharge (\$26.25 total), 16 feet to less than 26 feet - \$45.00 registration fee and \$12.50 surcharge (\$57.50 total), and 26 feet or longer - \$75.00 registration fee and \$18.75 surcharge (\$93.75 total). The surcharge goes to a dedicated fund which supports improvements of vessel access and transient marina facilities.

For additional information please visit the Department of Motor Vehicles website at: [www.dmv.ny.gov](http://www.dmv.ny.gov)

## PART TWO

# Trailerling



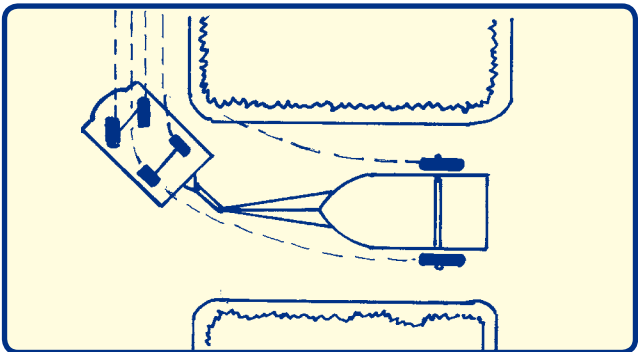
# Trailers

All trailers operated on New York State's public highways must be registered, and inspected much the same as passenger cars. You must provide the Department of Motor Vehicles with the following items in order to receive a valid registration document for your trailer:

1. a completed Application for Vehicle Registration (MV-82)
2. proof of ownership (either a signed Title document for 1973 or newer models, or a signed transferable registration for earlier models).
3. proof of payment of sales tax (tax may be paid at any motor vehicle issuing office)
4. proof of vehicle inspection
5. proof of identity
6. a check for the correct fee made out to the "Commissioner of Motor Vehicles"

Presentation of these items to any motor vehicle issuing office will produce a valid one-year registration for your trailer. If you have questions go to [www.dmv.ny.gov](http://www.dmv.ny.gov).

Trailers with an unladen weight of less than 1000 pounds are exempt from titling requirements. Builders of homemade trailers can contact their county's weights and measures office for locations of weighing stations in your area.



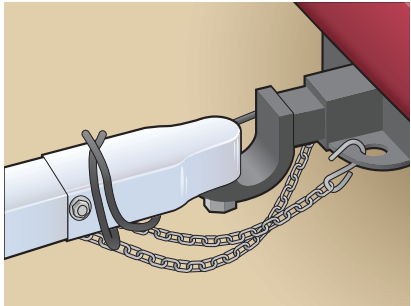
## Trailer Your Boat

By using a trailer, the average boater becomes more mobile, eliminates the usual marina charges and makes routine maintenance easier to perform.

In selecting a trailer be certain that the one you choose is capable of handling your boat's weight and length. Each trailer is equipped with a capacity plate which informs you of this necessary information. When determining the load don't forget to include all equipment and gear that will be carried aboard the trailer during a typical tow. As for length, the trailer must adequately support the entire length of your boat including the transom. The trailer must also be capable of being properly adjusted to uniformly support the hull. When shopping for a trailer, either bunk or roller type, first determine how you intend to use the trailer. Generally bunk trailers provide greater long term storage advantages, while roller types best facilitate launching/retrieval, particularly on shallow ramps.

**Safety Tips.** Never exceed your tow hitches rated capacity and always be certain that the trailer hitch is secured to the vehicles frame and not merely a light duty hitch secured only to the bumper. Frame connections

are much safer, particularly with increasing loads. Always consult your vehicle and trailer owner's manuals for hitch specifications. Be certain that the hitch ball is always matched to the coupler on the trailer tongue. **Using a mismatched coupler and ball could result in the trailer disconnecting from the hitch.**



**Using a mismatched coupler and ball could result in the trailer disconnecting from the hitch.**

**Always connect the trailer to the hitch with the use of safety chains.** The chain size is usually determined by the manufacturer of the trailer, however it is generally specified that the minimum breaking strength of the chain be about 1.5 times the maximum gross trailer weight. Related hardware should also be equally rated.

If your trailer is 1500 pounds or more gross weight, it will be equipped with brakes. Most brakes today are the “surge” type which activate when the tow vehicle decelerates. Boat trailer brakes need regular inspection to ensure proper operation. Should your brakes fail in a sudden or unexpected stop, you may find yourself in a difficult and dangerous situation, if not in an accident. Have your mechanic check your brakes at least once a year, particularly at the start of the season.

**Wheels and Tires.** Your trailer tires need routine checking as well, look for cracking, wear, and sufficient pressure. Trailer tires take a beating at ramps, over the road at highway speeds, and just sitting around the yard exposed to ultraviolet light. Don’t forget to take along a spare as well. Wheels exposed to water also need regular greasing to maintain wheel bearing integrity.

**Tie it down.** Make sure the boat is properly cradled with bow eye secured to the winch hook, as well as being properly tied down as recommended by the manufacturer. Remember to secure the winch handle so as to prevent accidental release, boat damage, or possible injury.

## Launching Your Boat

The skill of launching a boat comes with time and practice. Before attempting any ramp on a busy weekend, you may first want to practice backing up a trailer in a vacant parking lot. This will give you a fair idea of how the trailer will respond to the tow vehicle when backing. You might perhaps want to use traffic cones or similar props to simulate the launch ramp limits and practice with them until you feel confident. The local ramp is not the place to learn on a busy weekend. The concrete is not very forgiving and your fellow boaters tend not to be particularly patient with rookies.

When you are ready to launch your boat, the following suggestions will save time when your turn to launch arrives. While waiting in line check out your boat and trailer. Be certain that:

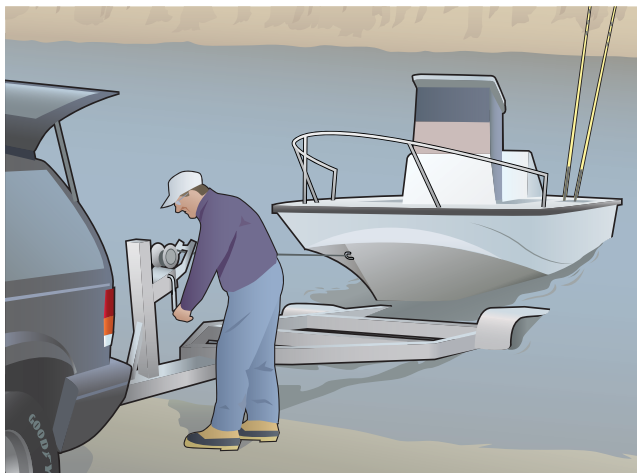
- the boat plug is in
- the tie downs are removed
- the bow and stern lines have been attached to the boat

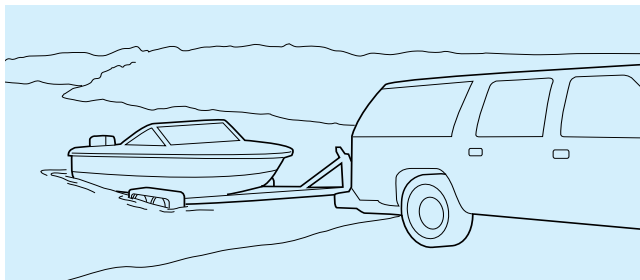
- the outdrive has been raised
- the winch is connected to the bow eye

You should also take a walk over to the ramp and assess the slope, condition of the ramp, water depth, debris, and general traction.

Launching a boat generally requires at least two people, one to drive the tow vehicle and the other to handle the lines once the boat is launched. Before launching, assess the wind and current to determine if they will affect your boat during launching. Back down the ramp approximately until the rear tires of the tow vehicle enter the water, set the brake and put it in park. Now you can get in the boat or have someone on board lower the outdrive, start the engine and prepare to back off the trailer. Be certain that there's sufficient water depth before starting the engine. Once the engine is running, release the winch, back off the trailer, and tie up alongside the ramp wall or courtesy dock. Get back in your tow vehicle, drive off the ramp and park in the designated parking area.

When returning to the ramp and preparing to haul your boat you basically want to do the launch process in reverse. Come





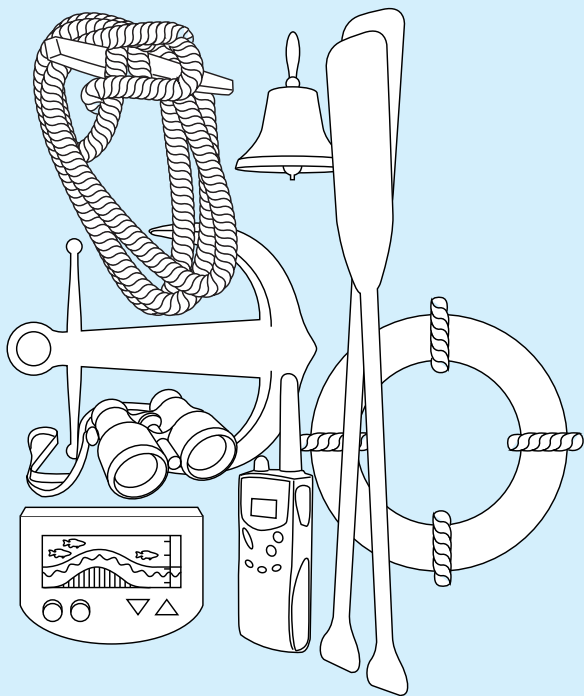
alongside the wall or dock and tie up. Discharge passengers and unload the boat if possible. Have someone get the tow vehicle from the parking lot and get in line for retrieval. When your turn arrives, line up your boat with your trailer which is now waiting for you on the ramp. The trailer should be in about the same position as it was for launching. As you prepare to reload the boat on the trailer remember to consider the effect of wind and current which can give you difficulty. This process may be difficult and may require more than one attempt. Once properly loaded on the trailer bunks or rollers, be sure to secure the bow winch and carefully exit the ramp and return to the parking area in order to complete the tie down process, secure the boat and clean up.

**For a list of statewide boat launch sites go to:  
[www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish\\_marine\\_pdf/nyboatlaunching.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/nyboatlaunching.pdf)**



# PART THREE

## Equipment



# Required Equipment Aboard Vessels

(For Personal Watercraft requirements-see page 62)

## Life Jackets

Every vessel including canoes, kayaks and row boats operated in NYS must have on board one USCG approved wearable life jacket for each person aboard. In addition, vessels 16 feet and greater in length except canoes and kayaks are required to have a USCG approved type IV throwable flotation aid. In order for any life jacket to be considered properly worn, any straps or zippers must be tied or zipped. Life jackets must be readily accessible. Meaning they must be reachable quickly in an emergency. Never store life jackets in plastic bags or under lock and key while under way. Life jackets must also be serviceable and of appropriate size for the wearer. A serviceable life jacket is free from tears, rot and punctures. In addition all fasteners must be attached and functional. Avoid if possible storing life jackets in direct sunlight, a wet environment and sitting on life jackets as this will accelerate wear and damage.

### Who must wear a life jacket

Children under the age of 12 aboard pleasure vessels less than 65 feet in length, canoes, kayaks or rowboats unless in a totally enclosed cabin. Everyone being towed (wakeboarding, water skiing, tubing, etc.). Everyone aboard pleasure vessels less than 21 feet in length, including rowboats, canoes, and kayaks, while underway between November 1st and May 1st. Everyone aboard a Personal Watercraft

## Types of Life Jackets

As of October 22, 2014 the USCG will no longer require that life jackets use Type Coding – Type I, Type II, etc. – for life jackets. Current life jackets that have Type I-IV coding on their labels will be legal to sell and wear for the useful life of the jacket. New labels are based on an internationally accepted standard and use a combination of text and graphics.



A **Type I Life Jacket**, or **Off-Shore Life Jacket**, provides the most buoyancy. It is effective for all waters, especially those which may be open, rough, remote, or where rescue may be slow in coming. These devices are designed to turn most unconscious wearers in the water to a face-up position. There are two sizes: adult-which provides a minimum of 22 pounds of buoyancy, and the child-which provides a minimum of 11 pounds.



*Type I Life Jacket*



*Type II Life Jacket*

A **Type II Life Jacket**, or **Near-Shore Buoyant Vest**, is intended for calm, inland water or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. This device will turn some unconscious wearers face up in the water. The turning action is not as pronounced nor as effective as the type I device. The adult vest provides a minimum of 15.5 pounds of buoyancy, a medium child size provides 11 pounds. Infant and small child size provide a minimum of 7 pounds of buoyancy.

A **Type III Life Jacket**, or **Flotation Aid** is good for calm, inland water, or where there is a good chance of quick rescue. It is designed for special recreational activities such as water skiing so that the wearer can place oneself in a face up position in the water. The type III has the same minimum buoyancy as a type II device. Float coats, fishing vests, and vests designed with special features suitable for various sports activities are examples of this type of life jacket.



*Type III Life Jacket*



*Type IV Life Jacket*

A **Type IV Life Jacket**, or **Throwable Flotation Aid** is designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped and held until rescued. These devices are not intended to be worn. Examples of types IVs include buoyancy cushions, life rings and horseshoe buoys.

A **Type V Life Jacket** contains a small amount of inherent buoyancy and an inflatable chamber. Performance can be equal to a type I, II, or III life



*Type V Life Jacket*

jacket (as noted on the label) when inflated. To meet current vessel carriage requirements, type V life jacket must be worn when underway and display an official US Coast Guard approval number.

**Inflatable Type III and Type V Life Jacket** - the US Coast Guard now approves both automatic as well as manually inflated life jackets. Both devices are inflated with compressed carbon dioxide gas which is stored in a replaceable cartridge. These cartridges must be replaced each time the life jacket is inflated. These devices do require a minimal amount of maintenance, but nothing that the average boater can't complete in the field. Always consult the approval label on any life jacket to determine if it is approved for the activity in which you plan to use it. Fully inflatables are not recommended for water skiing, PWC operation, non-swimmers, and are not approved for children less than 16 years of age.

## Checking Your Life Jacket

Buoyancy is the force that counteracts the gravitational forces on a person in water. Most of us don't have enough natural buoyancy to keep afloat therefore the difference must be made up by a life jacket. Be aware that our natural buoyancy changes with body weight, clothing, and breathing.

You should periodically test your life jacket in shallow water to see if it has sufficient buoyancy to keep you safely afloat. Keep arms and legs below the water's surface and assume a relaxed position. Your head and chin should be above the water's surface.

Many type I and II life jackets consist of several kapok bags sewn into the device. Each bag must be airtight. If there is a leak, the kapok may then absorb water and lose some, if not most, of its buoyancy. Examine all life jackets for securely attached straps and functional buckles or fasteners. Discard torn or ripped devices.

Life jackets will last many years given reasonable care. During the winter remove them from the boat and store in a dry, well ventilated place. Never store life jackets near oil or grease since these substances can cause deterioration and reduce the devices' performance. Never use your life jacket as a boat

fender, such action may tear or rupture the device thus rendering it useless. Your life jacket is your primary piece of lifesaving equipment, treat it as such and it may someday save your life.

## Visual Distress Signals

- State law requires all vessels 16 feet and greater, except for rowboats, kayaks and canoes to carry USCG approved day and nighttime visual distress signals.

- State law requires all vessels, except rowboats, kayaks, and canoes, to carry USCG approved nighttime visual distress signals when operating from sunset to sunrise. It is strongly recommended that all vessels when operating between sunset and sunrise carry nighttime visual distress signals.

Most boats can meet this requirement by simply carrying three USCG approved day/night hand held flares. You may also carry any combination of three-day and three night-approved pyrotechnic devices. Non-pyrotechnic options include an approved electric distress light (for night) or an orange distress flag (for day). Whichever you choose, all devices must be in serviceable condition and readily accessible. For pyrotechnics, the expiration date, as printed on the device, must not have lapsed. When buying pyrotechnic visual distress equipment always look for the freshest devices possible, those with at least three years of service life would be the newest.

### Visual Distress Signals (VDS)



**Red  
Parachute Flare**



**Red  
Hand-Held Flare**



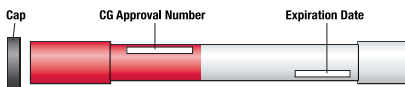
**Red  
Meteor Flare**



**3' X 3'  
Distress Flag**



**Orange Hand-Held  
Smoke Signal**



**Hand-Held Flare**

# Fire Extinguishers

All mechanically propelled vessels, except outboards less than 26 feet in length and of open construction, must carry one



B-I US Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher. Mechanically propelled vessels 26 feet to less than 40 feet in length must carry two B-I US Coast Guard approved fire extinguishers. Mechanically propelled vessels 40 feet to less than 65 feet in length must carry three B-I US Coast Guard approved fire extinguishers. Vessels 65 feet and greater in length should consult federal regulations. On any vessel, one B-II extinguisher may

substitute for two B-I extinguishers. Vessels equipped with approved fixed extinguishing systems may carry one less B-I extinguisher.

Beyond the previously mentioned requirements fire extinguishers are also required whenever: a vessel is equipped with an inboard engine, where there are enclosed or permanently mounted fuel tanks on board, when there are enclosed living spaces, or there are closed stowage compartments in which combustible or flammable materials are stored.

The most common types of fire extinguishers are dry chemical and carbon dioxide. Dry chemical extinguishers are for use on fires caused by flammable liquids such as fuel or grease

<b>Minimum number of hand portable fire extinguishers required</b>		
<b>Vessel Length</b>	<b>No Fixed System</b>	<b>With Approved Fixed Systems</b>
Less than 26'	1 B-I	0
26' to less than 40'	2 B-I or 1 B-II	1 B-I
40' to 65'	3 B-I or 1 B-II & 1 B-I	2 B-I or 1 B-II

(class B fires) and electrical fires (class C). Carbon dioxide is good on combustible solids (class A fires) such as paper or wood as well as class B and C fires. All of these extinguishers work best in enclosed areas or away and sheltered from the wind. Check your extinguishers frequently to ensure that they are fully charged and undamaged. Check the pressure gauge, replace cracked or broken hoses, and keep the nozzle free of blockages. Never test the extinguisher to see if it works, rather have it inspected by a professional to determine its reliability.

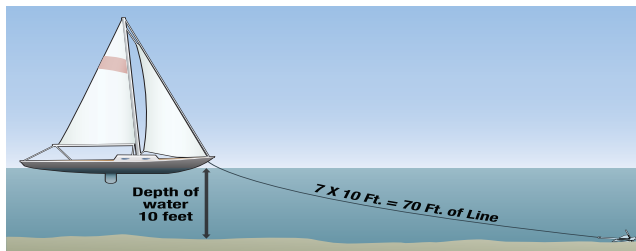
A fire generally needs three things in order to burn: heat, fuel, and oxygen. If you can sufficiently remove any one of the three components, the fire will go out. Be familiar with the extinguisher and its method of effective extinguishing before you need to use it. Read the label and instructions on its use. Be certain that the extinguisher is readily accessible and properly mounted in its bracket.

Vessels with inboard engines are more susceptible to fires that may ignite and take hold before the operator is aware. The enclosed nature of the engine space combined with the potential for gasoline leaks can create an explosive situation. Operators of gasoline inboard powered vessels should consider the option of installing an automatic fixed extinguishing system in order to reduce the danger of fire aboard these vessels.

## Anchor

All mechanically propelled vessels, except PWC, must carry an anchor and line of sufficient weight and strength to provide the vessel with safe anchorage. Select an anchor for the type of waters in

### SCOPE OF 7 TO 1



which you'll be operating. Generally speaking, the prudent mariner should have an anchor which can hold a vessel when subjected to the worst conditions of wind and wave that might typically be encountered. The anchor line should also be between 7 and 10 times the depth of water in which you normally anchor.

## **Whistle or Horn**

All mechanically propelled vessels 12 meters (39 ft.) and greater in length must carry a whistle which must be a mechanical device capable of producing a blast of two or more seconds in duration. On vessels less than 12 meters (39 ft.) in length a mouth whistle may be used.

## **Bell**

All vessels 20 meters (65 ft.) and greater in length are required to have a bell. The purpose of the bell is to facilitate compliance with the rules of the road when anchored or grounded during periods of reduced visibility.

## **Additional Suggested Equipment**

First Aid Kit	Oar/Paddle
Tool Kit	Compass
Bilge Pump/Bailer	Marine Radio
Boat Hook	Spare Parts

## **Navigation Lights**

Recreational vessels must display their required navigational lights at all times between sunset and sunrise, and during periods of restricted visibility. Sail vessels less than 7 meters (23 ft.) in length as well as manually propelled vessels may carry, in lieu of fixed lights, a lantern with a white light which can be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent a collision. Law enforcement vessels may also exhibit a blue flashing light.

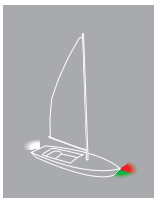
## **Anchor Lights**

According to State Law, a vessel under 150 feet when at anchor shall carry forward at a height not to exceed 20 feet above the hull, a white light visible all round.

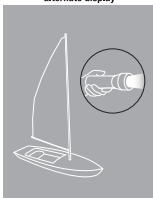


# NAVIGATIONAL LIGHTS

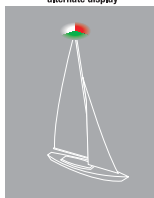
Sailboat



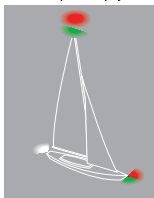
Sailboat under 7 meters,  
alternate display



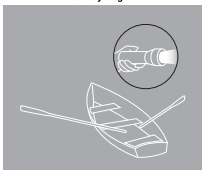
Sailboat under 20 meters,  
alternate display



Sailboat any length,  
with optional display



Manually propelled boat  
of any length



Power-driven boat  
under 12 meters



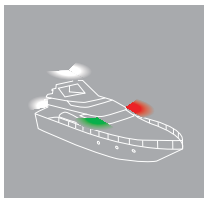
Power-driven boat under 12 meters, with  
alternative display of masthead and stern lights



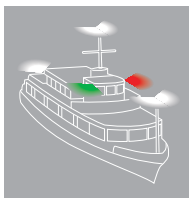
Power-driven boat under 12 meters, with  
alternative display of stern and side lights



Power-driven boat  
less than 50 meters



Power-driven boat  
over 50 meters



## NYS Pleasure Boat Required Equipment Checklist

	PWC	Motorboat Less than 16 feet	Motorboat 16 feet to less than 26 feet	Rowboat, Canoe, Kayak, Stand Up Paddleboard	Sailboat +
Boat Registration Certificate	Required	Required	Required	Not Required	Not Required
Validation Sticker Display	Required	Required	Required	Not Required	Not Required
Personal Flotation Device	Must Be Worn	1 per person onboard*	1 per person onboard*	1 per person onboard*	1 per person onboard*
Type IV PFD	Not Required	Not Required	Required	Not Required	Required ≥ 16 ft.
Fire Extinguisher, Type B-1	Not Required	Required, with exceptions●	Required, with exceptions●	Not Required	Not Required
Ignition Safety Switch	Lanyard attached to operator, if so equipped	Not Required	Not Required	Not Required	Not Required
Backfire Flame Arrestor	Required	Gas inboard and I/O engines	Gas inboard and I/O engines	Not Required	Not Required
Ventilation	Required	May be required	May be required	Not Required	Not Required
Muffled Exhaust	Required	Required	Required	Not Required	Not Required
Horn or Whistle	Mouth whistle is acceptable	Mouth whistle is acceptable	Mouth whistle is acceptable	Mouth whistle is acceptable if < 39ft.	Mouth whistle is acceptable if < 39ft.
Daytime Visual Distress Signals	Required	Not Required	Required	Not Required	Required ≥ 16 ft, with exception¥
Nighttime Visual Distress Signals	No nighttime operation	Required at night	Required at night	Not Required	Required at night
Navigation Lights	No nighttime operation	Required at night & Restricted visibility	Required at night & Restricted visibility	Required at night & Restricted visibility	Required at night & Restricted visibility
Anchor	Not Required	Required	Required	Not Required	Not Required

\* PFD must be worn between November 1st and May 1st on any pleasure boat under 21 feet, including sailboats, canoes and kayaks

PFD must be worn by anyone under 12 years of age, unless in an enclosed cabin, if onboard a motorboat under 65 feet or any other pleasure boat including sailboats, canoes, and kayaks

PFD must be worn by anyone who is being towed by a pleasure boat

● Motorboats less than 26 feet in length are required to carry one type B-1 USCG approved fire extinguisher unless they are of open construction and powered by outboard motors. Motorboats with a fixed fire extinguishing system are required to carry one less type B-1 fire extinguisher.

Motorboats which use fuel having a flash point of 110°F or less, which includes gasoline, are required to have at least two ventilators unless the bilges under the engine and fuel tank are exposed to the natural atmosphere.

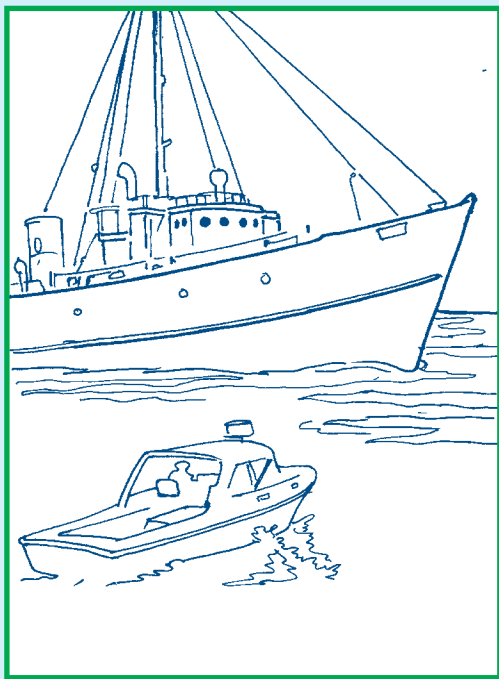
+ Requirements apply to sailboats using wind power. When using mechanical power, requirements for motorboats apply.

¥ Open sailboats less than 26 feet in length not equipped with mechanical power are not required to carry daytime visual distress.

For vessels over 26 feet in length refer to the US Coast Guard publication "A Boater's Guide to the Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats and Safety Tips at <https://www.uscgboating.org/images/420.PDF>

## PART FOUR

# Rules of the Nautical Road



# Rules of the Nautical Road

The rules of the road are an accepted standard by which all mariners are to comply when operating a vessel upon the water. Basically the rules require that every operator conduct his/her vessel in a prudent manner, at a safe speed, while constantly maintaining a proper lookout by all means available.

## The Sound Signals

All vessels are required to exchange sound signals when their paths will lead them into any close quarters situation. The following signals are prescribed for use by vessels when within sight of each other, to signal their intentions with respect to maneuvering:

1. One short blast - "I intend to leave you on my port side."  
Often this means a change in course to starboard (right).
2. Two short blasts - "I intend to leave you on my starboard side."  
Often this means a change in course to port (left).
3. Three short blasts - "I am operating astern propulsion."  
Usually means that you are backing down.
4. Five or more short blasts - commonly known as the danger signal and is used when either vessel doubts whether sufficient action is being taken by the other vessel to avoid collision.
5. One prolonged blast – the boat is leaving its slip. It is also used for indicating your boat's presence when coming around a bend.

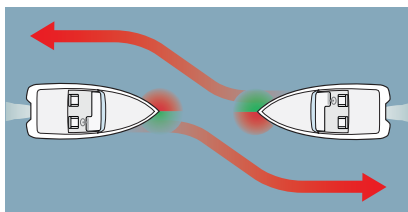
*(A short blast is that of one second in duration. A prolonged blast is that of four to six seconds in duration.)*

## The Situations

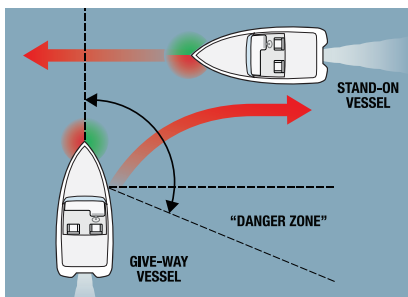
In the following situations we use the terms "Stand-on" or "Give-way". The Stand-on vessel is generally required by the rules to maintain both course and speed. The Give-way vessel is required to take early and substantial action to keep clear and avoid colliding with the other vessel.

**MEETING.** In this situation both vessels will pass within close proximity to one another on nearly reciprocal headings. The rules require that in this situation both vessels should exchange one short blast and pass with sufficient room on each other's port side. In this case both vessels are required to give way.

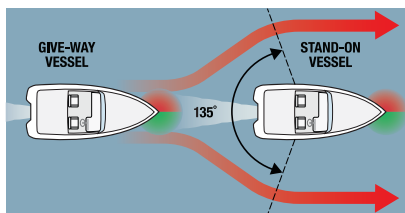
## THE SITUATIONS



Meeting



Crossing



Overtaking

**CROSSING.** Here both vessels are approaching each other at perpendicular or oblique angles and expect to pass close to one another. The rules specify that the vessel which has the other on its starboard side must keep out of the way. In this case the give way vessel should sound one short blast and alter course to starboard thus leaving the stand on vessel to port.

**OVERTAKING.** This situation exists when one vessel is coming up from any direction two or more points abaft (behind) the other vessel's beam. The overtaking vessel is considered the give-way vessel and must keep clear of the vessel it is overtaking. The overtaking vessel should sound its intentions with respect to the desired side of passing, and the overtaken vessel must stand-on until the other vessel is past and clear.

## **Keep these things in mind:**

1. Most practical on water situations may involve more than two vessels operating under less than ideal conditions. In any multiple vessel encounter, all mariners should exercise good seamanship, operate at a safe speed, and if ever in doubt as to the intentions of another vessel, immediately sound the danger signal, slacken speed, stop, or reverse the engines until the risk of collision passes.

2. As the stand-on vessel in any situation you must hold course and speed until such time as it becomes apparent to you that the action of the give-way vessel alone can not avoid a collision. Don't be stubborn, even if you are entitled to the right of way expect the unexpected and be prepared to yield. Always exercise prudent seamanship in all close quarter and restricted navigation situations. Remember that a good number of your fellow boaters don't know a lot about boating, not to mention what the rules of the road prescribe.

## **Rules for Restricted Visibility**

When operating under conditions of restricted visibility such as fog, heavy rain, snow, etc., all vessels must travel at a "Safe Speed" for the prevailing conditions. In addition motor vessels must sound a prolonged blast (4-6 second duration) on the horn or whistle every two minutes. Motor vessels less than 12 meters (39ft.) in length that can't give this signal must make some other efficient sound signal every two minutes. Also turn on your naviga-

tion lights. Under any restricted visibility situation always navigate with extreme caution while keeping a sharp lookout for lights and signals of other vessels.

When at anchor in restricted visibility every vessel must ring the ship's bell rapidly for five seconds every minute. Vessels less than 12 meters (39 ft.) in length that can't give this signal must make some other efficient sound signal every two minutes. This does not apply to vessels less than 20 meters (65 ft.) anchored in an approved special anchorage.

## Responsibilities between vessels: Who has the right of way?

Vessels with a lower priority must keep out of the way of vessels with a higher priority unless being overtaken.

### Highest Priority



- a. A vessel not under command (unable to maneuver)
- b. A vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver\*\*
- c. A vessel engaged in fishing\*
- d. A sailing vessel
- e. A power driven vessel

### Lowest Priority

*\*A vessel engaged in fishing does not include fishing with trolling lines or other apparatus which does not restrict maneuverability. (ie. Sport Fishing)*

*\*\* A power driven vessel pulling a water skier, tube etc. is not considered restricted in its ability to maneuver. It is still considered a power driven vessel.*

As a recreational boat operator plying the waters of New York's harbors and rivers, you should be aware of the maneuvering characteristics and limitations of large commercial vessels, particularly in congested areas.

As a general rule, it's best to avoid hampering the progress of any large vessel even if you believe you have the right of way. Keep in mind that large vessels are restricted to the deeper navigable channels whereas your boat may safely operate in relatively little water. If you feel that you must stay within the marked channel due to your draft, always observe good seamanship and keep as far to the right side of the channel as is safe and practical for your vessel.

Also remember that large vessels generally throw large wakes as they displace water. Larger deeply laden vessels can also take up

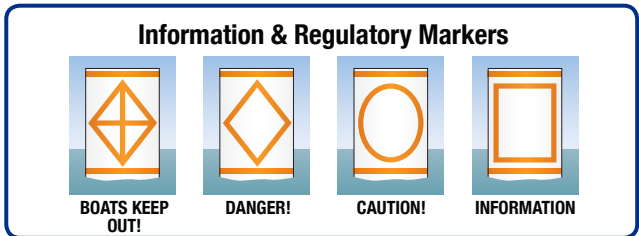
to a half mile or more to come to a complete stop. Never put yourself in a position where a vessel needs to execute an emergency maneuver in order to avoid running you down. When meeting any large vessel on the water, a little courtesy goes a long way.

Speaking of large vessels and the water they displace, never haul or launch your boat at a ramp when these larger vessels are transiting. The large amounts of water they displace may cause a surge in the water level which may not only damage your property but may also endanger your life as well. The same rule holds for swimming. If you see a large vessel approaching, get out of the water. The suction effect caused by these large boats may pull you way out into the river.

Absolutely never attempt to pass between a tug and its tow. The tow line may not be visible however it may just be below the surface ready to take up and become taut at any time. The force of a cable is easily capable of flipping or splitting your boat. Learn the signals displayed by these vessels and stay well clear of tugs, their tows and any cables.

## Aids to Navigation

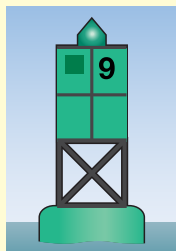
In New York State navigational aids are placed by either the State of New York or the federal government. The red and green markers indicate the right and left sides of the channel. Boaters should always remember the old adage, red right returning. This means that the red buoys mark the right side of the channel whenever we are returning from sea or proceeding toward the head of navigation. The reverse would be true when heading back to the sea. Always remember to pass safely between the red and green buoys in order to ensure safe water, deep enough to permit navigation. In addition you may see several regulatory markers which designate direction, speed, danger, etc. These aids are always white with bright orange stripes and legends emblazoned upon the buoy.



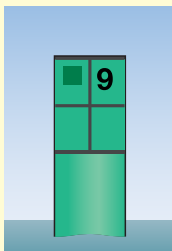


# WHEN GOING UPSTREAM

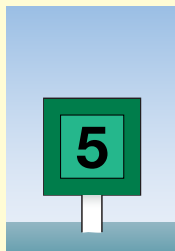
## Port Side Odd-Numbered Aids



Lighted Buoy

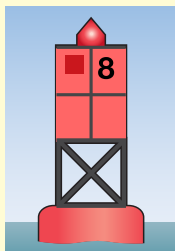


Can Buoy

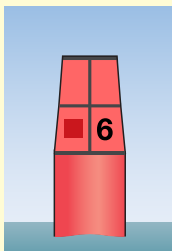


Day Beacon

## Starboard Side Even-Numbered Aids



Lighted Buoy



Nun Buoy

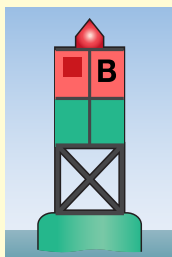


Day Beacon

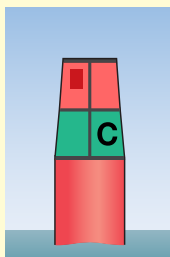
**Lateral System** (As Seen Entering From Seaward)

For more information on Aids to Navigations go to  
<http://www.uscgboating.org/ATON/index.html>

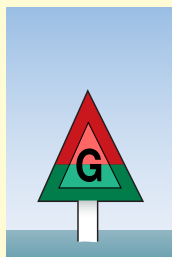
## Preferred Channel to Port - Topmost Band Red



Red Light Only

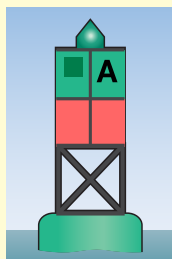


Nun Buoy

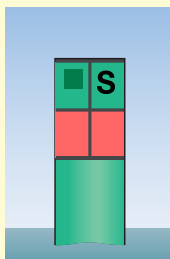


Day Beacon

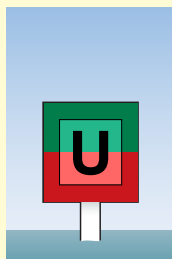
## Preferred Channel to Starboard - Topmost Band Green



Green Light Only



Can Buoy



Day Beacon

For more information on Aids to Navigations go to  
<http://www.uscgboating.org/ATON/index.html>

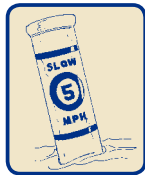
## PART FIVE

# General Boating Regulations



## Speed

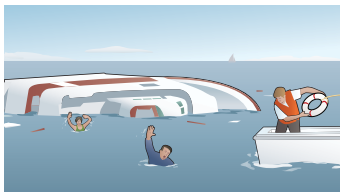
In New York State, vessel speed is generally limited to 5 mph when within 100 feet of the shore, a dock, pier, raft, float, or anchored boat. On some specific bodies of water the 5 mph limit has been extended to 200 feet, and there may also be a 45 mph daytime and 25 mph nighttime speed limit. Local ordinances may further regulate the speed of boats operated within specific areas, check with authorities regarding local regulations.



When no speed limit is posted, vessels must always be operated in such a fashion so as not to endanger others. A vessel must be able to stop within a distance appropriate to the prevailing conditions. A vessel operator is responsible for any damage caused by the vessel's wake. Prudent judgment requires operators to reduce speed when passing marinas, fishing vessels, work boats or other similar areas. When encountering marine regattas or parades, always transit with an escort vessel. Should no escort vessel be provided, vessels should only proceed at a safe, no wake speed, as far away from the regatta as safely possible.

## Boating Accidents

It is the responsibility of every boater to render all practical and necessary aid possible to other vessels requiring assistance, without endangering their vessel or their passengers.



If you are involved in a boating accident you must

stop and give your name, address and vessel identification to the owner of the damaged property or any injured party. If personal injury has been caused to another person, or another person has disappeared under the water, the nearest law enforcement agency shall be contacted immediately. In the event of an accident involving only property damage, if the person sustaining damage cannot be located at the scene or the other operator involved leaves the scene, the accident shall be reported to the nearest law enforcement agency immediately.

If you are the owner or operator of a boat involved in a boating accident in which there was an injury, death or disappearance of a person, or if property damage exceeding \$1,000 to any one party has occurred, you must report the matter in writing to New York State Parks within 5 days of the accident. Failure to report an accident is a violation under NYS Law.

Accident Report forms can be found at: [www.parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating/resources.aspx](http://www.parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating/resources.aspx)

## Age & Education Requirements

### FIND A BOATING SAFETY COURSE

- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – [www.WearItNewYork.com](http://www.WearItNewYork.com)
- United States Coast Guard Auxiliary – [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org)
- America’s Boating Club – [www.americasboatingclub.org](http://www.americasboatingclub.org)
- US Powerboating/US Sailing – <https://uspowerboating.com>

### Motor Boat Education Requirements:

- All operators must be at least 10 years of age.

As of January 1, 2020, new education requirements for motor-boat operators go into effect under Brianna’s Law. Your date of birth will determine when you must have a boating safety certificate by, with all operators required to have a certificate by 2025. The chart below shows the phase in.

<b>If you were born on or after:</b>	<b>You will need a boating safety certificate when operating a motorized vessel in:</b>
January 1, 1993	2020
January 1, 1988	2022
January 1, 1983	2023
January 1, 1978	2024

**All operators of motorized vessels, regardless of age, will need a boating safety certificate by January 1, 2025**

- Persons 18 years of age or older may rent a motor boat without a boating safety certificate provided that the operator of the livery holds a certificate, demonstrates the use of the vessel and safety equipment, and the person renting demonstrates their understanding of the vessels operation and safety equipment. Those under the age of 18 must have a boating safety certificate in order to rent a vessel.

### **Motor Boat Operators Exempted From Having To Hold A Safety Certificate:**

- Certified New York Safe Boating Instructors
- Members of the USCG Auxiliary or America's Boating Club
- Persons licensed by NYS Parks, the United States Coast Guard or Canadian Coast Guard to operate commercial vessels
- Police officers, peace officers, fire and rescue personnel, and life guards when acting pursuant to assigned duties
- A resident of another state or country who is the holder of a valid boating safety certificate issued according to the laws of their home state or country

## **Enforcement/Violations**

Several different law enforcement agencies enforce the Federal and State navigation laws. The US Coast Guard patrols the joint jurisdictional waters while enforcing federal laws. The State Park Police, State Police, Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as county and local agencies work to ensure compliance with state laws upon the water. Violations of State and Federal statutes carry fines and/or imprisonment.

Law enforcement may terminate the operation of any vessel, including rowboats and canoes, found to have an immediately hazardous violation of the law which may result in an accident or physical injury.

Reckless operation of a boat can be a violation or misdemeanor. Operators are required to operate a boat in a careful and prudent manner in such a way as not to interfere with the free and proper



use of the navigable waters or endanger any boat or person. Reckless operation may be the result of operator ignorance, inattention, indifference or carelessness. Some examples of reckless operation include:

- Operating at high speed in a congested area or in restricted visibility
- Following another boat too closely
- Operating too closely to swimmers or divers
- Operating near dams
- Cutting through a regatta or marine parade
- Overloading a boat
- Allowing passengers to ride on the bow, gunwale or transom while underway

## Boating While Intoxicated

No one may operate a vessel on the waters of NYS while impaired or intoxicated either through the consumption of alcohol or drugs. An operator with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 or higher is considered legally intoxicated. New York



law prescribes heavy fines, imprisonment, and the suspension of operator privileges for violators. In New York, if you are stopped for the suspicion of impaired operation and refuse to voluntarily submit to a breath test, your privilege to operate may be immediately suspended, pending a hearing.

## Zero Tolerance



New York, in an effort to send a clear message to our young citizens that underage drinking will not be tolerated, has enacted legislation, for those under 21 years of age, providing for the suspension or revocation of operating privileges if caught drinking while operating a vessel.

It is important to realize that particularly on the water, even small amounts of alcohol may greatly impair one's ability to function in three critical areas: balance, coor-

dination, and judgment. Compound this with such environmental stressors such as glare, heat, vibration, and engine noise, one can become quickly fatigued thus slowing your reaction time.

We must always keep in mind that a boat is an unstable platform, and since a large percentage of fatalities occur from falling overboard. Alcohol will also decrease your coordination. Drinking also impairs your ability should you find yourself unexpectedly immersed in the water. Many a good swimmer has drowned because alcohol distorted their ability to orient themselves upon entering the water and ended up swimming down instead of towards the surface.

Alcohol may also give you the feeling that you and your boat can perform maneuvers beyond both your limits. The ability to process information from various sources is also depressed by alcohol and the person may develop a tunnel vision perspective, thus blocking out critical information. One's ability to judge speed and distance are also impaired which also limits one's ability to track moving objects. Alcohol also reduces your night vision, you lose the ability to differentiate between red and green which makes the intoxicated boater an even greater hazard after dark.

### Float Plan

Complete this page, before going boating and leave it with a reliable person who can be depended upon to notify the Coast Guard or other rescue organization, should you not return as scheduled.  
Do not file this plan with the Coast Guard.

1. Name of person reporting and telephone number. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Description of boat.  
 Type \_\_\_\_\_ Color \_\_\_\_\_ Trim \_\_\_\_\_  
 Registration No. \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Make \_\_\_\_\_ Other info. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Engine type \_\_\_\_\_ H.P. \_\_\_\_\_  
 No. of engines \_\_\_\_\_ Fuel capacity \_\_\_\_\_
4. Survival equipment: (Check as appropriate)
 

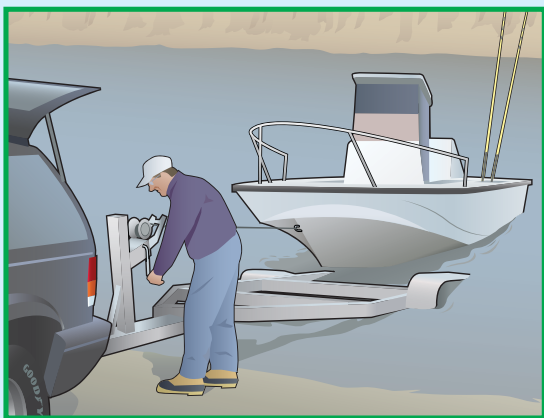
<input type="checkbox"/> PFDs	<input type="checkbox"/> Flares	<input type="checkbox"/> Mirror
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoke Signals	<input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight	<input type="checkbox"/> Food
<input type="checkbox"/> Paddles	<input type="checkbox"/> Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Others
<input type="checkbox"/> Anchor	<input type="checkbox"/> Raft or Dinghy	<input type="checkbox"/> EPIRB
5. Radio  yes  no Type \_\_\_\_\_ Freqs. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Automobile license \_\_\_\_\_ Trailer license \_\_\_\_\_  
 Color \_\_\_\_\_ and make of auto \_\_\_\_\_  
 where parked \_\_\_\_\_
7. Persons aboard \_\_\_\_\_  

Name	Age	Address & Telephone No.
_____	_____	_____
8. Do any of these persons aboard have a medical problem?  
 yes  no If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Trip Expectations: Leave at \_\_\_\_\_  
 From \_\_\_\_\_ Going to \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expect to return by \_\_\_\_\_ (Time) and  
 not later than \_\_\_\_\_
10. Any other pertinent info. \_\_\_\_\_
11. If not returned by \_\_\_\_\_ (Time) call  
 the COAST GUARD, or (Local authority) \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Telephone numbers \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## PART SIX

# Getting Underway



Before getting underway, be certain to load your vessel properly. Never enter your boat in such a manner as to upset the stability of the craft. Hand equipment to others onboard and don't overextend yourself. Distribute the load evenly throughout the boat so as not to impair the handling and operational characteristics. Never exceed the vessels capacity rating and never overpower your vessel.

## Basic Flotation

Another important item installed in many boats during construction is flotation. Since 1972 all boats less than 20 feet in length have been required to have built in flotation. Those built since 1978 have sufficient flotation to float the boat and its occupants, even when flooded with water. This feature is also found on several larger boats as well.

Because of this built in feature, your boat can also double as a self-rescue platform in the event of an accident. Should a boat with flotation swamp, flood, or otherwise partially sink in the water, don't abandon it. In most cases you may be able to climb back in and possibly be able to maneuver to shore. Remember that the shoreline is usually further away than it looks. Many drown trying to swim for shore while those that stay with the boat are frequently rescued.

## Overloading

Overloading any boat will decrease stability and reduce performance. A capacity plate placed aboard vessels less than 20 feet in length will tell you just how much weight and/or people the boat may safely carry. It is



important to never exceed the capacity plate. Remember that gear counts against a boats capacity. Overloading can lead to the loss of stability and the possibility of capsizing.

## Overpowering

Operators should also strictly follow the manufacturer's recommendations for engine size. A larger engine may make your boat run faster, however it



may have not been designed to handle the weight or stress. In addition to the added weight of the larger engine, your steering mechanism may not be designed for the larger engine as well, which may lead to reduced or lost control at higher speeds.

## Vessel Operator Duties

### When underway always:

1. Be comfortable with the handling characteristics of the vessel. Know your stopping distance, turning radius, and optimal cruising speed.
2. Avoid unnecessary risks which may endanger life, limb or property.
3. Always be cognizant of the vessel's position and where you are heading. Learn to navigate safely.
4. Listen to local weather broadcasts and watch for changing weather conditions. Be prepared to head for safe harbor should the weather conditions degrade.
5. Know and abide by the rules of the road.
6. Exercise courtesy.
7. Use the 1/3 rule to prevent running out of fuel. Figure on 1/3 for the trip out, 1/3 to return, and 1/3 for reserve.
8. Never allow passengers to ride on the bow, seat backs or gunwales. Riding in these positions may increase the risk of falling overboard. Operators who permit passengers to ride in these locations may be cited for reckless operation.
9. Encourage everyone to don a life jacket, particularly non-swimmers.

## Proper Fueling Practices

Improper fueling practices are the cause of most fires aboard boats. Since gasoline vapor is heavier than air it will always seek the lowest location in the boat, the bilge. Since the bilge area usually runs through the engine space, the risk of explosion is ever present. This risk however can be greatly reduced by taking the following precaution when fueling the boat:



1. Moor the boat securely to the dock
2. Remove all passengers
3. Extinguish all galley fires or smoking materials
4. Shut off engines and electrical equipment
5. Close all hatches and ports
6. Fill portable tanks on the dock, not in the boat
7. Keep fuel nozzle in contact with fill opening and never overfill your tank
8. Replace fuel fill cap tightly
9. Wipe up any spilled gasoline, check bilges for leakage
10. After fueling, open up all hatches and run the blower for at least 4 minutes to rid the vessel of stray vapors
11. Before starting the engine, give the engine space a sniff to ensure that explosive vapors are no longer present
12. Secure portable fuel tanks before leaving the dock, and never in an interior compartment

**Note:** Be aware that some alcohol blended fuels have been found to accelerate the deterioration of fuel hoses within the fuel system. Some blends have been known to make hoses brittle and thus subject to cracking, while others can make hoses soft and spongy allowing vapors to permeate the hose. Boats that sit for long periods of time are most prone to these conditions. Contact your dealer/manufacturer concerning possible problems regarding alcohol blended gasoline.

**Fuel Tanks** - Vessels with foamed in aluminum fuel tanks have been known to corrode, crack and even leak. Since many fuel tanks are not easily accessed on today's recreational boats, operators should be certain that leaks have not developed over the years. If you suspect

a leak, have it checked out with a professional. Leaking fuel into your bilge is an explosion waiting to happen.

## Carbon Monoxide- The Invisible Killer



Boaters aboard vessels with enclosed cabins or other similar accommodation spaces need to be aware of the potential danger from carbon monoxide gas. Carbon Monoxide (CO), a colorless and odorless by-product of all internal combustion engines, can quickly collect within, along side or behind a boat. Symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, nausea and dizziness and may lead to death. This dangerous situation can occur aboard enclosed vessels while underway or at the dock when engine exhaust enters the vessel from outside, usually over the stern. Most of us might recognize this as the “station wagon” or “backdraft” effect. To reduce or eliminate this effect it’s best to open a hatch forward (while underway) to allow fresh air to move freely through the cabin. CO gas from on board generators can also collect about a moored vessel. Avoid teak surfing, dragging and water skiing within 20 feet of your vessel as it may be fatal. Be certain to check all exhaust lines from any internal combustion engine to ensure that they are not leaking into the boat. Always ensure a flow of fresh air into your boat. Also be aware that exhaust from other vessels which may be moored close to you at an overnight marina can also surround your boat. Your best preventative measure is to install a carbon monoxide detector in the living and sleeping spaces aboard your vessel and be certain that it is functioning properly before turning in.

## Propellers - Hidden Danger

A spinning propeller can cause devastating injuries in less than a second to a person in the water. Propeller accidents can be prevented by using an Emergency Engine Cut-off Switch attached from the ignition to the operator. If the operator is thrown from the boat, the lanyard disconnects and the engine stops immediately. This may prevent the boat from running over the operator and any passengers in the water. Other safety practices include having all passengers properly seated while underway, check for swimmers around the boat before

starting the engine, turn the engine off and take out the key when tubers, water skiers, or swimmers are entering or exiting the water and consider installing a propeller guard.

## In Water Electrical Shock Hazard

Boats that are stored at docks with shore power connections may pose a risk to swimmers. Do not swim in marinas. Faulty or improperly wired electrical systems can sometimes leak current into the water. The electrical current spreads out trying to find a path back to the source. The path of least resistance back may include swimmers. This is particularly dangerous in fresh water that is less conductive than salt water. Proper maintenance on your vessel's electrical system can help prevent this from happening.

## Vessel Engine Noise

The state of New York has established noise levels for recreational boats. In addition to the prohibition against muffler "cut-out" systems, the law stipulates that vessel noise not exceed either 90 decibels when subject to a stationary test or 75 decibels when tested while moving. It is also illegal to manufacture or sell a boat that does not meet these specifications. It is also against the law to remove, alter, or modify a muffling system which will cause the vessel to now operate in violation of the above noted standards.

## Marine Sanitary Devices (MSDs)



The MSD requirements on NYS waters are dictated by both the Federal and State government, depending where you operate your boat. Recent regulation changes have extended no discharge zones to all waterways touching New York State. No discharge zones include Long Island Sound, Hudson River, NYS Canal System, Lake Champlain, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and all sole state waters. Sewage must be kept in the MSD as a holding tank for later transfer to a marine pump out facility. If the MSD has overboard lines, the valve must be secured in such a manner that discharge overboard is prevented. In addition, upon the waters of Canandaigua, Skaneateles, Greenwood (Orange County) Lakes, and Lake George, any vessel equipped with a toilet, sink, tub,

etc., which results in the drainage of any waste water must have all such waste water drain into a holding tank in order that it may be pumped ashore at a marine pump out facility. Any overboard lines from such systems must be either sealed or removed. Pump out facilities can be found at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7840.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7840.html).

## Your Float Plan

Before venturing out on any voyage aboard your vessel be certain to write down a float plan and leave it with a reliable person who can follow up in the event you don't return on time. Items that should be included in any float plan include: who's on board, where you are going, when will you leave and at what time are you expected to return. The more information you can provide will better improve the likelihood that search units will be able to locate you in the event you break down or need assistance. Should your plans change during your trip, be certain to notify the individual with whom you've filled your float plan. (See sample on page 42)

## Your Marine Radio and the FCC

A marine radio is a wise investment in safety for any recreational boater planning to venture any distance from shore or to any area where immediate rescue is unlikely. Your marine radio will allow you to request marine assistance or towing services, in non-emergency situations, from a variety of commercial services. Distress and mayday calling should be limited to medical emergencies or other situations where the safety of those on board is threatened. Current Federal Communications Commission regulations exempt small recreational boats, operating domestically, from needing to carry a ship station or operator license.

## Changes in Marine Radio Communications

Commercial vessels that are required to be Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) compliant are no longer required to maintain a listening watch on VHF channel 16.



The U.S. Coast Guard encourage all recreational vessels not required to participate in GMDSS to carry a system to enhance safety, particularly if you venture offshore away from the more populated recreational boating areas. The recommended primary system would be a digitally selective calling (DSC) marine radio and an Emergency Position Indicator Radio Beacon (EPIRB). For more information on GMDSS please contact the U.S. Coast Guard.

**Cell phones**-many recreational boaters rely on cell phones as their primary means of marine communication. And while a cell phone can be useful in many situations it should not replace your marine (VHF) radio. In emergency situations your 911 call may be misdirected to police or fire departments thus delaying rescue. Cell calls can not be contacted by rescue boats and aircraft. Your cell phone should supplement your VHF, not replace it. If you must rely exclusively on a cell phone be certain to have coast guard and marine police phone numbers handy. When placing a distress call be certain to give your position, your cell number, nature of the emergency and the number of people on board.

## Paddle Craft

Increasingly popular paddle craft, kayaks, stand-up paddleboards and canoes, are vessels and operators need to know the fundamentals of safe boating as well as be aware of the potential risks associated with small boat recreation. By their nature paddle

### Take a **FREE** Online Paddle Safety Course [www.paddlecouse.com](http://www.paddlecouse.com)

Request If Found Stickers to identify your boat and assist in rescue or returning a lost boat and Safe 'n Sight Paddle Flash Stickers to increase visibility to other boats. Send a legal size self-addressed stamped envelope to NYS Parks, Marine Services Bureau, Safety Stickers, Albany, NY 12238

Vessel Identification Sticker for Canoe, Kayak or Rowboat


### If Found-Contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

USE WATERPROOF MARKER

 Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
[nysparks.com](http://nysparks.com)





craft are low profile watercraft and may not be readily seen by larger boats. Paddlers should generally avoid heavily trafficked areas of any waterway and if necessary to cross a marked channel, do so at right angles and move as quickly as possible so as to avoid impeding the passage of larger craft in the channel. As the likelihood of capsizing or swamping is greater on smaller watercraft, cold water immersion becomes a real danger when water temperatures drop below 70° F. Therefore everyone is strongly advised to wear a life jacket and the appropriate clothing designed to retain body heat. When operating at night you are required to carry a white light to show to prevent collision. All paddlers must carry a whistle or other means of making an efficient sound signal to attract attention when in the vicinity of power and sail vessels.

## Cold Water Immersion

Paddlers and sportsmen often boat during the early and late seasons when water temperatures are cold. Boaters are required by law to wear a life jacket from Nov. 1 to May 1 on all boats less than 21 feet when underway. In addition a boater should dress for the water, not the air temperature, as a boater who capsizes or swamps in cold water can be in an immediate life threatening situation. Cold water immersion has four phases: upon immersion cold shock occurs which can include involuntary gasping, hyperventilation, panic, and possible cardiac arrest. Between 3 to 30 minutes later swimming failure may occur as muscles and nerves quickly cool and the victim loses motor control along with the ability to self rescue. Next, hypothermia, typically occurs after 30 minutes in the water which can then lead to unconsciousness and death. Last is post-immersion collapse. This can occur during or after rescue due to damage to lungs and heart as cold blood returns to the core area from the arms and legs.



To survive a cold water immersion, try reboarding or climbing on top of your boat, slow heat loss by huddling up and do not remove clothing even if it is wet, use a whistle or visual distress signal to summon help. Leave a float plan so authorities can be called should you fail to return on time.

## PART SEVEN

# Specific Recreational Boating Activities



## Water Skiing

On the navigable waters of NYS, any vessel towing a water skier, parasail, or other similar device, must have on board, in addition to the operator, an observer who is specifically charged with watching out for the person towed. The observer must be at least 10 years of age. Waterskiing, and similar towed activities, are limited to the hours between sunrise and sunset. Anyone towed by a vessel must wear a securely fastened US Coast Guard approved personal flotation device. This includes those on water skis, inner tubes, parasails, inflatable devices, to name a few. The preferred life jacket for these activities is the type III special purpose device as it is impact rated, form fitting, and generally affords better visibility for the skier. Never use a fully inflatable life jacket. Remember the skier is considered a passenger and is to be counted against the maximum passengers allowed. Exceeding that number can be written as reckless operation.

For more information on safe water skiing contact: The American Water Ski Assoc. at [www.usawaterski.org](http://www.usawaterski.org)

### Water Skiing Hand Signals



**Cut Motor**



**Speed OK**



**Turn**



**Speed Up**



**Slow Down**



**Stop**



**Return To Launch**



**Skier in Water**



**Skier OK**

## Fishing and Hunting

Fishermen and hunters generally consider themselves sportsmen rather than boaters. However, if they are using a boat to hunt or fish, all boating laws apply. For many people, the only reason they own a boat is to get to out-of-the-way fishing spots. There are boats designed and built specifically for the sportsman, from bass boats to boats specially equipped for trolling.



Be courteous if you see someone fishing from their boat by staying well clear of them. They may have lines or nets in the water that you might damage if you come too close. Your wake may also swamp or flip their boat, pull their anchor loose from the bottom, or dump one of the occupants in the water. Remember, state law makes you responsible for any damage caused by your wake when passing other boats, docks or swimmers.

Duck hunting from a boat is popular in the autumn. Hunters also use boats to set decoys or to travel to remote hunting areas. New York State Environmental Conservation Law allows a boater to carry a legally registered and New York State licensed handgun on a boat. The law also permits boaters to carry long guns, rifles or shotguns, but these must not be loaded when the boat is underway. The hunter may load or discharge the firearm only when the boat is tied up or at an anchor.

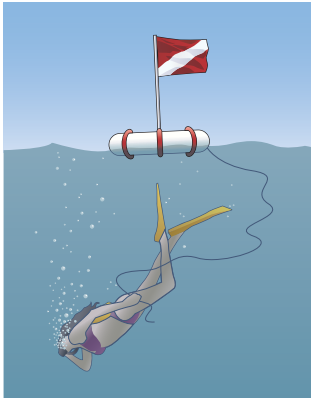
Cold water is a serious hazard for sportsmen. Hypothermia and death can result if a boat capsizes and its occupants are immersed in the cold water. The risk is greatest in spring and fall when there are fewer boaters and marine patrols on the water, increasing the response time. Because the hunting and fishing seasons tend to open when the weather is colder, the risk of exposure is especially high for sportsmen.

If you are fishing or hunting from your boat, stay out of the main boating channels so that you do not have to move to avoid other boating traffic. Be constantly aware of wakes from other boats as you move about your boat. Most importantly, remember that cold water kills. File a float plan, don't overload your boat, and wear your PFD!

## Diving Operations

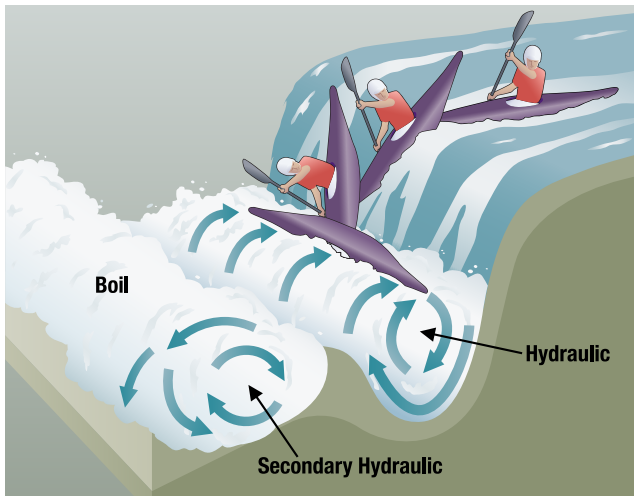
All motorboat operators should be aware of the two flags which indicate the presence of divers in the water. The official blue and white Alpha Flag flown from a vessel is the internationally recognized indicator of dive activity in the water. Any vessel displaying the Alpha flag is to be considered restricted in its ability to maneuver and should be afforded the right of way. The other flag, “diver down”, which is prescribed by the state, is a red flag with a white diagonal stripe. This flag should be attached to a float to indicate the diver’s presence.

Under no circumstances should a vessel approach within 100 feet of any craft or object displaying either flag. Divers should be aware that it is illegal to disturb any underwater archeological site and/or remove any artifacts without a state issued permit.



## Dams and Spillways

One of the greatest potential dangers to any boater on inland rivers and streams are lowhead dams. The lowhead dam is particularly dangerous because it isn't well recognized as a potential death trap. The principal purpose of any lowhead dam is to maintain a minimum upstream water level above the dam. The typical drop off at a lowhead dam is deceptively small, however the power of the water going over the dam at any given moment can be very large. The unwary boater may think it safe to shoot



the dam by riding over it in a small boat or canoe, however if the boat should turn sideways and capsize while crossing the dam, the occupants can be trapped in what is referred to as the hydraulic, and become unrescuably trapped beneath the falling water. Stay well away from both the top as well as the bottom of any dam.

Conventional larger dams found at power generation plants as well as any water impoundment can also be extremely dangerous. Dangerous currents, large vertical drops, and steep spillways are just a few of the many potential hazards which can be found at these sites. If the dams purpose is power generation you can probably also expect to find overhead power lines which may present a hazard in themselves. Usually a dam is marked with warning or exclusionary buoys. Stay well outside these markers never let yourself drift into these extremely hazardous area in and around dams.

## Locks

The New York State Canal system connects hundreds of miles of lakes and rivers stretching across the Empire State. Four waterways, the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca canals

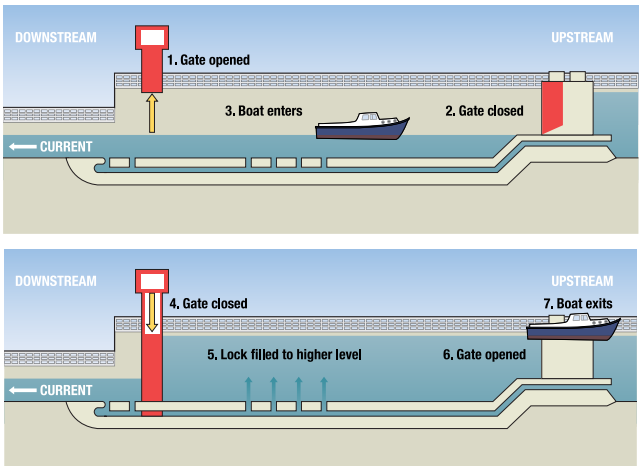
travel throughout New York's heartland, gliding past lush farmland, famous historic battlefields, scenic port towns and thriving wildlife preserves. There are 57 locks and almost 300 additional miles of accessible lakes and rivers stretching across the entire state.

Many large dams have navigation locks designed to raise and lower boats from one water level to another, allowing vessels to travel up and down stream. These locks were built, along with a series of dams, to bypass rapids, waterfalls, and otherwise un-navigable areas.

When locking through with any large vessel be particularly cautious of prop turbulence and vessel wake. Many commercial vessels are designed to occupy the entire space within a lock, never try to squeeze into a lock chamber with a larger vessel unless directed to by the lock operator. The operator will determine the order in which boats enter a lock in order to maximize the lock most efficiently.

The lock operator controls all boat traffic through the lock by light signals or horn devices. All canal locks and lift bridges monitor VHF channel 13 as well as cellular phones.

The following tips and suggestions are recommended to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip along the canal and through the locks:



**Approaching the lock.** When approaching the lock, boaters should stop at a safe distance from the lock and follow the specified signals. Boaters without VHF radio may give three distinct blasts on the horn, whistle, or other signalling device. Lock operators will respond with lights in the following manner:

- Green-lock is ready, you may advance
- Red-lock not ready, hold your position and wait
- No light-wait, tie up to the approach wall
- Six flashes of red or green-remain stopped and await instructions

Be Aware of the wake your boat creates, excessive wake can erode the shoreline and damage docked boats as well as the lock itself. Keep the channel near the lock gates clear and allow boats departing or entering the lock a safe and easy passage. Be patient if lock staff are not ready to lock you through immediately since they may have other water management duties.

**Entering the Lock.** Upon entering the lock chamber, vessels must proceed under control at a safe reduced speed. All boats must be equipped with adequate mooring lines or fenders. Lock operators are not required to handle or furnish lines. Although nearly every lock has weighted lines hanging from the sides of the lock chamber for boater's convenience. As you near the walls of the lock chamber, have your crew ready to loop lines around snubbing posts, lock wall ladders, and tie lines; be sure to loop and not tie your lines or your boat may be left hanging or damaged as the water level changes. Be alert to other boats entering the chamber and move ahead if necessary. Serious injury may result from using you hands or feet to fend off the chamber wall. Use a boat hook, oar, or paddle. Line handlers should wear life jackets. Passengers not involved in the locking process should remain seated out of the way.

**In the Lock Chamber.** Always follow the directions of the lock operator. Once you are safely positioned against the chamber wall with lines looped, turn off the engine but leave your blower running. Never smoke or operate flame appliances. Never leave your boat unattended in the lock.

**Exiting the Lock.** As soon as the water in the lock chamber reaches the desired level, the gates in front of you will open. Boaters

**Visit the canal website at:  
[www.canals.ny.gov](http://www.canals.ny.gov)**



## PART EIGHT

# Personal Watercraft



# Personal Watercraft

## Mandatory Education Requirements

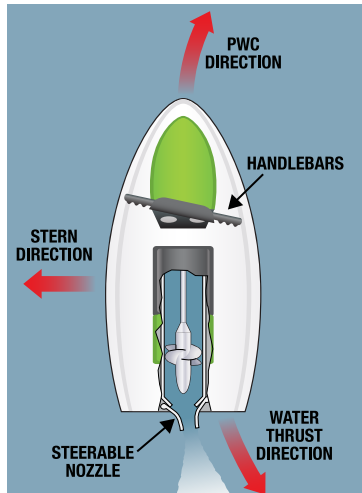
New York requires that anyone operating a personal watercraft complete an approved course in boating safety or otherwise be accompanied, on board, by someone 18 years of age or older who is the holder of an approved boating safety certificate. Certificates are required to be carried at all times when operating the personal watercraft. See page 39 for information about acceptable boating safety certificates.

## Minimum Age for Operation

In order to operate a personal watercraft in New York the operator must be a minimum of 14 years of age. The operator must hold an approved boating safety certificate or be accompanied by a person over 18 years of age who is the holder of a boating safety certificate. It is strongly recommended that small children not be permitted to ride forward of an adult as it may lead to serious personal injury. It is also strongly recommended that no person be permitted to ride a personal watercraft if he or she can not hold on to the person in front (or hand holds) and can not keep both feet on the deck in order to maintain balance during operation.

## Operation

Before operating any Personal Watercraft (PWC) it is very important that we learn as much as we can about the vessel before attempting to operate it alone. Have someone who knows what they're doing take you out for a ride and show you how to properly operate the vessel. Have them explain the operation of the



device as well as the rules of the road for the waterway. When you're ready to go it alone, try the device out in an area that's free of traffic, obstructions and sensitive wildlife.

One of the first things we should understand about the PWC is that, unlike a conventional boat, which has a propeller and rudder to drive itself through the water, the PWC employs a jet pump and nozzle for propulsion and direction. The speed with which the water is pushed through the nozzle is controlled much the same way speed is regulated on a motorcycle, by throttle controls located on the handlebars. It is very important that PWC



operators understand that once the throttle is released, they no longer have directional control of the vessel, since water is no longer being pushed through the directional nozzle. The device will continue on its present course, and since there are no brakes, it won't be able to immediately stop.

Although PWC are relatively stable at slow speeds, they are relatively light and can easily flip and become airborne. As the craft has a low profile, it is also somewhat difficult to be seen by larger boats on the water. To help with visibility, operators should wear bright orange or similarly colored life jackets in order to be better seen. Although PWCs can operate in very shallow water, operators should be mindful of adjacent property owners, as well as environmentally sensitive areas, not to mention docks and other hazards associated with close-in vessel operation. Remember, speed is limited to 5 miles per hour within 100 feet of shore, dock, raft or anchored boats. In the interest of safety, never operate your PWC in congested areas, transit the area and proceed to where there is sufficient space to operate your vessel. Stay clear of other boats on the water and give fellow PWC operators a safety buffer in order to avoid potential collisions.

Remember not to wear out your welcome in any one particular area on the water, avoid use conflict with others recreating on the water particularly in the area of boat ramps, marinas and channels. Refrain from buzzing your neighbors, it's just annoying and not much appreciated. PWCs can be great fun provided they are operated responsibly.

**State law specifically regulates the operation of personal watercraft (PWC), and while most sections of the navigation law also apply to all PWC, the following are specific regulations regarding their operation:**

**Life Jackets**-must be worn by each person on or towed behind (strength tested models recommended). Fully inflatable life jackets are not approved for water sports.

**Engine Cutoff** - if so equipped must be functional and attached to the rider

**Horn, Whistle** - capable of a two second blast, audible 1/2 mile

**Visual Distress Signals (VDS)** - a fluorescent orange flag (1 foot sq) or other appropriate US Coast Guard approved day distress signaling device

**Backfire Flame Arrestor** - manufacturer installed, do not remove, prevents explosion/fire

**Ventilators** - manufacturer installed, do not remove, removes potentially explosive vapors from engine/fuel space

**Hours of Operation** - between sunrise and sunset. The installation of an after market light kit will not allow you to legally operate a PWC at night.

**NOTE:** *Although an anchor and fire extinguisher are not required under state law, you must carry a fire extinguisher when operating in federal waters.*

## Prohibited Operation

**Boating while Intoxicated (BWI)** - prohibited on all watercraft, laws are strict, penalties severe

**Swim Areas** - no operation permitted within 500 feet of a designated swim area, except in bodies of water where the opposing shoreline is less than 500 feet or when launching and retrieving a PWC from a designated launch site. PWC must not exceed 10 mph when within this zone.

**Reckless Operation** - strictly prohibited, examples of such operation would be:

- wake jumping too close to other vessels,
- weaving through congested traffic,
- last minute swerving to avoid collision,

**Liveries** - prohibited from renting a PWC to individuals less than 16 years of age. Livery operators are also required to check proof of age, and if the individual is less than 18 years of age, a boating safety certificate, prior to renting out equipment. Liveries must also explain/demonstrate proper use of a PWC, as well as maintain rental records for not less than one year.

Those 18 years of age and older wishing to rent a PWC from a livery may do so without a boating safety certificate provided they operate in a specific area within 2500 feet of the livery, or if removed from the livery location they may not be operated beyond 500 feet of the livery operator in order that they may be supervised. In cases where a livery operator is monitoring PWC away from the livery, his/her PWC or life jacket must be clearly marked in a distinguishable manner.

**Reminder** - a PWC is a recreational boat which means that its operator must obey the rules of the road. PWC operators should also be mindful that group riding in one area may annoy other waterfront users/owners, and may in fact become dangerous, particularly if one's attention is limited to having fun while neglecting other traffic or hazards.

# Boat Wreck-less Take a Boating Safety Course



## Who should take a course?

Anyone who is on the water in a mechanized, wind, or human-powered vessel.

## Who is required legally to take a course?

Anyone operating a personal watercraft. You must be at least 14 years of age.

**If you were born on or after:**

January 1, 1993
January 1, 1988
January 1, 1983
January 1, 1978

**You will need a boating safety certificate when operating a motorized vessel in:**

2020
2022
2023
2024

**All operators of motorized vessels, regardless of age, will need a boating safety certificate by January 1, 2025**

**Classroom and Online Courses Available**



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic  
Preservation**

[parks.ny.gov](http://parks.ny.gov)



[WearItNewYork.com](http://WearItNewYork.com)

**Brookfield**  
Renewable

A photograph of a person from behind, wearing a blue t-shirt and a red and black life vest, sitting in a boat on a body of water. The background shows a blue sky with white clouds and a line of green trees on the shore.

**MAKE SAFETY  
A PRIORITY!**

**BE CAUTIOUS WHEN RECREATING  
NEAR HYDROPOWER FACILITIES.  
WATER CONDITIONS CAN CHANGE  
QUICKLY AND WITHOUT NOTICE.**

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Pay attention to your surroundings  
and respect all signs and  
warning signals.



[Safewaters.com](http://Safewaters.com)



## **Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**

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