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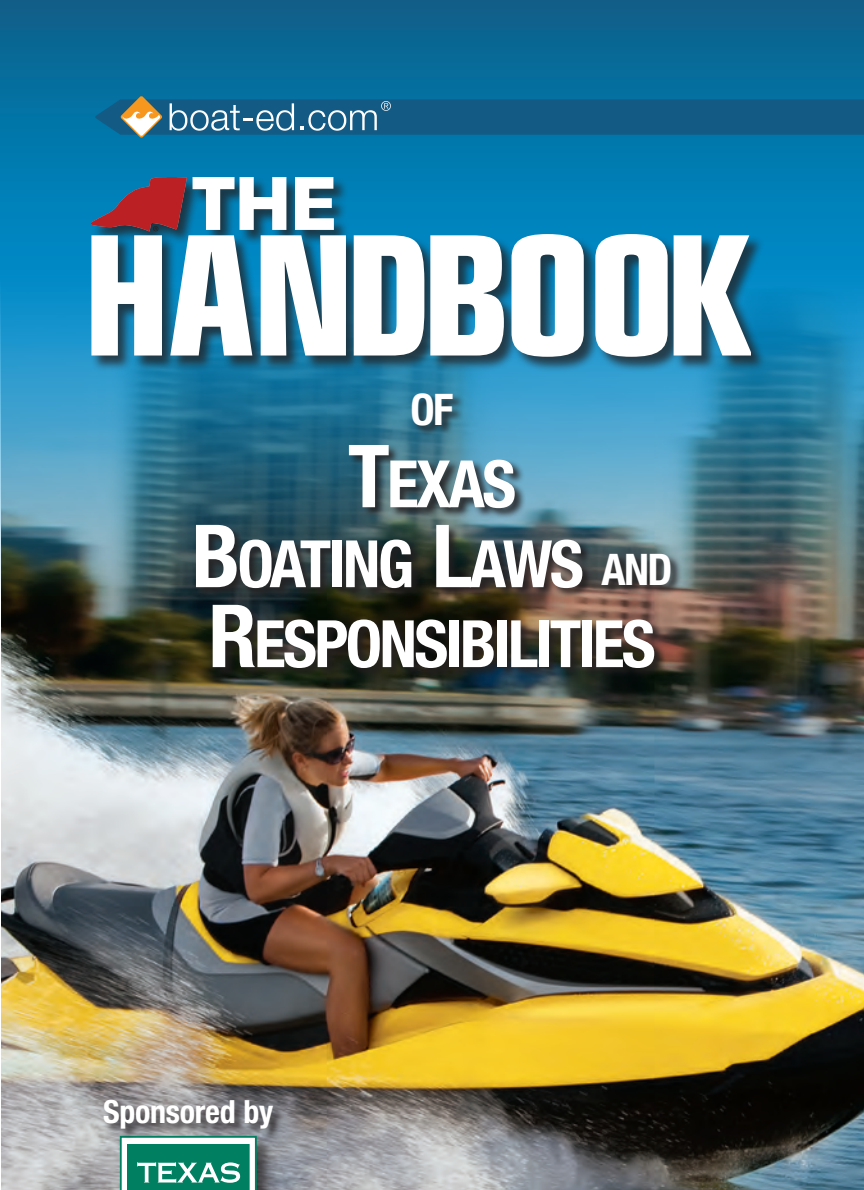
THE HANDBOOK OF TEXAS BOATING LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES



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TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

2022 Edition

BOAT TEXAS

A Course on Responsible Boating

Boater education certification is required by law for many Texas boaters. Even if it's not required for you, by becoming certified, you can save money on boat insurance. You have two ways to be certified.

1. Over the Internet…

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

Start today at www.tpwd.texas.gov

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2. In a classroom…

Share the learning experience with other interested students and a qualified instructor. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department can help you find a classroom course in your area.

Register for one today at tpwd.elementlms.com

THE HANDBOOK OF TEXAS BOATING LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This handbook is based on laws valid through August 31, 2022. Information in this handbook may change due to actions taken by the Texas State Legislature, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Commission, or the U.S. Coast Guard. This handbook does not take the place of the current regulations that can be found in ***A Digest of the Texas Water Safety Act***.

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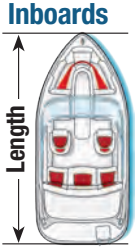
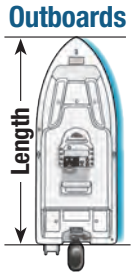
This handbook is a guide to Texas boating laws for recreational boaters. The publication ***BOAT TEXAS: A Course on Responsible Boating*** gives additional information on safe boat handling and practices.

- For more advanced information, see:
  - 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 state boating law information, contact Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) at **1-800-792-1112** or **512-389-4846**, **option 4**.

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
  - 16 feet to less than 26 feet
  - 26 feet to less than 40 feet
  - 40 feet to less than 65 feet
- 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 a molded part 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, turn it on for at least four minutes after fueling and before starting your engine to remove gas vapors in the bilge.

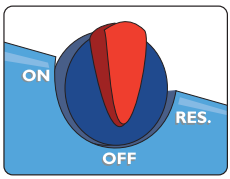
■ **After fueling:**
- Open all windows, ports, doors, and other openings.
- Before starting the engine, sniff the bilge and engine compartment for fuel vapors.

Additional Safety Procedures for PWC

■ 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.

Preventing Theft

Defend against theft of your vessel and equipment.

- Store your vessel so that it is not easily accessed.
  - Store your vessel and trailer in a locked garage or storage area.
  - Park another vehicle in front of the trailer, or lock the trailer to a fixed object in a well-lit area.
  - Secure the vessel and trailer to a fixed object with a good-quality chain and lock. If moored, secure the vessel to the dock with a steel cable and lock.
  - Remove a trailer wheel if parked for an extended time.
  - Purchase a quality trailer hitch lock and use it.
- Chain and lock the motor and fuel tanks to the vessel.
- Mark or engrave all equipment with an identifier such as your driver's license number.
- Photograph or videotape the interior and exterior of your vessel, showing all installed equipment and additional gear and equipment. Make a complete inventory of your equipment, vessel, and trailer.
- Remove expensive electronics or other valuables if the vessel is left unattended.
- Cover your vessel and always remove the keys.
- Title and register your vessel.

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 timeframe 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 Texas waterways is the responsibility of everyone. 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.

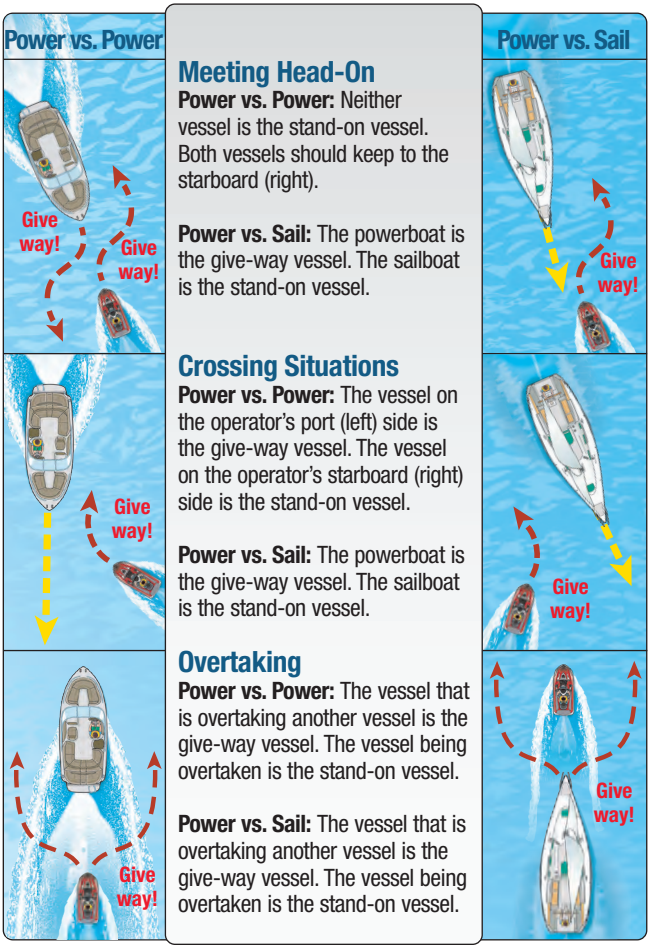
Encountering Vessels With Limited Maneuverability

- 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



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.

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

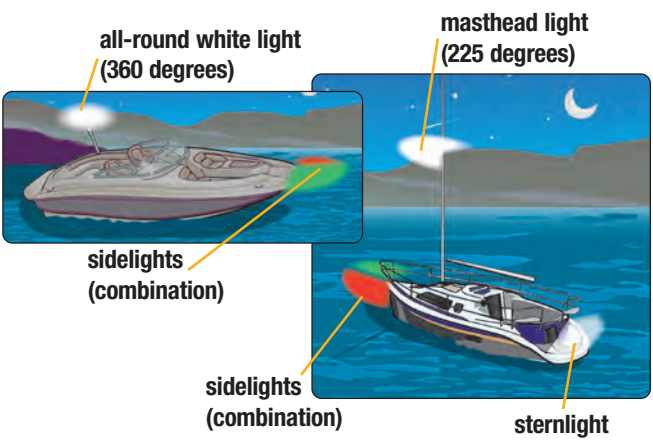
Power vs. Power: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.

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

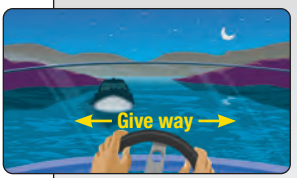
Nighttime Navigation

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

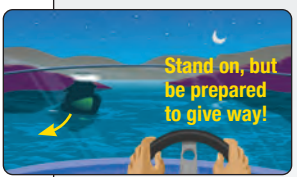
- **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (also called combination lights) because they are visible to another vessel approaching from the side or head-on. The red light indicates a vessel's port (left) side; the green indicates a vessel's starboard (right) side.
- **Sternlight:** This white light is seen 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.



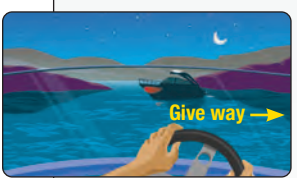
Encountering Vessels at Night



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.



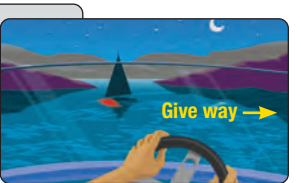
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.

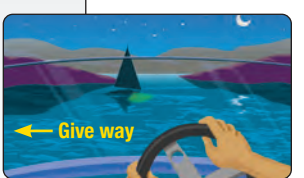


When you see a red and a white light, you must give way to the other vessel. Slow down and allow the vessel to pass, or you may turn to the right and pass behind the other vessel.

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)

- The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is a chain of local channels that are linked together to provide an inland passage along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts. Channels of the ICW are identified by yellow symbols on channel buoys and markers. They are aids for both the U.S. Aids to Navigation System and 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.
- When you are following the ICW, the yellow triangles and squares supersede the colors and shapes of the lateral markers on which they appear.

Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigation aids that give information other than the edges of safe water areas. The most common are the regulatory markers shown on the next page, 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 listed on the next page.

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 fog horn.
  - 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, anchor using 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."

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.

Steering and Stopping a PWC

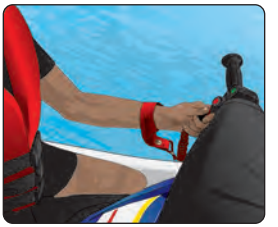
- PWC are propelled by drawing water into a pump and then forcing it out under pressure through a steering nozzle at the back of the unit. This "jet" of pressurized water is directed by the steering control—when the steering control is turned, the steering nozzle turns in the same direction. For example, 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 safety device 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.

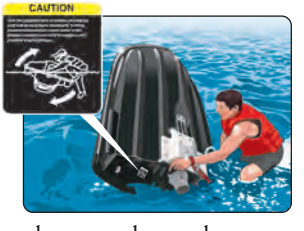


- A lanyard is attached to the switch and the operator's wrist or PFD. The switch shuts off the engine if the operator falls off the PWC or out of the powerboat. If your vessel does not come equipped with an ECOS, you should have one installed.
- In many states, it is illegal to ride your PWC without attaching the lanyard properly between the switch and yourself.

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

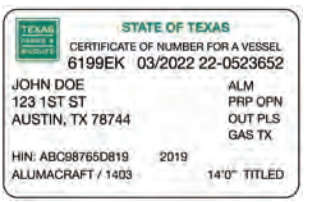
- Remember that everyone on board a PWC must wear a PFD.
- Keep hands, feet, loose clothing, and hair away from the pump intake area. Before cleaning debris away from the pump intake, be sure to shut off the engine.
- Keep everyone clear of the steering nozzle unless the PWC is shut off. The water jet 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.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity for your PWC.
- Know your limits, and ride according to your abilities.

Before Going Out

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

Registering Your Vessel

- You must have a Texas Certificate of Number (registration card) and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on public waters in Texas. The only exceptions are:
  - A non-motorized sailboat under 14 feet in length
  - Non-motorized vessels such as canoes, kayaks, rowboats, and rubber rafts
  - Vessels registered in other states and using Texas waters for 90 consecutive days or less
- The Certificate of Number and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application, supporting documentation (signed bill of sale, title, etc.), and fees by mail or in person.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CERTIFICATE OF NUMBER FOR A VESSEL
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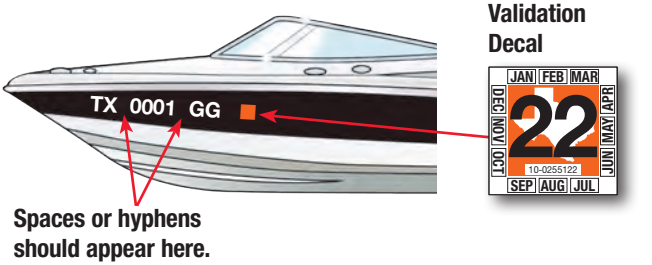
HIN: ABC98765D819 2019
ALUMACRAFT / 1403 14'0" TITLED

- *This certificate or a copy of it must be on board and available for inspection by an officer whenever the vessel is being operated.*
- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows:
  - Number must be painted on, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to the forward half of the vessel.
  - Number must read 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: **TX 0001 GG** or **TX-0001-GG**.
  - No other numbers may be displayed.
  - Decals must be affixed on each side, three inches behind (toward the stern) and in line with the number.



Keep in mind…
A small boat operator should never go out alone. Bring along at least one other boater. If unfamiliar with the waterway, go out with someone who is knowledgeable.

Other Facts About Titling and Registering

- You must obtain a title for all outboard motors, just as you would a vessel. Battery-operated trolling motors are an exception.
- A Certificate of Number is valid for two years. You will receive a renewal notice about three months prior to the expiration date. The expiration date is on the certificate and the decals.
- If you have changed addresses, you must call or write Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) within 15 days of your change of address in order to get your renewal notice.
- If you abandon or destroy your vessel, you must report it to TPWD within 20 days and surrender your Certificate of Number and title if applicable.
- If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number, you must complete a PWD 143 form and submit a processing fee.

- To apply for a Certificate of Number and decals for a homemade vessel, you must submit the following, in addition to completed application forms and required fees:
  - An affidavit regarding the origin of the vessel and receipts for materials used in its construction
  - An inspection and certification by a Texas game warden
- 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. ***Documented vessels also must be registered with TPWD***.

Buying and Selling a Vessel

The procedure for buying or selling a new or pre-owned vessel or motor is outlined here.

- The seller completes the appropriate application forms.
  - Form 143, the blue-striped form, is used to buy or sell a new or used vessel.
  - Form 144, the green-striped form, is used to buy or sell an outboard motor.
- Forms 143 and 144 can be obtained:
  - On the Internet at **www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/forms/**
  - From marine dealerships
  - From any of the TPWD offices listed toward the end of this handbook
- The buyer reviews and signs the form(s), and the seller assigns the title(s) to the buyer (if titles have been previously issued).
- This procedure must be completed no later than 45 days from date of purchase in order to avoid a penalty. The following items are submitted to TPWD:
  - Completed and signed forms PWD 143 and 144
  - Supporting documentation (Manufacturer's Statement of Origin or assigned titles, signed bill of sale, etc.)
  - All required state fees and sales tax (**Note:** Registration fees are based on the length of your vessel.)
- TPWD will send to the buyer a new title and Certificate of Number in the buyer's name.

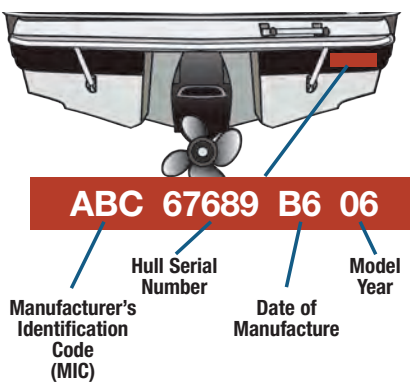
Schedule of Fees

Texas Certificate of Number (Registration) Fees	Fee
Less than 16 feet in length (Class A)	$32
16 feet but less than 26 feet in length (Class 1)	$53
26 feet but less than 40 feet in length (Class 2)	$110
40 feet or more in length (Class 3)	$150
Livery boat less than 16 feet in length (Class A)	$32

Texas Certificate of Title Fees	Fee
Original, transfer of, or replacement title (ea.)	$27.00
Correction (return present title to TPWD)	$27.00
"Quick" Title (for replacement titles only)	$64.00

Hull Identification Number (HIN)

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer. All vessels are required to have an HIN. A Game Warden inspection is required for all vessels that do not have the HIN.
- These numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- You should write down your HIN and put it in a place separate from your vessel in case warranty problems arise or your vessel is stolen.



Legal Requirements for Trailers

- Trailers must be registered with your county tax assessor just like your automobile.
- If the gross weight of the vessel and trailer exceeds 4,500 pounds, the trailer must be equipped with brakes.
- Trailers must have proper lighting, including turn signals, taillights, and brake lights. All trailer lights must be maintained in an operable condition.
- All towing vehicles must be connected to the trailer by a set of safety chains or a cable of sufficient strength to maintain connection under all conditions.
- Contact the tax assessor in your county for complete details on requirements for your trailer.

Who May Operate a Vessel

- Operators must meet the age and boater education requirements shown below in order to operate any of the following vessels legally in Texas:
  - A powerboat powered by a motor of more than 15 horsepower ***or…***
  - A personal watercraft (PWC) ***or…***
  - A windblown vessel over 14 feet in length.
- **A person less than 13 years of age** may operate *only if* he or she is supervised by a person who:
  - Is 18 years of age or older ***and…***
  - Can lawfully operate the watercraft ***and…***
  - Is on board when the vessel is underway.
- **A person at least 13 years of age and born on or after September 1, 1993,** may operate without supervision *only if* he or she has passed a boater education course that is accepted by TPWD.
- All persons required to have passed a state-approved boater education course must carry with them on the vessel:
  - Photographic identification, such as a driver's license or student I.D., ***and…***
  - A boater education certification card issued by the TPWD upon successful completion of a boater education course *or* proof of completion of the requirements to obtain a vessel operator's license issued by the USCG.

- Non-residents may fulfill the Texas boater education requirement by supplying proof that they have passed another state's boater education course that is accepted by TPWD and is NASBLA–approved.

Party Boat Operator Licensing and Inspection Process

A Party Boat Operator License issued by the TPWD is required for operators of charter vessels, operating on inland waters, carrying more than six passengers and with a length exceeding 30 feet. The only exemption from this requirement is if the operator holds a current USCG Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel (OUPV) License, often referred to as a "6-pack license," or higher level of Captain's license issued by the USCG. Inland charter or party boats must have annual inspections and post the annual inspection certificate on their boat. For more details on the Party Boat Operator regulations, age and experience requirements, and application process, see the TPWD website at **www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/laws/party_boat/**.

Marine Events

Although no state permit is needed to hold a race or regatta on Texas waters, always notify the controlling lake authority. Events held on federally controlled waters are granted a permit through the USCG by applying at least 30 days in advance.

Required Equipment

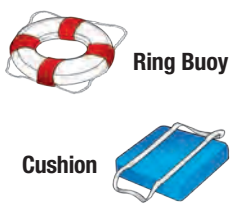
When preparing to go out on a vessel, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- All vessels (including canoes, kayaks, and other paddlecraft) must have at least one Type I, II, III, or V (wearable) personal flotation device (PFD) that is USCG–approved for each person on board.
- In addition to the above requirements, vessels 16 feet or longer (except canoes and kayaks) must have one USCG–approved Type IV (throwable) device on board that is readily accessible.
- *Texas law requires that all children under 13 years of age wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V (wearable) PFD* while underway (not at anchor, moored, or aground) on any vessel less than 26 feet long, including canoes, kayaks, and other paddlecraft.
- If a person over 13 years of age chooses to wear a PFD that is **not** USCG–approved, a properly fitting USCG–approved PFD **must** be carried on board the vessel to meet the state and federal carriage requirements.
- One Type V 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 or being towed behind a PWC must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition, of the proper size for the intended wearer, and readily accessible. Readily accessible means you are able to put the PFD on quickly in an emergency. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

Wearable PFDs

Throwable Devices



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 (Level 50 does not currently meet USCG carriage requirements.)
  - 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.

Navigation Lights

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

Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

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

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

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

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

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

All Vessels When Not Underway

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

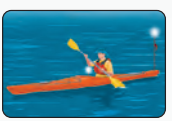
1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

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

2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

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

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23.0 Feet



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

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."

- Federal law requires all vessels, including PWC, to have a Type B USCG–approved fire extinguisher on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Any inboard engine
  - Closed compartments where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Double bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not filled completely with flotation material

- Closed living spaces
- Closed storage compartments in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
- Permanently installed fuel tanks (any tank where the removal of the tank is hampered by the installation of tie-down straps or clamps)

- 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.
- If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a PWC), open the engine compartment and sniff for gasoline fumes before starting the engine.

Backfire Flame Arrestors

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

- All powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have an approved backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor.
- Backfire flame arrestors must be USCG–approved (must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards).
- Periodically clean flame arrestor(s) and check for damage.

Mufflers

- Motor-driven vessels must have a factory-type muffler or exhaust water manifold installed on the engine or another effective muffling system for noise reduction purposes.
- Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.

Engine Cut-Off Switch (ECOS)

If the vessel is equipped with a lanyard-type engine cut-off switch (ECOS), the lanyard must be attached to person, clothing, or PFD of the operator at all times when a PWC is underway and at greater than headway speed for all other motorboats under 26 feet in length other than a PWC. The operator of the vessel is also responsible for verifying that the ECOS system is operating.

Sound-Producing Devices

- Vessels less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length, which includes PWC, must have some way of making an efficient sound signal. Examples are a handheld air horn, an athletic whistle, an installed horn, etc. A human voice is not acceptable.
- Vessels that are 39.4 feet (12 meters) or more in length must have a sound-producing device that can produce an efficient sound signal. The sound signal should be audible for one-half mile and should last for 4 to 6 seconds.

Some sound signals that you should be familiar with are:

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 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.

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)

- Vessels on **federally controlled waters** must be equipped with visual distress signals (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 ft. in length
- Non-motorized open sailboats less than 26 ft. 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 examples satisfy USCG requirements:
  - Three handheld red flares (day and night)
  - Three orange smoke signals (day only) and one electric light (night only)

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.

On the Water

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

Negligent and Reckless Operation

The failure to exercise the care necessary to prevent the endangerment of life, limb, or property of any other person is illegal. Below are examples of negligent and reckless operation.

- Boating in restricted areas that have been marked clearly by buoys or in some other manner.
- Allowing passengers to ride on the bow, gunwale, transom, seat backs, seats on raised decks, or any other place where there may be a chance of falling overboard.
- Operating at speeds that are not reasonable and prudent based on boating traffic, weather conditions, visibility, or other hazards. If no speed limits are posted, you should operate a vessel so that it does not endanger others and so that it can be stopped safely.
- Causing damage to a person or property with a vessel's wake in "No Wake" areas. In these areas, you should operate a vessel slowly so that it does not throw a wake. In addition, you should reduce your speed when passing:
  - Near a swimming area or close to a shoreline
  - Another vessel where people are fishing, water-skiing, diving, or anchored
- Encircling people engaged in water activities. Unless you are retrieving a downed water-skier or person engaged in a similar activity, do not operate a boat or PWC in a circular course around:
  - Any person swimming
  - Any other boat or PWC when the operator or any passenger is fishing, water-skiing, or participating in a similar activity

Power Lines and Electric Safety

Always remember that electricity and water don't mix. When electric current makes contact with water, which is a conductor, it has the potential to travel great distances. In Texas, power lines exist over many lakes and streams. They are high enough

that, under normal conditions, boats can pass under them safely. But safety awareness is always important when you are in the area of water and electricity.

- Keep a safe distance from power lines, and stay aware of what is around you and in the water and above it.
- Water can rise, especially after storms. Keep a close watch on water levels, especially in areas near power lines.
- Look up, down, and all around you while on boat ramps and in marinas. Take note and avoid overhead power lines during launch, docking, and all times in between.
- If you see a low-hanging power line, stay away, and call **911**.
- Sailboat masts conduct electricity, so be aware of your mast height.
- If your boat or mast touches a power line, stay in the boat, and wait for help.
- Make sure any electrical equipment used in or near water is in good working condition. If you feel a tingling sensation while in the water, it might be electrified. Get out of the water as quickly as you can, avoiding metal ladders. Use marine cords, plugs, and receptacles.
- Avoid swimming near docks or marinas where electricity is used.

Alcohol and Drugs

- Texas law prohibits anyone from operating a vessel while intoxicated (BWI). This includes the operation of any boat, sailboat, PWC, water skis, sailboard, or similar device. Operators who have a blood alcohol content of 0.08% or greater are considered intoxicated.
- Alcohol and drugs cause impaired balance, blurred vision, poor coordination, impaired judgment, and slower reaction times. Alcohol is a major contributor to boating accidents and fatalities.
- Texas law establishes the following penalties for BWI.
  - First conviction carries a fine of up to $2,000 and/or jail time of up to 180 days.
  - Second conviction carries a fine of up to $4,000 and/or jail time of up to one year.
  - Third conviction carries a fine of up to $10,000 and/or jail time of 2–10 years.

- By operating a vessel on Texas waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol and/or drugs if arrested by a law enforcement official. Refusal to submit to testing may result in the suspension of your vehicle driver's license for at least 180 days.
- Remember this simple rule: ***Don't drink and boat!***

Obstructing Navigation

It is illegal to:

- 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.

Homeland Security Restrictions

Recreational boaters have a role in keeping our waterways safe and secure.

- Observe and avoid all security zones, including restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc. Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel. Violators can expect a swift and severe response.
- 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 or the USCG.

Accidents and Casualties

- 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.
- Vessel operators involved in an accident must report the accident to the TPWD by the quickest means possible if it has resulted in:

- Death ***or…***
- The disappearance of a person from a vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury ***or…***
- Injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid ***or…***
- Property damage exceeding $2,000 to all vessels, docks, etc. involved in the accident.

- Accident reports submitted by operators are confidential and are not admissible in court as evidence.
- Report forms are available from TPWD offices and game wardens, or call the TPWD 24 hours a day at **512-389-4848**.

Enforcement

- All marine safety enforcement officers and game wardens are given the authority under the Texas Water Safety Act to enforce the boating laws of Texas. This includes the right to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with federal and state laws.
- The USCG has enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.

Diver-Down Flags

- Scuba divers or snorkelers must display a diver-down flag to mark their diving area.
- Vessels must remain at least 50 feet away from the flag. If they have to approach the diving area, vessel operators must have permission from the person who placed the flag or the vessel displaying the flag.
- Outside of 50 feet, vessel operators must operate at headway speed out to a distance of 150 feet away from the flag.

Divers Flag

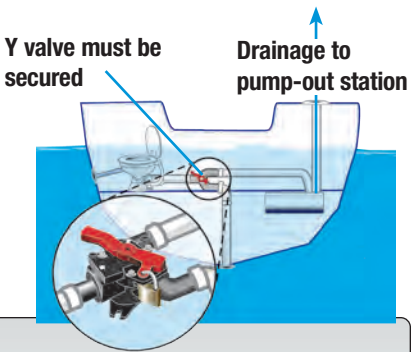
A rectangular red flag, at least 15 inches by 15 inches, with a white diagonal stripe is required on state waters by Texas law.

Alfa Flag

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

Discharge of Sewage and Waste

- All boats, including houseboats and floating cabins, equipped with a galley or toilet must have a waste-water holding system to prevent the discharge of waste products into surrounding waters.
- If you have a recreational vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board.
- All installed devices must be USCG–certified.



Typical Marine Sanitation Device

Types of MSDs

There are three types of MSDs.

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

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:

- Notify the National Response Center by calling **1-800-424-8802**.
- Also, notify the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality by calling the hotline at **1-800-832-8224**.

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

Discharge of Trash

It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into any federally controlled or state waters. Many forms of litter can kill birds, fish, and marine mammals.

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

It's the Law: On the Water With Your Vessel

Protect Texas Seagrasses

Seagrasses are plants totally adapted to living underwater. Their canopy of leaves and net of roots create a stable and protected habitat for marine life. It is this habitat that helps make the fishing great.

- Seagrass benefits the environment by providing habitat for young stages of fish, crustaceans, and shellfish, which are important to commercial and recreational industries. Seagrass stabilizes bottom sediments and removes nutrients from the water, aiding the growth of the other marine life.
- Seagrass loss in watersheds of estuarine and marine systems is caused by human activities such as dredge and fill activities, coastal development, nutrient pollution, degraded water, and uprooting by propellers.
- If boating in shallow areas or seagrass beds, you will see a mud trail in your wake where your propeller has churned up the bottom, clouded the water, and cut seagrass roots. If you see this trail, you should:
  1. **Lift**. Stop your vessel. Tilt your motor out of the water.
  2. **Drift**. Use the wind to drift to and through dense submerged vegetation.
  3. **Pole**. Pole or walk your vessel out of the shallow area or seagrass bed.
  4. **Troll**. Use a trolling motor to navigate the shallow waters.
- In Redfish Bay State Scientific Area, consisting of 30,000 acres of dense submerged vegetation located on the mid-central coast, it is against the law to uproot seagrasses with a propeller.

Invasive Species

- Our lakes, rivers, and bays are under attack from destructive invasive species such as giant salvinia, water hyacinth, and zebra mussels. These invaders harm native plants and animals; cost Texas taxpayers millions of dollars; and hurt fishing, swimming, and boating. Invasive species spread across Texas by hitching a ride on boats.
- Do your part to protect Texas waters—Clean, drain, and dry!
  - **CLEAN:** Before leaving the ramp, do a "walk around" inspection. Remove any plants, mussels, and other debris from the boat, trailer, and gear.
  - **DRAIN:** Drain your boat, motor, bait buckets, and other water-retaining compartments. Keep your drain plug out until you get home.
  - **DRY:** Let boat dry for a week or more before visiting another lake. Leave all compartments open and gear out to air dry. If you aren't able to dry it this long, then wash everything thoroughly.
- It is illegal to transport invasive species or to leave a public water body without draining all water and removing all harmful plants and animals from your boat and trailer. Failure to comply with the laws results in a first-offense Class C misdemeanor with a fine of up to $500.

Learn more at **www.tpwd.texas.gov/invasivespecies**.

Specifically for PWC

PWC operators must obey the laws that apply to other vessels as well as obey additional requirements that apply specifically to the operation of PWC on Texas waters.

Requirements Specific to PWC

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- If the PWC is equipped with a lanyard-type ECOS, the lanyard must be attached to the person, clothing, or PFD of the operator.
- It is illegal to:
  - Operate a PWC between sunset and sunrise.
  - Operate a PWC within 50 feet of another boat or PWC, a person, a stationary platform, or a shoreline. The only exception is when the PWC is maintaining headway speed.
  - Operate a PWC in a manner that requires the operator to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid a collision. Furthermore, a PWC should not jump the wake of another vessel recklessly or unnecessarily close to that vessel.
  - Chase, harass, or disturb wildlife with your PWC.
- PWC must be rated to carry the number of persons on board at any time.

Specifically for Skiing

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

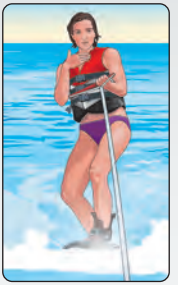
Requirements for Towing Skiers

- It is illegal for operators of boats to tow a person(s) on water skis, skiboards, or any device of this type between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise. It is illegal for operators of PWC to tow any person or device between sunset and sunrise.
- All vessels towing person(s) on water skis or similar devices must be operated in a careful and prudent manner. A reasonable distance from other vessels, people, and property must be maintained so as not to endanger life or property. Buzzing or spraying another vessel or swimmer is illegal.
- Only a vessel operator who is retrieving a downed water-skier or person engaged in a similar activity may operate in a circular course around that person.
- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device must have:
  - An observer, other than the vessel operator, 13 years of age or older on board ***or…***
  - A rearview mirror. The size of the mirror must be no less than four inches in size from bottom to top and across from side to side. It should be mounted firmly to give the operator a full, complete view beyond the rear of the vessel at all times. **Note:** Most PWC mirrors do not meet these size standards.
- PWC have rating requirements that must be met when towing people.
  - A PWC must be rated for at least two people when towing a person on water skis or a similar device.
  - If an observer is used, the PWC must be rated for *three* people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.

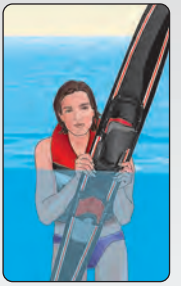
Hand Signals for Skiers

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

Avoiding Propeller Strike Injuries

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

- Maintain a proper lookout. The primary cause of propeller strike accidents is operator inattention.
- Make sure the engine is off so that the propeller is not rotating when passengers are boarding or leaving a boat.
- Never start a boat with the engine in gear.
- Slow down when approaching congested areas and anchorages. In congested areas, always be alert for swimmers and divers.
- Learn to recognize warning buoys that mark swimming and hazardous areas.
- Keep the boat away from marked swimming and diving areas. Become familiar with the red-and-white or blue-and-white diver-down flags signaling that divers are below the surface.
- Make sure that passengers are seated properly before getting underway. Some operators of larger boats with several passengers have caused injuries by putting the engine in gear while people were still swimming or diving from the boat.
- Never ride on a seat back, gunwale, transom, or bow.

Devices That Reduce Propeller Strikes

There are several new technologies designed to reduce propeller strikes. The effectiveness of the devices varies, depending on the boat and the operating environment. For more information, visit the USCG's Boating Safety website at **www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters**.

TPWD Law Enforcement Offices

Abilene
281 North Willis Street
Abilene, TX 79603
325-673-3333

Amarillo
203 West 8th Street
Suite 200
Amarillo, TX 79101
806-379-8900

Austin Headquarters
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744
1-800-792-1112

Beaumont
5550-K Eastex Freeway
Beaumont, TX 77708
409-892-8666

Brownsville
5460 Paredes Line Road
Suite 201
Brownsville, TX 78526
956-546-1952

Brownwood
301 North Main Street
Suite D
Brownwood, TX 76801
325-646-0440

College Station
12815 Wellborn Road
Suite 160
College Station, TX 77845
979-696-4148

Corpus Christi
5541 Bear Lane
Suite 232
Corpus Christi, TX 78405
361-289-5566

El Paso
401 East Franklin
Suite 520
El Paso, TX 79901
915-834-7050

Fort Worth
5400 Airport Freeway
Suite E
Fort Worth, TX 76117
817-831-3128

Garland
346 Oaks Trail
Suite 100
Garland, TX 75043
972-226-9966

Houston (North)
350 North Sam Houston
Parkway East
Suite 100
Houston, TX 77060
281-931-6471

Houston (South)
10101 Southwest Freeway
Suite 206
Houston, TX 77074
713-779-8977

Kerrville
309 Sidney Baker South
Kerrville, TX 78028
830-257-7611

LaMarque
14037 Delaney Road
LaMarque, TX 77568
409-933-1947

Laredo
5119 Bob Bullock Loop
Laredo, TX 78041
956-718-1087

Lubbock
1702 Landmark Lane
Suite 1
Lubbock, TX 79415
806-761-4930

Lufkin
Old Texas Plaza
4100 South Medford Drive
Suite 204B
Lufkin, TX 75901
936-632-1311

Midland
4500 West Illinois
Suite 307
Midland, TX 79703
432-520-4649

Mt. Pleasant
212 South Johnson
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455
903-572-7966

Rockport
715 South Highway 35
Rockport, TX 78382
361-790-0312

Rusk
580 West 6th Street
Rusk, TX 75785
903-683-2511

San Angelo
3407 South Chadbourne
San Angelo, TX 76903
325-651-4844

San Antonio
2391 Northeast Loop 410
Suite 409
San Antonio, TX 78217
210-348-7375

Temple
3615 South General
Bruce Drive
Temple, TX 76504
254-778-8913

Tyler
11942A FM 848
Suite 100
Tyler, TX 75707
903-534-0388

Victoria
2805 North Navarro
Suite 600A
Victoria, TX 77901
361-575-6306

Waco
1601 East Crest Drive
Waco, TX 76705
254-867-7951

Wichita Falls
4822 Kemp Boulevard
Suite 1300
Wichita Falls, TX 76308
940-723-7327

Boater Information

Boater Education Program
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744
512-389-4846, option 4

Boat Registration and Titling
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744
1-800-262-8755
512-389-4828

Texas Required Equipment Checklist

	PWC	Boats Less Than 16 Ft.	Boats 16 Ft. to Less Than 26 Ft.
Boater Education Certification Card and Photographic Identification on Board	✓1	✓1	✓1
Certificate of Number 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	1 5-B	1 5-B	2 5-B or 1 20-B
ECOS	✓	✓	✓
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓	✓4	✓4
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓
Muffler	✓	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓	✓	✓
Daytime VDSs			✓5
Nighttime VDSs	6	✓5	✓5
Navigation Lights	6	✓	✓

1. Applicable if operator is under 18 years of age.
2. Those on PWC must *wear* a PFD at all times.
3. Those under the age of 13 must *wear* a PFD at all times while underway.
4. Required on boats with inboard engines or stern drives.
5. Required when boating on federally controlled waters.
6. Certain items are not applicable to PWC because they are not allowed to operate between sunset and sunrise.

Learn just about everything you want to know about what is going on outdoors in Texas!

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

- Stay current on all boating safety laws
- Get the latest fishing reports
- Find answers to questions about:
  - boat titling and registration
  - fishing licenses and regulations
- Learn about state park locations and fees and available camping, fishing, hiking, and boating activities
- Discover outdoor education opportunities

Important Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Phone Numbers

Operation Game Thief
Report game and fishing violations
1-800-792-GAME

Texas State Parks Pass
Camp and park entry discounts
512-389-8900

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Magazine Subscriptions
Texas like you've never seen it
1-800-937-9393

State Parks Reservations
Plan your next trip with one call
512-389-8900

Boat Information and Registration
Questions on registering or titling?
1-800-262-8755

Hunting and Fishing Licenses
1-800-895-4248

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Information Number
For anything else…
1-800-792-1112

Everything you need to know about boating in Texas is just a click away.

Visit our website:
www.tpwd.texas.gov