

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



Prepare for safe boating in Wisconsin.

10 MOST COMMON BOATING VIOLATIONS

1. Failure to provide an adequate number of life jackets
2. Personal watercraft violations
3. Operating a boat without a valid certificate of number (begins with "WS")
4. Local ordinance violations
5. Operating a motorboat while under the influence
6. Operating a boat in excess of the speed limit or in a prohibited area
7. Operating a boat at night without the required lights
8. Operating a boat that is towing a water-skier without a required observer
9. Failure to display proper registration
10. Failure to have certificate of number on board (plastic card titled "Wisconsin Boat Registration Certificate")

— Source: Wisconsin DNR

WHEN TO CALL

Boat accidents must be reported immediately to a conservation warden or other law enforcement officer if the accident (regardless of the number of boats involved) results in loss of life, injury that requires medical treatment beyond first aid, boat or property damage in excess of \$2,000 or complete loss of a boat.

To report a boating accident or other violation, call 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367).

In addition, within 10 days of the accident, the operator must submit a written report on Form 4100-20 (Operator Boating Incident Report Form) to the Department of Natural Resources. If you are unable to download the form from the DNR website (dnr.wi.gov/org/es/enforcement/docs/4100020.pdf), forms are also available from DNR offices, sheriffs' departments and many local police departments. Mail completed forms to:

**WI Department of Natural Resources
Boating Program - LE/5**
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

Boater education is mandatory in Wisconsin



It is estimated that over one million boats take to Wisconsin waters each year making courtesy, safety and education important issues for boaters.

Boating is a major Wisconsin recreational activity as well as a significant part of the state's economy and tourism industry. In Wisconsin, the number of motorboat registrations has increased by over 15 percent since 1996. Department of Natural Resources surveys indicate that an average of 36 percent of Wisconsin citizens participate in boating each year and this level of participation is expected to continue.

"But safe boating is a critical part of a pleasant on-the-water experience and safe boating starts before you launch," explains Roy Zellmer, DNR Boating Law Administrator. In fact, as a result of 2007 legislation, boating education is now mandatory in Wisconsin for motorboat operators.

The law: Wisconsin boating safety certification or an out-of-state equivalent certification is required for operators born on or after January 1, 1989. Operators 12 to 15 years of age must either have a certificate or have an adult on board while operating. Anyone 10 years of age or older is eligible to take the class and receive a safety education completion certificate. The certificate does not become valid until the child reaches 12 years of age.

Statistics bear out what logic suggests — boater education prevents accidents and saves lives. Of the approximately 7,700 accidents reported each year, the U.S. Coast Guard found that nearly 70 percent are caused by operator error as opposed

to boating and environmental factors.

Incompetent boaters also cause more severe accidents. The National Transportation Safety Board reports boating fatalities are second only to highway fatalities and more than 80 percent of recreational boat operators involved in fatal boating accidents have not taken any type of boater education course. An untrained boater would likely not know the proper steps to take in a life-threatening situation, such as capsizing, a fall, fire, sinking, flooding or collision.

In 2007, 18 people died in 122 reported boat accidents on Wisconsin waters. Five deaths were the result of impact/trauma/injuries with the remaining 13 a result of drowning. Eleven of the 13 drowning deaths were due to the boat capsizing or falls overboard. Failure to wear a life jacket or wear it correctly contributed to all but one of the drowning deaths. Alcohol was a contributing factor in one third of the fatal boating incidents.

Zellmer asks you to start the season on a safe note and boat smart. The DNR offers boater safety courses in cooperation with schools, private clubs and organizations. In 2007, 5,405 students were certified in 299 classes. Another 2,627 were certified by completing an Internet boat safety course.

The new boating education rule in Wisconsin also allows boat rental businesses to provide the minimum



NATIONAL SAFE BOATING COUNCIL

basic training required for people who will be operating a motorboat which they have rented or leased. The minimum age to be eligible for a temporary boater education training and certificate is 16 years of age, and the certification only applies to the operation of boats that are rented or leased by the holder of the certificate. Motorboat rental businesses will be required to collect a \$10 fee for the temporary boating education course and issuance of the certificate.

On course

There is at least one boater education course held per county per year. Boating safety classes are mostly offered in March, April, May and June. Visit dnr.wi.gov/org/es/enforcement/safety/upcoming.htm to check latest availability. Course cost is \$10 and content includes instruction in:

1. Boats, classification of boats, hull designs and motors.
2. Legal requirements, including registration and equipment requirements.
3. Navigation rules, basic safety regulations and waterway marking systems.
4. Getting underway, preparation, loading, boarding, cruising, docking, anchoring, knots, trailering, courtesy and maintenance.

For state boating law information, call Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, at 1-888-936-7463, or visit dnr.wi.gov

5. Boat accidents, emergency measures, aquatic safety, alcohol usage, visual distress signals, fire on board and first aid.

An online boating safety course is also available. To register visit www.boat-ed.com/wi/index.htm. This online instruction is not recommended for children under 14 years of age.

Be boat ready

It's also time to conduct your annual boat maintenance and make certain your registration is up to date and that the current year sticker is displayed. Here are a few other items to add to your boat check-up:

Do trailer maintenance. Clean and check for rust. Tighten bolts. Check trailer hitches, safety chains, rollers and pads. Check tire pressure and tire tread. Keep the tires and your spare inflated to the pressure indicated on the sidewall and inspect the tires for signs of wear. Check the safety chains from the car to the trailer and from the winch to the boat.

For both trailer and boat, check electrical systems to make sure all lights are in working order. Charge up those batteries.

Inspect the boat. Check the hull, pulleys, carpeting and fittings. Grease pulleys and check them for signs of wear. Check and lubricate steering cables. Move on to the electrical conduits, live well, compartments, chairs, benches, transom and the motor. Get your motor tuned-up for the season.

Check all your lines including the anchor ropes. Replace if frayed.

Inspect the fuel lines for wear and cracks. Install a fresh fuel filter. Inspect your fuel tanks and cap vents.

Check your safety equipment including the number of life jackets on board, and make sure the fire extinguisher, flare kit, flashlights and first aid kit are up to snuff.

Check the vehicle you will be using to tow the trailer and boat. Inspect the ball and hitch assembly and make sure the brakes on your vehicle are in good shape.

Do your part to stop the spread.

Clean boats mean clean waters. The DNR reminds you to take these steps to prevent the spread of invasive species every time you leave a launch:

- Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and remove visible aquatic plants, animals and mud.
- Drain water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells and bait containers.
- Dispose of leftover bait in the trash, not in the water or on land.
- Wash your boat and equipment with high pressure or hot water, or let it dry for five days before heading to another waterbody.

Visit dnr.wi.gov/invasives/ to learn more about what you can do to keep Wisconsin waterways clean and prevent the spread of invasive species.



ROBERT QUEEN

SAFETY TIPS FOR BEGINNERS AND SEASONED BOATERS

Even if you have taken a boater education course it helps to brush up on these important boating safety tips before your season on the water begins.

1. Carry one wearable U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved life jacket of the proper size and type for each boat occupant. Serviceable jackets and vests have no tears, rips, broken straps or snaps. Squeeze kapok life jackets to check that they are pliable and are free of punctures in the inner plastic liner. And remember: all life jackets must be ready at hand and not enclosed in plastic bags or locked compartments. Better yet, just wear one every time you go boating.
2. Boats 16 feet and over must also carry one USCG-approved throwable life jacket (Type IV).
3. If your boat has enclosed compartments or a false floor, you must carry a USCG-approved fire extinguisher. Make sure that it is charged and accessible.
4. Test your boat lights before the boat leaves the dock. If you use battery-operated lights, always carry extra batteries. Keep in mind that even if you plan to be back before dark, an equipment malfunction or bad weather may change your plans.
5. Be weather wise. Sudden wind shifts, lightning flashes and choppy water all can mean a storm is brewing. Bring along a radio and keep a close eye on the weather.
6. Bring emergency supplies: maps, flares and a first aid kit. Keep them in a floatable pouch.
7. Tell someone where you are going and when you will return. Bring a cell phone.
8. Check the boat landing for local regulations.
9. If boating on the Great Lakes or Mississippi River, review the federal regulations for additional requirements.
10. Ventilate tank after refueling. Open all hatches and run the blower. Sniff for fumes before starting the engine and do not start the engine until the air smells clean.
11. Learn proper anchoring procedures. Improper anchoring causes many fatal accidents.
12. Never consume alcohol or drugs before or during boat operation. Wisconsin law states that a person is considered to be operating a vessel under the influence of alcohol or drugs if he or she:
 - Has a blood or breath alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent or greater or...
 - Is under the influence of any controlled substance or any other unprescribed drug, or any combination of alcohol, controlled substance or drugs that renders that person incapable of operating safely.
13. If you loan your boat or personal watercraft to someone, teach them how to operate it. If you share the boat – share the knowledge!
14. Never allow passengers to ride on gunwales or seatbacks or outside of protective railings, including the front of a pontoon boat. A sudden turn, stop or start could cause a fall overboard.
15. Make certain your registration is up to date and that the current year's sticker is displayed. Carry your registration card on board with you.
16. Practice good boat launch etiquette.
17. Practice loading and unloading on a day that isn't too busy at the ramp.
18. Remove boat covers and straps before you get in line to launch.
19. Load equipment into the boat before you reach the ramp. Make sure all equipment is working and that the drain/boat plug is in.
20. Once in line to launch, have a person available to hold the bow line and assist in boat handling at the pier.
21. Have one person drive the boat off the trailer and out of the way of other boaters while another person is parking the tow vehicle.
22. When leaving a boat launch, maintain slow-no-wake speed for a safe and legal distance from the boat launch.
23. If bad weather is approaching, get off the water early to avoid a long waiting line.
24. Drop one person off at the pier to get the tow vehicle and then get in line.
25. Once loaded, pull well away from the launch area before securing the boat for travelling purposes.

Boating safety programs benefit

An increase in registration fees helps fund the programs.

Fees charged by the Department of Natural Resources for original boat registration and renewal increased effective October 30, 2007. The fee increase is expected to generate approximately \$330,000 in 2007-2008 and \$870,000 in 2008-2009. Boat registration fees are used to administer boat registration and titling, and operate the boating safety and enforcement programs. The costs of the title fee, transfer fee and replacement of titles, expiration decals and certificate of number cards have not changed.

"For example, original registration of a motorized boat 16 to 26 feet in length has increased from \$29 to \$33 and renewal of that size boat increased from \$24 to \$28," said Diane Brookbank, director of DNR's Customer Service and Licensing bureau.

The registration instruction form and application form can be found at dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cs/registrations/boatingregis.htm.

Boat owners can also renew their registration online 24 hours a day, seven days a week using their credit card. Boat owners can then print the validation receipt that will allow them to operate their boats while they wait for their new registration certificate and decals.

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