

Boating Safety Tips



Before You Make a Splash, Put Safety First!

Freedom, exhilaration, the wind and waves... Operating a boat can be fun and exciting, but it has risks. Most can be avoided by remembering simple safety tips before you leave the dock.

Be weather wise

Listen to local and national weather reports before leaving shore.

Be prepared

Bring a flashlight, extra batteries, clothing and blankets, maps, flares and a first-aid kit. Remember sunscreen and sunglasses. As the sun's rays reflect off the water, glare and sunburn are highly possible.

Gear up

Every time you go boating, be sure to carry basic safety equipment. Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD). And have one for each person on board. A PFD must fit well and be in good condition to meet Coast Guard requirements. Also make sure you have a throwable personal flotation device in case someone falls overboard. Other important safety gear includes: a tow line, jumper cables, extra paddle or oar, fire extinguisher, something to use for bailing in the event that your vessel takes on water and distress signaling devices such as a whistle, air horn, orange smoke device and flare.

Have a float plan

Provide a responsible person with details about where you are going, when you are leaving and when you plan to return.

Fuel safely

Fill portable fuel tanks on the dock. Never smoke when fueling your boat. Close all hatches and be sure to turn off engines and any electrical appliances or equipment. After fueling, open all hatches to ventilate the vessel, then run the blower for at least four minutes. Check the bilges for vapors before starting your engine. If you smell fumes, wait until all traces are eliminated before starting your engine.

Check it out

Check that your boat is running properly before casting off. Your vessel should be in top working condition and free of fire hazards, tripping hazards and any other conditions that could result in injury.

Load carefully

When loading your boat, keep the load low and evenly distributed. When changing seats in a small boat, stay low and near the center. Be sure you know your boat's capacity; this should be labeled on a Capacity Plate on your boat. Don't overload or use a motor that is too big for your vessel.

Operate personal watercraft safely

Personal watercraft ownership is increasing every year, and so are accidents relating to these crafts. It is important you know how to swim and operate your personal watercraft before taking it into the water. Read your owner's manual. You should also be aware of any age restrictions in the state for personal watercraft operators.

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