



# Watercraft Safety

WEEK 4: 15 JUNE, 2020

## BOATING SAFETY

You learned the "rules of the road" before you sat behind the wheel of a car, and you should do the same before taking the helm. Just like studying to get your driver's license, it is very important to have the boating information and certifications you need to be a safe boater before you hit the water. By consulting a safe boating guide and obtaining the required certificates beforehand, you not only protect yourself and family, but other boaters on the water as well. Here is a list of precautions for safe boating:

**Take a Boating Course.** New boaters and experienced experts alike need to be familiar with the boating rules of the road. Boating safety courses are offered locally, are relatively inexpensive, and can often be completed in a day, in-person or online.

**Get a Free Vessel Safety Check.** The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and U.S. Power Squadrons offer complimentary boat examinations to verify the presence and condition of certain safety equipment required by state and federal regulations. Free of charge, they also offer virtual vessel exams.

**Follow a Pre-Departure Checklist.** Utilizing a pre-departure checklist is a helpful way to check the boat and ensure the proper gear is onboard.

### CALIFORNIA BOATING STATS 2016

- 588 accidents
- 266 injuries
- 50 fatalities
- \$4 million property damage

**Be Weather-Wise.** Always check local, route and destination weather and water conditions before departure and ensure it is safe to go out.

**Know the Nautical Rules of the Road.** Maintain a proper lookout and be respectful of buoys and other navigational aids, all of which have been placed there to ensure your



safety and the safety of the boats around you.

**Develop a Float Plan.** Whether you choose to inform a family member or staff at your local marina, let someone else know where you're going and how long you're going to be gone. A float plan can include the following information: name, address, and phone number of trip leader and passengers; boat type and registration information; trip itinerary; and, types of communication and signal equipment onboard, such as an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).

**Designate an Assistant Skipper.** Make sure more than one person onboard is familiar with all aspects of the boat's handling, operations, and general boating safety, in case the primary operator is incapacitated and someone else needs to get the boat back to shore.



**Make Proper Use of Life Jackets.** Assign and fit each member of your onboard team with a life jacket prior to departure. Regulations vary by state but children under 16 and all watersports riders should wear a life jacket on the water.

**Avoid Alcohol.** Operating a boat while intoxicated is illegal. Nearly half of all boating accidents involve alcohol. Make sure both the primary skipper and the assistant skipper are and will remain sober before leaving the dock.

**Use Common Sense.** Operate at a safe speed at all times (especially in crowded areas), stay alert, and steer clear of large vessels and watercraft that can be restricted in their ability to stop or turn.

**Stay Clear of the Engine.** Drivers should wear the boat's engine cut-off switch lanyard at all times. Keep watch around the propeller area when people are in the water. Never allow passengers to board or exit your boat from the water when engines are on or idling. Take extra precautions near boats towing skiers or tubers.



**Be Aware of Carbon Monoxide.** Maintain fresh air circulation throughout the boat. Educate all passengers about the symptoms of CO poisoning and where CO may accumulate.

**Skip Swimming in a Marina.** Never swim in a marina or in other areas where boats are connected to shore power. Stray power in the water can create an electric shock hazard.

# PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (PWC) SAFETY

At an average length of around 10 feet, personal watercrafts (PWC) may seem small, but they come with some pretty big responsibility. With the horsepower of a large outboard engine and the acceleration of a motorcycle. PWC are not toys. In fact, the U.S. Coast Guard considers personal watercraft Class A vessels, which means all safety equipment and operation laws that apply to boat under 16 feet also apply to a PWC.



In California only those individuals 16 years of age and older can operate a PWC with a motor of 15 horsepower or more. It is legal for a child 12 - 15 years of age to operate a PWC if they are being supervised by a person on board with them who is 18 or over.

According to U.S. government reports, most accidents are associated with rental operators, underage operators, under-trained and under-educated boaters and a variety of factors associated with recreational-boating accidents.

So before you launch, here are a few things you'll need to know to have a safe and hassle-free day on the water.

### Required Equipment:

- A life jacket for each operating passenger, and person being towed
- A Coast Guard-approved B-I fire extinguisher
- An approved sound-signaling device such as a whistle or horn
- An emergency engine cutoff lanyard attached to the operator

- Proper display of registration numbers, letters, and validation decals
- Vessel registration, to be displayed when requested
- A functioning backfire flame arrestor and passive ventilation system

### Recommended Safety Equipment

- Hand-held VHF radio, and a cell phone as a backup
- A basic first-aid kit, sunscreen, and burn cream
- A dewatering device such as a hand operated bilge pump
- An anchor and enough anchor line for your area
- If pulling a skier or other tow-sport participant, a skier-down flag, and rear-view mirrors
- Distress signaling devices such as flares, an orange flag, or signal mirror

For more information, visit the California Division of Boating and Waterways at [www.dbw.parks.ca.gov](http://www.dbw.parks.ca.gov).

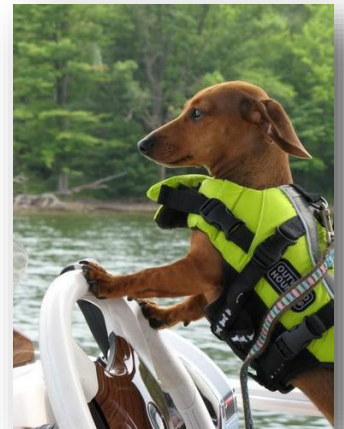
## LIFE JACKETS SAVE LIVES!

Life jackets come in many shapes, colors and materials. Some are made rugged to last longer while others are made to maintain body heat in cold water. No matter which life jacket you choose, get one that is right for you, your planned activities and the water conditions you anticipate. Spending a little time now can save your life later.

Life jacket sizes run from infant to XXL. Adult life jackets will not work for children until they weigh about 90 pounds. Children's life jackets should have a loop on the collar and a strap between the legs.

Here are the guidelines for inspecting and wearing your life jacket:

1. Check the label for US Coast Guard compliance.
2. Check that there are no broken parts and no mold or rips in the fabric.
3. Fasten up all buckles, zippers, and straps. Adjust straps so that they jacket fits snugly.
4. Check the fit by lifting the shoulders of the life jacket. It shouldn't slip above the chin or ears. It should feel snug, yet comfortable.
5. Wear it! Make sure you wear the right life jacket before you go out on the water.



The US Coast Guard reports that only 5% of adults in powerboats wore a life jacket in 2018. For children, the rate was less than 68%.



### CAMP PENDLETON SAFETY CENTER

We provide a wide range of safety support services aimed at preserving combat readiness by identifying hazards and reducing risk to people and resources. We perform inspections, provide technical support, assist with safety program implementation, conduct mishap investigations, and offer safety training opportunities for all base personnel to include tenant commands. We want to empower all Sailors, Marines, civilians, and their families to embrace a proactive culture of risk identification and management to achieve zero preventable mishaps.

Have a question? Email us at: [Cpen\\_safety\\_help@usmc.mil](mailto:Cpen_safety_help@usmc.mil)

Commanding General's Safety Hotline: 760.763.7233