

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICE

Boat
MASSACHUSETTS

**YOUR GUIDE TO
BOATING LAWS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES**



7TH EDITION

WELCOME ABOARD!



Massachusetts offers a wonderfully diverse spectrum of boating opportunities to residents and visitors alike. With nearly 1,500 miles of coastline, four major river systems, hundreds of lakes and ponds, as well as the beautiful Quabbin Reservoir, if it has to do with recreational boating, you can find it in Massachusetts.

To really enjoy a safe and relaxing day on the water, vessel operators and passengers must know the “rules of the road,” equipment requirements, safe fueling practices, and other basic safe boating practices. These topics and many others are covered in this guide. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with it and keep it on board your boat for ready reference.

The Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) is the Commonwealth’s primary marine enforcement agency, ensuring boater compliance with boating laws and regulations. Environmental Police Officers are involved heavily in boat accident investigations as well as boat thefts. Additionally, we provide boaters with boating safety courses that are state and nationally approved and geared to both youth and novice boaters of all ages. Taking a course as a family is fun and has proven to be very rewarding. We also encourage you to take advantage of other educational opportunities that are available. Working in partnership with volunteer organizations and private enterprise, we strive to make boating a safer and more enjoyable experience for all. Contact us for a schedule of courses offered in your area at 508-564-4961 or www.mass.gov/ole.

Boating is an activity that provides a lifetime of pleasure and learning opportunities. No matter how many years you have spent on the water, each time underway presents its own unique challenges and conditions. We hope this guide assists you in meeting those challenges safely.

Massachusetts Environmental Police

And always:



Boat Smart From the Start
WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!!

Boat MASSACHUSETTS

YOUR GUIDE TO BOATING LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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MASSACHUSETTS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICE



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An Agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

NOTE: The information in this handbook is intended to be used only as a summary of the boating laws and regulations in Massachusetts. The language in this handbook does not replace the language of the actual boating laws and regulations as they are presented in Chapter 90B of Massachusetts General Law and in Section 323, Code of Massachusetts Regulations.

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Where to Find Additional Information

This handbook is a guide to Massachusetts boating laws for recreational boaters.

- To stay up to date on new boating laws, contact the Massachusetts Environmental Police at:
508-564-4961 or **www.mass.gov/ole**
- For federal boating laws, visit the U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety website: **www.uscgboating.org**

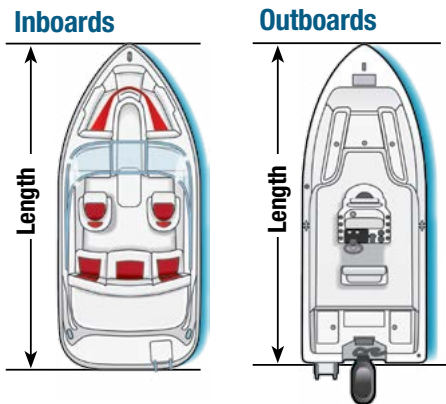
Information in this handbook does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in Massachusetts, which is found in Massachusetts General Law, Code of Massachusetts Regulations, and federal law.

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 a molded part of the hull.

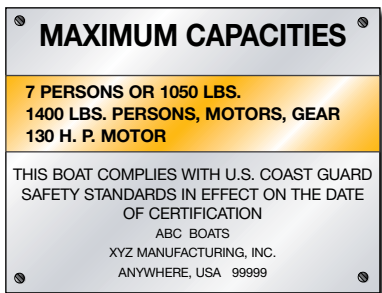


Vessel Capacity

- Always check the capacity plate to make sure you don't swamp or capsize your vessel. This plate is usually found near the operator's position or on the vessel's transom.

It indicates the maximum weight capacity and maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely. It also indicates the maximum horsepower.

- Capacity plates are required on single-hull vessels that are less than 20 feet in length.
- Personal watercraft (PWCs) 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.
- Verbatim statute regarding overloading:** Vessel capacity is regulated as per Section 323, CMR2.07(7). No vessel may be operated in an overloaded condition. Overloaded condition means that the number of persons on board and/or the cargo being carried exceeds the manufacturer's recommended limit for such vessel or is excessive given windy water and weather conditions.



Remember...

Overloading your boat can lead to capsizing.
 Capsizing means that you could wind up in the water!

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.

■ After fueling:

- Wipe up any spilled fuel.
- Open all windows, ports, doors, and other openings.

- Each pump or other dispensing device used to provide motor fuel for motorboats shall be equipped with an automatic shut-off nozzle that shall not be capable of being locked into an open position. Any violation of this shall be punishable by a fine of not more than \$500.

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.

Additional Safety Procedures for PWCs

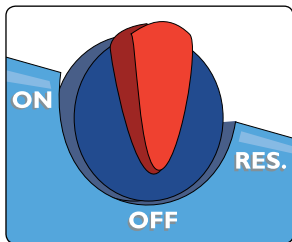
- Do not tip the PWC in order to fill it all the way up. If the tank is overfilled, the fuel may expand and spill into the water.
- After fueling, open the door of the engine compartment and sniff to check for any evidence of gas fumes. Do this before starting the engine. If you do smell gas fumes, determine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



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.
- Float plan forms are available online at www.mass.gov/ole.

Pre-Departure Checklist

You can help assure 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 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.

Boat Theft Prevention

Keep in mind three factors that discourage thieves everywhere—time, noise, and visibility.

Taking Crime Prevention Measures

- Always remove the key from the ignition when not in use.
- Store your vessel so that it is not easily accessed.
 - Secure the boat itself to a fixed object using a steel cable or chain with a heavy-duty lock. Don't leave valuable items in an unattended boat.
 - If it's a trailered boat, attach a quality trailer hitch lock; and if it's to be parked for a long time, remove a wheel.
 - If you store your boat at home, keep it either in a locked garage or in a fenced-in, locked back yard.
 - If you live in an apartment building, use an antitheft device on your vessel if it's stored in the parking lot. Never leave your vessel out with a "FOR SALE" sign on it; others may see the thief but assume he's just bought it.
 - If you keep the boat in the water at a marina, use a marina with full-time security and good lighting.
- Install an alarm (preferably a combination burglar/fire alarm) wired to the ignition. Have a second, hidden switch in case the thief jumps the first one.
- Avoid leaving loose gear visible. Keep radios, TV sets, and other items of value out of sight through windows.
- Pick one hold or locker, and secure it. Beef up the door, and install a deadbolt lock or a strong hasp and padlock. Keep your valuables in the locked compartment when you're not on board.
- Title and register your vessel.

Avoiding Cabin Entry

- Replace spring-latch locking assemblies with deadbolts.
- Install lugs in the hinge plates to prevent opening the door by removing the hinge pins.
- Close or cover any gaps that could allow prying.
- Lay wooden dowels in the tracks of sliding windows.

- Add a high-impact polycarbonate backup piece and solid brass hasp to make the forward hatch more difficult to open from the outside.
- Install an alarm system with magnetic or pressure switches on doors, windows, hatches, and holds to activate the alarm. Also include pressure mats at entrance points and in front of the operating console.

Identifying Your Belongings

- Make a complete inventory with full descriptions of your boat, trailer, and marine equipment, including manufacturer's model and serial numbers; and keep the inventory list at home. Hide a second list somewhere on the vessel. This information will prove invaluable when reporting a loss to law enforcement authorities and insurance companies.
- Do not leave registration and title papers on the vessel.
- Inscribe electronic instruments, communication gear, and other valuables with your driver's license number and state. This allows identification of your belongings by law enforcement computer networks. Prominently display the *Operation Identification* sticker so that the thief will know you're serious about crime prevention.
- Mark deck chairs, flotation gear, and other loose items with the name of your boat, your home port, and your name.
- Photograph or videotape the interior and exterior of your vessel, showing all installed equipment and additional gear and equipment.

Using Caution When Buying a Vessel

- Be careful when buying a used vessel—it could be stolen. Verify all identification numbers to make sure they haven't been tampered with. Be certain that the boat's description on the title matches the boat you are buying.
 - Check year, make, length, and the hull identification number (HIN). Do not buy a boat if the HIN has been altered or removed.

- Do not buy a boat that is registered as “homemade” but is obviously a manufactured model.
 - Do not buy an outboard motor if the model and serial number plates have been removed.
 - Be suspicious of a fresh paint job on a late-model boat.
 - Don't forget that if the price seems too good to be true, there is a good chance that the vessel is stolen.
- Don't purchase a boat with a dubious pedigree.
- Before buying, be certain the seller can provide you with current registration, a bill of sale, and title.
 - Compare the registration information against the actual boat. If the HIN and description don't match, leave it. Failure to obtain all necessary paperwork will likely result in your not being able to register the purchase.
 - If you suspect the attempted sale of a stolen boat, immediately contact the environmental police and state or local police.

Reporting Marine Theft

- Immediately report any possible theft to your local law enforcement agency, the state environmental police, and your insurance company.
- Upon reporting such theft to the environmental police, your boat will be deleted from the registration database, preventing re-registration by another party.

To report a stolen vessel, call the MA Environmental Police Radio Communication Center at **800-632-8075**.

Trailer Your Vessel Safely

■ Before leaving home:

- Secure all gear in the vessel, and arrange it so that the weight is evenly distributed in the vessel.
- Properly secure the vessel with several tie-down straps and/or safety lines to prevent it from shifting.
- Tilt and secure the engine to increase clearance.
- Crisscross the safety chains when attaching them to the towing vehicle.
- Make sure the trailer brakes and lights are working.



■ On the road:

- Think farther ahead on the road than usual. Anticipate changes in traffic flow in advance, make wider turns at corners and curves, allow extra time and distance for stopping and for passing other vehicles, and remember the length added by your trailer.
- Be aware that there may be lower speed limits for vehicles with trailers.

■ Launching your vessel from a trailer:

- Prepare your vessel well away from the boat ramp.
- Back the vessel into the water until the lower unit of the engine can be submerged while on the trailer.
- Once the engine is warmed up, back the trailer further until the vessel floats. Then back slowly off the trailer.

■ Retrieving your vessel:

- Back the trailer into the water so that approximately two-thirds of the rollers or bunks are submerged.
- Move the vessel onto the trailer far enough to attach the winch line to the bow eye of the vessel. Finish pulling it onto the trailer by cranking the winch.
- Tow the vessel off the ramp out of the way of others.
- While at the ramp area, remove all weeds from the vessel, remove the drain plug, and drain live wells.

■ Practice these simple courtesies on the ramp:

- Prepare your vessel for launching well away from the ramp.
- Use at least two experienced people to launch and retrieve the vessel—one to drive the towing vehicle and one to operate the vessel.
- Never block a ramp with an unattended vessel or vehicle. The vessel operator should move the vessel away from the launch lane immediately after removing it from the trailer. Return briefly to pick up the vehicle driver once he or she has parked and is at the ramp.



- When retrieving, do not pull your vessel into a launch lane until the towing vehicle is at the ramp. The line is formed by vehicles with trailers, not by vessels in the water. Drop off the vehicle driver, and wait offshore and clear of the ramp until he or she arrives with the trailer.
- After retrieving your vessel from the water, pull it out well away from the ramp before preparing the vessel for the drive home.

On the Water

Safe navigation on Massachusetts waterways is everyone's responsibility. All operators are equally responsible for taking action necessary 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

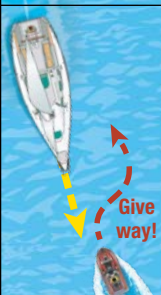


Meeting Head-On

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.

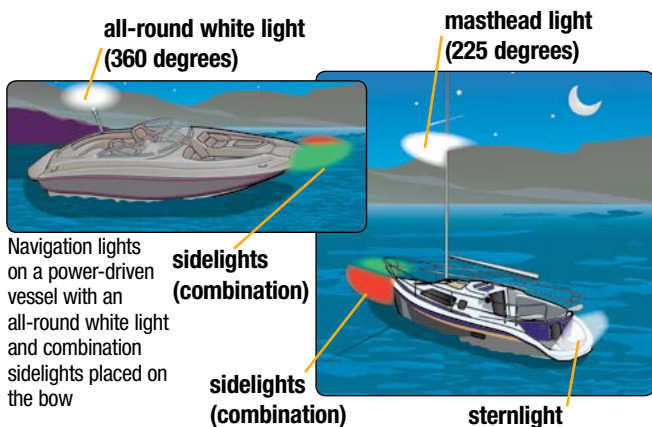
Power vs. Sail: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



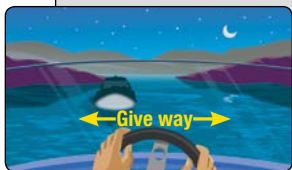
Nighttime Navigation

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.

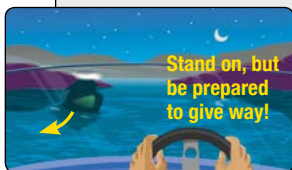
- **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (also called combination lights) because they are visible to another vessel approaching from the side or head-on. The red light indicates a vessel's port (left) side; the green indicates a vessel's starboard (right) side.
- **Sternlight:**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



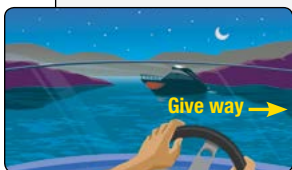
Encountering Vessels at Night



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.



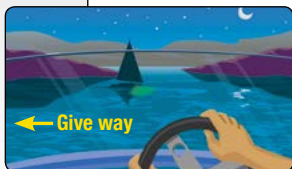
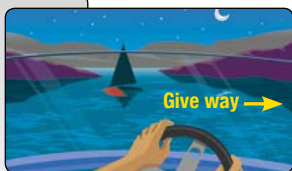
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.



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.

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.

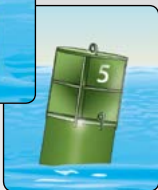
Red and green colors and/or lights indicate the preferred (primary) channel. If green is on top, the preferred channel is to the right as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream; if red is on top, the preferred channel is to the left.



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.

Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigational 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.



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.



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.



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 below.

VHF Channels Broadcasting NOAA Weather Reports

Channel	Frequency (MHz)
WX1	162.550
WX2	162.400
WX3	162.475
WX4	162.425
WX5	162.450
WX6	162.500
WX7	162.525

Recreational boaters are given access to these VHF channels:

6	Intership safety communications only
9	Communications between vessels (commercial and recreational) and ship to coast
13	Strictly for navigational purposes by vessels at bridges, locks, and harbors
16	Distress and safety calls to USCG and others, and to initiate calls to other vessels
22	USCG broadcasts of severe weather warnings and other safety warnings
24–28	Public telephone calls (to marine operator)
68, 69, 71	Recreational vessel radio channels and ship to coast

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 USCG–approved life jacket (personal flotation device, or 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. PWCs 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.

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 from 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 PFD.
- 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

Hypothermia is defined as the lowering of the core body temperature. Hypothermia occurs when the body loses heat faster than it produces it and can cause death. It can occur any time an individual is exposed to cold, wet, or windy weather.

■ 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 if you do fall into or must enter cold water:

- 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.



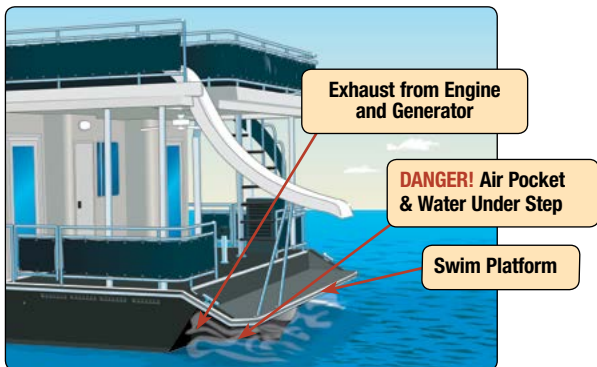
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas. CO can make you sick in seconds. In high enough concentrations, even a few breaths can be fatal.

- Early symptoms of CO poisoning include irritated eyes, headache, nausea, weakness, and dizziness. They are often confused with seasickness or intoxication. Move anyone with these symptoms into fresh air immediately. Seek medical attention—unless you're sure it's not CO.
- Sources of CO on your vessel may include engines, gas generators, cooking ranges, and space and water heaters. Natural air flows can suck fumes forward into the vessel.

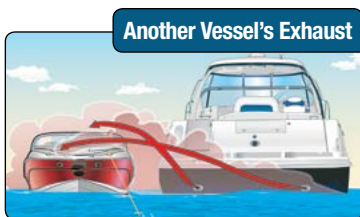
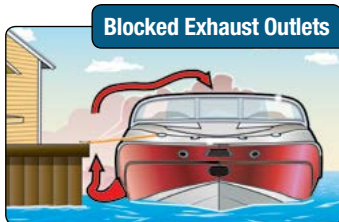


- Swimmers should never enter areas under swim platforms where exhaust outlets are located—even for a second. One or two breaths of the air in this area could be fatal.



■ To protect yourself and others against CO poisoning while boating:

- Keep fresh air flowing throughout the vessel at all times.
- Keep your vessel at least 20 feet from a vessel that is running a generator or engine.
- Know where your engine and generator exhaust outlets are located, and keep everyone away from these areas.
- Never sit on the back deck, teak surf, or hang on the swim platform while the engines are running.
- If exhaust fumes are detected on the vessel, immediately ventilate.
- Install and maintain CO detectors inside your vessel. Replace detectors as recommended by the manufacturer.



Specifically for PWCs

Although a personal watercraft (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

steering control



steering nozzle

- PWCs 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 PWCs 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 PWCs will continue in the direction they were headed before the engine was shut off, no matter which way the steering control is turned. New PWCs allow for off-throttle steering.

- **Most PWCs 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 PWCs that have a braking system do not stop immediately.

Engine Cut-Off Switches

- Most PWCs and powerboats come equipped by the manufacturer with an important device called an emergency engine cut-off switch. This is a safety device that is designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown from the proper operating position.
- A lanyard is attached to the safety switch and the operator's wrist or PFD. The safety 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 engine cut-off switch, 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.



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 vessel, or riding too close to another vessel, creates risks and is prohibited in Massachusetts. Visibility around the vessel making the wake may be blocked, both for the PWC operator and for approaching vessels.
- Excessive noise from PWCs often makes them unwelcome.
 - 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. Excessive use in one area can be an irritant to people who are there to enjoy a quiet and relaxing time.
 - 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 or other jet-propelled watercraft, 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 you and anyone on board must wear a PFD.
- 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.
- Make sure that every operator and passenger knows how to swim.
- Keep hands, feet, loose clothing, and hair away from the pump intake. Before cleaning debris away from the pump intake, always shut off the engine.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity for your PWC.
- See page 7 for safety tips on fueling PWCs.
- See pages 62–63 for legal requirements specific to PWCs.



Here are some important things to do when operating a PWC:

- Do not ride too closely behind another PWC. If it turns sharply or if it stalls, you could collide with it; if the other rider falls off, you could run over him or her.
- Be aware of all traffic in your boating area; don't focus just on the short distance ahead.
- Always remember that operating a PWC has the same responsibilities as operating any other vessel.

It is prohibited to use a personal watercraft (PWC), regardless of size, to tow waterskiers, tubes, or any similar device upon Massachusetts waters.

Other Watersports

Paddlesports

Paddlers (those who boat in small craft, such as canoes, kayaks, and rafts) should follow the same safe practices as any other small vessel operator.

- When paddling, you should:
 - Know how to paddle or swim in strong currents, and be an experienced swimmer.
 - Wear a PFD at all times, and consider wearing a helmet.
 - Dress in layers under your PFD.



- Be prepared for cold water by wearing a wetsuit or drysuit. Don't underestimate cold water's ability to rob you of your strength.
- Never paddle alone. Paddle with someone who is familiar with the waterway.
- Never overload the craft. Tie down gear, and distribute weight evenly.
- Don't stand up or move around in a small craft as that can make it unstable.
- Carry a first-aid kit.
- Check your craft for leaks.
- Map a general route and timetable when embarking on a long trip. Arrange for your vehicles to be shuttled to the take-out point.

- Be aware of any dangers ahead. When approaching rapids, go ashore well upstream, and check them out before continuing. Steer clear of drop-offs and dams. Carry your craft around low-head dams.
- Stay away from strainers. Strainers are river obstructions that allow water to flow through but block vessels and could throw you overboard and damage or trap your craft. Strainers may include overhanging branches, logjams, or flooded islands.
- If you capsize, follow these guidelines.
 - Float on the upstream side of the craft. You can be crushed on the downstream side if you run into an obstruction.
 - Do not attempt to stand or walk in swift-moving water. The current could pull you under if your foot becomes trapped between submerged rocks.
 - Float on your back with your feet and arms extended. Float with your feet pointed downstream to act as a buffer against rocks. Don't fight the current. Use the current to backstroke your way to shore.
- If paddling on a lake, watch the weather and stay close to shore. Head for shore if the waves increase.
- Canoe and kayak fatalities have grown significantly over the past 10 years in Massachusetts. Because both canoes and kayaks can capsize quite easily, make sure that you know the water temperature, and outfit yourself accordingly. Water temperatures can be deceiving and dangerously cold even on days when the air temperature is comfortable.
- When using a stand-up paddleboard (SUP) beyond the limits of swimming, bathing, or surfing areas, users are **required by law** to have a Type I, II, or III personal flotation device (PFD) aboard.

All persons on board a canoe or kayak from September 15 to May 15 must wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD at all times.

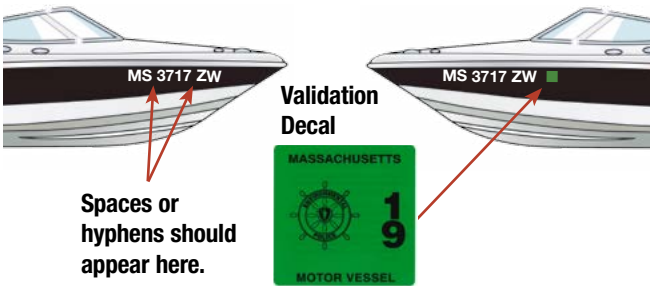
Before Going Out

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

Registering Your Motorboat

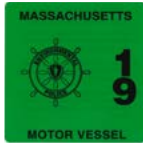
- You must have a Massachusetts Certificate of Number (boat registration) to operate a motorboat legally on Massachusetts waters. Exceptions to registration are:
 - Vessels without any kind of motor (unpowered canoes, sailboats, or kayaks)
 - Vessels properly registered in another state and using Massachusetts waters for 60 or fewer consecutive days
 - Vessels documented with the U.S. Coast Guard
- *The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is being operated.*
- The registration number and validation decal must be displayed as follows.
 - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed on the forward half of each side of the vessel and placed to be clearly visible.
 - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the vessel.
 - Number must be in at least three-inch-high, bold, **BLOCK** letters.
 - Number's color must contrast sharply with its background.
 - No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.





Spaces or
hyphens should
appear here.

Validation Decal



- Letters must be separated from the numbers by two-inch spaces or hyphens:
MS 3717 ZW or **MS-3717-ZW**.
- The validation decal must be affixed within six inches following the registration number on the port (left) side of the vessel.
- 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.

Where to Register

You can submit your registration or title applications and fees to:

- Massachusetts Environmental Police
Registration and Titling Bureau
251 Causeway St., Suite 101
Boston, MA 02114 *or...*
- Any of our satellite offices listed on the inside back cover *or...*
- The online registration renewal at:
www.mass.gov/ole*

Registration Questions?

Contact the Registration and Titling Bureau by calling **617-626-1610** or sending a fax to **617-626-1630**. You also may find the answers to registration questions on the Internet by visiting **www.mass.gov/ole**.



*If your registration has been expired for 48 months or longer, you will not be able to renew online.

Titling Your Motorboat

All vessels 14 feet or greater in length that require registration also must be titled.

- The title application must be made to the Massachusetts Environmental Police within 20 days of purchasing a vessel.
- The title certificate is valid for the life of the vessel or until the vessel is sold or otherwise transferred, at which time the new owner must transfer the title.

How to Apply for Registration

To register a vessel, you need to provide:

- Bill of Sale (name and address of seller)
- Sales tax form (ST-6 or ST-6E) (you can pay sales tax online at www.mass.gov/dor)
- Pencil tracing of Hull ID Number (serial number)*
- Required fees (see fee schedule on the next page)
- Properly completed and signed registration application

* If your vessel was built prior to 1972 or does not have a proper Hull Identification Number (HIN), a vessel inspection may be required.

If the vessel is 14 ft. or greater in length, you also need to provide in addition to the documents above:

- The title** or, if the vessel is documented with the U.S. Coast Guard, Termination of Documentation (“Deletion Letter”) from the U.S. Coast Guard

** If the vessel is purchased new from a registered boat dealer or department store, an original “Manufacturer’s Certificate of Origin” is required in lieu of title. When a boat is purchased from a private party from a non-titled state, the previous owner’s registration is required in lieu of title.

When in doubt, please call one of our registration offices listed on the inside back cover prior to submitting an application.

Fees to Register and Title Your Vessel

Registration of a Motorboat (2 years)

Length of vessel	Fee
Under 16 ft.	\$44.00
16 ft. to less than 26 ft.	\$66.00
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	\$88.00
40 ft. plus.....	\$110.00

Other Fees

Title for boats 14 ft. or greater in length	\$27.50
Duplicate Title	\$16.50
Transfer of Registration	\$16.50
Duplicate Registration	\$11.00
Duplicate Expiration Decal.....	\$5.50

If visiting any registration office, please bring a check or money order made payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

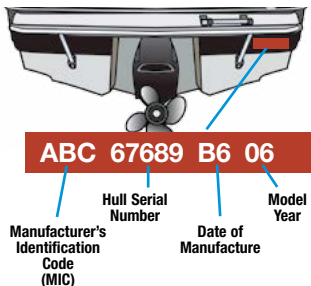
Other Facts About Titling and Registration

- A Certificate of Number is valid for two years from the date it is issued. Owners of vessels that have already been registered will be sent a renewal notice to their residence at least one month prior to the expiration of their current registration.
- The Massachusetts Environmental Police must be notified within 15 days of any of these events:
 - The sale, trade, or transfer of ownership of a registered vessel
 - The abandonment, destruction, loss, or theft of a registered vessel
 - The change of address of the owner of a registered vessel
 - The destruction or loss of a Certificate of Number or validation decal
- Boat trailers are registered and titled under the same requirements as passenger cars. Application is made through the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

- Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard. Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information. Documented vessels are exempt from Massachusetts registration and titling requirements.

Hull Identification Number

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- Hull Identification 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.
- It is illegal to remove or in any way falsify a Hull Identification Number.
- If your vessel is homemade, was built before 1972, or does not have a proper hull identification number (HIN), please contact the Massachusetts Environment Police at **1-800-632-8075** to arrange for a vessel inspection. The inspecting officer will provide the customer with an inspection certificate that must be presented when registering the vessel. At the time of registration, your boat will be assigned an HIN. You will be given instructions on how to place this HIN on your boat. **You must provide proof, to the registration office, of the HIN placement on your boat before you will receive your registration card and decal.**
- An HIN is required to title and register your vessel.



Who May Operate a Vessel

- **Who May Operate a Motorboat:** The restrictions below apply to boats propelled by any type of motor, whether or not the motor is the principal source of propulsion.
 - **Persons under 12 years of age** may operate a motorboat on Massachusetts waters *only if* accompanied on board and directly supervised by a competent person 18 years of age or older.
 - **Persons 12 through 15 years of age** may operate a motorboat on Massachusetts waters *only if* they:
 - Have passed a state-approved boating education course *or...*
 - Are accompanied on board and directly supervised by a competent person 18 years of age or older.
 - **Persons 16 years of age or older** may operate a motorboat on Massachusetts waters without age restrictions.
- **Who May Operate a Personal Watercraft (PWC):**
 - **Persons under 16 years of age** may not operate a PWC on Massachusetts waters under any circumstances.
 - **Persons 16 or 17 years of age** may operate a PWC on Massachusetts waters *only if* they have passed a state-approved boating education course.
 - **Persons 18 years of age or older** may operate a PWC on Massachusetts waters without age restrictions.
 - It is illegal to lease or rent a personal watercraft to any person under 16 years of age. It is illegal to lease or rent a PWC to any person 16 or 17 years of age who does not have in his or her possession the required Boating Safety Certificate.
- A person must be at least 12 years of age to be issued a Boating Safety Certificate. Students must be at least 12 years of age to enroll in the state's boating safety course.
- Persons required to have passed a state-approved boating education course must have the Boating Safety Certificate on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.



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 must have at least one USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD for each person on board.
- In addition to the above requirement, one USCG–approved Type IV (throwable) PFD must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer.
- Children under 12 years of age must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD whenever above deck on any vessel that is underway.
- Each person on board a personal watercraft (PWC) must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD at all times.
- Each person water-skiing or being towed in any manner must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD at all times.
- Each person on board a canoe or kayak from September 15 to May 15 must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD at all times.
- All PFDs must be:
 - *U.S. Coast Guard–approved*, which means they are marked clearly with the USCG approval number.
 - *In good and serviceable condition*.
 - *Readily accessible*, which means you are able to put the PFD on quickly in an emergency.
 - *Of the proper size for the intended wearer*. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.



TYPE I: Wearable Offshore Life Jackets

These vests are geared for rough or remote waters where rescue may take a while. They provide the most buoyancy, are excellent for flotation, and will turn most unconscious persons face up in the water.



TYPE II: Wearable Near-Shore Vests

These vests are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. A Type II may not turn some unconscious wearers face up in the water.



TYPE III: Wearable Flotation Aids

These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. They are not recommended for rough waters because they will not turn most unconscious persons face up.



TYPE IV: Throwable Devices

These cushions and ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. Since a Type IV is not designed to be worn, it is neither for rough waters nor for persons who are unable to hold onto it.



TYPE V: Special-Use Devices

These vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs, and others are designed for specific activities, such as windsurfing, kayaking, or water-skiing. *To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their labels.*

Boat Smart—Wear Your PFD

Approximately 70% of all boating fatalities involve drownings caused by boating accidents. Most drowning victims are not wearing a PFD or are wearing an inadequate one. That is why it is critical that you have a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD for each person on board.

- PFDs must be readily accessible. Better yet, each person should wear a PFD because PFDs are difficult to put on once you are in the water. In most fatal accidents, the proper PFDs were on board but were not in use or were not within easy reach. If you are in the water without a PFD on, retrieve a floating PFD and hold it to your chest by wrapping your arms around it.
- PFDs must be of the proper size for the intended wearer. Always read the label of the PFD to make sure it is the right size based on the person's weight and chest size. It's especially important to check that a child's PFD fits snugly. Test the fit by picking the child up by the shoulders of the PFD and checking that his or her chin and ears do not slip through the PFD.
- PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition.
 - Regularly test a PFD's buoyancy in shallow water or a swimming pool. Remember that, over time, the ultraviolet radiation from the sun will break down the synthetic materials used to make your PFD.
 - Frequently inspect personal flotation devices for rips or tears, discolored or weakened material, insecure straps or zippers, or labels that are no longer readable. Discard and replace any PFD that has a problem.



- If using an inflatable PFD, before each outing check the status of the inflator and that the CO₂ cylinder has not been used, has no leaks, and is tightly screwed in. Also check that the PFD itself has no leaks by removing the CO₂ cylinder and orally inflating the PFD. The PFD should still be firm after several hours. After an inflatable PFD has been inflated using the CO₂ cylinder, replace the spent cylinder and re-arm it. Because an inflatable PFD is a mechanical device, it requires regular maintenance. Inspect and maintain the inflatable portion of the PFD as instructed in the owner's manual.

In Massachusetts over the last 10 years, 85% of the victims who died in boating accidents did not use PFDs. The majority of these victims fell overboard or capsized and then drowned. Many of these deaths undoubtedly would have been prevented if a PFD had been worn.



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 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

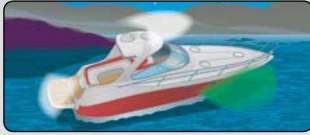
Unpowered vessels are sailboats or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed.

- **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 in all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area between sunset and sunrise.

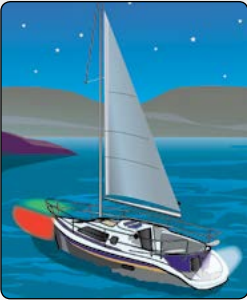
1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



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 Feet



To prevent a collision, 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

- All vessels with a motor of any type are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher on board. The only exception is a vessel that is of open construction, is less than 26 feet in length, has an outboard engine, is not carrying passengers for hire, and is not on federally controlled waters.
- 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 (B-I or B-II) and the approval number. The "II" in the symbol B-II indicates that this type of fire extinguisher has twice the amount of extinguishing agent as those labeled B-I.

Fire Extinguisher Requirements*

Classification type & size	Foam minimum gallons	Carbon Dioxide minimum pounds	Dry Chemical minimum pounds
B-I	1¼	4	2
B-II	2½	15	10

Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System**
Less than 16 ft.	None***	None
16 ft. to less than 26 ft.	one B-I	None
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	two B-I or one B-II	one B-I
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	three B-I or one B-II and one B-I	two B-I or one B-II

* See first paragraph on this page for exceptions.

** Refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system.

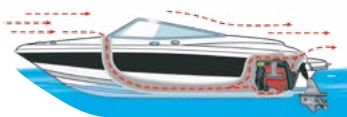
*** One B-I extinguisher is required if boating on federally controlled waters.

- Extinguishers should be placed in an accessible area—not near the engine or in a compartment, but where they can be reached immediately. Be sure you know how to operate them, and inspect extinguishers regularly to ensure they are in working condition and fully charged.



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 personal watercraft), 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 gasoline-powered motorboats, except outboards, must have a backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor that is U.S. Coast Guard-approved (must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards).

Mufflers and Noise Level Limits

- The exhaust of every internal combustion engine on any vessel must be effectively muffled by a muffler or underwater exhaust. That is, the engine's exhaust must be muffled or suppressed at all times so as not to create excessive noise.
- The use of cutouts is prohibited.
- It is illegal to remove or modify the exhaust or muffler system of a vessel.
- Vessels involved in a marine event authorized by the Massachusetts Environmental Police are exempt from the requirements above.

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 or on Massachusetts coastal waters must be equipped with visual distress signals that are U.S. Coast Guard–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 U.S. Coast Guard 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 visual distress signals 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).



Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

Orange Smoke—Handheld

Orange Smoke—Floating

Day Signal

Red Meteor

Day and Night Signal

Red Flare

Day and Night Signal

Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

Electric Light

Night Signal

Orange Flag

Day Signal

Federally Controlled Waters

Vessels must observe federal requirements on these waters:

- Coastal waters
- The Great Lakes
- Territorial seas
- Bodies of water connected directly to one of the above, up to a point where the body of water is less than two miles wide

Massachusetts Coastal Waters

Any Massachusetts waters that are subject to the rise and fall of the tide out to three nautical miles from any Massachusetts land point and including all of Massachusetts Bay, Vineyard Sound, Nantucket Sound, Buzzards Bay, and Cape Cod Bay.



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

A sound-producing device is required on all state and federally controlled waters. It is essential during periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position.



If on State Waters

Less than 26 feet long
(includes PWCs)

An efficient whistle or other sound-producing mechanical appliance to make an efficient sound signal audible for at least one-half mile required

26 feet long or longer

Whistle or horn **and** a bell audible for at least one-half mile required

If on Federally Controlled Waters

Less than 65.6 feet long
(includes PWCs)

Whistle or horn audible for at least one-half mile required

65.6 feet long or longer

Whistle or horn **and** a bell audible for at least one mile required

Sound Signals

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

Changing Direction

- **One short blast** tells other boaters, "I intend to pass you on my port (left) side."
- **Two short blasts** tell other boaters, "I intend to pass you on my starboard (right) side."
- **Three short blasts** tell other boaters, "I am operating astern propulsion." For some vessels, this tells other operators, "I am backing up."

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 sailing vessels.

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.

Other Equipment

Diver-Down Flag

- Persons scuba diving, skin diving, or snorkeling must display a red and white divers flag.
 - Divers or snorkelers must remain within 100 feet of the divers flag.
 - If possible, vessel operators not engaged in the diving operation should stay at least 100 feet from a displayed flag. If not possible, vessel operators must reduce speed to no more than three miles per hour.
- Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.
- Divers engaged in recreational marine fisheries activities (i.e., catching lobsters or fin fish) are subject to special regulations. Refer to www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dmf/.



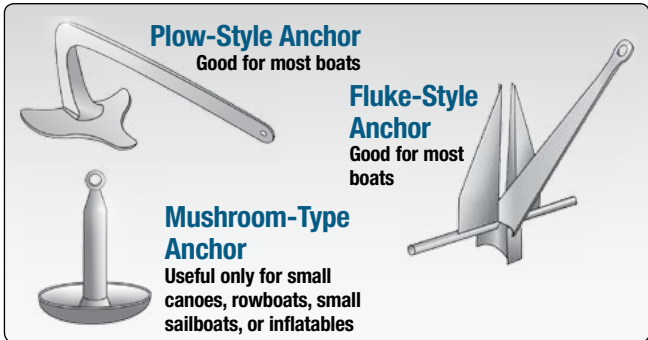
A rectangular red flag with a white diagonal stripe, at least 12 x 15 inches in size and constructed of rigidly supported material. This flag must be displayed on a vessel or surface float and must extend a minimum distance of three feet up from the surface of the water.

A blue and white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag), flown from a vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver. This flag indicates that a vessel is involved in a diving activity. The Alfa flag may be displayed in addition to the divers flag but does not replace the divers flag.

The following are Massachusetts requirements and will not be found in federal law.

Anchor and Bailer

All vessels propelled by a motor of any kind must have an anchor, and sufficient line (rope) to anchor in the vessel's normal operating area, and a manual bailer. (PWCs are exempt from these requirements.)



Paddle or Oar

All vessels less than 16 feet in length and propelled by a motor of any kind must carry a paddle or oar on board. (PWCs are exempt from this requirement.)



Ladder

All vessels towing a person on water skis or similar devices must be equipped with a ladder, steps, platform, or similar device that can be used to retrieve the person being towed from the water.

On the Water

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

Unlawful Operation

Massachusetts law states that these dangerous operating practices are illegal.

- **Reckless or Negligent Operation** of a vessel is the failure to exercise the degree of care necessary to prevent endangering the life, limb, or property of any person. Examples of reckless or negligent operation are:
 - Operating at high speed or erratically in congested waterway traffic
 - Operating such that your vessel or another vessel must swerve abruptly or cut speed in order to avoid collision
 - Operating near or through areas being used by swimmers or divers
 - Operating such that your vessel collides with another vessel, object, or person
 - Operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs
 - Cutting through a regatta or marine parade in progress
 - Operating between sunset and sunrise without displaying navigation lights
 - Chasing or harassing wildlife with your vessel

Remember...

As an owner of a vessel, you are responsible if you allow others to operate your vessel in an illegal manner or without the required equipment.

- **Improper Speed or Distance** is not maintaining a proper speed and/or distance while operating a vessel. Specifically, it is illegal to operate any vessel:
 - At a distance from other vessels or at a speed that exceeds safe and reasonable limits given the waterway traffic; marked speed limits; visibility; wind, water, and current conditions; and the proximity of navigational hazards
 - At greater than 45 miles per hour on any inland waters of Massachusetts, except on areas posted otherwise
 - Motorboats may not be operated:
 - Within 150 feet of shorelines used as swimming areas
 - Within 75 feet of floats or markers that designate swimming areas
 - At a rate of speed that creates a wake that causes damage, injury, or excessive rocking to other vessels, rafts, or floats

“Headway Speed” is the minimum speed at which a vessel may be operated and still maintain steering, but does not exceed 6 miles per hour.

- At more than headway speed under any of the following conditions:
 - From 150 to 300 feet of shorelines used as swimming areas
 - Within 150 feet of marinas, ramps, rafts, or floats
 - Within 150 feet of swimmers
 - When vision is obscured by bridges, bends in the waterway, or any other reason
 - When operating in a channel, unless channel markers state that higher speeds are allowed

- **Riding on the Bow or Gunwales** is allowing passengers to ride on the bow, gunwales, or any other place where there may be a chance of falling overboard.



- **Failure to Follow Navigation Rules** is operating a vessel on Massachusetts waters in violation of the navigation rules as contained in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Section 323, CMR 2.07(13).
- **Overloading or Overpowering** is loading or powering the vessel beyond the safe load and power limits, taking into consideration weather and other operating conditions. The safe load and power limits for most vessels are shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer.
- **Unsafe Condition** is operating a vessel in a condition that causes danger to the occupants or others on the waterways. Law enforcement officers may instruct the operator to take immediate corrective action or terminate the voyage if any of the following “unsafe conditions” exist:
 - Inadequate number of PFDs or fire extinguishers
 - Overloading (check capacity plate information)
 - Failure to display navigation lights after sunset
 - Fuel leakage or excessive fuel accumulation in the bilges or the engine compartment
 - Lack of proper ventilation of engine spaces
 - Failure to meet carburetor backfire flame arrestor requirements
 - Excessive leakage or accumulation of water in the bilge

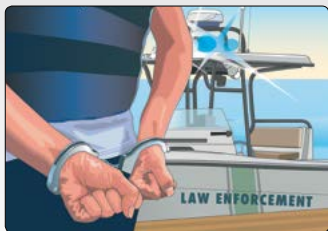
Alcohol and Drugs

Massachusetts has one of the strongest boating under the influence (BUI) laws in the nation. Massachusetts law prohibits anyone from operating any vessel while under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance.

- Massachusetts law states that a person is considered to be boating under the influence (BUI) if he or she has a blood or breath alcohol concentration of 0.08% or greater.
- Massachusetts law establishes the following penalties for BUI.
 - Those convicted of BUI for the first time may be imprisoned for up to 30 months, fined up to \$1,000, or imprisoned and fined. An offender also may have his or her motor vehicle license and vessel's registration revoked for up to one year.
 - Repeat offenders will receive more severe penalties.
 - Offenders convicted of BUI and causing serious bodily injury to another person may be imprisoned for up to 10 years and fined up to \$5,000.

Why drinking and boating can be lethal...

- The effect of alcohol is increased by the natural stressors (wind, sun, vibration) placed on your body while boating. Also, the dehydration of your body caused by natural stressors causes alcohol to be absorbed more quickly into your system.
- Alcohol depresses the central nervous system, affects judgment, and slows reaction times. Most people become slightly intoxicated after only one drink.



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

- By operating a vessel on Massachusetts waters, you have given “implied” consent to alcohol testing if arrested for boating under the influence. Anyone who refuses to submit to a blood alcohol level test is subject to having their motor vehicle license suspended for 120 days and vessel’s registration revoked.
- It is illegal for the owner or operator of a vessel to knowingly permit it to be operated by someone under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance.

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.

Marine Events

- Permits for regattas, races, marine parades, tournaments, or exhibitions to be held on state waters must be obtained from the Massachusetts Environmental Police in advance of the event.
- If the event is being held on federally controlled waters, a permit from the U.S. Coast Guard is required.



Homeland Security Restrictions

- Violators of the restrictions below can expect a quick and severe response.
 - 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 U.S. Coast Guard 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 U.S. Coast Guard, 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.
- The operator of a vessel is required to submit a written report to the Massachusetts Environmental Police whenever an accident results in:
 - The death of a person *or...*
 - The disappearance of a person under circumstances that indicate the possibility of death or injury *or...*
 - Any injury requiring medical attention *or...*
 - Property damage exceeding \$500.
- Accidents resulting in death or serious injury must be reported to the Massachusetts Environmental Police within 48 hours. All other accident reports must be submitted within five days.
- Accidents should be reported on a Boating Accident Report form available from the Massachusetts Environmental Police at www.mass.gov/ole.

Local Regulations

Many Massachusetts waterways have additional equipment and operational restrictions besides those covered in this handbook. Be sure to check with the harbormaster's office or local police department for local regulations before you go boating.

Enforcement

- Massachusetts Environmental Police officers, harbor masters, police officers assigned to harbor patrol, fish and game wardens, and state police officers enforce the boating laws of Massachusetts. Town police and harbor masters also may enforce local recreational boating laws. U.S. Coast Guard officers patrol and have enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.
- Officers have the authority to stop and board any recreational vessel at any time to check equipment and registration and to positively identify the vessel operator.
- It is illegal to refuse to follow the directive of a person with law enforcement authority. An operator who has received a visual or audible signal from a law enforcement officer must bring his or her vessel to a stop and allow safe boarding.



- Officers may arrest, without a warrant, anyone in violation of, or believed to be in violation of, the boating laws of Massachusetts.
- Officers empowered to enforce state boating laws and U.S. Coast Guard officers enforcing federal laws may terminate the use of vessels if they find an "unsafe condition."

Specifically for PWCs

In addition to adhering to all boating laws, there are legal requirements that apply specifically to the operation of PWCs on Massachusetts waters.

Requirements Specific to PWCs

- Every person on board a PWC must *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device that is in good and serviceable condition.
- If the PWC is equipped with an engine cut-off switch, the lanyard must be attached to the person, clothing, or PFD of the operator.
- PWCs may be operated only from sunrise to sunset.
- There are age and boater education requirements for operators of personal watercraft.
- PWCs may not be operated within 150 feet of a swimmer or a moored vessel unless operated at headway speed.
- PWCs may not be operated within 150 feet of a shoreline used for swimming.
- PWCs may not be operated on any Massachusetts waters that are less than 75 acres in size.



Remember—PWC owners are responsible...

As an owner of a PWC, you are legally responsible if you allow your PWC to be operated by others in violation of Massachusetts law.

- It is illegal to tow a water-skier or a person in any other manner behind a PWC.
- PWCs must be operated in a safe and responsible manner. For example, it is illegal to:
 - Jump the wake of another vessel.
 - Speed in restricted areas.
 - Follow within 150 feet of a water-skier.
 - Cross unreasonably close to another vessel.
 - Weave through congested waterway traffic.
 - Operate in a way that endangers the life, limb, or property of any person.
 - Chase or harass wildlife with your PWC.

Sharing Your PWC...Safely!

Before allowing anyone to operate your PWC, you should:

- Make sure they meet the minimum age and education requirements for PWC operation.
- Make sure they know basic boating safety information and “rules of the road.”
- Let beginners take their first rides in a quiet area. While still on shore, show them the proper procedures for deep water starting and reboarding.
- Explain the basic operating features of the PWC. Be sure to give instruction on how to steer and control the PWC. Remind the operator that ***power is required for steering control!***
- Make sure the operator understands how to use the lanyard with the engine cut-off switch.
- Explain the importance of “slow, no wake” restrictions.
- Emphasize the need for staying alert. Beginning riders may concentrate on riding and not on paying attention to the surrounding traffic in the area.

Specifically for Skiing

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

Towing Skiers

- It is illegal to tow a person on water skis or any person in any other manner from a PWC.
- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or similar devices must have on board, in addition to the operator, an observer at least 12 years of age constantly observing the person being towed.
- Each person being towed behind a vessel on water skis or similar devices must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD.
- It is illegal for vessels to tow a person(s) on water skis or similar devices from sunset to sunrise.
- All vessels towing a person on water skis or similar devices must be equipped with a ladder, steps, a platform, or a similar device that can be used to retrieve the person being towed from the water.
- Everyone engaged in water-skiing—the operator and the towed person(s)—must conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner.
 - Water-skiers must ski at a safe distance to prevent their wash from being thrown into or causing excessive rocking of other vessels, rafts, or floats.
 - The towing vessel must not be operated within 150 feet of shorelines being used as swimming areas or within 75 feet of floats or markers that designate swimming areas.
 - It is illegal for the vessel operator to be under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance.



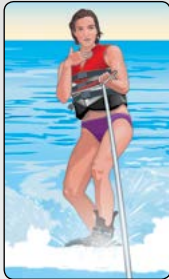
- Water-skiing is not permitted on some Massachusetts waterways. Check before you go boating.

Hand Signals for Skiers

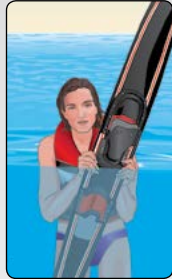
Knowing proper hand signals will help the skier(s) communicate with their boat operator or the observer.



Skier OK



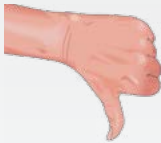
Stop



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 U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety website: <http://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters>.

The Environment and Your Vessel

As a boater, it's your legal responsibility to help protect the Massachusetts aquatic environment.

Discharge of Sewage and Waste

- All Massachusetts waters are a no discharge zone (NDZ). Massachusetts law states that it is unlawful to discharge sewage, whether treated or not, or other refuse from your vessel into Massachusetts waters. If you have a recreational vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have on board an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) that is self-contained and incapable of discharging directly into the water.
- All installed MSDs must be U.S. Coast Guard–certified.

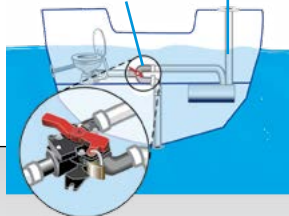


Pump-Out Station

Drainage to pump-out station

Y valve must be secured so that waste cannot be discharged into the water

Typical Marine Sanitation Device



Types of MSDs

There are three types of MSDs.

- Types I and II MSDs treat waste with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged. It is illegal to discharge through a Type I or II MSD in Massachusetts. 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.
- Type III MSDs provide no treatment and are either holding tanks or portable toilets. Collected waste should be disposed of at a pump-out station or onshore toilet.

No Discharge Zones (NDZs) in Massachusetts

No discharge zones, or NDZs, are designated bodies of water where the discharge of *all* boat sewage, whether treated or not, is prohibited. All Massachusetts waters are designated as “no discharge zones” for vessel sewage. (Boaters should note that waters of the Commonwealth can extend beyond three miles from the shore areas of Massachusetts Bay, Cape Cod Bay, and Buzzards Bay. See NOAA Chart 13267 for the federal boundary of Massachusetts Bay.)

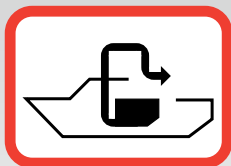
- When traveling in NDZ waters, boaters with Type I or Type II MSDs must do one of the following.
 - Close the seacock, and remove the handle.
 - Fix the seacock in the closed position with a padlock or non-releasable wire tie.
 - Lock the door to the space enclosing the toilet with a padlock or door handle key lock.
- When traveling in NDZ waters, a Type III MSD (holding tank) must be secured in one of the following ways.
 - Close each valve leading to an overboard discharge.
 - Padlock each valve in the closed position.
 - Use a non-releasable wire tie to hold each valve leading to an overboard discharge in the closed position.

All of these methods of securing MSDs while in NDZ waters are approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.

- Boaters with Type III MSDs can use any of the pump-out facilities located throughout the state. For the best service, boaters should call ahead to verify hours or to make an appointment for a pump-out. See www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/czm/program-areas/coastal-water-quality/clean-boating/pumpout-list.html.

Please Pump Out

- Boaters can help reduce water pollution by pumping out their sewage. Pump-out stations provide wet vacuums that draw sewage out of a boat's holding tanks for proper disposal.
- All Massachusetts waters are designated as "no discharge zones" for vessel sewage, so pump-out stations allow boaters to comply with the federal and state laws, which prohibit the discharge of sewage, whether treated or not, in Massachusetts coastal waters.
- With the assistance of federal and state funding, the number of pump-out stations (and pump-out boats) has increased significantly. Boaters have responded by using them, which already has improved coastal water quality.
- Pump-out stations also are available throughout the Massachusetts no discharge zones (NDZs).
- Use the pump-out stations to keep sewage out of our fishing and swimming areas.
- For more information, see www.mass.gov/czm/ndz or call **617-626-1200**.



Discharge of Trash

- It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into any state or federally controlled waters.
- You must store trash in a container while on board, and place it in a proper receptacle after returning to shore.
- If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display, in a prominent location, a durable Garbage Disposal Placard (sign) that is at least 4 x 9 inches. It must notify passengers and crew about the discharge restrictions of the Marine Pollution Act (MARPOL).

It is illegal for any vessel to dump plastic trash anywhere in the ocean or navigable waters of the United States. Annex V of the MARPOL TREATY is a new International Law for a cleaner, safer marine environment. Each violation of these requirements may result in civil penalty up to \$25,000, a fine up to \$50,000, and imprisonment up to 5 years.

U.S. lakes, rivers, bays, sounds, and 3 miles from shore

ILLEGAL TO DUMP:

Plastic	Garbage
Paper	Metal
Rags	Crockery
Glass	Dunnage
Food	

3 to 12 miles

ILLEGAL TO DUMP:

Plastic
Dunnage (lining & packing materials that float)
Also, if not ground to less than one inch:

Garbage	Metal
Paper	Crockery
Rags	Food
Glass	

12 to 25 miles

ILLEGAL TO DUMP:

Plastic
Dunnage (lining & packing materials that float)

Outside 25 miles

ILLEGAL TO DUMP:

Plastic

State and local regulations may further restrict the disposal of garbage

Working together we can all make a difference!

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW

Chapter 270

CRIMES AGAINST PUBLIC HEALTH

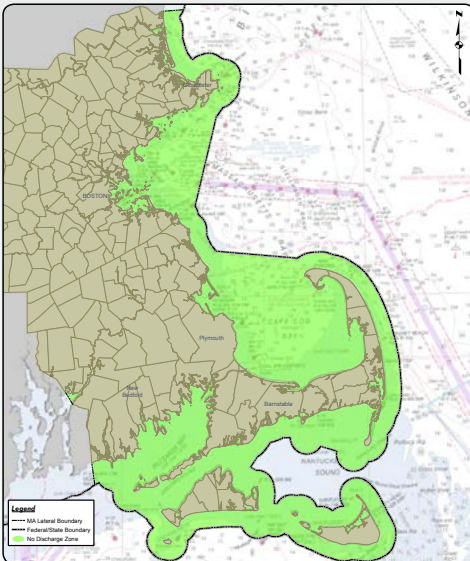
(Selected Section)

Whoever places, throws, deposits, or discharges upon Massachusetts coastal or inland waters trash, bottles or cans, refuse, rubbish, garbage, debris, scrap, waste, or other material shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$5,500 for the first offense and a fine not to exceed \$15,000 for each subsequent offense.

Help Keep Massachusetts Waters Clean

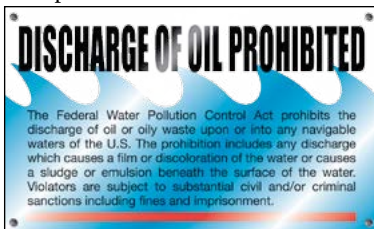
Boaters in Massachusetts have a role to play in preserving the aquatic environment.

- To help keep our waters clean:
 - Make it a policy on your vessel that nothing goes overboard. If you had room to bring it, there's room to take it back!
 - Take reusable containers, and recycle your paper, cans, and bottles whenever possible.
 - Encourage your marina to establish recycling facilities and pump-out stations.
 - Avoid products that remove stains or make your boat shine—they can be very toxic.
 - Use or request that your boatyard use the least damaging bottom paints available.
- For more information, contact Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management at **617-626-1200**.



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 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.



If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substance(s) into the water:

- Immediately call the National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.
- Also notify the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection at **1-888-304-1133**.



Hazardous Substances and the Boater

No paint or varnish product is environmentally safe, and all are toxic to both humans and marine life. When cleaning or painting your vessel, it's important to protect the water.

- Minimize your use of toxic materials while the vessel is in the water. Use biodegradable and non-phosphate products whenever possible.
- Use an absorbent sponge in your bilge to soak up oil. Have oil absorbent pads or rags on hand in case of a spill. When changing engine oil, wipe up any spills so that the oil isn't pumped overboard with the bilge water.
- Use a suspended tarp to catch spills, paint scrapings, or debris that would end up in the water.
- Inspect your fuel lines periodically. Replace bad ones with USCG-approved Type A, alcohol-resistant fuel line hoses.
- Dispose of old antifreeze and oil on shore in a recycling container.
- Antifouling paint is used to prevent the growth of organisms on vessel bottoms. Some antifouling paints use tributyltin, which has been found to cause abnormal development and reduced reproduction in marine life. Instead use a "non-fouling" paint (silicon or teflon based) or a non-abative (copper based) antifouling paint.

Protect Marine Mammals

All whales, dolphins, and porpoises in the northeast region are federally protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and most large whales in the area are further protected under the Endangered Species Act. Under these laws, it is illegal to “harass, hunt, capture, or kill” any marine mammal. Prohibited conduct includes any “negligent or intentional act that results in the disturbing or molesting of marine mammals.” Violations of these laws may result in fines of up to \$50,000, imprisonment, and/or seizure of one’s vessel.



Boating Near Whales

Various species of whales, including the humpback, finback, right, and minke, may be encountered in our state’s coastal waters. The North Atlantic right whale is the most endangered marine mammal, with no more than 500 remaining in the world. Boaters maneuvering around whales improperly risk the safety of all passengers on board, as well as potential injury to the whales.

To protect whales in their habitat, the following operation guidelines are recommended.

- Avoid excessive speed or course changes within 500 yards of whales.
- Do not approach within 500 yards of North Atlantic right whales.
- Approach with extreme caution within 100 yards of any species of whales other than North Atlantic right whales.
- Approach whales from the side—not head-on—and don't box them in.
- Don't cut off their path.
- Don't separate mothers from offspring.
- If a whale approaches within 100 feet of your vessel, put your engine in neutral. Do not reengage your engine until the whale is observed on the surface, outside of the 100-foot zone.
- If you sight one whale, expect to see more whales in the immediate vicinity.



Whale Disentanglement

- If you observe a whale entangled in fishing gear or other man-made material, do not attempt to disentangle it. Contact the U.S. Coast Guard or the Massachusetts Environmental Police on VHF radio channel 16, or call the Large Whale Disentanglement Network at **1-800-900-3622**.
- For further information on the protection of marine mammals, visit the websites of the Center for Coastal Studies at www.coastalstudies.org or the National Marine Fisheries Service at www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

Invasive Species

What Are They?

Invasive species are plants or animals, either indigenous to this region (native) or from other regions (non-native or exotic), that have the ability to dominate or alter an ecosystem. Most exotic species originally arrived in ballast water or were intentionally or accidentally released from aquariums. Invasive species often are spread by remaining on boat trailers, propellers, and fishing gear, or in a bait bucket, cooling water, and live well water.



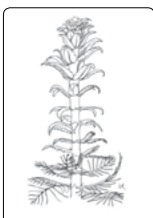
**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!**

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.
Clean all recreational equipment.

www.ProtectYourWaters.net



Eurasian Milfoil



Variable Milfoil



Fanwort

Why Are They Harmful?

- **Interference with boating and fishing:** Many invasive plants grow rapidly in our lakes. The dense mats of vegetation they form can restrict or entirely prevent boating and fishing and may make the waterway entirely impassable.
- **Loss of native plants and animals:** Non-native plants often do not provide ideal habitat or food for fish and other aquatic animals. These plants crowd out native vegetation, and the fish and animals that depend on native vegetation must relocate or perish.
- **Loss of biodiversity:** The spread of invasive species often reduces the biological diversity of the area and can disrupt the balance of the ecosystem.

- **Loss of property value:** The aesthetic appeal, recreational value, and surrounding property values of a lake may decline quickly as an invasive species takes over.
- **Expensive:** Once exotic plants are established, they are almost impossible to eradicate and are expensive to control. The United States invests millions of dollars annually to manage these plants and repair the damage.

CLEAN—DRAIN—DRY

- Remove all plant parts, animals, mud, and other debris from your boat motor, trailer, anchors, fishing gear, and dive gear. Dispose of plant and animal matter, mud, and other debris above the waterline on dry land or in a trash can.
- Pull all drain plugs and allow any standing water to drain completely; dispose of live well, bait, and cooling water away from the shore before leaving the area.
- Never release a plant or animal into a body of water unless it came out of that body of water.
- Wash your boat (see the Cleaning Solutions chart), and allow it to dry completely before entering another body of water.
 - Your boat and equipment should be allowed to dry completely for:
 - 1 week during July and August
 - 2 weeks during June and September
 - 4 weeks from October to May
 - Increase drying times if the weather is unseasonably cool or wet.
 - If your boat is exposed to freezing temperatures, it is considered decontaminated.
- Familiarize yourself with invasive species by requesting one of our free color guides to invasive aquatic plants, and spread the word to others about invasive species.

Cleaning Solutions

Disinfectant	Concentration	Contact Time
Steam/scalding hot wash	>140°F	10 seconds
Chlorine/bleach solution	1 oz. per gallon water	10 minutes
Lysol	1% solution	10 minutes
Vinegar	as sold—100%	20 minutes
Freezing	<32°F	24 hours

- Get involved. Request a free “Stop the Spread” sign for your boat ramp, or join a weed-monitoring group to identify and eradicate new infestations in your lake before they become permanently established.
- Be alert for zebra mussels. They are now established in some Massachusetts waters. They are also found throughout New York, Vermont, and Connecticut. Zebra mussels can destroy dive gear, boat motors, and other engines. Please report any sighting or possible infestation.



Invasive species create problems for boaters. Zebra mussels can attach in clusters on motors, and hydrilla can get tangled in propellers.

**For more information on invasive species
or to report an infestation, contact the
MA Department of Conservation & Recreation
Lakes & Ponds Program
617-626-1250 www.mass.gov/lakesandponds**

Required Equipment Checklist



	Boats Less Than 16' & PWCs Class A 12	Boats 16' to Less Than 26' Class 1	Boats 26' to Less Than 40' Class 2	Boats 40' to Less Than 65' Class 3	Non-Motorized: Any Length
Vessel Registration on Board ¹	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
Validation Decal Displayed ¹	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
Registration Numbers ¹	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
Boating Safety Certificate ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
Wearable PFDs: Type I, II, or III (one per person)	✓ ³	✓ ³	✓ ³	✓ ³	✓ ¹⁰
Throwable PFD: Type IV	✓ ⁹	✓	✓	✓	
Fire Extinguisher(s) ⁴	1 B-I	1 B-I	2 B-I or 1 B-II	3 B-I	n/a
Backfire Flame Arrestor ⁵	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Muffler	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓	✓	✓ ⁶	✓ ⁶	✓ ¹³
Daytime Visual Distress Signals		✓	✓	✓	
Nighttime Visual Distress Signals ⁷	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Navigation Lights ⁸	✓ ¹²	✓	✓	✓	13, 14
Anchor, Line, and Manual Bailer	✓ ⁹	✓	✓	✓	
Boarding Ladder ¹¹	✓ ¹²	✓	✓	✓	n/a

- Vessels documented by the U.S. Coast Guard are exempt from Massachusetts registration and titling requirements.
- Required if operator is 12 through 15 years of age. Required for PWC operators 16 or 17 years of age. Those under 16 years of age cannot operate a PWC in Massachusetts.
- Those on personal watercraft must wear a PFD (personal flotation device) at all times. Children under 12 years of age are required to wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved PFDs in Massachusetts State when above deck on any vessel that is underway. Type V PFD use authorized for those on PWCs and children less than 12 years of age.
- A fixed extinguishing system in machinery space can be substituted for one B-I. One B-II can replace two B-I extinguishers. Outboard motorboats less than 26', of open construction, not carrying passengers for hire, and not on federally controlled waters are not required to carry fire extinguishers.
- Required on all gasoline engines except outboard engines.
- Vessels 26 feet up to 65 feet are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, and a bell.
- VDs are required only on coastal waters. Coastal waters are defined on page 49.
- Vessels without proper navigation lights may not operate between the hours of sunset and sunrise.
- PWCs are exempt. Vessels less than 16 ft. also must carry a paddle or oar.
- All persons on board a canoe or kayak from September 15 to May 15 must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, or III PFD at all times.
- Ladder, steps, platform, or similar device is required if towing a person on skis or other device.
- PWCs may not be operated between sunset and sunrise. PWCs may not be used to tow anyone.
- Applies to MA coastal waters only.
- At least one lantern or flashlight.

Boaters' Telephone Directory

Massachusetts Environmental Police

Central Headquarters, Boston	617-626-1650
Radio Communications, Boston	1-800-632-8075
Boat & RV Safety Bureau	508-564-4961
Registration & Titling Bureau, Boston	617-626-1610
Coastal Enforcement HQ, Hingham.....	781-740-1163
Inland Enforcement HQ, Westboro	508-366-6537
Environmental Crimes Bureau	617-727-2200
Marine Theft Bureau	617-626-1666

Department of Fish and Game	617-626-1500
Public Access Board	617-727-1843
Division of Marine Fisheries	617-626-1520
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife	508-389-6300

Other Agencies

United States Coast Guard	
Vessel Documentation Center.....	1-800-799-8362
Oil Spill Hotline	1-800-424-8802
National Safe Boating Council	703-361-4294
National Weather Service.....	508-822-0634
MA Department of Revenue	1-800-392-6089
MA Department of Environmental Protection.....	1-888-304-1133
MA Coastal Zone Management (Pump-Out Stations)	617-626-1200



MASSACHUSETTS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICE DIRECTORY

Central Headquarters
251 Causeway Street,
1st Floor
Boston, MA 02114
617-626-1650
Fax: 617-626-1670

Specialized Bureaus

Boat & R.V. Safety Bureau
P.O. Box 1325
Forestdale, MA 02644
508-564-4961
Fax: 508-564-4964

Environmental Crimes Bureau

1 Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02133
617-727-2200
Fax: 617-727-5755

Enforcement

*Radio Communications
Center*
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 0211
1-800-632-8075
617-626-1665
Fax: 617-626-1670

Coastal Bureau

30 Shipyard Drive
Bldg. #45
Hingham, MA 02043
781-740-1163
Fax: 781-740-4113

Inland Bureau

183 Milk Street
Westboro, MA 01581
508-366-6537
Fax: 508-366-1182

Registration

251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114
617-626-1610
Fax: 617-626-1630

Cape Cod & Islands

60 Perseverance Way
Hyannis, MA 02602
508-771-8382

Southeast

218 S. Main Street
Fall River, MA 02721
508-679-8287

Central

67 Millbrook Street
Worcester, MA 01605
508-753-0603

West

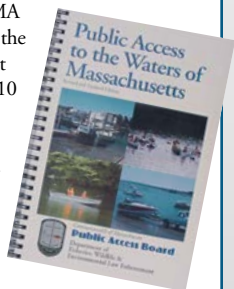
STCC Technology Park
1 Federal Street, Bldg. 101
Springfield, MA 01105
413-733-1642

Public Access to the Waters of Massachusetts

Public Access to the Waters of Massachusetts is a full-color publication that includes 90 individual site maps and descriptions of more than 200 access points to state waterways. The 150-page guide also includes information about sportfishing piers, fishing in fresh and marine waters, boating law, rights of access, and boating and fishing programs in the Department of Fish and Game.

Copies of *Public Access to the Waters of Massachusetts* may be purchased in person for \$5.00 each from the Office of Fishing and Boating Access in Westboro during business hours or may be ordered by mail by sending a

check or money order for \$8.00 per book payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, along with the address to which the book(s) is to be shipped, to the Office of Fishing and Boating Access, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westboro, MA 01581. Call the FBA office at 508-389-7810 if you need additional information.



For Boating INFORMATION

Find out more about boater safety, and register boats and recreational vehicles online. See our webpage of frequently asked questions, or call the Boat & R.V. Safety Bureau at: 508-564-4961



Visit the Massachusetts
Environmental Police Website
at www.mass.gov/ole



An Agency of the Executive Office of
Energy and Environmental Affairs

251 CAUSEWAY ST. • BOSTON, MA 02114 • 617-626-1650