

# NEW YORK STATE BOATER'S GUIDE



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

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:**

**Nautical Charts** of Long Island Sound, the Hudson River, the Great Lakes, Lake Champlain or the NYS Canal System contact: National Aeronautical Charting Office, Greenbelt, MD 20770-1479 or call 800-638-8972.

**The State Canal System**, for information and maps of the canal as well as lock information, contact the NYS Canal Corporation, 200 Southern Blvd., PO Box 189, Albany, NY 12201-0189, or call 800-422-6254.

**NYS Boat Launch Sites** (Brochure), call NYS Parks at 518-474-0445.

**“Cruising Guide to Hudson River & Lake Champlain”** including info on marinas, weather, as well as aerial photos of the region from NYC to Montreal, contact: Lk. Champlain Publishing Comp., 176 Battery St., Burlington, VT 04501 or call 800-845-0028

**“Embassy’s Complete Guide to Long Island Sound”**, including harbor charts, marine facilities/services, along with a history of the sound, its fish and wildlife, contact: Maptech, 10 Industrial Way, Amesbury, MA 01913 or call 888-839-5551. [www.maptech.com](http://www.maptech.com)

**“Waterway Guide”**(Northern Edition), including information about harbors, marinas from NY Harbor, Long Is. Sound, the Great South Bay, Hudson River, Erie & Champlain Canals, St. Lawrence R, contact: Waterway Guide, 326 First Street, Suite 400, Annapolis, MD 21403 or call 800-233-3359. [www.waterguide.com](http://www.waterguide.com)

**Cruising Guide to the New York Canal System**, including maps, marinas, attractions, contact Northern Cartographic, 4050 Williston Rd., S. Burlington, VT 05403.

**Cruising Guide to the NY Waterways & Lk. Champlain**, a guide book to Champlain, the Hudson, Erie Canal & Lakes Erie & Ontario. Contact: Watermark Publishing, 800-803-0809, [www.cruisersnet.net](http://www.cruisersnet.net)

**The Great Lakes Seaway Trail**, from Pennsylvania to Quebec, including charts, parks, facilities, and accommodations, contact: Seaway Trail Inc., Corner of Ray and West Main, PO Box 660, Sackets Harbor, NY 13685, or call 800-SEAWAY-T. [www.seawaytrail.com](http://www.seawaytrail.com)

**Maps of Lake George or Great Sacandaga Lake** can be purchased locally or through JIMAPCO, 2095 Rte 9, Round Lake, NY 12151, or call 518-899-5091. [www.jimapco.com](http://www.jimapco.com)

**Fishing Guide to Western NY (Vol 1) or the Finger Lakes (Vol 2)**, including launch sites, bait shops, marinas, lake maps, contact: Sander’s Fishing Guide, PO Box 0624, Amherst, NY 14226-0624, or call 716-832-4285. [www.sandersfishingguides.com](http://www.sandersfishingguides.com)

**Lake Maps** for Chautauqua, Allegany, Black and other NY lakes available from: Fishing Hotspots 1-800-338-5957. [www.fishinghotspots.com](http://www.fishinghotspots.com)

**USCG Oil Spill** - 1-800-424-8802

**NYS DEC Discharge** - 1-800-457-7362

**Note:** *NYS does not endorse, nor is it responsible for the accuracy for any of the above mentioned commercial publications, however we wish to mention them as a potential resource for your recreational planning needs.*



# New York State **BOATER'S GUIDE**

For class schedule information visit:  
[www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com)

**NEW LAW: Personal Flotation Device**

All persons aboard a pleasure vessel less than 21 feet regardless of age must wear a Personal Flotation Device from November 1st to May 1st.



# Introduction

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**I**nterest in recreational boating continues to be an increasing diversion for many New Yorkers. With an ever increasing 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. Volunteer organizations such as the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and the US Power Squadrons are partners with the state in this effort. For further information on boating courses near you, call 1-800-336-BOAT. You may also contact the US Power Squadrons directly at 1-888-FOR-USPS or at their web site <http://www.usps.org>.



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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**

Agency Bldg #1

Albany, NY 12238

518-474-0445

*or visit our web site at [www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com)*

This publication, which was produced under a grant from the Aquatic Resources (Wallop-Breaux) 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.*



**FOR IMMEDIATE DANGER TO LIFE OR PROPERTY  
CALL 911 OR USCG ON MARINE CHANNEL 16  
LOOK FOR AND REPORT:**

- Suspicious waterfront loitering
- Forcible access
- Persons photographing, taping or sketching
- Boaters seeming to be forcibly controlled
- Liquids being poured into reservoirs or lakes
- Apparently dangerous loads and/or cargoes
- Items that appear to be weapons or explosives
- Boats loitering under bridges or by locks or dams
- Diving operations near any critical infrastructure
- Boats or divers in naval protection zones
- Note appearance, size, coloring of individuals
- Note type of boat, car, registration, etc.
- If diving is involved, note color of equipment

**REPORT WHAT YOU SEE TO 1-877-24-WATCH**



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Bureau of Marine and Recreational Vehicles.  
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## To Operate Your Boat or PWC In:

**CT** - New Yorkers may boat in CT for up to 60 days without needing to obtain a CT boating certificate. A NYS certificate is required to operate a PWC (minimum pwc operator age 16).

**PA** - New Yorkers born after 1/1/82 wishing to operate a boat with an engine greater than 25 hp or a PWC (minimum pwc operator age 12) must possess either a NYS or other NASBLA certificate.

**VT** - New Yorkers born after 1/1/74 must possess a NYS or NASBLA certificate in order to operate a boat or PWC (minimum pwc operator age 16).

**NJ** - All New Yorkers Must have a boating safety certificate issued either by the State of New Jersey or State of New York (minimum age to operate A boat or a PWC is 16)

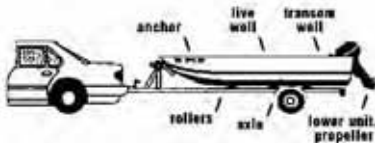
**Canada** - permits non-residents to operate a boat or PWC provided you meet the boating education requirements of your home state. (minimum pwc operator age 16)



## STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

You could be transporting plants and animals that endanger recreational opportunities on New York State's lakes and rivers. Plants and animals cling to your boats, personal water craft, boat trailers, outboard motors, propellers, anchors, fishing gear and can survive in water contained within your equipment. These nuisance species use you and your equipment to invade uninfested waters such as our fragile Adirondack lakes and streams. You can help prevent the spread of these species by following the four simple steps listed below and learning to recognize the hitchhiker. More information can be obtained from the Department of Environmental Conservation's Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources at [www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us) and [www.protectyourwaters.net](http://www.protectyourwaters.net)

**Don't pick up aquatic nuisance hitchhikers.  
Inspect and clean these areas of your equipment.**



### When you leave a body of water:

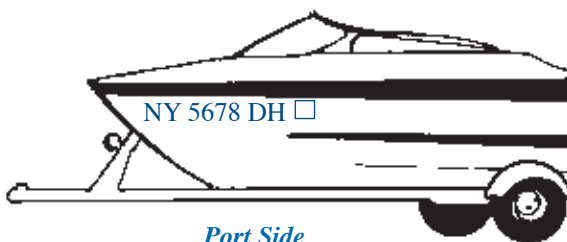
- Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment.
- Eliminate water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.



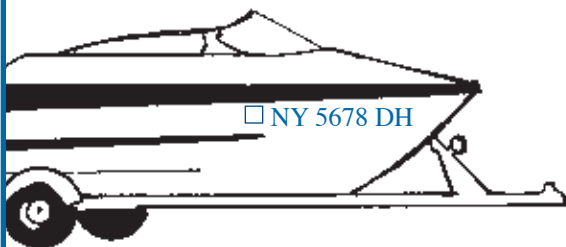
## Part One



# REGISTRATION



*Port Side*



*Starboard Side*

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## 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

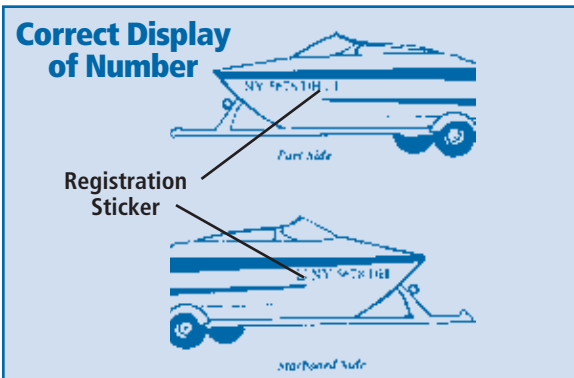
The registration certificate is your proof of current registration. It may also be your only proof of ownership unless the vessel is titled or documented. Vessel operators, whether they are the owner or not, must carry the vessel's original



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.

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## 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.

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,



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Vehicles of the name and address of the new owner, as well as the date of transfer 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.

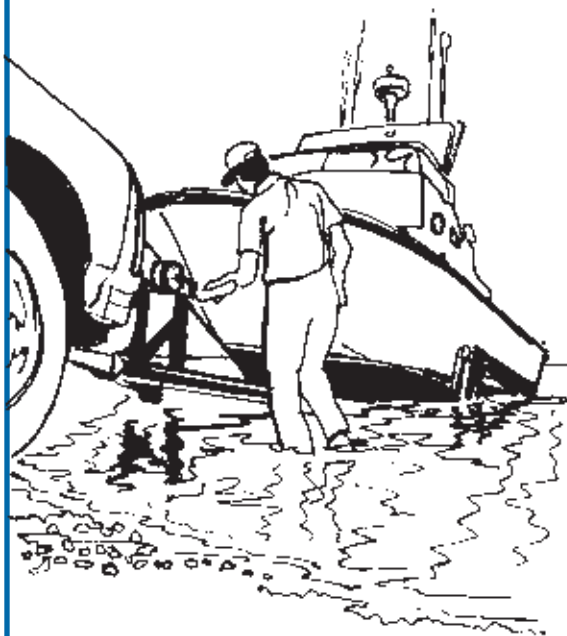
## Registration Fees

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. Seventy-five percent of all registration fees collected from boaters, are returned to the counties to support local marine law enforcement efforts.

## Part Two



# TRAILERING



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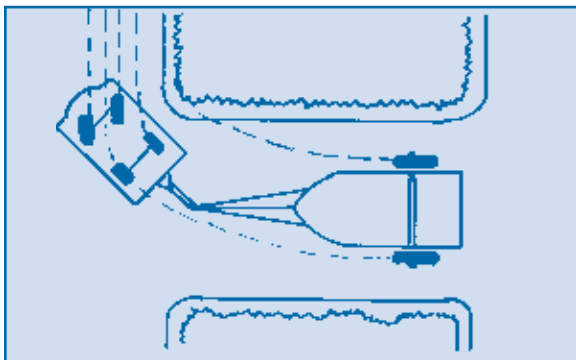
## Trailers

All trailers operated on New York State's public highways must be registered, insured, 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 [nysdmv.com](http://nysdmv.com).

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.





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## 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.

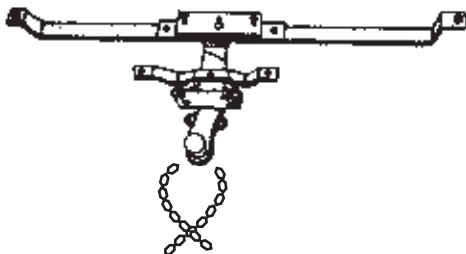
**Safety Tips.** Never exceed your tow hitches rated capacity and always be certain that the trailer hitch is secured to the vehicles frame and not merely a light duty hitch secured only to the bumper. Frame connections are much safer, particularly with increasing loads. Always consult your vehicle and 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.

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.

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**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,

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bow and stern lines have been attached to the boat, the outdrive has been raised, and 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.



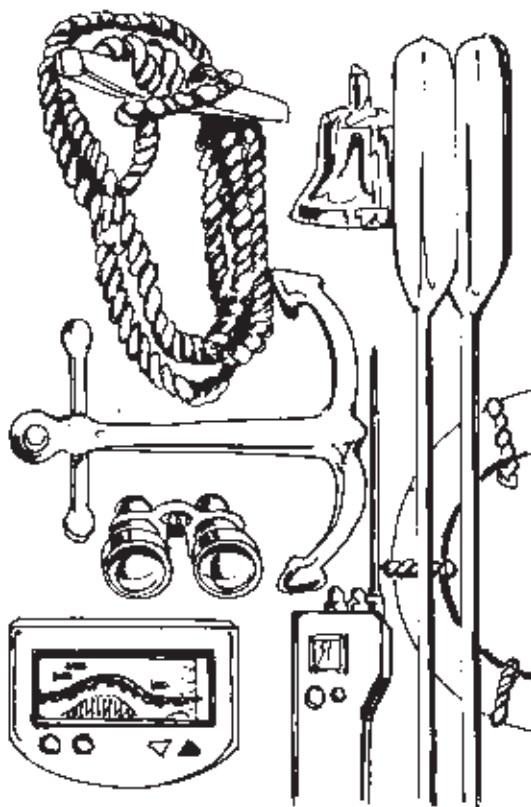
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Come alongside the wall or dock and tie up. Discharge passengers and unload the boat if possible. Have someone get the tow vehicle from the parking lot and get in line for retrieval. When your turn arrives, line up your boat with your trailer which 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.

## Part Three



# EQUIPMENT



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# Required Equipment Aboard Vessels

*(For Personal Watercraft requirements - see page 62)*

## Personal Flotation Devices

Every pleasure vessel including canoes, kayaks and rowboats operated upon the waters of NYS must have on board one United States Coast Guard approved wearable Personal Flotation Device (PFD) for each person on the vessel. In addition, vessels 16 feet and greater in length, except canoes and kayaks, must also carry a type IV throwable PFD. Children under 12 years of age, on any vessel 65 feet or less in length must wear a US Coast Guard approved type I, II or III PFD, while underway. The foregoing requirements do not apply to children less than 12 years of age when situated within a fully enclosed cabin. In order for any PFD to be considered properly worn, any straps or zippers must be tied or zipped. All persons aboard a pleasure vessel less than 21 feet regardless of age must wear a Personal Flotation Device from November 1st to May 1st.

All PFDs carried on board your vessel must be serviceable, readily accessible, and of the appropriate size for the intended PFDs wearer. A serviceable PFD must be free of rot, tears, punctures, or waterlogging of any flotation material. In addition, all straps and buckles must be attached and fully functional. Readily accessible means that the PFD must be quickly reachable in an emergency situation. Never keep your PFDs in plastic bags, or under lock and key while underway. Make certain that all your passengers know the location and proper use of these important life saving devices before getting underway. Try to avoid exposing any PFD to constant direct sunlight, this will in time degrade the device's outer shell. Keep them out of wet or moist areas, and avoid sitting on any PFD particularly those filled with kapok. Sitting on kapok devices may rupture the plastic bags containing the water absorbent buoyant material.

When shopping for any PFD always look for and read the US Coast Guard label. This label, along with the provided informational brochure, will tell you everything you need to know about the device you are about to buy: the type, size, amount of buoyancy, and its proper care.

*To ensure that your vessel has all the equipment required by state and federal law, contact the USCG Auxiliary or US Power Squadrons for a free courtesy marine inspection.*

## Types of PFDs

A **type I PFD**, 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:



*Type I PFD*

adult-which provides a minimum of 22 pounds of buoyancy, and the child-which provides a minimum of 11 pounds.



*Type II PFD*

A **type II PFD**, 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 PFD**, 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. It comes in many styles, colors, and sizes and is generally the most comfortable type for continuous wear.



*Type III PFD*

Float coats, fishing vests, and vests designed with special features suitable for various sports activities are examples of this type of PFD.



*Type IV PFD*

A **type IV PFD**, or **Throwable Device** is designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped and held until rescued. These devices are not intended to

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be worn. Examples of types IVs include buoyancy cushions, life rings and horseshoe buoys.

A **type V PFD**, or **Hybrid Inflatable PFD** is the least bulky of all PFDs. It contains a small amount of inherent buoyancy and an inflatable chamber. Performance can be equal to a type I, II, or III PFD (as noted on the label) when inflated. To meet current vessel carriage requirements, hybrids must be worn when underway and display an official US Coast Guard approval number.

**Inflatable Type III and Type V PFDs** - the US Coast Guard now approves both automatic as well as manually inflated PFDs. Both devices are inflated with compressed carbon dioxide gas which is stored in a replaceable cartridge. These cartridges must be replaced each time the PFD is inflated. The type V automatic inflatable PFD must be worn to meet vessel carriage requirements. The type III manually inflated device is strongly recommended to be worn as well. 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 PFD 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, or children (unless approved for children).

## Checking Your PFD

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 PFD. Be aware that our natural buoyancy changes with body weight, clothing, and breathing.

You should periodically test your PFD 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 PFDs 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 PFDs for securely



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attached straps and functional buckles or fasteners. Discard torn or ripped devices.

PFDs 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 PFDs near oil or grease since these substances can cause deterioration and reduce the the devices' performance. Never use your PFD as a boat fender, such action may tear or rupture the device thus rendering it useless. Your PFD is your primary piece of lifesaving equipment, treat it as such and it may someday save your life.

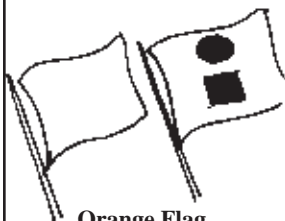
## **Visual Distress Equipment**

State law requires that every mechanically propelled vessel, 16 feet and greater in length, carry United States Coast Guard approved visual distress equipment. This applies to all mechanically propelled vessels operating upon the state's joint jurisdictional waters, where the state and federal government share responsibility, as well as the interior sole-state lakes.

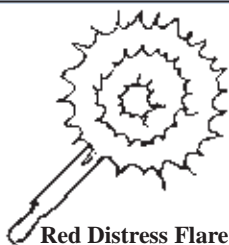
Most boats can meet this requirement by simply carrying three USCG approved day/night hand held flares. You may also carry any combination of three-day and three night-approved pyrotechnic devices. Non-pyrotechnic options include an approved electric distress light (for night) or an orange distress flag (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.

State law requires that all vessels operating between sunset and sunrise, regardless of length, carry visual distress signals approved for night use. For obvious safety reasons rowboats and canoes should also carry visual distress signals approved for night use when out on the water after sunset. Keep in mind also that Federal law requires all manually propelled craft to carry visual distress equipment, approved for night use, when operating on the state's joint jurisdictional waters.

## Visual Distress Equipment



**Orange Flag**  
*Use Day Only*

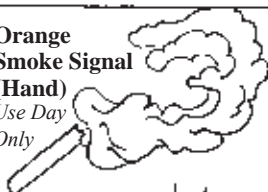


**Red Distress Flare (Hand)**  
*Use Day and Night*

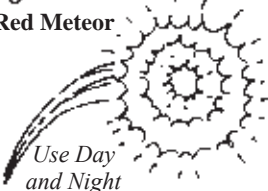
**Arm Signals**  
*(Use Bright Cloth)*



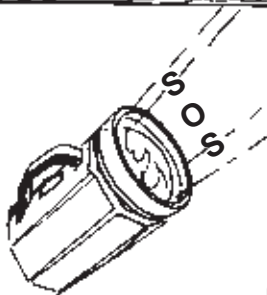
**Orange Smoke Signal (Hand)**  
*Use Day Only*



**Red Meteor**



*Use Day and Night*



*Use Night Only*

**Dye Marker**  
*Use Day Only*



## 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, there are enclosed or permanently mounted fuel tanks on board, when there are closed living

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



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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 (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 insure 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. Lastly don't forget to ventilate the engine space before starting the engine.

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## 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 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 4 and 7 times the depth of water in which you normally anchor.



## Whistle or Horn

All mechanically propelled vessels 39 feet 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 39 feet and less in length a mouth whistle may be used.

## Bell

All vessels 39 feet 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

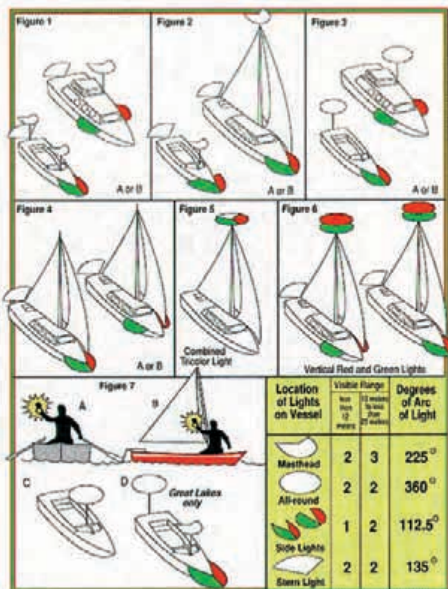
First Aid Kit	Oar/Paddle
Tool Kit	Compass
Bilge Pump/Bailer	Marine Radio
Boat Hook	Spare Parts

# Navigation Lights

Recreational vessels must display their required navigational lights at all times between sunset and sunrise, and during daylight periods of reduced visibility. Sail vessels less than 23 feet 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. Should you see such a light, reduce speed, yield, and if necessary stop your vessel. (See page 26)

# Anchor Lights

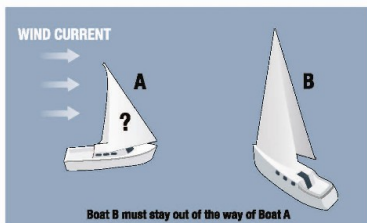
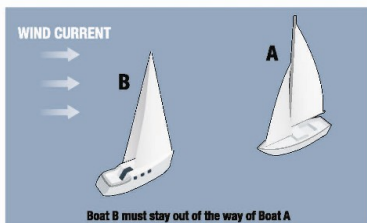
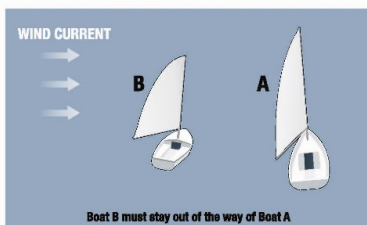
All vessels between 7 and 50 meters in length, when at anchor, must exhibit at night an all around white light. By day a black ball shall be exhibited. Vessels less than 7 meters in length need not display an anchor light unless anchored in or near a narrow channel or where vessels would otherwise normally navigate.



## Part Four



# RULES OF THE NAUTICAL ROAD



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## Rules of the Nautical Road

The rules of the road are an internationally 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 four signals are the only ones 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." Generally this means an alteration of course to your starboard.
2. Two short blasts - "I intend to leave you on my starboard side." In this case an alteration of course to port generally occurs.
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.

(A short blast is that of a one second 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.

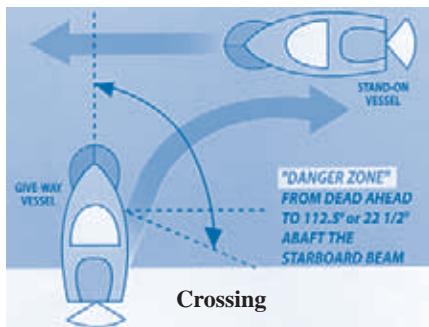
**MEETING.** In this situation both vessels will pass within close proximity to one another on nearly reciprocal headings. The rules require that in this situation both vessels should exchange one short blast and pass with sufficient room on each other's port side. In this case both vessels are required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



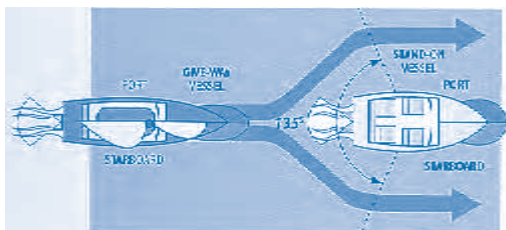
## The Situations



Meeting



Crossing



Overtaking

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**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 danger 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 or you may be only dead right. 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 reduced visibility such as fog, heavy rain, snow, etc., all vessels must travel at a "Safe Speed" for the prevailing conditions and in addition sound a prolonged blast (4-6 sec duration) on the horn or whistle once every two minutes. Vessels less than 12 meters in length that

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can't give this signal must make some other efficient sound signal once every two minutes. Also turn on your navigation lights. Under any reduced visibility situation always navigate with extreme caution while keeping a sharp lookout for lights and signals of other vessels.

When at anchor in reduced visibility every vessel must ring the ship's bell or other similar device for a period of five seconds, once every two minutes. This generally does not apply to vessels either moored in approved anchorage areas or in close in areas where vessels don't normally navigate. Should you be anchored near a channel or other frequently navigated area, you must sound the bell to alert others to your position.

## **Responsibilities between vessels - Who has the right of way?**

1. A power-driven vessel underway must keep out of the way of:
  - A vessel not under command (unable to maneuver).
  - A vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver.
  - A vessel engaged in fishing.\*
  - A sailing vessel.
2. A sailing vessel underway must keep out of the way:
  - A vessel not under command.
  - A vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver.
  - A vessel engaged in fishing.\*
3. A vessel engaged in fishing\* when underway must, so far as possible, keep out of the way of:
  - A vessel not under command.
  - A vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver.

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

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.

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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 pilot needs to execute an emergency maneuver in order to avoid running you down. When meeting any large vessel on the water, a little common sense and courtesy go 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. Both systems are principally the same in that 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, the state system has several regulatory markers which designate direction, speed, danger, etc. These aids are always white with bright orange stripes and legends emblazoned upon the buoy.

**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

**Information & Regulatory Markers**

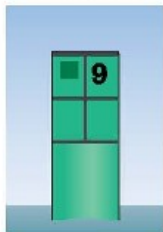
BOATS KEEP OUT!	DANGER!	CAUTION!	INFORMATION

# WHEN GOING UPSTREAM

## Port Side Odd-Numbered Aids



Lighted Buoy

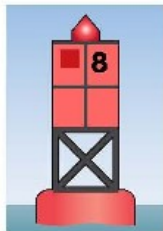


Can Buoy

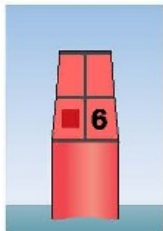


Day Beacon

## Starboard Side Even-Numbered Aids



Lighted Buoy



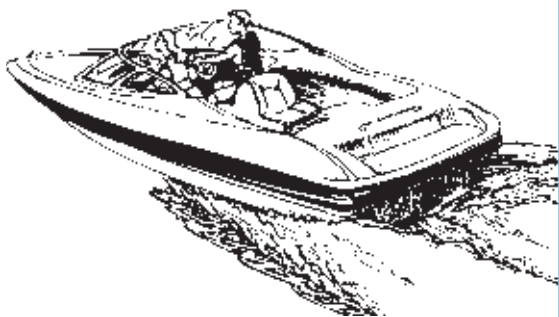
Nun Buoy



Day Beacon



# GENERAL BOATING REGULATIONS



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## 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 safely within the clear space ahead. A vessel operator is always 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.

## Accidents

Unfortunately some accidents on the water will always occur. There are far too many reasons to explain why accidents happen, but there are a few trends that can be identified.

## Fatalities

Most people will tell you that boating fatalities occur during violent collisions involving large boats far off shore. The truth is that the vast majority of fatalities occur either when a small boat capsizes or when a vessel's passenger unexpectedly enters the water. In a large percentage of these cases, had the boaters been wearing PFDs they probably would have survived.

## Injuries

Personal injuries are usually the result of a collision between two vessels, or between a boat and a fixed object such as a dock. The key in preventing this type of accident is to



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always keep a proper lookout, operate at a safe speed, and practice courtesy on the water.

## Property Damage

While not as serious as the previous types of accidents, property damage is of a major concern. Common sense can prevent most types of accidents. Maintain that lookout; navigate with caution; employ proper fueling and ventilation procedures; and always keep the vessel's safety equipment in top shape.

## Boater Responsibility and Accident Reporting

It is the responsibility of every boater involved in an accident to render all practical and necessary assistance possible to victims without seriously endangering their own vessel. If you or your vessel is involved in an accident, a report must be filed with NYS Parks within 5 days if: 1. Someone is killed or missing. 2. Personal injury beyond first aid is sustained. 3. Total property damage exceeds \$1,000. Forms may be obtained from the local marine patrol or may be requested from [nysparks.com](http://nysparks.com). Failure to report an accident may result in a \$100 fine. If for any reason the operator of the vessel is unable to file this report then the owner of the vessel becomes responsible.

If you are involved in an accident with another vessel or other real property you are required to stop and give your name and address, the name and address of the vessels owner (if someone other than you), and your vessels registration or document number to the owner of the other vessel or property. If you cannot locate the owner you must notify local law enforcement **immediately** to report the incident. Failure to properly exchange information in an incident involving loss of life constitutes a felony; personal injury a misdemeanor; and property damage a violation.

## Age of Legal Boat Operation

In order to operate a boat in NYS without adult supervision individuals must be at least 18 years of age or have successfully completed a safe boating course and be between the ages of

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10 and 18. Individuals less than 18 years of age who have not successfully completed a boating safety course may only operate a vessel while under the direct supervision of an individual who is 18 years of age or older. The required boating safety certificate must be carried by the minor at all times while operating the boat.

See page 60 for mandatory educational requirements for personal watercraft operation.

Although not mandatory, except of PWC operation, adult boating education is strongly recommended. Courses are available from many different organizations, usually at a nominal fee. You may contact the Boat/US Foundation at 1-800-336-BOAT for the location of a course near you, or visit nysparks.com.

## **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. Your sheriff's department, as well as the State Park Police, local, county and State Police, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation, along with local Harbormasters and Bay Constables work to ensure compliance with state and local 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.

Negligent or grossly negligent operation is a failure to exercise due care to prevent the endangerment of life, limb, or property of any person and is prohibited by law. Negligent operation may be the result of operator ignorance, inattention, indifference or plain carelessness. Examples of negligent operation are excessive speed for the prevailing conditions, operation in exclusion areas, or positioning oneself on the vessel's bow while underway in an area not intended to accommodate passengers (bow riding). Bow riding does not include those times during docking, anchoring, or handling sails, when it is otherwise advisable to wear a PFD on an open bow area.

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## 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 0.8 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. Fines and penalties are now the same as driving while impaired or intoxicated.

## 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.

Recent studies which have shown the effectiveness of “zero tolerance” laws on the road are believed to be applicable to similar laws on the water.



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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, coordination, 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, it's critical that our balance not be diminished through the consumption of intoxicants. Alcohol will also decrease your coordination. Simple tasks such as climbing a ladder to the bridge, or reaching for your sunglasses on the other side of the dash may become challenging. Drinking also impairs your ability should you find yourself unexpectedly immersed in the water. Alcohol will not only make it more difficult to reach for and put on a PFD, it may also increase one's disorientation upon entering the water thus reducing your chances of rescue. 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. After a couple of drinks, inhibitions are reduced and recklessness takes over. 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. The brain actually becomes impaired in its ability to function. 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.

# Part Six



# GETTING UNDERWAY

## 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.

- Name of person reporting and telephone number. \_\_\_\_\_
- Description of boat.  
Type \_\_\_\_\_ Color \_\_\_\_\_ Trim ...  
Registration No. \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Make \_\_\_\_\_ Other info \_\_\_\_\_  
H.P. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Engine type ... Fuel capacity \_\_\_\_\_  
No. of engines \_\_\_\_\_
- Survival equipment. (Check as appropriate)  
 PFDs  Flares  Mirror  
 Smoke Signals  Flashlight  Food  
 Paddles  Water  Others  
 Anchor  Raft or Dinghy  EPIRB
- Radio  yes  no Type \_\_\_\_\_ Freqs \_\_\_\_\_
- Automobile license ... Trailer license \_\_\_\_\_  
Type \_\_\_\_\_ and make of auto \_\_\_\_\_  
Color \_\_\_\_\_  
where parked \_\_\_\_\_
- Persons aboard \_\_\_\_\_ Address & Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_
- Do any of these persons aboard have a medical problem?  
 yes  no If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_
- Trip Expectations: Leave at \_\_\_\_\_  
From \_\_\_\_\_ Going to \_\_\_\_\_ (Time) and  
Expect to return by \_\_\_\_\_  
not later than \_\_\_\_\_
- Any other pertinent info. \_\_\_\_\_ (Time) call \_\_\_\_\_
- If not returned by \_\_\_\_\_  
the COAST GUARD, or (Local authority) \_\_\_\_\_
- Telephone numbers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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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 (Consult the vessel's capacity plate). And don't forget to sound one prolonged blast before leaving the dock so as to alert others to your movement.

## Basic Flotation

Another important item of "equipment" 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 21 feet in length will tell you just how much



weight and/or people the boat may safely carry. This capacity information has a margin of safety built in to take into consideration an average amount of equipment carried. Should

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an unusually large amount of equipment be taken aboard, be sure to remove one person from the vessels rated capacity for each 150 lbs carried. At no time should the capacities of the vessel be exceeded.



## 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.

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5. Know and abide by the rules of the road
  6. Exercise courtesy and common sense.
  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, which in New York is a misdemeanor.
  9. Encourage everyone to don a PFD, 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 spilt 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



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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



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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.

## 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. Should you run exclusively upon the state’s land locked lakes, all marine sewage must be kept aboard the vessel in a Type III MSD (Holding Tank) and pumped ashore at a marine pumpout facility. In other words, no discharge of any sewage is permitted on any land



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locked lake which is located completely within the borders of the state. In addition, upon the waters of Canandaigua, Skaneateles, Greenwood (Orange County) Lakes, as well as Lake George, any vessel equipped with a toilet, sink, tub, etc., which result in the drainage of any waste water whatsoever must have all such material drain into a holding tank in order that it may be pumped ashore at a marine pumpout facility. Any overboard lines from such systems must also be either sealed or removed. Vessels operating upon the Great Lakes, State Canals, Long Island Sound, or most tidal waters may discharge sewage overboard only after it has been treated in a US Coast Guard certified Type I or II MSD. Type I MSDs may not be used on vessels in excess of 65 feet. Recent legislation now permits localities located in tidal areas to adopt No-Discharge zones provided that they've followed the requirements of both federal and state law. This includes the entire Hudson River as well as a number of bays and harbors on Long Island. Consult with local officials in these areas first. When operating upon Lake Champlain boaters may not discharge sewage at all. All vessels must have their MSDs inoperable as well as all overboard lines disconnected and removed. Sewage may only be kept aboard the vessel in an approved Type III device, for later transfer to a marine pumpout facility.

## **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 64)

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## **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. Should you need to request help during your voyage, your marine radio will allow you to broadcast a mayday message to rescue units as well as other boaters in your immediate area. Current Federal Communications Commission regulations exempt small recreational boats, operating domestically, from needing to carry a ship station or operator license. For information and a license form you may call 1-800-418-3676.

## **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.

This means commercial ships may not hear your distress transmissions 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.

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## Paddle Craft

Increasingly popular paddle craft, kayaks 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 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 night time visual distress signals and a white light to show to prevent collision. The U.S. Coast Guard also suggests that paddlers write their name and contact information under the front deck of their boats so as to avoid needless searches that may occur when paddle craft are found adrift, presumably missing their operator.

## Cold Water Immersion

Paddlers and sportsmen often boat during the early and late seasons when water temperatures are cold. As of 2009, boaters are required by law to wear a PFD 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, provided that visibility is not reduced. Effective 2002, 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 PFD 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

### Water Skiing Hand Signals



PFD. 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., PO Box 191, Winterhaven, FL 33880.

## Diving Operations

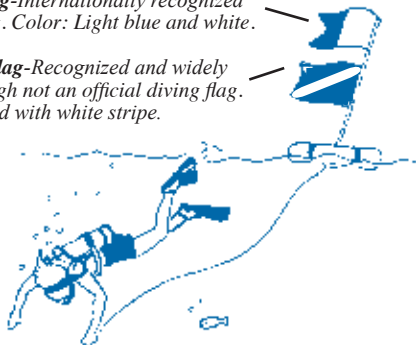
All motorboat operators should be aware of the two flags which indicate the presence of divers in the water. The official flag, Alpha, is the internationally recognized indicator for all dive operations. Any vessel displaying the Alpha flag is to be considered restricted in its ability to maneuver and 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. The prudent mariner should afford the same privileges to vessels displaying this flag as would be afforded a vessel displaying Alpha.

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.

### Diver's Flags

**Alpha Flag**-Internationally recognized diving flag. Color: Light blue and white.

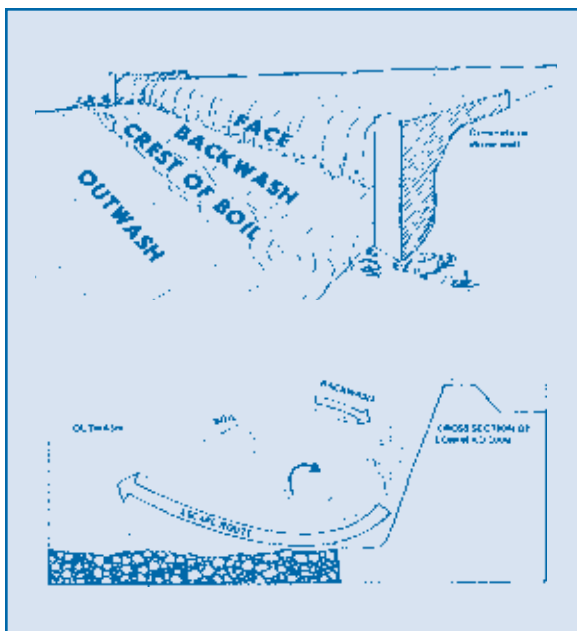
**Diver's Flag**-Recognized and widely used though not an official diving flag. Color: Red with white stripe.





## Dams and Locks

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 unrescueably trapped beneath the falling water. Stay well away from both the top as well as the bottom of any dam.



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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 unnavigable areas.

When locking through with any large vessel be particularly cautious of prop turbulence and vessel wake. As 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:

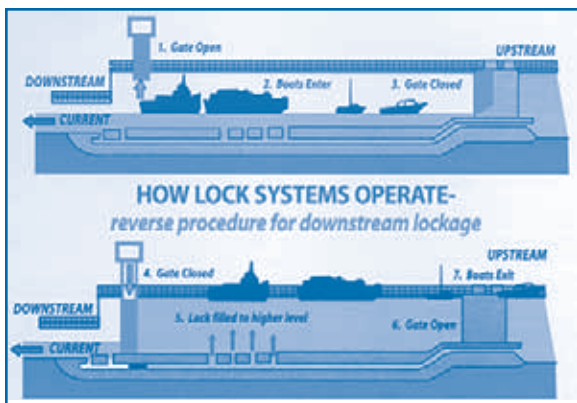
**Approaching the lock.** When approaching the lock, boaters should stop at a safe distance from the lock and follow the specified signals. Boaters without VHF radio may give

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.



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Serious injury may result from using your hands or feet to fend off the chamber wall. Use a boat hook, oar, or paddle. Line handlers should wear PFDs. 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 should then cast off all lines and proceed at a reduced speed to exit the chamber in station order. Remember to observe posted speed limits and stay clear of dams in lock areas.

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

## Part Eight



# PERSONAL WATERCRAFT



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## 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.

An approved course of instruction includes an 8-hour classroom session and a proctored examination. Certificates issued by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadron are acceptable alternative certification under state law. Previously issued young boater safety certificates, issued by the State of New York, are also acceptable.

An operator who is the resident of another state or country and is the holder of a valid boating safety certificate issued pursuant to the laws of the operator's resident state or country is exempt from the NYS certification requirement however they must have the certificate with them when operating.

The following individuals are exempt from the personal watercraft educational requirements: both U.S. and Canadian licensed commercial vessel operators, NYS certified boating instructors, certified instructors of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons, peace/police officers, fire/rescue personnel and lifeguards acting pursuant to their assigned duties.

### Minimum Age for Operation

In order to operate a personal watercraft within New York the operator must be a minimum of 14 years of age. *As of January 1st of 2009 the minimum legal age for personal watercraft operation is 14. Although it is not recommended, those under 14 may operate a personal watercraft provided there is a certified operator over the age of 18 on board accompanying this individual. It is also strongly discouraged that small under-age individuals 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 can not keep both feet on the deck in order to maintain balance during operation.*

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## 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 PFDs 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

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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. It's interesting to note that in the 27 accidents involving PWC last year, 16 involved collisions with other vessels.

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. PWC 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:**

**PFDs**-must be worn by each person on or towed behind (impact rated models recommended). Fully inflatable PFDs should not be used.

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

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

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

**Hours of Operation**-between sunrise and sunset, and only when conditions are not classified as restricted visibility. 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. Federal rules do require a fire extinguisher.*



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## 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, should a designated access site exist within the 500 foot exclusion area, PWC may access and exit at no more than 10 mph.

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,
- any maneuver which unreasonably or unnecessarily endangers life, limb or property, including carrying more passengers than is recommend by the manufacturer.

**Liveries**-prohibited from renting 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.

Until 1/1/12 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 PFD 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.

## 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.

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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 ... \_\_\_\_\_

Type \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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## Take the New York Safe Boating Course and carry on the tradition of boating safely.

**New York State is celebrating 51 years of Boating Education.**



### **Who should take a course?**

Anyone who is out on the waterways in a motorized or human powered boat.

### **Who is required legally to take a course?**

- Youths ages 10-17 when operating a motorboat without adult supervision.
- Anyone age 14 or older when operating a personal watercraft.

**A NY Safe Boating Certificate is good for life, may allow you a discount on your boat insurance, and has reciprocity in other states, and countries that require boating education.**

**To find a course go to  
[www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com)**





**New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza  
Agency Building 1 • Albany, New York 12238