

What You Need to Know About Your Pleasure Craft

If you own or operate recreational watercraft in Canada, you are subject to various federal and provincial rules and regulations. All pleasure craft used for recreational purposes are governed by these regulations. The following is a summary of some of the requirements that you should know. Refer to the **Safe Boating Guide** published by Fisheries and Oceans Canada for detailed information.

RECREATIONAL PLEASURE CRAFT FACTS

LICENSE AND REGISTRATION

All recreational vessels under 20 gross tons and powered by an engine(s) 10 horsepower (7.5 kw) or more must be licensed, regardless of where they operate in Canada. The license number must be displayed on both sides of the bow, above the waterline.

Vessels of 20 gross tons or more must be registered and identified with a name.

CANADIAN COMPLIANCE PLATES

A "Capacity" plate must be carried on all new pleasure boats up to 6 metres in length and capable of being fitted with engine(s) of 10 H.P. (7.5 kw) or more.

A "Conformity" plate or decal must be displayed on all other motorized pleasure craft.

A "Single Vessel" plate is issued to homebuilt boats.

If you buy, import, or build a boat, you are responsible for ensuring it has the appropriate compliance plates issued by the Canadian government.

OPERATION IN CANADIAN WATERS

Provisions for the careful operation, safe speed, right-of-way and maintaining constant look out are established by various acts, regulations and codes. These apply to every vessel in all navigable waters-from canoes to super tankers. As an operator and/or owner you are expected to know these rules. Contravention of any provision is an offence subject to penalties or fines.

On waters within Ontario boundaries, a shoreline speed restriction applies of 10 km/h within 30 metres from shore. Exceptions to this shoreline limit include-water skiing, where the vessel follows a trajectory perpendicular to the shore; or-in rivers of less than 100 metres in width or, canals or buoyed channels, or-in waters where another speed is prescribed.

Personal Watercraft (PWC) are one of the fastest growing segments in recreational boating in North America. Skill and experience is required to operate these high performance vessels properly. The Canadian Coast Guard and most manufacturers strongly advise against the operation of Personal Watercraft (PWC) after dark.

OPERATOR REQUIREMENTS

All operators of motorized pleasure craft born after April 1, 1983 must have Proof of Competency on board at all times.

Operators of Personal Watercraft (PWC) or pleasure craft under four meters long will be required to carry Proof of Competency by September 2002. By September 2009, operators of all motorized pleasure craft used for recreational purposes will be required to carry Proof of Competency.

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Persons under 16 years of age are not allowed to operate a Personal Watercraft (PWC).

Persons under 12 years of age (when not accompanied by someone 16 years or older) may only operate a vessel of not more than 10 hp (7.5 kw).

Persons between 12 and 16 years of age (when not accompanied by someone 16 years or older) may only operate a vessel of not more than 40 hp (30 kw).

Operating a vessel anywhere in Canada while impaired under the influence of alcohol, is a criminal offence.

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Safe boating regulations apply to all recreational vessels—from paddleboats to a 19 meter long pleasure craft. The Small Vessel Regulations set out the minimum safety equipment required on board a recreational boat.

Minimum requirements for personal protection, boat safety, distress and navigation equipment are based on vessel length and type. The regulations do not apply to beach and pool toys under 2 m in length.

One regulation common to all vessels is that of the personal floatation device (PFD) or life jacket. The law requires one Canadian-approved PFD of appropriate size be provided for each person on board a vessel. Life saving cushions are no longer approved as personal floatation devices.

INSURANCE FOR WATERCRAFT

Personal Liability policies may exclude claims made against you arising from the ownership, use, or operation of watercraft, unless coverage has been purchased specifically. Some policies may automatically include coverage but may restrict coverage to operation of watercraft up to a determined size and horsepower.

Check with your broker or agent to make sure you have adequate protection.

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