the HANDBOOK! of Wisconsin Boating Laws and Responsibilities

Approved by

WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2009 Edition

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BOAT WISCONSIN

A Course on Responsible Boating

Boater education certification is required by law for anyone born on or after 01/01/1989 and 16 years old or older before they may operate a motorboat on Wisconsin's waterways. Even if it's not required for you, becoming certified may save you money on boat insurance and may allow you to operate alone if you are at least 12 years old.

Before taking a certification course, you must be assigned a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources customer identification number. Call 1-888-936-7463 between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. daily.

After you have your identification number, you have two ways to be certified.

1. Over the Internet …

Learn what you need to know to be a safe boat operator online! The complete course with exciting visuals awaits you on the Internet. Interactive graphics help you learn and retain information on boating safely in Wisconsin. Successfully complete the online test and you will receive a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources boater education certificate by mail.

Start today at www.boat-ed.com/wi

2. In a classroom …

Share the learning experience with other interested students and a qualified instructor. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources can help you find a classroom course in your area.

Call 1-888-936-7463 for information or visit dnr.wi.gov

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Helping Wisconsin Boaters ... by providing boating courses, courtesy vessel examinations, and surface and air operations. For more information, visit our website at **www.cgaux.org**.

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the HANDBOOK! of Wisconsin Boating Laws and Responsibilities

This handbook includes a summary of Wisconsin boating laws. For complete information on what is legal when boating in Wisconsin, see the Wisconsin Statutes and Regulations and federal laws.

- To stay up-to-date on Wisconsin boating laws, contact the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources:
  - Call **1-888-936-7463**
  - Visit our website at **dnr.wi.gov**
- For federal boating laws, visit the U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety website at **www.uscgboating.org**

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Table of Contents

It's the LAW!

Before Going Out
Registering Your Vessel 3
Other Facts About Titling and Registration. 4
Hull Identification Number 5
Who May Operate/ Age Restrictions 6
Local Regulations 7
Enforcement 7

Required Equipment
Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) 8
Sound-Producing Devices 9
Fire Extinguishers 9
Navigation Lights 10
Ventilation Systems 12
Backfire Flame Arrestors 12
Mufflers and Noise Level Limits 12
Visual Distress Signals (VDSs) 13

On the Water
Unlawful Operation 14
Alcohol and Drugs 16
Obstructing Navigation. 16
Homeland Security Restrictions 17
Boating Accidents 17
Diving Activities 18
Boat Battery. 19
Discharge of Waste 19
Discharge of Trash. 20
Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances. 20
Aquatic Nuisance Species 20

Specifically for PWCs
Requirements Specific to PWCs 22

Specifically for Skiing
Requirements for Towing Skiers. 23

Boating BASICS

Before Going Out
Vessel Capacity 24
Trailering Your Vessel Safely . . .24

On the Water
Navigation Rules 25
Nighttime Navigation 26
Non-Lateral Markers. 28
Boating Emergencies. 29

Sunrise and Sunset–2009 31-32
Required Equipment Checklist 33

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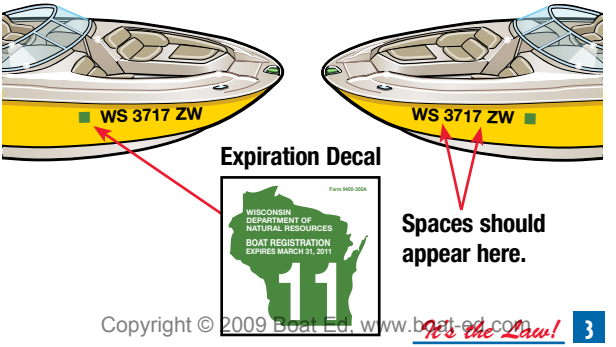
Before Going Out

It's the LAW!

All operators are required to obey laws that regulate your vessel's registration and operation.

Registering Your Vessel

- You must have a Wisconsin Certificate of Number (registration) and expiration decals to operate a recreational vessel legally. Exceptions to the requirement to register a recreational vessel include:
  - Sailboats 12 feet of length or less and not equipped with a motor, and sailboards
  - Manually propelled vessels that are not equipped with a motor or sail
  - Vessels registered in another state and using Wisconsin waters for less than 60 consecutive days
- The Certificate of Number is obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- *The Certificate of Number (registration card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.*
- The registration number and decals must be displayed as follows.
  - Numbers must be placed on each side of the forward half of the vessel.
  - Number must be read from left to right.
  - Number must be in at least 3″-high **BLOCK** letters.
  - Number's color must contrast with it's background.
  - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space at least two inches wide.
  - Decals must be affixed three inches behind (towards the stern) and in line with the number.



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Other Facts About Titling and Registration

- **Titling:** Only vessels 16 feet or more in length require a Certificate of Title.
- **Vessel Operation:** If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered properly.
- **Expiration:** Registration is valid for three years, beginning on April 1 and expiring on March 31 at the end of each three-year period. No vessel may be operated after March 31 without renewing the registration.
- **Duplicates:** If a Certificate of Number is lost or destroyed, the vessel owner must apply to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a duplicate.
- **Buying or Selling a Vessel:** Transfer of ownership of a vessel terminates the Certificate of Number and Certificate of Title.
  - The "buyer" must apply for a new registration and/or title on forms furnished by the DNR. The previous owner's Certificate of Number and Certificate of Title must accompany the application.
  - Upon receipt of the required fee and applications, the DNR will issue a new Certificate of Number and/or title.
  - After applying, the "buyer" may operate the vessel for *up to 60 days* while waiting for the registration card and expiration decals to arrive. The operator must have a copy of the application on board.
  - It is unlawful to transfer the number assigned by the DNR from one vessel to another.
- **Changes Requiring Notification:** The owner of a registered vessel must notify the DNR within 15 days of the occurrence of any of the following events.
  - The owner changes his or her address.
  - The owner transfers all or any part of his or her interest in the vessel.
  - The vessel is destroyed or abandoned.

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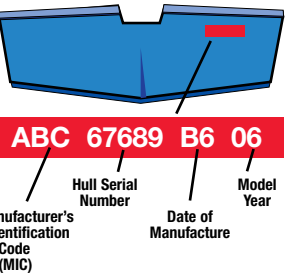
- **Documented Vessels:** Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard. Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information. ***Documented vessels also must be registered in Wisconsin.***
  - The expiration decals must be displayed on either side of the vessel's name on the transom, but it is not required to display the registration number.
  - If the expiration decals are not displayed beside the vessel's name, then the registration number and decals must be displayed as they are for undocumented vessels.

For More Information on Registering ...

- Call Wisconsin DNR at **1-888-936-7463**
- Visit the Wisconsin DNR website at **http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cs/registrations/wivrs/**

Hull Identification Number

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- Hull Identification Numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.



- You should write down your HIN and put it in a place separate from your vessel in case warranty problems arise or your vessel is stolen.
- If a vessel has no HIN, or if the manufacturer's HIN has been removed, obliterated, or altered, the condition must be noted in the application for the Certificate of Title. The DNR will assign a HIN to the vessel.

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Who May Operate/Age Restrictions

- It is illegal for a parent or guardian to allow a child to operate a vessel in violation of the requirements below.
- Individuals who are required to complete a boater safety course before operating a vessel must carry the course certificate on board the vessel.

Motorboats (Other Than a Personal Watercraft)

- **A person under the age of 10** may not operate a motorboat.
- **A person 10 or 11 years old** may operate a motorboat *only if* accompanied by a parent, a guardian, or a person at least 18 years old who is designated by the parent or guardian.
- **A person 12-15 years old** may operate a motorboat *only if*:
  - He or she is accompanied by a parent, a guardian, or a person at least 18 years old who is designated by the parent or guardian ***or …***
  - He or she has completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the Wisconsin DNR.
- **A person born on or after January 1, 1989, and at least 16 years old** may operate a motorboat *only if* he or she has completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the Wisconsin DNR.

Personal Watercraft (PWC)

- **A person under the age of 12** may not operate a PWC.
- **A person 12-15 years old** may operate a PWC *only if* he or she has completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the Wisconsin DNR. (Parental supervision is not a substitute for a boating safety course certificate as with other motorboats.)
- **A person born on or after January 1, 1989, and at least 16 years old** may operate a PWC *only if* he or she has completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the Wisconsin DNR.
- **A person under 16 years old** may not rent or lease a PWC.

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Local Regulations

Many local waterways in Wisconsin have specific equipment requirements, operational restrictions, and restrictions on certain activities in addition to those covered in this handbook. Be sure to check with the local boat patrol or municipality for additional regulations before you go boating.

Enforcement

Wisconsin conservation wardens, county sheriffs, and municipal police enforce the boating laws of Wisconsin. U.S. Coast Guard officers also patrol and have enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.

- Officers have the authority to stop and board your vessel in order to check for compliance with state and federal laws.
- It is illegal to refuse to follow the directive of a person with law enforcement authority.
  - A vessel operator who has received a visual or audible signal from a patrol boat must reduce speed to "slow, no wake speed" and give way to the patrol boat.
  - A vessel operator must stop when requested or signaled to do so by a law enforcement officer or a patrol boat.

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Required Equipment

It's the LAW!

When preparing to go out, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- All vessels must have at least one USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD (life jacket) for each person on board.
- In addition to the requirement for life jackets, one USCG–approved Type IV PFD must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer (except canoes and kayaks) and immediately available.
- Federal law requires children under the age of 13 to *wear* a USCG–approved PFD while underway in an open vessel on federally controlled waters.
- Sailboarders and windsurfers are exempt from PFD requirements but are encouraged to wear a PFD.
- Every person on board a personal watercraft must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- Besides being USCG–approved, all PFDs must be:
  - *In good and serviceable condition.*
  - *Readily accessible,* which means you are able to put the PFD on quickly in an emergency.
  - *Of the proper size for the intended wearer.* Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

TYPE I: Offshore Life Jackets
These vests are geared for rough or remote waters, provide the most buoyancy, and will turn most unconscious persons face up.

TYPE II: Near-Shore Vests
These vests are good for calm waters and may not turn some unconscious wearers face up.

TYPE III: Flotation Aids
These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters and will not turn most unconscious persons face up.

TYPE IV: Throwable Devices
These cushions and ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble and are not designed to be worn.

TYPE V: Special-Use Devices
To be acceptable, these PFDs must be worn whenever the vessel is underway.

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Sound-Producing Devices

In periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position, a sound-producing device is essential.

- Although not required on most state waters, sound-producing devices are required on federally controlled waters. (See page 13 for a definition of "federally controlled waters")
  - Vessels less than 65.6 feet in length, which includes PWCs, are required to carry on board a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal audible for at least one-half mile.
  - Vessels that are 65.6 feet or more in length are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, *and* a bell that are audible for at least one mile.
- No vessel may be equipped with a siren, except vessels used by law enforcement officers.

Fire Extinguishers

- All vessels are required to have a Type B, USCG–approved fire extinguisher(s) on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Inboard/outboard or inboard engine
  - Closed compartments
  - Closed living spaces
  - Closed storage compartments in which flammable or explosive gases or vapors may become entrapped.
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks
- Approved types of fire extinguishers are identified by the following marking on the label—"Marine Type USCG Approved"—followed by the type and size symbols and the approval number.

Fire Extinguisher Requirements

Classification type & size	Foam minimum gallons	Carbon Dioxide minimum pounds	Dry Chemical minimum pounds
B-I	1¼	4	2
B-II	2½	15	10

Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*
Less than 26 ft.	one B-I	None
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	two B-I ***or*** one B-II	one B-I
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	three B-I ***or*** one B-II and one B-I	two B-I ***or*** one B-II

** refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system*

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Navigation Lights

The required navigation lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility.

Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

If less than 65.6 feet long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:

- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet higher than the side-lights.

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

Unpowered vessels are sailboats or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed.

- **If less than 65.6 feet long**, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2. The required lights are:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away.
  - A sternlight visible from at least two miles away.
- **If less than 23.0 feet long**, these vessels should:
  - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 65.6 feet in length.
  - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight with a white light which can be exhibited as in illustration 3 in sufficient time to avoid a collision.

All Vessels When Not Underway

All vessels are required to display a white light visible in all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area or more than 200 feet from shore between sunset and sunrise.

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1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

The masthead light and sternlight may be combined as an all-round white light on vessels less than 39.4 feet long.

2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

An alternative to the sidelights and sternlight is a combination red, green, and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23.0 Feet

Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.

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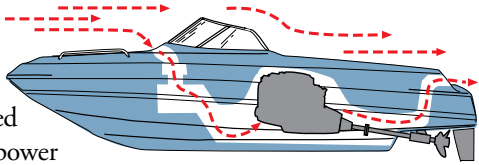
Ventilation Systems

The purpose of ventilation systems is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases.

- All gasoline-powered vessels, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls to remove the fumes.



- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine.
- If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a personal watercraft), open the engine compartment and sniff for gasoline fumes before starting the engine.

Backfire Flame Arrestors

Backfire flame arrestors are designed to prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

- All powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have an approved backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor.
- Backfire flame arrestors must be:
  - In good and serviceable condition ***and …***
  - U.S. Coast Guard–approved (must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards).
- Periodically clean the flame arrestor(s) and check for damage.

Mufflers and Noise Level Limits

Vessel operators may not hear sound signals if the engine is not adequately muffled.

- The exhaust of every internal combustion engine on any vessel must be effectively muffled. That is, the engine's exhaust must be muffled or suppressed at all times so as not to create excessive noise.
- It is unlawful to operate a vessel that exceeds a noise level of 86 dBA.
- The use of cutouts is prohibited.

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Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency.

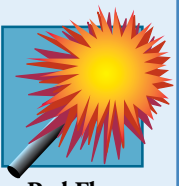
- Vessels on federally controlled waters must be equipped with visual distress signals. If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, at least three must be carried in the vessel.
- An operator who observes a distress signal must stop and render aid. It is prohibited to display visual distress signals unless assistance is needed.

VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night), or both day and night signals. VDSs are either pyrotechnic (smoke and flames) or non-pyrotechnic (non-combustible).

Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

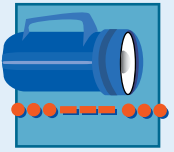
Orange Smoke
Day Signal

Red Meteor
Day and Night Signal



Red Flare
Day and Night Signal

Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals



Electric Light
Night Signal

Orange Flag
Day Signal

Arm Signal
Although this signal does not meet VDS equipment requirements, wave your arms to summon help if you do not have other distress signals on board.

Federally Controlled Waters

Vessels must observe federal requirements on these waters:

- Coastal waters
- The Great Lakes (including Lake Michigan and Lake Superior)
- Territorial seas
- Waters which are two miles wide or wider and are connected directly to one of the above

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On the Water

In addition to the laws mentioned previously, here are some other Wisconsin regulations that apply when vessel operators are on the water.

Unlawful Operation

Wisconsin law states that these dangerous operating practices are illegal.

- **Negligent or Reckless Operation** of a vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or a similar device is operating in a manner that causes danger to the life, limb, or property of any person. Examples of negligent or reckless operation are:
  - Jumping the wake of any vessel that is towing a person on water skis, inner tube, wakeboard, or other similar device
  - Operating a vessel within any area marked off or set aside as a prohibited area or a swim area
  - Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic
  - Operating a vessel in a manner that creates hazardous wave or wake conditions while approaching or passing another vessel
  - Steering toward another object or person in the water and swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision
  - Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel
- **Operating a Boat With a Person Riding on the Bow, Deck, or Gunwale** is allowing the operator or passengers to ride on the bow, gunwale, transom, seat backs, seats on raised decks, or any other place where there may be a chance of falling overboard.

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- **Overloading** is loading the vessel beyond the recommended capacity shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer. The operator must limit the vessel's load to the total weight or maximum number of persons shown on the capacity plate, whichever is more restrictive.
- **Improper Speed or Distance** is not maintaining a proper speed and/or distance while operating a vessel. Specifically, it is illegal to:
  - Operate a vessel at a distance from other vessels or at a speed that exceeds safe and reasonable limits given the waterway traffic, marked speed limits, weather, and other boating conditions.
  - Exceed the speeds posted or charted in any specific zone or area.
  - Operate a vessel repeatedly in a circuitous manner within 200 feet of another vessel or person in the water.
  - Operate a vessel within 100 feet of any dock, raft, pier, or restricted area on any lake at greater than "slow, no wake speed."
  - Operate a vessel at greater than "slow, no wake speed" on lakes that are 50 acres or less and have public access, unless such lakes serve as thoroughfares between two or more navigable lakes.
  - Operate a vessel at greater than "slow, no wake speed" within 100 feet of a swimmer, unless the vessel is assisting the swimmer.

"Slow, No Wake Speed" means a speed at which a vessel moves as slowly as possible while still maintaining steerage control

- **Unsafe Condition** is placing or leaving in public waters any vessel that is not safe to operate. Law enforcement officers may instruct the operator to take immediate corrective action or return to mooring if any of the following "unsafe conditions" exist.
  - The vessel is overloaded.
  - There are insufficient personal flotation devices, fire extinguishers, backfire flame arrestors, ventilation systems, or navigation lights.
  - The vessel is leaking fuel or has fuel in the bilges.

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Alcohol and Drugs

Wisconsin law prohibits *anyone from* operating a motorboat or manipulating water skis or similar devices while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs cause impaired balance, blurred vision, poor coordination, impaired judgment, and slower reaction times.

- Anyone who operates or attempts to operate a vessel is deemed to have given consent to an alcohol and/or drug test.
- It is illegal for a person to operate a motorboat or use water skis, a surfboard, or other device if he or she:
  - Is under the influence of an intoxicant or a controlled substance ***or ...***
  - Has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or greater.

Obstructing Navigation

It is illegal to:

- Operate any vessel in such a way that it will interfere unnecessarily with the safe navigation of other vessels.
- Anchor a vessel in the traveled portion of a river or channel in a way that will prevent or interfere with any other vessel passing through the same area.
- Moor or attach a vessel to a buoy (other than a mooring buoy), beacon, light, or any other navigational aid placed on public waters by proper authorities.
- Move, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.
- Obstruct a pier, wharf, boat ramp, or access to any facility.

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Homeland Security Restrictions

- Violators of the restrictions below can expect a quick and severe response.
  - Do not approach within 100 yards and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Naval vessel. If you need to pass within 100 yards of a U.S. Naval vessel for safe passage, you must contact the U.S. Naval vessel or the U.S. Coast Guard escort vessel on VHF-FM channel 16.
  - Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise-line, or petroleum facilities.
  - Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc.
  - Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel.
- Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary. Report all activities that seem suspicious to the local authorities, the U.S. Coast Guard, or the port or marina security.

Boating Accidents

- An operator involved in a boating accident resulting in death, injury, or damage to the boat(s) or other property exceeding $2,000 must:
  - Stop his or her vessel *immediately* at the scene of the accident ***and …***
  - Assist anyone injured or in danger from the accident, unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her own vessel or passengers ***and …***
  - Give, in writing, his or her name, address, and vessel identification to anyone injured and to the owner of any property damaged by the accident.
- A vessel operator is required to make an oral and written report whenever a boating accident results in:
  - Loss of life or disappearance of a person ***or …***
  - Injury to any person ***or …***
  - Property damage in excess of $2,000.
- Oral reports must be made immediately to a DNR conservation warden or a local law enforcement officer.
- A written report must be submitted within 10 days on a DNR *Form 4100-20* to DNR-Boat Safety, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 52707.

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Diving Activities

Diver-Down Flag

Persons participating in scuba diving, skin diving, snorkeling, or underwater spearfishing must display a diver-down flag unless they are within 150 feet of shore.

- A diver must stay within 50 feet of the flag on federal waters. Except in the case of an emergency, a diver may not surface more than 50 feet from the flag on any waters. It is unlawful to display a diver-down flag when not diving.
- Vessels not engaged in diving operations must stay at least 100 feet away from any displayed diver-down flag.
- Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.

Divers Flag

A rectangular red flag, at least 12 x 15 inches with a three-inch white diagonal stripe, mounted on a float or buoy to be clearly visible

A blue and white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag), usually flown from a vessel and used on federally controlled waters

Diving Around Wisconsin's Historic Shipwrecks

The Wisconsin Historical Society has published information about many historic shipwreck sites in Wisconsin waters, some of which are marked by seasonal mooring buoys. Damaging or removing material from a wreck site not only diminishes the enjoyment for future visitors but also is a crime that can result in fines, imprisonment, and the loss of a diver's gear, boat, trailer, and vehicle.

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Boat Battery

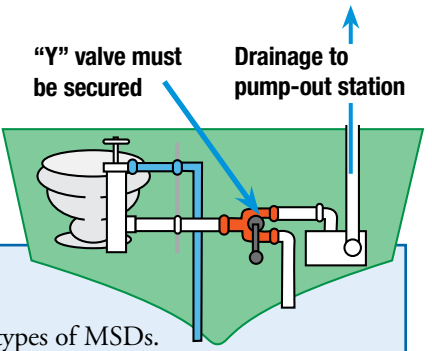
It is unlawful to operate a motorized vessel equipped with a storage battery unless the battery is secured against shifting. The battery must be equipped with nonconductive terminal shields to prevent accidental shorting. Both the positive and negative terminals must be covered. A covered battery box with a strap is best.

Discharge of Waste

It is unlawful to place, leave, or discharge waste or waste containers into or near any Wisconsin waters.

- Every vessel with an installed toilet must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board.
- All installed marine sanitation devices must be U.S. Coast Guard–certified and working properly.

Typical Marine Sanitation Device



Types of MSDs

There are three types of MSDs.

- Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large vessels. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged. Types I and II MSDs with "Y" valves that would direct the waste overboard must be secured so that the valve cannot be opened. This can be done by placing a lock or non-reusable seal on the "Y" valve or by taking the handle off the "Y" valve in a closed position.
- Type III MSDs provide no treatment and are either holding tanks or portable toilets. Collected waste should be taken ashore and disposed of in a pump-out station or onshore toilet.

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Discharge of Trash

It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into any state or federally controlled waters.

- You must store trash in a container while on board and place it in a proper receptacle on shore.
- If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a Garbage Disposal Placard that is at least 4 x 9 inches and notifies passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.

Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

- You are not allowed to discharge oil or hazardous substances into the water.
- You are not allowed to dump oil into the bilge of the vessel without means for proper disposal.
- You must dispose of oil waste at an approved reception facility. On recreational vessels, a bucket or bailer is adequate for temporary storage prior to disposing of the oil waste at an approved facility.

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances into the water, immediately call the U.S. Coast Guard at **1-800-424-8802**.

- If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a 5 x 8-inch placard made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery spaces or at the bilge pump control station, stating the Federal Water Pollution Control Act's law.

Aquatic Nuisance Species

Introducing non-native species into Wisconsin waters can upset the balance of the ecosystem, thereby harming the environment. Aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, milfoil, and hydrilla, are most often spread between waterways by hitching a ride on vessels and trailers. When transplanted into new waters, these organisms proliferate, displacing native species and damaging the water resource.

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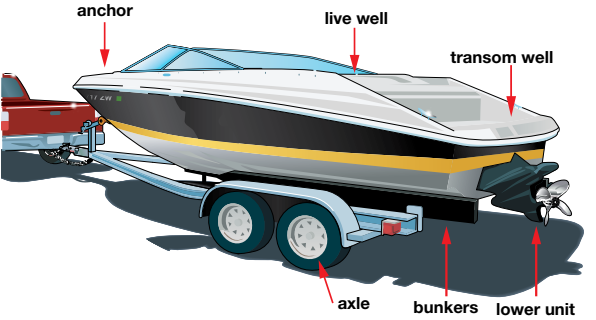
- Wisconsin law prohibits launching a vessel, a trailer, or any boating equipment if there are any aquatic plants or zebra mussels attached.
- To help prevent spreading aquatic nuisance species:
  - Inspect your vessel and trailer, and remove any plants and animals you see before leaving the area. Be sure to check the locations labeled below.



  - Drain water from your outboard motor or lower unit, live well, and bilge on land before leaving the area. Wisconsin law requires you to:
    - Drain all water from all boats, trailers, boat equipment, and fishing equipment before you transport the boat, trailer, or equipment away from that body of water or its shore.
    - Drain all water from any boat being transported over land before the boat enters Wisconsin from another state.
  - Dispose of your bait properly on land. Never release live bait into a body of water or release aquatic animals from one body of water into another.
  - Destroy any remaining nuisance species by:
    - Rinsing your vessel, propeller, trailer, and equipment with hot water (at least 104° Fahrenheit) especially if moored for more than a day ***or …***
    - Air-drying your vessel and equipment for at least five days.
- If you think you have found a zebra mussel, save it and contact your nearest Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources office.

For more information on aquatic nuisance species found in Wisconsin, visit **http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/**

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Specifically for PWCs

PWC operators must obey the laws that apply to other vessels as well as obey additional requirements that apply specifically to the operation of personal watercraft.

Requirements Specific to PWCs

- Every person on board a PWC must *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ignition safety switch must attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD.
- A PWC may not be operated between sunset and sunrise.
- A PWC operator must always face forward.
- A PWC may not be operated at faster than "slow, no wake speed" within:
  - 100 feet of any other vessel
  - 100 feet of a dock, pier, raft, or restricted area on any lake
  - 200 feet of shore on any lake
- There are minimum age and boater education requirements for operators of PWCs. See page 6.
- A PWC must be operated in a responsible manner. Maneuvers that endanger people or property are prohibited, including:
  - Jumping a wake with a PWC within 100 feet of another vessel
  - Operating within 100 feet of a vessel that is towing a person on water skis, inner tube, wakeboard, or similar device, or operating within 100 feet of the tow rope or person being towed
  - Weaving a PWC through congested waterway traffic
  - Steering toward another object or person in the water and swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision
  - Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with a PWC

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Specifically for Skiing

It's the LAW!

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or any other device have additional laws.

Requirements for Towing Skiers

- A person may not be towed behind a vessel between sunset and sunrise.
- When a vessel is towing a person on water skis, a surfboard, or other device, the operator must have another competent person on board to act as an observer.
- A PWC operator may not tow a person on water skis or other devices unless the PWC is designed and recommended by the manufacturer to accommodate at least three people.
- Those towing skiers on water skis, a surfboard, or similar devices and those being towed must act in a safe and prudent manner.
  - Vessels towing persons may not come within 100 feet of other vessels, persons in the water, a swimming area, or a public boat landing.
  - Persons being towed behind a vessel on water skis, a surfboard, or other device, or their towing rope, may not come within 100 feet of a PWC.

Avoid Propeller Strike Injuries!

Most propeller strike accidents result from operator error. Victims include swimmers, scuba divers, fallen water-skiers, and boat operators or passengers. Most propeller accidents can be prevented by following basic safe boating practices.

- Maintain a proper lookout. The primary cause of propeller strike accidents is operator inattention.
- Make sure the engine is off so that the propeller is not rotating when passengers are boarding or leaving a boat.
- Never start a boat with the engine in gear.
- Slow down when approaching congested areas and anchorages. In congested areas, always be alert for swimmers and divers.

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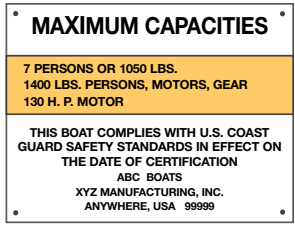
Before Going Out

Before going out on the water, take steps to make the outing safe and enjoyable.

Vessel Capacity

- Always check the capacity plate, which is usually found near the operator's position or on the vessel's transom. This plate indicates the maximum weight capacity and/or maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely.



- PWCs and some other vessels are not required to have a capacity plate. Follow the recommended capacity in the owner's manual and on the manufacturer's warning decal.

Trailering Your Vessel Safely

- **Before leaving home:**
  - Secure and evenly distribute all gear in the vessel.
  - Properly secure the vessel with tie-down straps.
  - Tilt and secure the engine to increase clearance.
  - Crisscross the safety chains when attaching them.
  - Test the trailer brakes and lights.
- **Launching your vessel from a trailer:**
  - Prepare your vessel well away from the boat ramp.
  - Back the vessel into the water until the engine's lower unit can be submerged while on the trailer.
  - Warm up the engine. Back the trailer further until the vessel floats. Then back slowly off the trailer.
- **Retrieving your vessel:**
  - Back the trailer into the water so that two-thirds of the rollers or bunks are submerged.
  - Move the vessel onto the trailer far enough to attach the winch line to the bow eye of the vessel. Finish pulling it onto the trailer by cranking the winch.
  - Tow the vessel off the ramp out of the way of others.
  - While at the ramp area, remove all weeds from the vessel, remove the drain plug, and drain live wells.

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On the Water

Safe navigation on Wisconsin waterways is everyone's responsibility. All operators are equally responsible for taking action as necessary to avoid collisions.

Navigation Rules

There are two terms that help explain these rules.

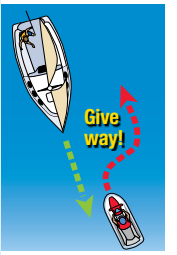
- **Stand-on vessel:** The vessel that should maintain its course and speed
- **Give-way vessel:** The vessel that must take early and substantial action to avoid collision by stopping, slowing down, or changing course

Power vs. Power

Meeting Head-On

Power vs. Power: Neither vessel is the stand-on vessel. Both vessels should keep to the starboard (right).

Power vs. Sail: The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.



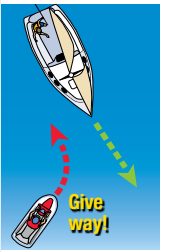
Power vs. Sail

Crossing Situations

Power vs. Power: The vessel on the operator's port (left) side is the give-way vessel. The vessel on the operator's starboard (right) side is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail: The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Power

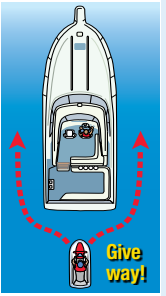


Power vs. Sail

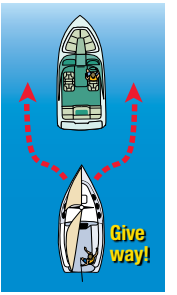
Overtaking

Power vs. Power: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



Power vs. Power



Power vs. Sail

Note: Powered vessels and sailing vessels should give way to unpowered vessels.

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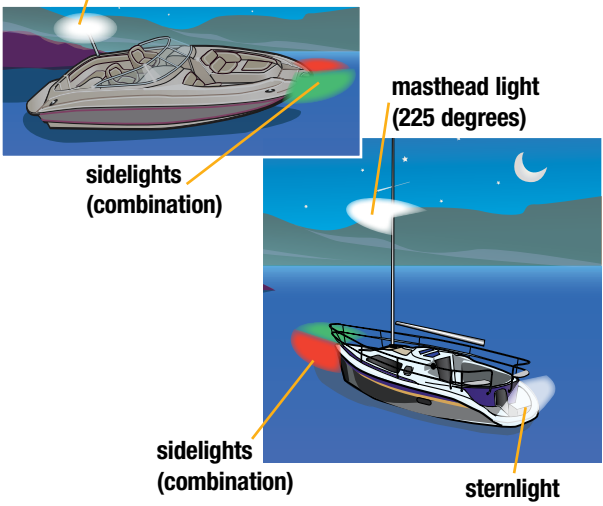
Nighttime Navigation

Be on the lookout for the lights of other vessels when boating at night. Several types of lights serve as navigational aids at night. There are four common navigation lights.

- **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (also called combination lights) because they are visible to another vessel approaching from the side or head-on. The red light indicates a vessel's port (left) side; the green indicates a vessel's starboard (right) side.
- **Sternlight:** This white light is seen only from behind or nearly behind the vessel.
- **Masthead Light:** This white light shines forward and to both sides and is required on all power-driven vessels. A masthead light must be displayed by all vessels when under engine power. The absence of this light indicates a sailboat under sail.
- **All-Round White Light:** On power-driven vessels less than 39.4 feet in length, this light may be used to combine a masthead light and sternlight into a single white light that can be seen by other vessels from any direction. This light serves as an anchor light when sidelights are extinguished.



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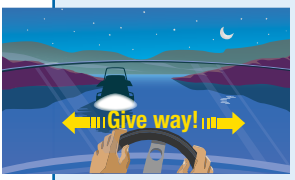
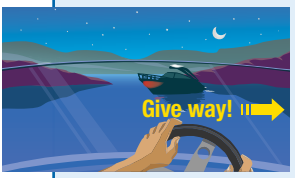
Encountering Vessels at Night



When you see only a white light, you are overtaking another vessel. It is the stand-on vessel whether it is underway or anchored. You may go around it on either side.

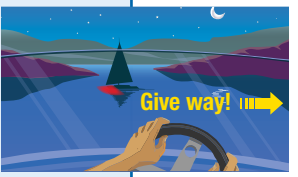
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.

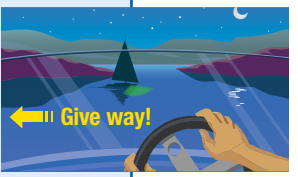


When you see a red and a white light, you must give way to the other vessel! Slow down and allow the vessel to pass, or you may turn to the right and pass behind the other vessel.

Encountering a Sailboat at Night

When you see **only a red light or only a green light**, you may be approaching a sailboat under sail and you must give way. The sailboat under sail is always the stand-on vessel!





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Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigational aids that give information other than the edges of safe water areas. The most common are regulatory markers which are white and use orange markings and black lettering. These markers are found on lakes and rivers.

Information

Squares indicate where to find food, supplies, repairs, etc. and give directions and other information.

Controlled Area

Circles indicate a controlled or restricted area such as speed limit, no fishing or anchoring, ski only or no skiing, or "slow, no wake" zones.

Restriction

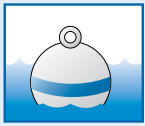
Crossed diamonds indicate areas off-limits to all vessels such as swimming areas, dams, and spillways.

Danger

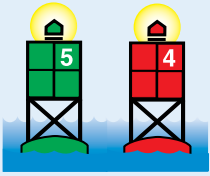
Diamonds warn of dangers such as rocks, shoals, construction, dams, or stumps. Always proceed with caution.

Channel Marker Buoys

Inland Waters Buoys are white with black vertical stripes and indicate the center of a navigable waterway.



Mooring Buoys are white with a blue horizontal band and are found in marinas and other areas where vessels are allowed to anchor.



All-Green and All-Red Companion Buoys indicate that the boating channel is between them.

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Boating Emergencies

A safe boater knows how to prevent and respond to boating emergencies.

Falling Overboard

- **To prevent persons from falling overboard:**
  - Don't sit on the gunwale, bow, seat backs, motor cover, or any other area not designed for seating.
  - Don't sit on pedestal seats when underway at greater than idle speed.
  - On fishing boats with carpeted decks (such as bass boats), don't sit or stand on the deck when the boat is moving at greater than idle speed.
  - Don't stand up in or lean out from the boat.
  - Don't move about the boat when underway.
- **If someone on your boat falls overboard:**
  - Reduce speed and toss the victim a throwable PFD.
  - Turn your boat around and slowly pull alongside the victim, approaching the victim from downwind or into the current, whichever is stronger.
  - Turn off the engine. Pull the victim on board over the stern, keeping the weight in the boat balanced.

Capsizing or Swamping

- **To reduce the risk of capsizing or swamping:**
  - Don't overload your boat. Balance the load.
  - Slow your boat appropriately when turning.
  - Secure the anchor line to the bow, never to the stern.
  - Don't boat in rough water or in bad weather.
- **If you capsize or swamp your boat, or if you have fallen overboard** and can't get back in:
  - Stay with the boat.
  - Try to reboard or climb onto it in order to get as much of your body out of the cold water as possible.
- **If the boat sinks or floats away,** don't panic.
  - If wearing a PFD, remain calm and await help.
  - If you aren't wearing a PFD, look around for one or for other buoyant items to use as a flotation device.
  - In cold water, float rather than tread.

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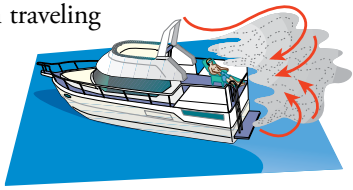
Hypothermia

- **If you are boating in cold water:**
  - Dress in several layers of clothing under your PFD or wear a wetsuit or dry suit.
  - Learn to recognize the symptoms of hypothermia. Symptoms begin with shivering and bluish lips and nails, and progress to a coma and, ultimately, death.
- **To reduce the effects of hypothermia:**
  - Put on a PFD if not wearing one. It helps you to float without excessive movement and insulates your body.
  - Get as much of your body out of the water as possible.
  - Don't take your clothes off unless necessary—clothes can help you float and provide insulation.
  - Don't thrash or move about. Excess motion consumes energy and increases loss of body heat.
  - Draw your knees to your chest and your arms to your sides, protecting the major areas of heat loss.
  - If others are in the water with you, huddle together with your arms around their shoulders.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas that can be deadly. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, keep air flowing through the boat and take extreme caution when running a generator at a dock or at anchor.

- Whenever people are using a swim platform or are in the water close to the stern, turn off all gasoline-powered generators with transom exhaust ports.
- Swimmers should never enter the cavity between the swim platform and the stern of the boat.
- When boating, be careful running downwind as exhaust gases may blow back on board. On cabin cruisers, be aware that exhaust gases can blow back into the stern when traveling into the wind.



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Sunrise and Sunset

Northern Reference Location: Powers, Michigan
Southern Reference Location: Sheboygan, Wisconsin

NORTHERN

Day	MAY 09		JUN 09		JUL 09		AUG 09		SEP 09		OCT 09	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
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3	5:35	8:00	5:03	8:34	5:06	8:43	5:36	8:16	6:14	7:24	6:51	6:26
4	5:33	8:01	5:03	8:35	5:07	8:42	5:37	8:14	6:15	7:22	6:53	6:24
5	5:32	8:03	5:02	8:36	5:07	8:42	5:39	8:13	6:16	7:20	6:54	6:22
6	5:30	8:04	5:02	8:36	5:08	8:42	5:40	8:11	6:18	7:18	6:55	6:20
7	5:29	8:05	5:01	8:37	5:09	8:41	5:41	8:10	6:19	7:16	6:56	6:19
8	5:27	8:06	5:01	8:38	5:09	8:41	5:42	8:08	6:20	7:14	6:58	6:17
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31	5:05	8:32			5:33	8:20	6:10	7:29			7:29	5:38

SOUTHERN

Day	MAY 09		JUN 09		JUL 09		AUG 09		SEP 09		OCT 09	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
1	5:43	7:54	5:12	8:26	5:13	8:36	5:40	8:14	6:15	7:26	6:49	6:31
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4	5:39	7:57	5:11	8:28	5:15	8:36	5:43	8:10	6:18	7:21	6:52	6:26
5	5:37	7:59	5:10	8:29	5:15	8:35	5:44	8:09	6:19	7:19	6:53	6:24
6	5:36	8:00	5:10	8:30	5:16	8:35	5:46	8:07	6:20	7:17	6:55	6:23
7	5:35	8:01	5:10	8:30	5:17	8:35	5:47	8:06	6:21	7:15	6:56	6:21
8	5:34	8:02	5:09	8:31	5:18	8:34	5:48	8:05	6:23	7:14	6:57	6:19
9	5:32	8:03	5:09	8:32	5:18	8:34	5:49	8:03	6:24	7:12	6:58	6:17
10	5:31	8:04	5:09	8:32	5:19	8:33	5:50	8:02	6:25	7:10	6:59	6:16
11	5:30	8:05	5:09	8:33	5:20	8:33	5:51	8:00	6:26	7:08	7:01	6:14
12	5:29	8:06	5:09	8:33	5:21	8:32	5:52	7:59	6:27	7:06	7:02	6:12
13	5:28	8:08	5:09	8:34	5:21	8:32	5:53	7:57	6:28	7:04	7:03	6:10
14	5:26	8:09	5:08	8:34	5:22	8:31	5:54	7:56	6:29	7:03	7:04	6:09
15	5:25	8:10	5:08	8:35	5:23	8:30	5:56	7:54	6:30	7:01	7:06	6:07
16	5:24	8:11	5:08	8:35	5:24	8:29	5:57	7:53	6:32	6:59	7:07	6:05
17	5:23	8:12	5:09	8:35	5:25	8:29	5:58	7:51	6:33	6:57	7:08	6:04
18	5:22	8:13	5:09	8:36	5:26	8:28	5:59	7:50	6:34	6:55	7:09	6:02
19	5:21	8:14	5:09	8:36	5:27	8:27	6:00	7:48	6:35	6:53	7:10	6:01
20	5:20	8:15	5:09	8:36	5:28	8:26	6:01	7:46	6:36	6:52	7:12	5:59
21	5:20	8:16	5:09	8:36	5:29	8:25	6:02	7:45	6:37	6:50	7:13	5:57
22	5:19	8:17	5:09	8:37	5:30	8:24	6:04	7:43	6:38	6:48	7:14	5:56
23	5:18	8:18	5:10	8:37	5:31	8:24	6:05	7:41	6:40	6:46	7:16	5:54
24	5:17	8:19	5:10	8:37	5:32	8:23	6:06	7:40	6:41	6:44	7:17	5:53
25	5:16	8:20	5:10	8:37	5:33	8:22	6:07	7:38	6:42	6:42	7:18	5:51
26	5:16	8:21	5:11	8:37	5:34	8:21	6:08	7:36	6:43	6:41	7:19	5:50
27	5:15	8:22	5:11	8:37	5:35	8:19	6:09	7:35	6:44	6:39	7:21	5:48
28	5:14	8:23	5:12	8:37	5:36	8:18	6:10	7:33	6:45	6:37	7:22	5:47
29	5:14	8:24	5:12	8:37	5:37	8:17	6:11	7:31	6:46	6:35	7:23	5:45
30	5:13	8:24	5:13	8:37	5:38	8:16	6:13	7:30	6:48	6:33	7:25	5:44
31	5:12	8:25			5:39	8:15	6:14	7:28			7:26	5:43

Please adjust times based on the map on page 32.

Source: U.S. Naval Observatory, http://aa.usno.navy.mil

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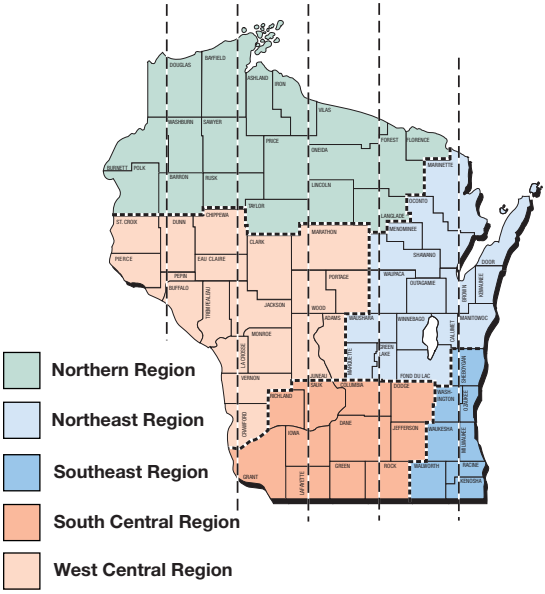
Use this map to adjust sunrise/sunset times:

Zone F	Zone E	Zone D	Zone C	Zone B	Zone A
+ 20 min.	+ 16 min.	+ 12 min.	+ 8 min.	+ 4 min.	in table



REGIONAL DNR OFFICE COVERAGE

Boating Safety Instructors and Boating Ambassadors are people like you who want to make a difference on the lakes in their community.

- **A Boating Safety Instructor:** is a certified volunteer instructor whose main responsibility is to teach boating safety education classes in their community.
- As the name "volunteer" would imply, the compensation for instructors is the satisfaction of knowing that what you are doing is important, that your contribution may save lives and positively influence the attitudes and actions of those who share or will share Wisconsin waterways with you.

Are you interested in getting involved with your community? Contact your local Recreational Safety Warden (see back cover for contact information) to learn more about this program.

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Wisconsin Required Equipment Checklist

	Unpowered Boat	PWC	Boat Less Than 16 Ft.	Boat 16 Ft. to Less Than 26 Ft.
Boater Safety Course Certificate On Board		✓1	✓1	✓1
Certificate of Number On Board		✓	✓	✓
Expiration Decals Displayed		✓	✓	✓
PFDs: Type I, II, III, or V	✓	✓2	✓3	✓3
PFD: Type IV				✓
Type B-I Fire Extinguisher		✓	✓	✓
Ignition Safety Switch		✓		
Backfire Flame Arrestor		✓	✓4	✓4
Ventilation System		✓	✓	✓
Muffler		✓	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell		✓5	✓5	✓5
Daytime Visual Distress Signals				✓5
Nighttime Visual Distress Signals		N/A	✓5	✓5
Navigation Lights	✓	N/A	✓	✓

Numbers correspond with the chart above.

1. Required for some operators of motorized vessels and PWCs. See page 6 for details.
2. Those on PWCs must *wear* a PFD at all times.
3. Those under the age of 13 years must *wear* a PFD when on federally controlled waters.
4. Required on inboard and stern drives only.
5. Required when operating on federally controlled waters.

Note: Some items are not applicable to personal watercraft (PWCs) because PWCs are not allowed to operate between sunset and sunrise.

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Southeast Region
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South Central Region
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Central Office
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Madison, WI 53707
608-266-2621

Find out about ...

- online boat license renewal
- fishing and hunting permits
- places to boat, fish, and hunt
- education and outdoor programs
- state parks, trails, and campgrounds

Everything you need to know about boating in Wisconsin is just a click away!

Visit our website:

dnr.wi.gov

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