

THE HANDBOOK

of Georgia Boating Laws and Responsibilities



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2.

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Share the learning experience with other boaters and a qualified instructor. Call the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to locate a classroom course in your area.

Call 770-918-6408 for information

THE HANDBOOK

of Georgia Boating Laws and Responsibilities



GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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How to Use This Handbook

The *Handbook of Georgia Boating Laws and Responsibilities* has been prepared in the interest of promoting greater enjoyment and safety on the waters of Georgia. It is intended to provide Georgia boaters with a handy booklet explaining the requirements of the Georgia Boat Safety Act and the regulations adopted under authority of that act.

Where to Find Additional Information

This handbook is designed to be a guide to Georgia's boating laws for recreational boaters. The publication *BOAT GEORGIA: A Course on Responsible Boating* gives additional information on safe boat handling and practices for recreational boaters.

- For more advanced information, the following publications may be useful:
 - U.S. Coast Guard's *Navigation Rules*
 - *Chapman Piloting: Seamanship and Boat Handling* by Elbert S. Maloney
 - *The Annapolis Book of Seamanship* by Mark Smith and John Rousmaniere
- For additional courses, contact these organizations:
 - U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
 - U.S. Power Squadrons
 - American Sailing Association
 - U.S. Sailing Association
- Stay abreast of new boating laws and requirements. Call the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Boating Education Office at 770-918-6408, or visit the DNR's website at www.gadnrle.org.

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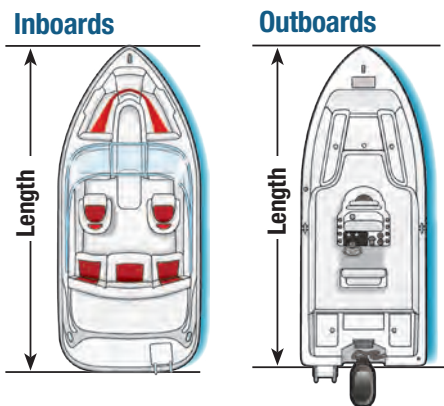
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Before Going Out

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

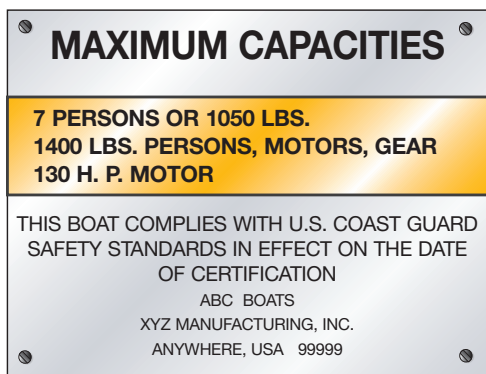
Vessel Length Classes

- A vessel's length class determines the equipment necessary to comply with federal and state laws.
- Vessels are divided into length classes:
 - Less than 16 feet (Class A)
 - 16 feet to less than 26 feet (Class 1)
 - 26 feet to less than 40 feet (Class 2)
 - 40 feet to less than 65 feet (Class 3)
- Length is measured from the tip of the bow in a straight line to the stern. This does not include outboard motors, brackets, rudders, bow attachments, or swim platforms and ladders that are not molded parts of the hull.



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 maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely.



- Personal watercraft (PWC) and some other vessels are not required to have a capacity plate. Always follow the recommended capacity in the owner's manual and on the manufacturer's warning decal.

Fueling a Vessel

Never fuel at night unless it is an emergency. If you must refuel after dark, use only electric lights. Try to refuel away from the water or on a commercial fueling ramp.

■ Before beginning to fuel:

- Dock the boat securely, and ask all passengers to exit.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke or strike a match.
- Check all fuel lines, connections, and fuel vents.
- Turn off anything that might cause a spark—engines, fans, or electrical equipment.
- Shut off all fuel valves, and extinguish all open flames, such as galley stoves and pilot lights.
- Close all windows, ports, doors, and other openings to prevent fumes from entering the boat.
- Remove portable fuel tanks, and fill them on the dock.

■ While filling the fuel tank:

- Keep the nozzle of the fuel-pump hose in contact with the tank opening to prevent producing a static spark.
- Avoid spilling fuel into the boat's bilge or the water.
- Never fill a tank to the brim—leave room to expand.
- Wipe up any spilled fuel.

The most important safe fueling practice...

If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, always turn it on for at least four minutes after fueling and before starting your engine to remove gas vapors in the bilge.

■ After fueling:

- Open all windows, ports, doors, and other openings.
- Before starting the engine, sniff the bilge and engine compartment for fuel vapors.

Filing a Float Plan

Before going out on a vessel, it is always a good idea to leave a float plan with a relative or friend, or at least with a local marina. A float plan should:

- Describe the vessel, including its registration number, length, make, horsepower, and engine type.
- State where you are going, the detailed route, your planned departure time, and your expected return time.
- Give the name, address, and telephone number of each person on board and an emergency contact.

Pre-Departure Checklist

You can help ensure a good time while operating your vessel by performing this pre-departure check.

- ✓ Check the weather forecast for the area and time frame during which you will be boating.
- ✓ Make sure that the steering and throttle controls operate properly and all lights are working properly.
- ✓ Check for any fuel leaks from the tank, fuel lines, and carburetor.
- ✓ Check the engine compartment for oil leaks.
- ✓ Check hose connections for leaks or cracks, and make sure hose clamps are tight.
- ✓ Drain all water from the engine compartment, and be sure the bilge plug is replaced and secure.
- ✓ Check to be sure you have a fully charged engine battery and fire extinguishers.
- ✓ If so equipped, make sure the engine cut-off switch (ECOS) and wrist lanyard are in good order.
- ✓ Make sure you have the required number of personal flotation devices (PFDs), and check that they are in good condition.
- ✓ Leave a float plan with a reliable friend or relative.

On the Water

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

Encountering Other Vessels

Even though no vessel has the "right-of-way" over another vessel, there are some rules that every operator should follow when encountering other vessels. It is the responsibility of both operators to take the action needed to avoid a collision. The next page shows what to do when encountering another vessel.

To prevent collisions, every operator should follow the three basic rules of navigation.

- Practice good seamanship.
- Keep a sharp lookout.
- Maintain a safe speed and distance.

Encountering Vessels With Limited Maneuverability

- When operating a power-driven vessel, you must give way to:
 - Any vessel not under command, such as an anchored or disabled vessel
 - Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver, such as a vessel towing another or laying cable, or one constrained by its draft, such as a large ship in a channel
 - A vessel engaged in commercial fishing
 - A sailboat under sail unless it is overtaking
- When operating a vessel under sail, you must give way to:
 - Any vessel not under command
 - Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver
 - A vessel engaged in commercial fishing

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.



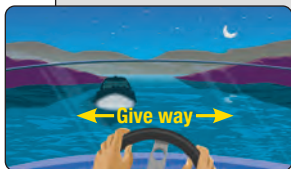
Overtaking

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

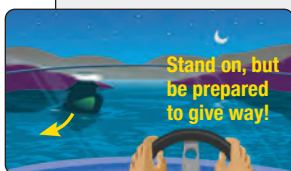
Power vs. Sail: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



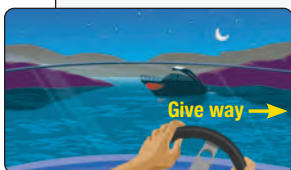
Encountering Vessels at Night



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.



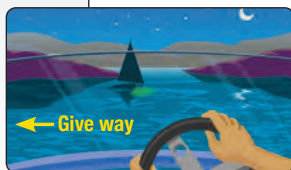
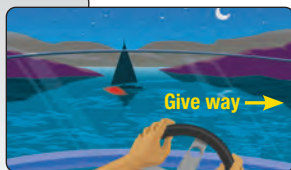
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.



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.



U.S. Aids to Navigation System (ATON)

Buoys and markers are the “traffic signals” that guide vessel operators safely along some waterways. They also identify dangerous or controlled areas and give directions and information. As a recreational boat or PWC operator, you will need to know the lateral navigation markers and non-lateral markers of the U.S. Aids to Navigation System (ATON).

Lateral Markers

These navigation aids mark the edges of safe water areas, for example, directing travel within a channel. The markers use a combination of colors and numbers, which may appear on either buoys or permanently placed markers.

Red colors, red lights, and even numbers indicate the right side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.



Green colors, green lights, and odd numbers indicate the left side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.



Red and green colors and/or lights indicate the preferred (primary) channel. If green is on top, the preferred channel is to the right as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream; if red is on top, the preferred channel is to the left.



Nuns are red cone-shaped buoys marked with even numbers.



Cans are green cylindrical-shaped buoys marked with odd numbers.



Lighted Buoys use the lateral marker colors and numbers discussed above; in addition, they have a matching colored light.

Daymarks are permanently placed signs attached to structures, such as posts, in the water. Common daymarks are red triangles (equivalent to nuns) and green squares (equivalent to cans). They may be lighted also.



Red Right Returning

is a reminder of the correct course when returning from open waters or heading upstream.

Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) System

- The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is a chain of channels that provides an inland passage along the U.S. coast. Buoys and markers used in this system are identified by yellow symbols and serve a dual purpose—they are navigational aids for the lateral system and are markers for the ICW.
- If you are following the ICW from New Jersey to Brownsville, Texas, in a clockwise direction:
 - Any marker displaying a yellow triangle should be passed by keeping it on the starboard (right) side of your vessel.
 - Any marker displaying a yellow square should be passed by keeping it on the port (left) side of your vessel.



Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigation 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.

Mooring Buoy

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





Information

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



Controlled

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



Exclusion

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.

Other Non-Lateral Markers

Safe Water Markers are white with red vertical stripes and mark mid-channels or fairways. They may be passed on either side.



Inland Waters Obstruction

Markers are white with black vertical stripes and indicate an obstruction to navigation. You should not pass between these buoys and the nearest shore.

Weather Emergencies

Weather can change very rapidly and create unexpected situations for boat operators. Even meteorologists have trouble predicting rapid weather changes. You should always monitor weather developments. One way is to tune a VHF radio to the frequencies.

What to Do if Caught in Severe Weather

■ **Prepare the boat to handle severe weather.**

- Slow down, but keep enough power to maintain headway and steering.
- Close all hatches, windows, and doors to reduce the chance of swamping.
- Stow any unnecessary gear.
- Turn on your boat's navigation lights. If there is fog, sound your foghorn.
- Keep bilges free of water. Be prepared to remove water by bailing.
- If there is lightning, disconnect all electrical equipment. Stay as clear of metal objects as possible.

■ **Prepare your passengers for severe weather.**

- Have everyone put on a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)–approved PFD. If passengers are already wearing their PFDs, make sure they are secured properly.
- Have your passengers sit on the vessel floor close to the centerline for their safety and to make the boat more stable.

■ **Decide whether to go to shore or ride out the storm.**

- If possible, head for the nearest shore that is safe to approach. If already caught in a storm, it may be best to ride it out in open water rather than try to approach the shore in heavy wind and waves.
- Head the bow into the waves at a 45-degree angle. PWC should head directly into the waves.

- If the engine stops, drop a “sea anchor” on a line off the bow to keep the bow headed into the wind and reduce drifting while you ride out the storm. In an emergency, a bucket will work as a sea anchor.
- If the sea anchor is not sufficient, use your conventional anchor to prevent your boat from drifting into dangerous areas.

VHF Frequencies Broadcasting NOAA Weather Reports

162.400 MHz	162.450 MHz	162.500 MHz	162.550 MHz
162.425 MHz	162.475 MHz	162.525 MHz	

These are the most commonly used VHF channels on United States waters.

Channel 6 Intership safety communications.

Channel 9 Communications between vessels (commercial and recreational), and ship to coast (calling channel in designated USCG districts).

Channel 13 Navigational use by commercial, military, and recreational vessels at bridges, locks, and harbors.

Channel 16 Distress and safety calls to USCG and others, and to initiate calls to other vessels; often called the “hailing” channel. (Some regions use other channels as the hailing channel.) When hailing, contact the other vessel, quickly agree to another channel, and then switch to that channel to continue conversation.

Channel 22 Communications between the USCG and the maritime public, both recreational and commercial. Severe weather warnings, hazards to navigation, and other safety warnings are broadcast on this channel.

Channels 24–28 Public telephone calls (to marine operator).

Channels 68, 69, and 71 Recreational vessel radio channels and ship to coast.

Channel 70 Digital selective calling “alert channel.”

Other Boating Emergencies

A safe boater knows how to prevent and respond to other 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.
- Don't stand up in or lean out of 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 device.
- 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.

Hypothermia

■ If you are boating in cold water:

- Dress in several layers of clothing under your PFD, or wear a wetsuit or drysuit.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of hypothermia. Symptoms begin with shivering and bluish lips and nails, and progress to a coma and, ultimately, death.

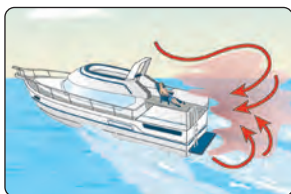
■ To reduce the effects of hypothermia:

- 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.



Before Going Out

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

Registering Your Vessel

- You must have a Georgia Certificate of Boat Registration and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on public waters in Georgia. The only exceptions are:
 - Sailboats under 12 feet in length
 - Canoes, kayaks, rowboats, and rubber rafts that have no mechanical propulsion (i.e., boats that are paddled, poled, rowed, or windblown)
 - Vessels operated exclusively on private ponds or lakes
 - Vessels registered in other states and using Georgia waters for 60 days or less

- The Certificate of Boat Registration and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). See “How to Apply For or Renew Your Vessel’s Registration.”

- *The certificate (pocket-sized plastic card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.*

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES		CERTIFICATE OF BOAT REGISTRATION STATE OF PRINCIPAL OPERATION - GEORGIA			
REGISTRATION NO GA 3717 ZW	CLASS	HULL	PROP	OPER	
EXPIRATION DATE 12/17/2022	1	FI	PROP	P	
YR BUILT 1992	TYPE	FUEL	ENGINE		
LENGTH 17' 10"	OPEN	G	OB		
MAKE OF BOAT SAMPLE					
MODEL SAMPLE					
HULL I.D. N.O. ABC 12345A292	COAST GUARD DOCUMENT NO.				
JOE SAMPLE					
5858 SAMPLE ROAD					
ANYWHERE, GA 30528-0000					

- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.
 - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow.
 - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
 - Number must be in at least 3-inch-high **BLOCK** letters.
 - Number's color must contrast with its background.
 - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen: **GA 3717 ZW** or **GA-3717-ZW**.

Validation Decal



**Spaces or hyphens
should appear here.**

- No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
- Current validation decals must be displayed on each side of the bow, preceding the prefix letters of the registration number.
- If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

Other Facts About Registering Your Vessel

- If a vessel owner changes addresses or sells the vessel, he or she must give written notice to the DNR Boat Registration Office within 15 days of the event.
- If you abandon or destroy your vessel, you must report it to the DNR Boat Registration Office within 15 days and surrender your Certificate of Boat Registration.
- If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Boat Registration or decal, you must apply for a duplicate by renewing the registration, referenced under “Registration Fees for Three-Year Boat Registration.” The fee is \$1 plus the appropriate transaction fee. Check the “duplicate” box on the form.
- Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information. If documented, the vessel is exempt from Georgia numbering requirements but must display the Georgia validation decals on the bow of the vessel.

How to Apply For or Renew Your Vessel's Registration

- Online boat registration:
Go to **www.gooutdoorsgeorgia.com** to renew your registration online.
- Telephone boat registration (all boating transactions):
Call **1-800-366-2661**.
- Mail-in boat registration (all boating transactions):
Download and print an application to submit via email by going to **www.georgiawildlife.com/boating/registration**.
- A Certificate of Boat Registration is valid for 3 years and expires on the last day of the owner's month of birth. The expiration date is on the certificate and decals. A renewal form is mailed to the owner at least 30 days prior to the expiration date. The renewal form may be returned, or the owner may renew by telephone or online as described above.
- A \$10 late fee will be applied to renew a registration if the certificate of number is expired.

Registration Fees for Three-Year Boat Registration

If your boat is...	Then your fee is...
Less than 16 feet (Class A)	\$25.00
16 feet to less than 26 feet (Class 1)	\$60.00
26 feet to less than 40 feet (Class 2)	\$130.00
40 feet or longer (Class 3)	\$200.00
Note: Additional transaction fees will apply based on the method chosen to register the vessel. These fees are subject to change if the law changes.	

Buying and Selling a Vessel

There are many ways to acquire a vessel. Regardless of how the acquisition occurs, the buyer must have supporting documentation that shows a legal trail of ownership. The buyer is required to have the following documents.

■ **New Vessel:**

- Original Manufacturer's Statement of Origin
- Dealer's Invoice/Bill of Sale

■ **Used Vessel Registered in Georgia:**

- Current Georgia registration card from the last owner of record, if available
- **All Bills of Sale** from last owner of record to current buyer
- Georgia-registered vessels have an eTitle in the DNR registration system. If a paper title has been requested or created for the vessel, it is the controlling document, and the Georgia paper title is required to be transferred to the new owner.

■ **Used Vessel Registered in Another State:**

- Transfer Title (if coming from a state that requires titles)
- Current registration card from the last owner of record, if available
- **All Bills of Sale** from last owner of record to current buyer, if not coming from a title state

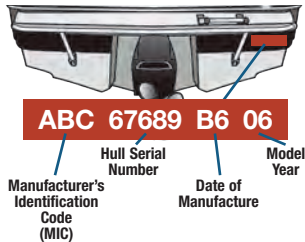
Contact the Georgia DNR Boat Registration Office at **1-800-366-2661** or visit **www.georgiawildlife.com/boating/registration**.



- To transfer ownership of the vessel to the current buyer, the buyer submits the application, the required documentation as listed above, and the required processing fee to the DNR.
- Once the required documentation and fee are received, the DNR will send the buyer a new Certificate of Boat Registration in the buyer's name.
- Applications that remain incomplete after 60 days must be resubmitted with a new application fee.

Hull Identification Number (HIN)

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- These numbers:
 - Distinguish one vessel from another.
 - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- To legally sell or operate a vessel on the waters of the State of Georgia, each vessel built after 1972 is required to have a valid HIN affixed to the vessel. For more information, go to www.georgiawildlife.com/boating/registration.
- 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.



Who May Operate a Boat

- **Persons less than 12 years of age:**
 - May not legally operate any vessel 16 feet in length or longer.
 - May legally operate a vessel less than 16 feet long and powered by a motor of 30 horsepower or less **only if** they are accompanied by a **competent adult**.
 - May legally operate any non-motorized Class A vessel.

Competent Adult means a person of age 18 or older who is not under the influence of alcohol or drugs and who is carrying proper identification.

- **Persons 12 through 15 years of age:**
 - May not legally operate any vessel 16 feet in length or longer.
 - May operate a personal watercraft (PWC) or a vessel less than 16 feet long if he or she:
 - Has passed a boating education course approved by the DNR **or...**
 - Is accompanied by a competent adult.

- **Persons 16 years of age or older** may operate any boat on Georgia state waters if he or she has **proper identification** on board.

Proper Identification means a driver's license (or legible copy) or any other government-issued identification that contains a description of the person, a photograph, and date of birth.

- **PWC:** Its operation has different age requirements. Read about these in "Who May Operate a PWC."

Mandatory Education Requirement

- Any person born after **January 1, 1998**, must have completed a boat education course approved by the DNR before he or she may legally operate a motorized vessel on Georgia state waters.
- A person is exempt from the mandatory education requirement if he or she:
 - Is licensed by the USCG as a master of a vessel **or...**
 - Operates on a private lake or pond **or...**
 - Is a non-resident who has proof that he or she has completed a NASBLA-approved boating education course or equivalency examination in another state.

Required Equipment

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

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

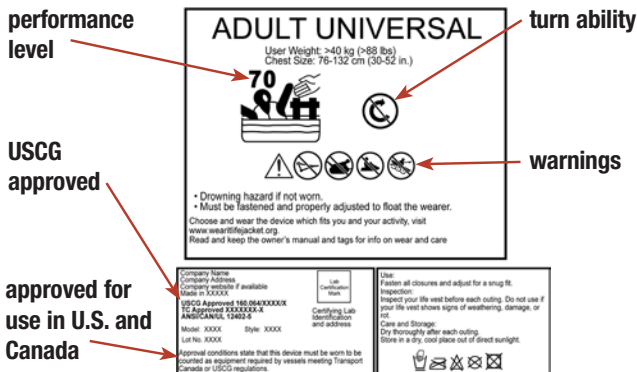
- All vessels must have at least one USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (PFD), sometimes called life jacket, for each person on board. However, Type V PFDs are acceptable only when worn and securely fastened.
- In addition to the above requirements, one USCG–approved throwable device must be on board all boats (except vessels less than 16 feet long, including PWC, canoes, and kayaks) and readily accessible.
- *Georgia law requires that all children under 13 years of age wear a USCG–approved PFD while on board any moving vessel.* This law does not apply when the child is in a fully enclosed cabin.
- If a person chooses to wear a PFD that is not USCG approved (when not specifically required), a properly fitting USCG–approved PFD must be carried on board the vessel to meet the state and federal carriage requirements.
- One Type V PFD may be substituted for any other type if it is specifically approved by the USCG for the activity at hand. Type V PFDs may not be substituted on children weighing less than 90 pounds.
- Each person riding on a PWC must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD that is properly fitted and fastened. Inflatable PFDs are not approved for use on PWC.
- Persons being towed must *wear* a ski belt, ski jacket, or Type I, II, or III PFD that is properly fitted and fastened.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and must be readily accessible.

PFD Label

Every USCG-approved PFD has a label that contains important information. While boating, you may encounter old- or new-style PFD labels.

Not all PFDs available are USCG approved. Regardless if the PFD label is in the old or new style, there must be a USCG approval number, and the PFD must be used in accordance with the labeling information to meet the legal requirements.

- The older legacy labels have a type number (Types I to V).
 - The type number indicates the conditions and the intended use for which the PFD is designed.
 - PFDs with these labels may still be used in the country where they are approved as long as they are in serviceable condition.
- The new labels have a performance level icon that contains a number, typically ranging from 50 to 150.
 - A lower number means the PFD is intended for near-shore activities in calm waters. PFDs designed for near-shore use offer greater mobility and comfort. However, they will not turn most unconscious persons face up.
 - A higher number means the PFD is intended for offshore activities. PFDs designed for offshore use offer greater flotation, turning ability, and stability.
 - PFDs with these labels are approved for use in both the U.S. and Canada.



Warnings

Some PFDs are **not** approved for certain activities:



Water-skiing



PWC or wakeboarding



Tubing



Whitewater paddling

Turn Ability



The PFD will turn an unconscious person face up. Test before use.

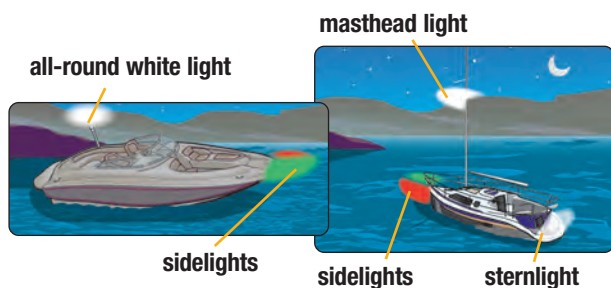


The PFD will not turn an unconscious person face up.

Navigation Lights

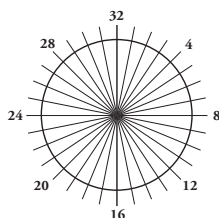
Failure to show the necessary lights is one of the leading causes of fatal accidents in Georgia.

- Knowledge of the required lights enables you to:
 - Be sure that your boat has proper lights.
 - Distinguish at night between a sailboat and a motorboat.
 - Determine what to do if you are in a meeting, crossing, or overtaking situation.
 - Have a good idea of the size of the other boat.
- Several types of lights serve as navigational aids at night.
 - **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (or 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 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.

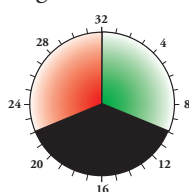
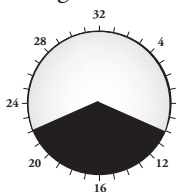


Lighting Configurations

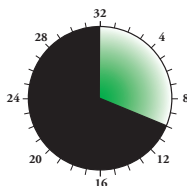
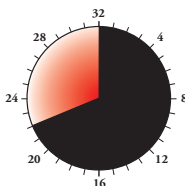
The degree of the arc of the light is expressed in points and is based on the division of a complete circle into 32 points, similar to a compass.



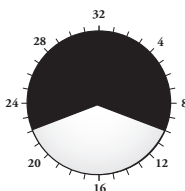
- When a light is a 20-point light, it will shine light that can be seen in 20/32 of a circle. This may appear as a single white light or as a combination red and green light.



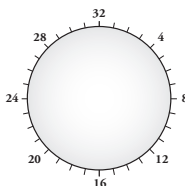
- When a light is a 10-point light, it will shine light that can be seen in 10/32 of a circle.



- When a light is a 12-point light, it will shine light that can be seen in 12/32 of a circle.



- A 32-point light can be seen throughout the complete circle, or from every angle.



Required Lighting When Underway

All motorized vessels less than 26 feet long being operated during hours of darkness or low visibility must display:



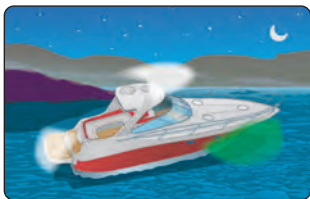
One 20-point combination red and green sidelight on the bow visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 32-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles ***or...***



One 20-point combination red and green sidelight on the bow visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 12-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles, *plus* one 20-point white masthead light visible for a distance of at least three miles and carried amidships, 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

Remember, the motor noise of your vessel makes it almost impossible to hear another vessel approaching; therefore, lights are necessary to locate a moving vessel during hours of darkness or low visibility.

All motorized vessels 26 feet long or longer being operated during hours of darkness or low visibility must display:



One 10-point red and one 10-point green sidelight visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 12-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles, *plus* one 20-point white masthead light visible for a distance of at least three miles and carried amidships, 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights **or...**



One 20-point white light on the bow visible for a distance of at least two miles, *plus* one 10-point red and one 10-point green sidelight visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 32-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles **or...**



One 20-point combination red and green sidelight on the bow visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 12-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles, *plus* one 20-point white masthead light visible for a distance of at least three miles and carried amidships, 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

Sailboats operating under engine power should carry and display the same lights required for motorboats of the same length.

Sailboats under sail only being operated during hours of darkness or low visibility must display the following lights.

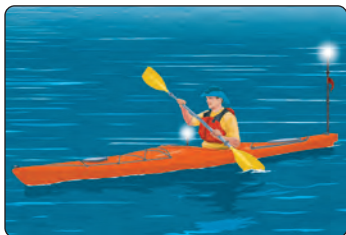


Sailboats less than 26 feet long must display one 20-point combination red and green sidelight on the bow visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 12-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles.



Sailboats 26 feet long or longer must display one 10-point red and one 10-point green sidelight, properly screened and visible for a distance of at least one mile, *plus* one 12-point white sternlight visible for a distance of at least two miles.

All non-motorized vessels (except sailboats) being operated during hours of darkness or low visibility must have ready and at hand:

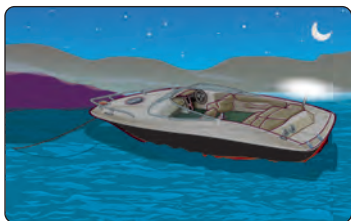


A white light that must be displayed in time to prevent a collision; a flashlight or a lantern is adequate for non-motorized vessels less than 16 feet long

Even though you may not plan to use your boat after sunset, you should have the required lights installed for your protection. No boat should ever leave shore without having at least one portable white light (a flashlight would be a minimum) in good operating condition. Trouble may develop that makes it impossible to get to shore before dark. If this happens, you would need a light to be seen and to signal to other boats.

Required Lighting When Anchored

All vessels moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area during hours of darkness must display:



A 32-point white light

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 VDSs that are USCG approved, in serviceable condition, and readily accessible.
- All vessels, regardless of length or type, are required to carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise. Most vessels must carry day signals also; exceptions to the requirement for day signals are:
 - Recreational vessels that are less than 16 feet in length
 - Non-motorized open sailboats that are less than 26 feet in length
 - Manually propelled vessels
- If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, they must be dated. Expired VDSs may be carried on board, but a minimum of three unexpired VDSs must be carried in the vessel.
- The following combinations of signals are examples of VDSs that could be carried on board to satisfy USCG requirements:
 - Three handheld red flares (day and night)
 - One handheld red flare and two red meteors (day and night)
 - One handheld orange smoke signal (day), two floating orange smoke signals (day), and one electric light (night only)
- It is prohibited to display VDSs while on the water unless assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board.

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).



Day

Handheld Orange Smoke (Pyrotechnic)
Floating Orange Smoke (Pyrotechnic)
Orange Flag (Non-Pyrotechnic)

Night

Electric Light (Non-Pyrotechnic)

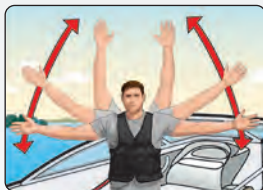
Day and Night

Red Meteor (Pyrotechnic)
Red Flare (Pyrotechnic)

Federally Controlled Waters

Vessels must observe federal requirements on these waters:

- Coastal waters
- The Great Lakes
- Territorial seas
- Waters that are two miles wide or wider and are connected directly to one of the above



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.

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.

If on State Waters

**Less than 26 feet long
(includes PWC)**

None required, but highly recommended

26 feet long or longer

Whistle, horn, or other sound signal required

If on Federally Controlled Waters

Less than 39.4 feet long (includes PWC)	Handheld air horn, athletic whistle, installed horn, or other way of making an efficient sound signal
39.4 feet long or longer	Sound-producing device capable of making an efficient sound signal that is audible for one-half mile and lasts 4 to 6 seconds

Some common sound signals that you should be familiar with as a recreational boater are as follows.

Restricted Visibility

- **One prolonged blast** at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by power-driven vessels when underway.
- **One prolonged blast plus two short blasts** at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by sailboats under sail.

Warning

- **One prolonged blast** is a warning signal (for example, used when coming around a blind bend or exiting a slip).
- **Five (or more) short, rapid blasts** signal danger or signal that you do not understand or that you disagree with the other boater's intentions.

Fire Extinguishers

Effective April 20, 2022, any non-rechargeable (disposable) fire extinguisher that is older than 12 years should be removed from service. Refer to the date of manufacturing stamped on the bottle; for example, "05" means "2005."

- Most vessels are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher on board. Type B fires are of flammable liquids, such as gasoline or oil. The only exceptions to the requirement are:
 - Any non-motorized boat
 - Class A or Class 1 boats with construction that will not permit the entrapment of flammable gases or vapors
- 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.

- When required by the USCG, fire extinguishers must be on board the vessel and readily accessible—where they can be easily reached. When deciding on a place to store a fire extinguisher, make sure to consider how easy it is to reach in the event of a fire. It is recommended that the fire extinguisher be conspicuously and securely mounted on its intended hanger or bracket.

The following information is **effective April 20, 2022**.

- Vessels that have a **model year** of 2018 and newer may carry only 5-B or 20-B rated fire extinguishers with date stamp.
- Vessels with a model year between 1953 and 2017 may carry either:
 - Unexpired 5-B or 20-B rated fire extinguishers *or...*
 - B-I or B-II rated fire extinguishers that are in good and serviceable condition.

Model Year means the period beginning June 1 of a year and ending on July 31 of the following year and being designated by the year in which it ends.

Use this chart to determine the size and quantity required for your vessel.

Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*
Less than 26 ft.	one 5-B	none
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	two 5-B (or one 20-B)	one 5-B
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	three 5-B (or one 20-B and one 5-B)	two 5-B (or one 20-B)
*refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system		

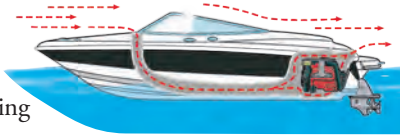
Note: One 20-B portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B portable fire extinguishers. For vessels with a model year between 1953 and 2017, one 20-B/B-II portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B/B-I portable fire extinguishers.

- Extinguishers must not be expired or appear to have been previously used. They must be maintained in good and serviceable condition. Good and serviceable condition means that the fire extinguisher on board:
 - Is charged and indicates it is charged if the extinguisher has a pressure gauge reading or indicator *and...*
 - Has a pin lock that is firmly in place *and...*

- Does not show visible signs of significant corrosion or damage *and...*
- Has a discharge nozzle that is clean and free of obstructions.

Ventilation Systems

The purpose of ventilation systems is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases. Properly installed ventilation systems greatly reduce the chance of a life-threatening explosion.



- 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.

Backfire Flame Arrestors

- Because boat engines may backfire, all powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have a USCG-approved backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor of every engine.
- Periodically clean the flame arrestor(s) and check for any damage.

Mufflers

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

- The exhaust of every internal combustion engine used on any vessel must be muffled or baffled and water-injected (except those engines where the exhaust goes through the lower unit or outdrive) so as to decrease noise.
- Enforcement officials are authorized to submit vessels to noise level tests and cite vessel operators whose vessels are not in compliance.
- Many Georgia lakes also have specific laws prohibiting vessels from making excessive or disturbing levels of noise.

Georgia Required Equipment Checklist



	PWC	Boat Less Than 16 Ft. (Class A)	Boat 16 Ft. to Less Than 26 Ft. (Class 1)
Boating Safety Certificate on Board	✓ ¹	✓ ¹	✓ ⁷
Certificate of Boat Registration on Board	✓	✓	✓
Validation Decals Displayed	✓	✓	✓
Wearable PFDs: Type I, II, III, or V	✓ ²	✓ ³	✓ ³
Throwable Device: Type IV			✓
Type 5-B Fire Extinguisher	✓	✓	✓
ECOS	✓		
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓	✓ ⁴	✓ ⁴
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓
Muffler	✓	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵
Daytime VDSs			✓ ⁵
Nighttime VDSs	6	✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵
Navigation Lights	6	✓	✓

1. Applicable if operator is 12 to 15 years of age.
2. Those on a PWC must *wear* a PFD at all times.
3. Those under the age of 13 must *wear* a PFD at all times while on any moving vessel.
4. Required on inboards and stern drives only.
5. Required on federally controlled waters.
6. Not applicable to PWC because PWC are not allowed to operate between sunset and sunrise.
7. Any person born after January 1, 1998, must have completed a boating education course approved by the DNR before he or she may legally operate a motorized vessel on Georgia state waters.

On the Water

In addition to the laws mentioned previously, here are some other Georgia regulations that apply when boat and PWC operators are on the water.

Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

These dangerous operating practices are illegal in Georgia.

- **Reckless Operation** of a boat or PWC is the disregard for the safety of persons or property. Examples are:
 - Water-skiing or dropping water-skiers close to swimmers, launching ramps, or other boaters
 - Jumping the wake of another boat within 100 feet of that boat or buzzing other boats
 - Causing damage from the wake of your boat or PWC
- **Improper Distance** is not maintaining a proper distance while operating a boat or PWC or while towing a person on water skis or any similar device. The following operations are illegal.
 - Operating a boat or PWC or towing a person on water skis or any similar device at greater than **idle speed** within 100 feet of a:
 - Moored or anchored boat or any boat that is adrift
 - Dock, pier, or bridge
 - Person(s) in the water
 - Shoreline adjacent to a full- or part-time residence
 - Public park or beach or a swimming area
 - Marina, restaurant, or other public use area
 - Running around or within 100 feet of another boat at greater than idle speed unless you are overtaking or meeting the other boat in compliance with the rules for encountering other boats
 - Following closely behind another boat, jumping the wake of the other boat, or changing course or direction in order to jump the wake of another boat

“Idle Speed” means you operate your boat or PWC at the slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering control.

- **Failure to Regulate Speed** is operating a boat or PWC at speeds that may cause danger, injury, damage, or unnecessary inconvenience either directly or by the effect of the boat's wake. It is illegal to:
 - Fail to regulate your speed near swimming areas, docks, moored boats, and boats engaged in fishing.
 - Operate a boat or PWC faster than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions (weather or boat traffic).
- **Overloading** is loading the boat beyond the recommended capacity shown on the capacity plate installed by the boat manufacturer.
- **Riding on the Bow or Gunwale** is illegal if the boat is not equipped with a railing or some other retaining device. As a boat operator, you are prohibited from allowing your passengers to ride on the bow or gunwale.



Alcohol and Drugs...Zero Tolerance!

- The Georgia Boat Safety Act prohibits anyone from boating under the influence (BUI)—that is, operating any boat, sailboat, PWC, water skis, sailboard, or similar device while intoxicated.
- It also is unlawful for the owner of a boat or PWC to allow anyone else to operate their boat or PWC while that person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Georgia boating law states the following.
 - It is illegal for those under the age of 21 years to operate a boat or PWC if their blood alcohol level is 0.02% or more.
 - Those 21 years of age or older are considered to be under the influence, and may not operate a boat or PWC, if their blood alcohol level is 0.08% or more or if drugs are detected.
- The Georgia Boat Safety Act sets these penalties.
 - Those arrested for BUI may lose their privilege to operate a boat or PWC until they successfully complete a DUI Alcohol or Drug Use Risk Reduction Program approved by the Georgia Department of Driver Services. They also will be charged with a misdemeanor punishable by fines of up to \$1,000 and/or prison time for up to one year.
 - A person found operating a boat or PWC under the influence while a child under the age of 14 years is on board also is guilty of the separate charge of endangering a child.
- By operating a boat or PWC on Georgia waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if requested by a law enforcement official. If you refuse to be tested, you will lose your privilege to operate a boat or PWC for up to one year, and your refusal may be offered into evidence against you at a trial.



Just remember this simple rule:
Don't Drink and Boat!

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.
- Place buoys, markers, or signs in an attempt to regulate navigation on public waters.

Homeland Security Restrictions

- 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 USCG 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 USCG, or the port or marina security.

Boating Accidents

- An operator involved in a boating accident 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.
- You cannot be held liable for any civil damages for any assistance rendered in good faith and in a prudent manner.
- Vessel operators involved in an accident must report it by the quickest means possible if the accident results in:
 - Death or the disappearance of a person from a vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury **or...**
 - Injury requiring first aid or medical attention **or...**
 - Property damage exceeding \$2,000 to all vessels, docks, etc., involved in the accident.
- In the case of a reportable accident, the operator or owner must file an accident report form supplied by the Georgia DNR.
- Most reports of accidents must be made within 5 days of the accident. However, you must report an accident within 48 hours if a person:
 - Dies within 24 hours as a result of the accident **or...**
 - Is disabled for more than 24 hours **or...**
 - Requires medical treatment for injuries **or...**
 - Disappears from a vessel.

Enforcement

- Primary responsibility for enforcement of the Georgia Boat Safety Act is with the Game Wardens of the Georgia DNR. However, all peace officers are authorized to enforce the law.
- Officers have the authority to stop and board your vessel in order to check that you are complying with state and federal laws.



Diver-Down Flags

- Scuba divers or snorkelers must display diver-down flags that mark the diving area.
- Vessels must remain at least 100 feet away from the person in the water.
- Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.



**Divers
Flag**



**Alfa
Flag**

A rectangular red flag, at least 15" x 15", with a white diagonal stripe is required on state waters.

A blue-and-white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag) is required on vessels on federally controlled waters.

Marine Events

- Permits for events held on state-controlled waters are required and are granted through the Georgia DNR.
 - You must complete a Marine Event Permit application and submit it at least 30 days in advance of the event. If the event is likely to attract 10,000 or more persons, the request must be made 90 days in advance.

- The application is available on the Georgia DNR website at **www.gadnrle.org/marine-event-permit**.
- Permits for events held on federally controlled waters are granted through the USCG by applying at least 30 days in advance.
- For more information, go to **www.gadnrle.org/boating-rules-regulations**.



Operating in Narrow River Channels

Rivers usually have only narrow channels that are deep enough for vessel operation. To operate safely and avoid collisions when operating on a river, you must:

- Keep as far to the starboard (right) side of the river channel as is safe and practical.
- Proceed with caution, and use the appropriate sound signals when:
 - You are overtaking or being overtaken.
 - Your view is obstructed, such as when you near a bend in the river.
- Follow the path of the river, and do not cut corners as you approach a blind spot.

Georgia Boating Safety Zones

The following areas are designated as “boating safety zones” and have special restrictions.

- It is unlawful to operate a powerboat between May 1 and September 30 within the areas of:
 - Jekyll Island, for a distance of 1,000 feet seaward from the high water mark on Jekyll Island Beach from the north end to the south end of the island
 - Tybee Island Beach, for a distance of 1,000 feet seaward from the high water mark on Tybee Island Beach from the north end to the south end of the island

- St. Simons Island, for a distance of 1,000 feet seaward from the high water mark from the north end to the south end of the island
 - Sea Island, for a distance of 1,000 feet seaward from the high water mark from the north end to the south end of the island
- It is unlawful to operate any type of boat during any time of the year within the:
- Marked boundary of any marked swimming area
 - Upstream or downstream area of any dam designated by the commissioner (these areas will be marked with signs and/or buoys)
- It is unlawful to operate a boat with a motor in excess of 10 horsepower on the Ogeechee River from the bridge at Georgia Highway 119 upstream.
- It is unlawful to operate any boat with a marine toilet, galley, or sleeping quarters (including houseboats) on Bull Sluice Lake, Goat Rock Lake, Lake Burton, Lake Harding, Lake Jackson, Lake Oconee, Lake Oliver, Lake Rabun, Lake Tugalo, Lake Yonah, North Highlands Lake, Seed Lake, and Tallulah Falls Lake.

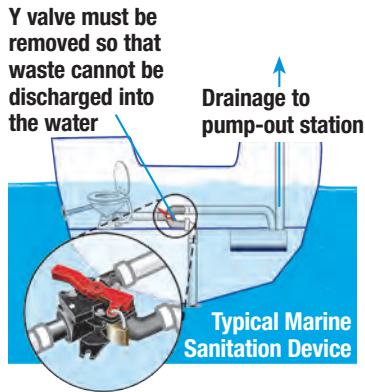
Hazardous Areas

Certain areas have been designated and marked as “hazardous areas” because of conditions that create a threat to the safety and welfare of boaters. When operating within a “hazardous area,” all passengers in a vessel must *wear* a USCG–approved PFD that is properly fitted and fastened.



Discharge of Waste

- All vessels, including houseboats and floating cabins, that are equipped with marine toilets must have wastewater holding systems to prevent the discharge of waste products into surrounding waters.
- A marine toilet is considered to be any equipment installed on board a vessel that is designed to receive, retain, treat, or discharge sewage and any process to treat such sewage. A portable toilet is not considered to be a marine toilet.
- It is illegal for a vessel to pump out sewage from a wastewater holding system, a portable toilet, or a marine sanitation device (MSD) into surrounding waters except into an approved pump-out facility or into a sewer system located on dry land.
- All vessels equipped with marine toilets must be registered with the Georgia DNR. You will be issued a Marine Toilet Certificate decal that must be affixed to the hull adjacent to the vessel's registration number. The one-time certification fee is \$5.00. No renewal of the certificate is required, and it is transferable to any subsequent owner of the vessel.



Marine Toilet Certificate

- Vessels equipped with marine toilets must follow these regulations.
 - If operated on Clarks Hill Lake, Lakes Allatoona, Blackshear, Blue Ridge, Hartwell, Russell, Seminole, Sidney Lanier, Sinclair, Walter F. George Reservoir, or West Point, the vessel's marine toilet must be equipped with a holding tank that is built so that it can be emptied only by being pumped out. The Y valve must be removed to prevent discharge.
 - If built before January 1, 1978, the vessel may be equipped with a fully operable USCG-certified MSD *if* the MSD is part of the vessel's original equipment.
 - Sewage from the wastewater holding system or MSD must conform to the current guidelines for disposal.
- You must maintain a record, going back at least one year, of the name and location of the pump-out facilities you use to empty your holding system and the dates of such use.

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 National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.
- Also call the Georgia Environmental Protection Division at **1-800-241-4113** within 24 hours of the discharge.



Specifically for PWC

Although a PWC is considered an inboard vessel and comes under the same rules and requirements of any other vessel, there are specific considerations for the PWC operator.

Fueling a PWC...Safely!

There are additional considerations when fueling a PWC. Spilled or leaked fuel can ignite and explode, especially in an enclosed space. Here are some safety procedures for PWC operators to follow.

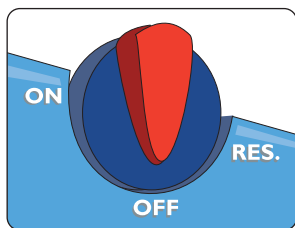
- Avoid spills when fueling in or near the water.
- Do not tip the PWC in order to fill it all the way up. If the tank is overfilled, the fuel may expand and spill into the water.
- After fueling, open the door of the engine compartment, and sniff to check for any evidence of gas fumes. Do this before starting the engine. If you do smell gas fumes, determine the source, and make repairs immediately.



Fuel Selector Switch on a PWC

This switch can help you avoid becoming stranded without fuel.

- Use the “Off” position when the PWC’s engine is turned off.
- Use the “On” position while you are underway.
- Use the “Reserve” position if you run out of fuel while underway. This will allow you to return to shore. Don’t forget to switch back to “On” after refueling.



Steering and Stopping a PWC

- PWC are propelled by drawing water into a pump and then forcing it out under pressure through a steering nozzle at the back of the unit. This “jet” of pressurized water is directed by the steering control—when the steering control is turned, the steering nozzle turns in the same direction. For example, if the steering control is turned right, the nozzle turns right and the jet of water pushes the back of the vessel to the left, which causes the PWC to turn right.



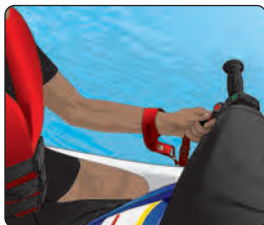
Remember—no power means no steering control...

Most PWC and other jet-drive vessels must have power in order to maintain control. If you allow the engine on a PWC or other jet-propelled vessel to return to idle or shut off during operation, you may lose all steering control. Many PWC will continue in the direction they were headed before the engine was shut off, no matter which way the steering control is turned. New PWC allow for off-throttle steering.

- **Most PWC do not have brakes.** Always allow plenty of room for stopping. Just because you release the throttle or shut off the engine does not mean you will stop immediately. Even PWC that have a braking system do not stop immediately.

Engine Cut-Off Switch (ECOS)

- Most PWC and powerboats come equipped by the manufacturer with an important device called an emergency engine cut-off switch (ECOS). If properly worn, this is a safety device that is designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown from the proper operating position. The USCG requires that operators of vessels equipped with an ECOS use the device at all times.
- A lanyard is attached to the switch and the operator's wrist or PFD. The switch shuts off the engine if the operator falls off the PWC or out of the powerboat. If your vessel does not come equipped with an ECOS, you should have one installed.
- In Georgia, it is illegal to ride your PWC without attaching the lanyard properly between the switch and yourself unless the PWC is equipped with a self-circling device.



If your PWC is not equipped with an ECOS...

PWC without ECOS must be designed to encircle the operator if he or she falls off. The engine will run at idle speed while the PWC slowly circles so that the operator can board as it circles. Be sure that the idle speed is always set correctly.

Remember...

Beginning April 2021, a new federal rule requires operators of recreational vessels less than 26 feet in length to use the ECOS if the vessel is equipped with such a device. Operators must use the ECOS whenever the vessel is operating on plane or above displacement speed.

Be sure to check with the state boating agency where you are boating to determine how this new USCG rule applies locally. For more information on this requirement, visit www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/engine-cut-off-switch-faq.php.

Reboarding a Capsized PWC

After a fall, the PWC could be overturned completely. You should be familiar with the proper procedure to right the PWC and to reboard from the rear of the craft.

- Most manufacturers have placed a decal at the rear or bottom of the craft that indicates the direction to roll your PWC to return it to an upright position. If no decal exists, check your owner's manual, or ask the dealer. If you roll it over the wrong way, you could damage your PWC.



- Practice reboarding with someone else around to make sure you can handle it alone. Don't ride your PWC if you are very tired because reboarding would be difficult. Also, avoid riding where there are strong currents or winds, which could hamper your reboarding efforts.

Courtesy When Encountering Other Vessels

- Jumping the wake of a passing boat, or riding too close to another PWC or boat, creates risks and is restricted or even prohibited in some states. The vessel making the wake may block the PWC operator's view of oncoming traffic and also conceal the PWC operator from approaching vessels.
- Excessive noise from PWC often makes them unwelcome with other vessel operators and people on shore. Be a courteous PWC operator.
 - Vary your operating area, and do not keep repeating the same maneuver.
 - Avoid congregating with other PWC operators near shore, which increases annoying noise levels.
 - Avoid making excessive noise near residential and camping areas, particularly early in the morning.
 - Avoid maneuvers that cause the engine exhaust to lift out of the water because that increases noise levels.
 - Do not modify your engine exhaust system if it increases the noise. Improperly modified exhausts will not make your PWC faster and may raise the noise to an illegal level.

Environmental Considerations

When operating your PWC, consider the effect you may have on the environment.

- Make sure that the water you operate in is at least 30 inches deep. Riding in shallow water can cause bottom sediments or aquatic vegetation to be sucked into the pump, damaging your PWC and the environment.



- Avoid causing erosion by operating at slow speed and by not creating a wake when operating near shore or in narrow streams or rivers.
- Do not dock or beach your PWC in reeds and grasses. This could damage fragile environments.
- Take extra care when fueling your PWC in or near the water. Oil and gasoline spills are very detrimental to the aquatic environment. Fuel on land if possible.
- Never use your PWC to disturb, chase, or harass wildlife.

Other PWC Considerations

- Remember that everyone on board a PWC must *wear* a PFD.
- Keep hands, feet, loose clothing, and hair away from the pump intake area. Before cleaning debris away from the pump intake, be sure to shut off the engine.
- Keep everyone clear of the steering nozzle unless the PWC is shut off. The water jet can cause severe injuries.
- Frequently inspect your PWC's electrical systems (e.g., starter and engine gauge connections) to ensure there is no potential for electrical spark. Gas fumes could collect in the engine compartment, and an explosion could occur. After fueling, sniff the engine compartment for any evidence of gas fumes.
- Every operator and passenger should know how to swim.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity for your PWC.
- Know your limits, and ride according to your abilities.
- See "Requirements Specific to PWC."



Specifically for PWC

PWC operators must obey additional legal requirements that apply specifically to the operation of PWC on Georgia waters.

Who May Operate a PWC

- **Persons less than 12 years of age** may not legally operate a PWC.
- **Persons 12 to 15 years of age** may legally operate a PWC *only if* they:
 - Have passed a boating education course approved by the DNR *or...*
 - Are accompanied by a **competent adult**.
- **Persons 16 years of age or older** may operate a PWC on the waters of Georgia if they have **proper identification** on board.
- Any person born after **January 1, 1998**, and operating a PWC on Georgia waters must meet:
 - The above requirements *and...*
 - The mandatory education requirement as explained in “Mandatory Education Requirement.”

Competent Adult means a person of age 18 or older who is not under the influence of alcohol or drugs and who is carrying proper identification.

Proper Identification means a driver's license (or legible copy) or any other government-issued identification that contains a description of the person, a photograph, and date of birth.

Requirements Specific to PWC

- Each person riding on a PWC must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD that is properly fitted and fastened.
- A PWC must be equipped with a fully operational self-circling device or a lanyard-type engine cut-off switch (ECOS). If a safety switch is used, the lanyard must be attached to the operator's person, clothing, or PFD.
- PWC may not be operated between sunset and sunrise.
- A PWC, operating at more than idle speed, may not run around, ride or jump the wake of, or be within 100 feet of another moving boat or PWC unless it is overtaking the other boat in compliance with the rules for encountering other boats. When a PWC is overtaking another boat, it must not change course to ride or jump the wake of the boat being overtaken.
- A PWC must be operated at idle speed if within 100 feet of a vessel not underway or adrift, a dock or pier, a bridge, a person in the water, a shoreline adjacent to a residence, a public park or beach, a swimming area, a marina, a restaurant, or any other public use area.
- It is unlawful for an owner of a PWC to allow anyone else to operate their PWC in such a way that it violates the Georgia Boat Safety Act.
- It is illegal to rent, lease, or let for hire a PWC to a person under the age of 16 years.



Sharing Your PWC...Safely!

Sharing the fun of your PWC with friends is all part of the boating experience. Before you share your PWC, however, make sure that others you allow to operate it understand their responsibilities as operators. They need to know that they have the same responsibilities as any other vessel operator, including obeying the navigation rules.

In addition:

- Make sure that anyone you allow to operate your PWC meets the minimum age and education requirements for PWC operation in Georgia and the local waterway you are using.
- Show new operators how to start and reboard the PWC while on shore or in shallow water.
- Explain how to steer and control the PWC. Tell all new operators, and remind experienced operators, that ***power is required for steering control!***
- Make sure that the operator understands how to use the ECOS and attaches the lanyard to his or her person or PFD before starting the engine.
- Have anyone new to PWC go out in an uncongested area first. Tell them to stay clear of other PWC, boats, or persons in the water.
- Explain how to recognize a “slow, no wake speed” marker and what to do when approaching one.



Specifically for Skiing

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device have additional laws they must follow.

Requirements for Towing Skiers, Tubes, etc.

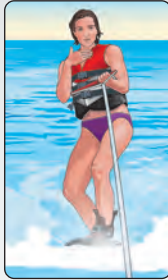
- It is illegal for boats or PWC to tow persons on water skis, a skiboard, or any device of this type between sunset and sunrise.
- It is illegal for the operator of the towing vessel or person(s) being towed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- A boat or PWC must not tow persons on water skis or similar devices greater than idle speed within 100 feet of a vessel not underway or adrift, a dock or pier, a bridge, a person in the water, a shoreline adjacent to a residence, a public park or beach, a swimming area, a marina, a restaurant, or any other public use area.
- The person being towed must *wear* a ski belt, ski jacket, or Type I, II, or III PFD that is properly fitted and fastened.
- Every boat towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device must have on board:
 - A person, in addition to the boat operator, capable of observing the towed person(s) at all times ***or...***
 - A wide-angle rearview mirror mounted such that the operator can observe the towed person(s) at all times.
- Every PWC towing a person(s) on water skis or similar device must be rated by the manufacturer to carry three or more persons and must have on board a person, in addition to the PWC operator, capable of observing the towed person(s) at all times. *A wide-angle mirror may not be used in place of an observer on PWC.*

Hand Signals for Skiers

Knowing proper hand signals will help the skier(s) communicate with their boat operator or the observer.



Skier OK



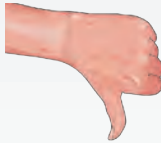
Stop



Skier down—watch!



Speed up



Slow down



Speed OK



Turn left



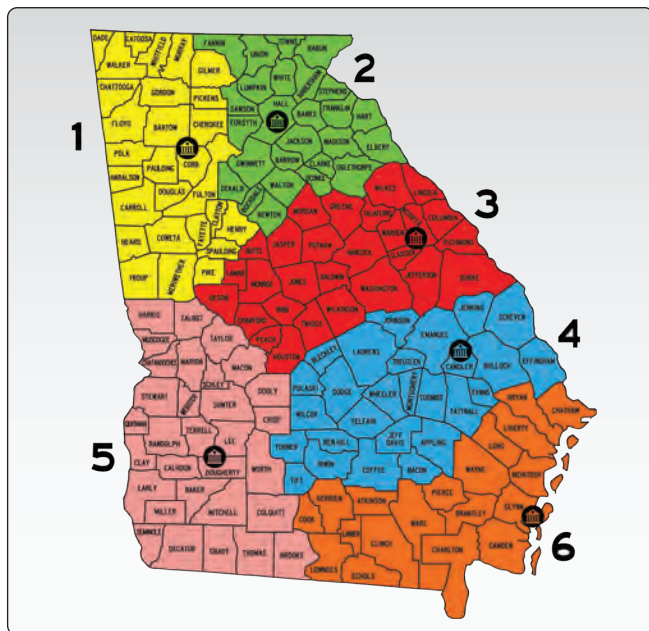
Turn right

Boating Statistics January–December 2021

LE Region	Total Drownings	Total BULs	Total Boating Incidents	Total Injuries	Fatalities
1. Acworth	11	52	15	9	2
2. Gainesville	12	95	34	28	5
3. Thomson	19	13	23	7	3
4. Metter	7	14	4	1	1
5. Albany	11	51	11	11	1
6. Brunswick	9	18	27	11	2
Total	69	243	114	67	14

Lake/Region	Total Drownings	Total BULs	Total Boating Incidents	Total Injuries	Fatalities
Allatoona (Region 1)	3	47	8	6	1
Blackshear (Region 5)	1	6	2	0	0
Clarks Hill (Region 3)	2	0	2	0	1
Hartwell (Region 2)	3	5	5	5	0
Jackson (Region 3)	1	6	0	0	0
Lanier (Region 2)	4	74	24	17	5
Oconee (Region 3)	1	4	10	2	0
Sinclair (Region 3)	4	2	8	4	1

Law Enforcement Division Regional Offices



Boat Registration Office
1-800-366-2661

Region III-Thomson
706-595-4211

DNR LED Headquarters
770-918-6408

Region IV-Metter
912-685-2145

Boating Education Office
770-918-6408

Region V-Albany
229-430-4252

Region I-Acworth
770-529-2424

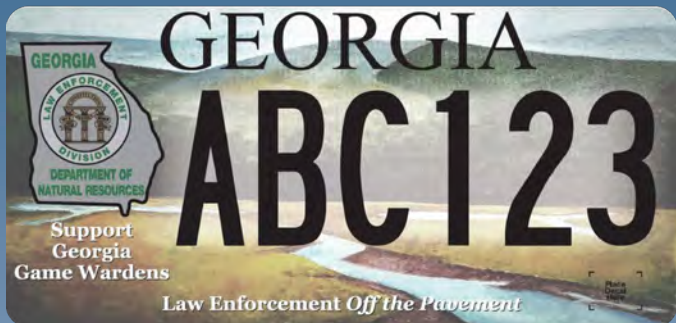
Region VI-Brunswick
912-264-7237

Region II-Gainesville
770-535-5499

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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Sixth Floor, Suite 6NW14G
131 M Street, NE
Washington, DC 20507

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