

# THE HANDBOOK

## of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities



**ALWAYS WEAR  
YOUR LIFE JACKET!**



**2023 Edition**



# WELCOME

## to the best boating resources in the U.S. and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources



The State of Michigan is surrounded by four of the five Great Lakes—the world’s largest freshwater lakes. These Great Lakes constitute 90% of the U.S.’s fresh surface water. Michigan has approximately 3,288 miles of Great Lakes coastline; has more than 10,000 inland lakes and ponds; and is interwoven by a 35,000-mile web of freshwater rivers, streams, and wetlands. Accordingly, Michigan is among the leaders in the nation for registered boats.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources promotes the safe use and enjoyment of the bountiful waters of Michigan. Through education, regulation, and enforcement, the Department hopes to ensure that boating continues to grow in safety and popularity.

Whether your interest is in fishing, sailing, hunting, canoeing, camping, or water-skiing, boating education is essential. We hope that you will practice what you learn from this handbook and pass your knowledge on to others.

To find more about recreation safety, visit our website at [www.michigan.gov/recreationsafety](http://www.michigan.gov/recreationsafety).

A tall, white lighthouse with a dark top section, set against a light blue sky and some greenery at the base. The lighthouse is positioned on the left side of the page, partially obscured by the text.

## Michigan Department of Natural Resources

# OUR MISSION

**The Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the state’s natural resources for current and future generations.**

 **THE  
HANDBOOK**

# of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities

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## Stay up to date on new boating laws...

- Call the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at **517-284-6000**.
- Visit the Department of Natural Resources website at **[www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)**.
- Report all poaching at **1-800-292-7800**.



**Note:** This handbook provides a summary of Michigan law at the time of printing and is not intended to be legal advice. Because laws are subject to change and it is a recreational user's responsibility to know and understand the current laws, users are encouraged to consult the most current regulations.

# Before Going Out

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

## Vessel Length Classes

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

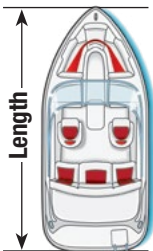
## Vessel Capacity

- Always check the capacity plate, which is usually found near the operator's position or on the vessel's transom. This plate indicates the maximum weight capacity and maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely.
- Personal watercraft (PWC) and some other vessels are not required to have a capacity plate. Always follow the recommended capacity in the owner's manual and on the manufacturer's warning decal.

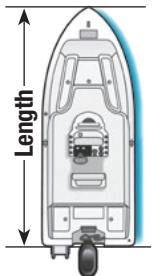
## Fueling a Vessel

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

### Inboards



### Outboards



### ■ Before beginning to fuel:

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

### ■ While filling the fuel tank:

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

#### The most important safe fueling practice...

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

### ■ After fueling:

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

### Additional Safety Procedures for PWC

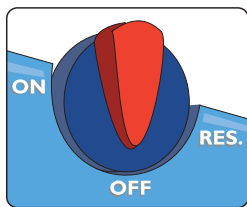
- Do not tip the PWC in order to fill it all the way up. If the tank is overfilled, the fuel may expand and spill into the water.
- After fueling, open the door of the engine compartment and sniff to check for any evidence of gas fumes. Do this before starting the engine. If you do smell gas fumes, determine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



## Fuel Selector Switch on a PWC

This switch can help you avoid becoming stranded without fuel.

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



## Preventing Theft

Defend against theft of your vessel and equipment.

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

## Filing a Float Plan

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

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

### Pre-Departure Checklist

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

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

# On the Water

Safe navigation on Michigan 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.

**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 you
- 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

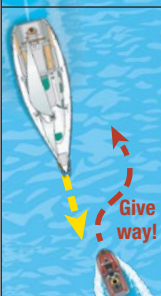


### Meeting Head-On

**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.

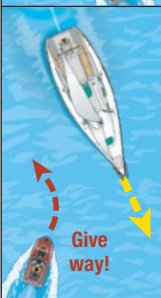
### Power vs. Sail



### 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.

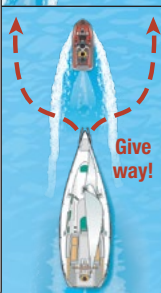
**Power vs. Sail:** The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.



### 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.

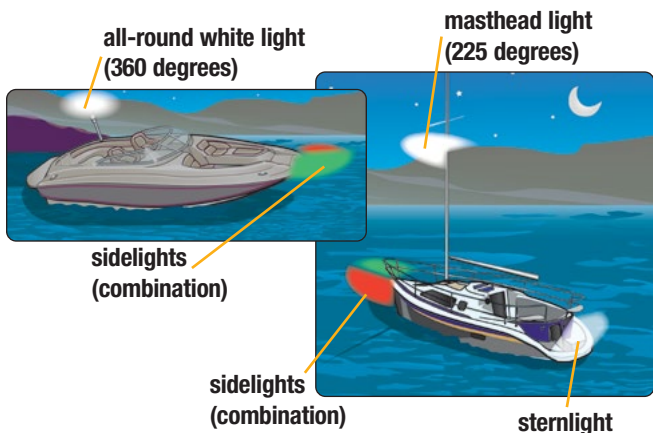
**Power vs. Sail:** The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



## Nighttime Navigation

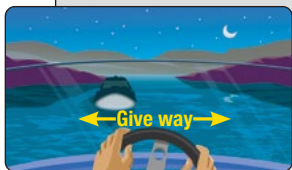
Be on the lookout for the lights of other vessels when boating at night. Several types of lights serve as navigational aids at night. There are four common navigation lights.

- **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.

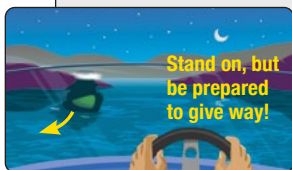




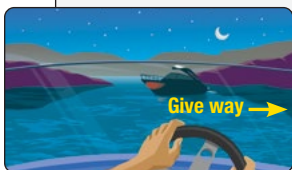
## Encountering Vessels at Night



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.



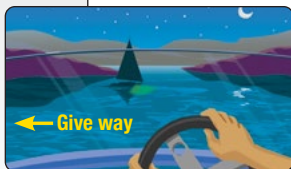
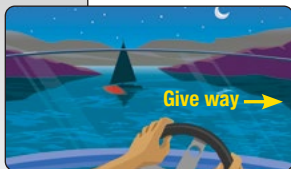
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.



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 (ATON).

### Lateral Markers

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

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



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

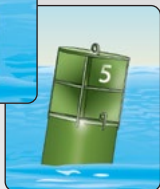
**Red and green colors and/or lights** indicate the preferred (primary) channel. If green is on top, the preferred channel is to the right as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream; if red is on top, the preferred channel is to the left.



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



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



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



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



## Red Right Returning

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

## 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.

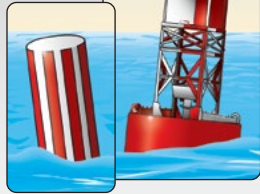


### Danger

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 on the next page.

### What to Do if Caught in Severe Weather

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### VHF Frequencies Broadcasting NOAA Weather Reports

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

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

**Channel 6** Intership safety communications.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Channel 70** Digital selective calling “alert channel.”

## Specifically for PWC

Although a 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 control



steering nozzle

### Steering and Stopping a PWC

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

#### **Remember—no power means no steering control...**

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

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

### Reboarding a Capsized PWC

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

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



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



## Courtesy When Encountering Other Vessels

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

## Environmental Considerations

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

- Make sure that the water you operate in is at least 24 inches deep. Riding in shallow water can cause bottom sediments or aquatic vegetation to be sucked into the pump, damaging your PWC and the environment.



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

### Other PWC Considerations

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



# Before Going Out

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

## Registering Your Vessel

- You must have a Michigan Certificate of Number (registration) and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on public waters in Michigan. The only exceptions are:
  - Privately owned rowboats 16 feet or less in length
  - Privately owned non-motorized canoes or kayaks
  - Vessels registered in another state using Michigan waters for 60 days or less
- All watercraft with a motor must be registered, including electric and inflatable vessels.
- *The Certificate of Number (registration card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is being operated.*
- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.
  - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow as high above the water line as practical.
  - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  - Number must be in at least three-inch-high **BLOCK** letters.

MICHIGAN REGISTRATION WATERCRAFT				RUTH JOHNSON, Secretary of State	
Expires on:		MC 3717 ZW			
Year:	Make:	Length:	Fee:		
98	Four Winns	20 04	\$42.00		
Hull Identification Number:		County of Residence:	County Code:		
FWN67689B698		Wayne	XX		
Hull Material:	Code:	Type:	Power:	Inboard:	Code:
Fiberglass	3	Open	1	Inboard	1
Use:	Code:	Fuel:	Code:		
Pleasure	1	Gas	1		
Owner's Complete Name and Address:					
John Doe 1430 Southview Lane Livonia, MI 48152					
Owner's Signature: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Registration must be in possession of operator whenever the vessel is in use.					
M-10 3					

Validation  
Decal

Spaces or hyphens  
should appear here.

- Number's color must contrast with the color of the background and be distinctly visible and legible.
- Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen: **MC 3717 ZW** or **MC-3717-ZW**.
- No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
- Decals must be affixed on each side of the vessel and placed three inches after the last character of the registration number.

### Where to Title and Register

The Certificate of Number and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to any Secretary of State branch office. You can find your closest branch office:

- By calling **1-888-SOS-MICH (1-888-767-6424)**
- On the Internet at **[www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)**

### Where to Renew Your Certificate of Number

A Certificate of Number is valid for three years and may be renewed:

- Over the Internet at **[www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)**
- At any Secretary of State branch office

## Other Facts About Titling and Registration

- All vessels that are 20 feet long or longer or have a permanently affixed engine must be titled also.

- As the owner of a vessel, you must notify the Secretary of State and surrender your Certificate of Number within 15 days if:
  - Your vessel is abandoned or destroyed *or...*
  - Your vessel is sold or ownership is transferred *or...*
  - You change your address.
- If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or decal, you must apply to the Secretary of State for a duplicate and submit a processing fee.
- Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information. Documented vessels are required to be registered also.

### Schedule of Fees to Register Your Vessel

#### Motorboats (all motors including electric motors)

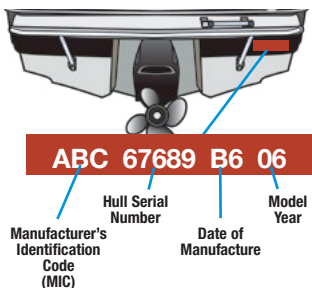
Less than 12 feet . . . . .	\$ 14.00
12 feet to less than 16 feet . . . . .	\$ 17.00
16 feet to less than 21 feet . . . . .	\$ 42.00
21 feet to less than 28 feet . . . . .	\$ 115.00
28 feet to less than 35 feet . . . . .	\$ 168.00
35 feet to less than 42 feet . . . . .	\$ 244.00
42 feet to less than 50 feet . . . . .	\$ 280.00
50 feet and over . . . . .	\$ 448.00
Pontoon vessels—any length. . . . .	\$ 23.00
Motorized canoes—any length . . . . .	\$ 14.00
Vessels licensed under part 473. . . . .	\$ 15.00
Vessels carrying passengers/freight for hire . . . . .	\$ 45.00

#### Other fees

Non-powered vessels (except non-motorized canoes or kayaks) .	\$ 9.00
Non-motorized canoes or kayaks used commercially . . . . .	\$ 5.00
15-day temporary permit . . . . .	\$ 10.00

## Hull Identification Number (HIN)

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- These numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- You should write down your HIN and put it in a place separate from your vessel in case warranty problems arise or your vessel is stolen.



## Legal Requirements for Trailers

Michigan has specific requirements for boat trailers.

- Trailers must be licensed *and* registered.
- If the gross weight of the vessel and trailer exceeds 3,000 pounds, the trailer must be equipped with brakes.
- Trailers must have proper lighting, including turn signals, taillights, and brake lights. All trailer lights must be maintained in an operable condition—same as when the trailer was manufactured.
- All towing vehicles must be connected to the trailer by a safety chain or cable of sufficient strength to maintain connection under all conditions.
- All aquatic plants must be removed from trailers, watercraft, and equipment before launching watercraft.

For further information, contact the Michigan Secretary of State at **1-888-SOS-MICH (1-888-767-6424)**, call one of the branch offices, or visit **[www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)**.

## Who May Operate a Boat

### ■ Those less than 12 years of age:

- May operate a boat powered by a motor of no more than 6 horsepower (hp) legally without restrictions.
- May operate a boat powered by a motor of more than 6 hp but no more than 35 hp legally *only if* they:
  - Have been issued a boating safety certificate and have it on board the boat *and...*
  - Are directly supervised on board by a person at least 16 years of age and have been issued a boating safety certificate.
- May not operate a boat powered by a motor of more than 35 hp legally under any conditions.

### ■ Those born on or after July 1, 1996,

may not operate a motorboat that is powered by a motor or motors totaling more than 6 hp on the waters of this state unless the person has been issued a boating safety certificate.

- Those born before July 1, 1996, may operate a boat legally without restrictions.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
**BOATING SAFETY CERTIFICATE**  
Issued under authority of Part 801 and Part 802, P. A. 451 of 1994.  
This certificate must be presented upon demand of any peace officer. Failure to comply with the provisions of this Act is a violation of State law.

LAST NAME		FIRST NAME		DATE OF BIRTH	
DATE OF BIRTH	SEX	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	HAIR	HAZEL
STUDENT'S SIGNATURE					
INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE					
DATE ISSUED		INSTRUCTOR'S NUMBER			
M		M			

**NOT VALID UNLESS SIGNED BY INSTRUCTOR**  
Approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

**MSBRLA**  
Michigan State Boating Law Administrators Association

## Who May Operate a Personal Watercraft (PWC)

- Those **less than 14 years of age** may *not* legally operate a PWC.
- Those **14 and 15 years of age** may operate a PWC legally *only if* they have obtained a boating safety certificate *and...*
  - He or she is accompanied on board by his or her parent or legal guardian or by a person at least 21 years of age who has been designated by the parent or legal guardian *or...*
  - He or she is operating or riding the PWC at a distance of not more than 100 feet from his or her parent or legal guardian or from a person at least 21 years of age who has been designated by the parent or legal guardian.
- Those **at least 16 years of age** and born after December 31, 1978, may operate a PWC legally *only if* they have obtained a boating safety certificate.
- Those born on or before December 31, 1978, may operate a PWC legally without restrictions.

## Marine Events

- To hold a race, regatta, or tournament, you must apply for a permit with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at least 30 days prior to the event by contacting a local Customer Service Center listed toward the end of this book.
- If the event is being held on federally controlled waters, a permit from the USCG is required.



# 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 be equipped with a personal flotation device (PFD), sometimes called a life jacket, for each person on board or being towed.
  - The USCG requires that all vessels have at least one USCG–approved wearable PFD for each person on board.
  - Michigan’s PFD law permits a vessel that is less than 16 feet long, or is a canoe or kayak, to choose to have either a wearable PFD or a throwable device for each person on board.
- In addition to the above requirements, one USCG–approved throwable device must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer and be readily accessible.
- Michigan law requires all children under 6 years of age to *wear* a USCG–approved wearable PFD when riding on the open deck of any vessel while underway.
- If a person chooses to wear a PFD that is not USCG approved (when not specifically required), a properly fitting USCG–approved PFD must be carried on board the vessel to meet the state and federal carriage requirements.
- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC or other vessel must *wear* a USCG–approved wearable PFD. Inflatable PFDs are not allowed on PWC or while being towed behind PWC or other vessels.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and must be readily accessible. Wearable PFDs must be of the proper size for the intended wearer. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

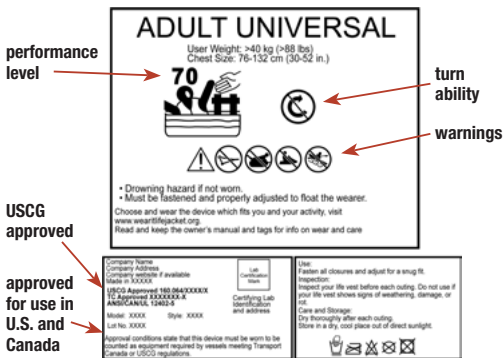
## PFD Label

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

- The older, legacy labels have a type number (Types I–V).
  - The type number indicates the conditions and the intended use for which the PFD is designed.

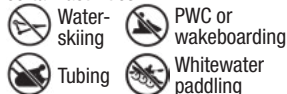
- PFDs with these labels may still be used in the country where they are approved as long as they are in serviceable condition.
- The new labels have a performance level icon that contains a number, typically ranging from 50 to 150.
  - A lower number means the PFD is intended for near-shore activities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

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



## Warnings

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



## Turn Ability



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



The PFD will not turn an unconscious person face up.

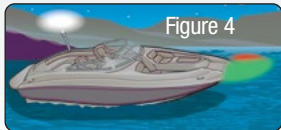
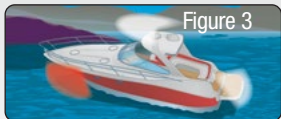
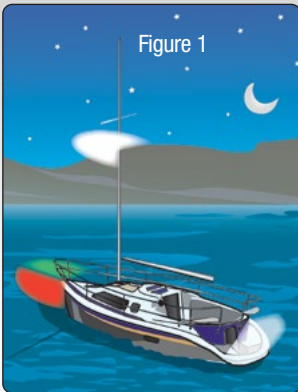
## Navigation Lights

If underway between sunset and sunrise, or during periods of reduced visibility (fog, rain, haze, etc.), vessels must be equipped with and exhibit navigation lights. The required navigation lights differ depending on the type and size of your vessel.

### Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power.

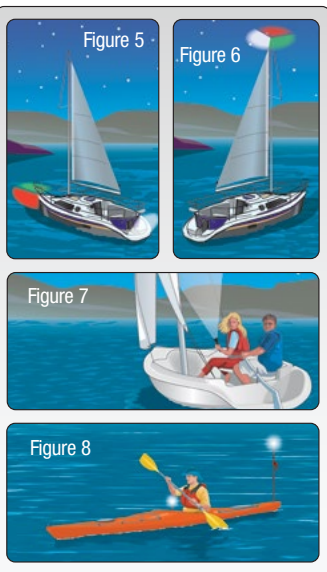
- **If less than 26 ft. long**, the required lights are:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least one mile away.
  - An all-round white light as shown in *Figure 4* or both a masthead light and a sternlight as shown in *Figures 1, 2, and 3*. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be higher than the sidelights.
- **If 26 ft. long or longer**, the required lights are:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least one mile away.
  - A masthead light and a sternlight visible from a distance of at least two miles away. The masthead light must be higher than the sidelights as shown in *Figures 1, 2, and 3*.



## Unpowered Vessels When Underway

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

- **If 26 ft. long or longer,** these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in *Figures 5 and 6*:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away
  - A sternlight visible from a distance of at least three miles away
- **If less than 26 ft. long,** these vessels should:
  - If practical, exhibit the lights as shown in *Figures 5 and 6*.
  - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight shining a white light as shown in *Figures 7 and 8*.



## All Vessels When Not Underway

**All vessels** are required to use an all-round white light between sunset and sunrise whenever they are anchored in the waters of or connected to the Great Lakes. It is advisable to always display a white light when anchored or adrift at night.

## Fire Extinguishers

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

- All vessels, including PWC, are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:

- Closed compartments under seats where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Closed storage compartments in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
  - Double bottoms not sealed to the hull or that are not completely filled with flotation material
  - Closed living spaces
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks
- Approved types of fire extinguishers are identified by the following marking on the label—“Marine Type USCG Approved”—followed by the type and size symbols and the approval number.
  - 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.



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

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

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

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

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

\*refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system

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

## Ventilation Systems

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

- All gasoline-powered vessels, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls to remove the fumes.
- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine.

## Backfire Flame Arrestors

- Because vessel engines may backfire, all powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have a USCG-approved (comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards) backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor.
- Periodically clean the flame arrestor(s) and check for any damage.

## Mufflers

- A vessel's engine must have a factory-installed muffler or exhaust system for noise reduction, or another effective muffling system. Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.
- Michigan law states that a vessel's muffler or exhaust system must prevent noise in excess of:
  - 90 decibels at idle from three feet away *and...*
  - 75 decibels when measured from the shore.

## Sound-Producing Devices

In periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position, a sound-producing device is essential.

If on State Waters	
Vessel 16 feet up to 26 feet long <b>and</b> under engine power	Whistle capable of producing a blast of two seconds or more and audible for at least one-half mile is required.
Vessel 26 feet long or longer <b>and</b> under engine power	Whistle capable of producing a blast of two seconds or more and audible for at least one mile is required.
If on Federally Controlled Waters	
Less than 39.4 feet long (includes PWC)	Something such as handheld air horn, an athletic whistle, or an installed horn is required.
39.4 feet long or longer	Sound signal should be audible for one-half mile and should last for 4 to 6 seconds.

## Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)

Visual distress signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency. 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).

- Vessels on federally controlled waters, such as the Great Lakes, must be equipped with VDSs that are USCG approved, in serviceable condition, and readily accessible.
  - All vessels, regardless of length or type, are required to carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise.
  - Most vessels must carry day signals also; exceptions to the requirement for day signals are:
    - Recreational vessels 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.
- An example of VDSs that could be carried on board to satisfy USCG requirements is one handheld orange smoke signal (day), two floating orange smoke signals (day), and one electric light (night only).
- It is prohibited to display VDSs while on the water unless assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board.



### Day

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

### Night

Electric Light (Non-Pyrotechnic)

### Day and Night

Red Meteor (Pyrotechnic)  
 Red Flare (Pyrotechnic)

### Federally Controlled Waters

Vessels must observe federal requirements on these waters:

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



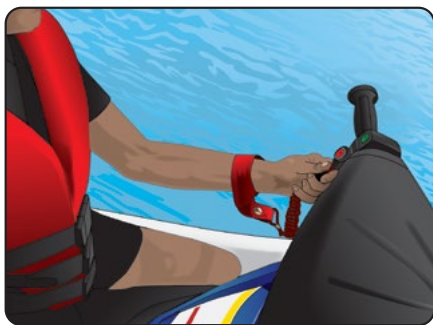
### Arm Signal

Although this signal does not meet VDS equipment requirements, wave your arms to summon help if you do not have other distress signals on board.



## Emergency Engine Cut-Off Switch (ECOS)

- Most PWC and powerboats come equipped by the manufacturer with a device called the emergency engine cut-off switch (ECOS). This safety device is designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown from the normal operating position.
- A lanyard is attached to the ECOS and the operator of the vessel, generally on the wrist or PFD. If the operator is thrown, the ECOS shuts off the engine. If your vessel does not have an ECOS, it is recommended to have one installed.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC on the waters of this state without properly attaching the lanyard between the ECOS and the operator.
- As of April 2021, the Elijah E. Cummings Coast Guard Act of 2020 requires the operator of motorized vessels under 26 feet in length, with an engine capable of 115 pounds or more of static thrust, which equates to about 3 horsepower, to wear an ECOS link (lanyard) while operating above no-wake speed. This is a federal regulation that applies on all federally controlled waters but is recommended on all waters of this state. For more information regarding this new federal regulation and how it may impact you, please visit United States Coast Guard Boat Responsibly website at <https://uscgboating.org>.



# On the Water

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

## Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

Michigan law designates these dangerous operating practices as illegal.

- **Reckless Operation** of a vessel or reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or similar device is defined as operation which disregards the safety or rights of others or endangers the person or property of others. Some examples are:
  - Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic or swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision
  - Jumping the wake of another vessel unnecessarily close to the other vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is restricted
  - Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel
  - Causing damage from the wake of your vessel
- **Failure to Regulate Speed** is operating a vessel at speeds that may cause danger to life or property of any other person or at speeds that will not permit you to bring your vessel to a safe stop. It is illegal to operate a vessel:
  - In excess of 55 mph unless you are at least one mile offshore on the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair
  - At greater than **“slow, no wake speed”** when a person is in the bow of a vessel without proper seating
  - Faster than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions (weather, vessel traffic, etc.)

**“Slow, No Wake Speed”** means a very slow speed whereby the wake or wash created by the vessel would be minimal.

- **Improper Distance** is not maintaining a proper distance while operating a vessel or towing a person. To maintain a proper distance when you are operating on the waters of the state in areas not marked by well-defined channels, canals,

ivers, or stream courses, at greater than “slow, no wake speed,” the vessel or persons being towed must not be within 100 feet of:

- A shoreline (if operating in water less than three feet deep)
  - Any moored or anchored vessel
  - A dock or raft
  - Any marked swimming area or person(s) in the water
- **Improper Distance for PWC** means that, if operating at greater than “slow, no wake speed,” a PWC also must:
- Stay at least 200 feet from any Great Lakes shoreline.
  - Not cross within 150 feet behind another vessel other than another PWC.
- **Improper Direction** is defined as the failure to operate in a counterclockwise direction on the waters of this state in areas not marked by well-defined channels, canals, rivers, or stream courses.
- **Boating in Restricted Areas** is defined as operating within a restricted area clearly marked by buoys, beacons, diver-down flags, etc.
- **Riding on the Bow, Gunwales, or Transom** is allowing passengers to ride on a motorboat in places where there may be a chance of falling overboard. While operating at greater than “slow, no wake speed,” persons on a motorboat may not sit, stand, or walk on any portion of a motorboat not designed for that purpose. This includes riding on the gunwale.
- **Insufficient Equipment** is operating a vessel that is not carrying, storing, maintaining, and using marine safety equipment on board the vessel as required by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

### National Park Lakeshores

Special shoreline closures are established seasonally in certain areas of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore for wildlife and habitat protection.

- Dimmicks Point on North Manitou Island is closed to the public during the piping plover nesting season.
- Additional site-specific restrictions apply to boating in the Lakeshore. See [www.nps.gov/slbe](http://www.nps.gov/slbe) for more information.

## Enforcement

The boating laws of Michigan are enforced by officers of the Law Enforcement Division of the Michigan DNR, county sheriff's department, USCG, and any other authorized law enforcement agency. They have the right to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with federal and state laws. The USCG has enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.

## Alcohol and Drugs

Michigan law prohibits anyone from boating while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It is also unlawful for the owner of a motorboat to allow anyone else to operate their motorboat if that person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

- If your blood alcohol content is 0.08% or greater by weight of alcohol as determined by a breath, blood, or urine test, you are considered to be under the influence of alcohol.
- Michigan law establishes the following penalties.
  - People arrested for boating under the influence are guilty of a misdemeanor. Upon a third conviction within 10 years, a person will be guilty of a felony.
  - If a person boating under the influence causes great bodily injury or death of another person, he or she will be guilty of a felony.
- By operating a motorboat on Michigan waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if arrested by a law enforcement official.



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

## Obstructing Navigation

It is illegal to:

- Anchor a vessel in the traveled portion of a river or channel in a way that will prevent or interfere with any other vessel passing through the same area.
- Moor or attach a vessel to a buoy, 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.

## Accidents and Casualties

- An operator involved in a boating accident must:
  - Stop his or her vessel *immediately* at the scene of the accident *and...*
  - Assist anyone injured or in danger from the accident, unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her own vessel or passengers *and...*
  - Give, in writing, his or her name, address, and vessel identification to anyone injured and to the owner of any property damaged by the accident.
- The operator of a vessel, or each person on board, must report an occurrence without delay, and by the quickest means available, to the nearest conservation officer, sheriff of the county, or nearest state police post when:
  - A person dies *or...*
  - A person disappears from a vessel.
- The operator or the owner of a vessel involved in a boating accident must file an accident report form supplied by the Michigan DNR.
  - The form must be filed within 48 hours if:
    - A person dies within 24 hours of the occurrence *or...*
    - A person loses consciousness, receives medical treatment, or is disabled for more than 24 hours.
  - The form must be filed within five days if:
    - Damage to the vessel and other property damage totals more than \$2,000 *or...*
    - A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury.

## Diver-Down Flags

Scuba divers or snorkelers must display a diver-down flag to mark their diving area.

- Divers must stay within 100 feet of the vertical position of their diver-down flag.
- Vessels must remain at least 200 feet away from the flag.



A rectangular red flag, at least 14 inches x 16 inches with a 3 1/2" white diagonal stripe, is required on Michigan state waters.

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

## Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

- It is illegal to discharge oil or hazardous substances.
- 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.
- If your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a 5 x 8-inch placard at the bilge pump control station stating the Federal Water Pollution Control Act's law.

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances into the water:

- Immediately call the National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.
- Also report the discharge to the Michigan Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS) by calling **1-800-292-4706**.

## Discharge of Sewage and Waste

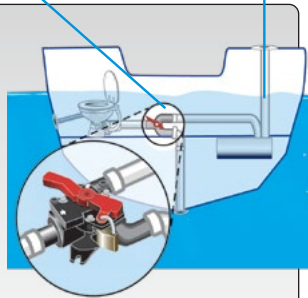
- Houseboats must have a wastewater holding system to prevent the discharge of waste into the water. Michigan law prohibits the discharge of any sewage, treated or untreated, into the fresh waters of Michigan.
- If you have a recreational vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board. All installed devices must be USCG certified and working properly.

**Y valve must be secured**      **Drainage to pump-out station**

### Types of MSDs

There are three types of MSDs.

- Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large boats. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria. The Y valve must be secured so that waste cannot be discharged into the water.
- Type III MSDs, the simplest and most common, consist of holding tanks or portable toilets. Waste is to be taken ashore and disposed of in a pump-out facility station.



## Discharge of Trash

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

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

# Specifically for PWC

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

## Requirements Specific to PWC

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC must *wear* a USCG–approved wearable PFD. Inflatable PFDs may not be used.
- You may not allow a child under 7 years of age to ride on or be towed behind a PWC unless with a parent or guardian or a designee of the parent or guardian.
- The lanyard of a PWC’s ECOS must be attached to the person, clothing, or PFD of the operator.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC during the period that begins at sunset and ends at 8:00 a.m. “Sunset” means that time determined by the National Weather Service.
- A PWC must be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times. It is illegal to:
  - Jump the wake of another vessel unnecessarily close to the other vessel.
  - Weave your PWC through congested traffic.
  - Swerve at the last possible moment to avoid collision.
- A PWC must be operated at “slow, no wake speed” if crossing within 150 feet behind another vessel unless the other vessel is also a PWC.
- You may not operate a PWC within 200 feet of a Great Lakes shoreline unless traveling at “slow, no wake speed” perpendicular to the shoreline.
- You may not operate a PWC in waters less than two feet deep unless you are operating at “slow, no wake speed” or are docking or launching your PWC.
- It is illegal to harass wildlife or disturb aquatic vegetation with your PWC.
- PWC are prohibited within the boundaries of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and Isle Royale National Park. Restrictions also apply at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore under Part 3 of 36 CFR.



# Specifically for Skiing

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

## Requirements for Towing Skiers

- Every person being towed behind a vessel on water skis, a surfboard, or similar device must *wear* a USCG–approved wearable PFD. Inflatable PFDs may not be used.
- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or a similar device must have a person on board, in addition to the vessel operator, observing the towed person(s) at all times.
- It is legal to tow persons on water skis, surfboards, or any device of this type only between:
  - One hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset if towed behind a boat
  - 8:00 a.m. and sunset if towed behind a PWC
- Persons being towed must stay at least 100 feet away from:
  - A shoreline (if operating in water less than three feet deep)
  - Any moored or anchored vessel
  - A dock or raft
  - Any marked swimming area or person(s) in the water



# Protecting the Environment

## Invasive Aquatic Plants and Animals

Michigan waters are threatened by non-native, invasive, aquatic plants and animals, such as zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil. These species and others are harmful to recreational boating and can cause extensive economic and natural resource damage. Effective 2019, there are new requirements to stop the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.

- A person shall not:
  - Launch or transport watercraft or trailers unless they are free of aquatic organisms, including plants.
  - Transport a watercraft without removing all drain plugs and draining all water from bilges, ballast tanks, and live wells.
  - Release unused bait into the water.
- Boaters should learn to identify invasive species that they may encounter and take precautions to prevent the spread of these species.
  - **Inspect** boats, trailers, and equipment, and remove all mud, debris, and aquatic plant material from trailers and watercraft before launching or retrieving a watercraft. Use a hose or power washer when available, and dry all equipment thoroughly before leaving the access area.
  - **Drain** live wells, bilges, and all water from boats before leaving the access site. Disinfect live wells and bilges with a bleach solution (1/2 cup bleach to 5 gallons of water) when possible. Fish diseases and microscopic life stages of aquatic invasive species can be hiding in seemingly clean water, so draining is an important step.
  - **Dispose** of unused bait in the trash. Do not release bait into the water. Release of bait and minnows can lead to the unintended introduction of aquatic invasive species.
  - **Do not transfer fish** to waterbodies other than where they were caught. This helps prevent the spread of both aquatic invasive species and fish diseases.
- For more tips, information, or to report an invasive species, visit [www.michigan.gov/Invasives](http://www.michigan.gov/Invasives).



## *Remember when you caught your first fish?*

Our children will not experience that same thrill unless we keep this country's waterways pollution-free. Using pump-out and dump stations is something we can all do to protect our waters.



### **Keep our water clean— use pump-outs**

To report illegal discharge of any sewage, treated or untreated, in the fresh waters of Michigan, call the National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.



### **Waste-Handling Facilities**

Michigan has approximately 280 marina-provided pump-out stations that are widely available to recreational boaters. The 280 pump-outs serve 32,000 boats that have marine sanitation devices (MSDs) and are kept at Great Lakes coastal locations in Michigan, including 9,000 boats not kept at

marinas. Keeping our environment clean is everybody's job. Please make it yours.

### **Clean Boating Tips for Petroleum Control**

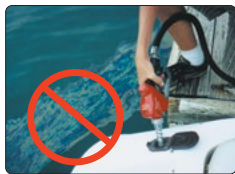
Petroleum in or on the water is harmful, and in some cases fatal, to aquatic life. Floating petroleum reduces light penetration, affects the exchange of oxygen at the water's surface, and contaminates the microlayer. The microlayer is the uppermost portion of the water column—home to thousands of species of plants, animals, and microbes that attract seabirds from above and fish from below. Pollution in the microlayer can poison much of the aquatic food web.

## The Law

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (also called the Clean Water Act) prohibits the discharge of oil or oily waste upon or into the navigable waters of the United States or the waters of the contiguous zone if such discharge causes a film or sheen upon, or discoloration of, the surface of the water or causes a sludge or emulsion beneath the surface of the water. Violators are subject to a penalty of \$5,000 from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). State law also prohibits the discharge of oil. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality may impose additional fines.

## Fueling Practices

Gas or diesel may be spilled while fueling—as backsplash out the fuel intake or as overflow out the vent fitting. Spills harm aquatic life. Follow these tips to avoid problems.



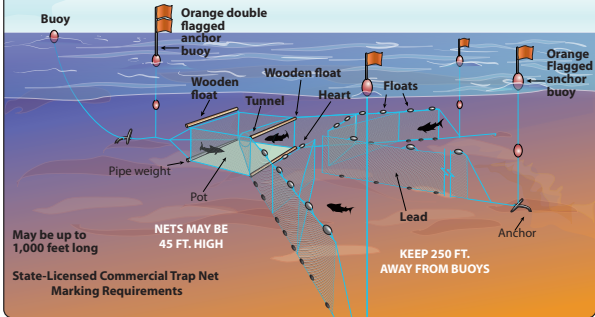
- Fill tanks to no more than 90% capacity—gas from cool storage tanks will expand as it warms up.
- To determine when the tank is 90% full, listen to the filler pipe, use a sounding stick, and know your tank's volume.
- Rather than filling your tank upon your return to port, wait and fill it just before leaving on your next trip. This practice will reduce spills due to thermal expansion because some fuel will be used before it warms up.
- Fill portable tanks on shore where spills are less likely to occur and are easier to clean up.
- Use oil absorbent pads to catch all drips.
- Slow down at the beginning and end of fueling.

## Pollution Emergencies

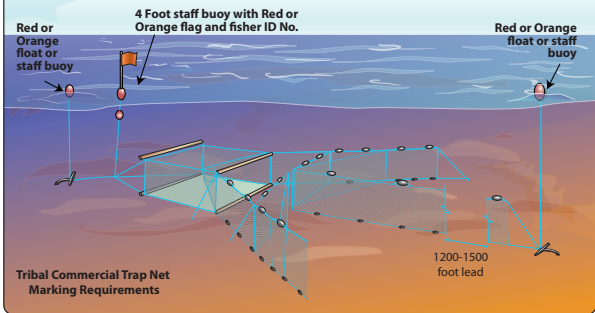
Call the Michigan Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS) at **1-800-292-4706**.

# Commercial Fishing Nets

## Markings for State-Licensed Trap Net



## Markings for Tribal-Licensed Trap Net



## Do Not Tamper With Net Markings

It is against the law and puts others at risk.

- This includes intentionally or unintentionally cutting, moving, or damaging buoys while trying to recover tangled gear.
  - Steer clear of the nets to avoid tangles.
  - If you do get tangled, cut your lines and do not disturb the markers. Missing markers put other boaters at risk. All net entanglements should be reported by calling the RAP Hotline at **1-800-292-7800**. The GPS coordinates of location of entanglement, water depth, and description of any gear lost should be provided.
- Those witnessing net tampering or unmarked nets should report their observations to the RAP Hotline.

# Michigan Department of Natural Resources Customer Service Centers

## Baraga Customer Service Center

427 US-41 North  
Baraga, MI 49908  
906-353-6651

## Bay City Customer Service Center

3580 State Park Drive  
Bay City, MI 48706  
989-684-9141

## Cadillac Customer Service Center

8015 Mackinaw Trail  
Cadillac, MI 49601  
231-775-9727

## Detroit Customer Service Center

1801 Atwater Street  
Detroit, MI 48207  
313-396-6890

## Escanaba Customer Service Center

6833 US-2, 41 & M-35  
Gladstone, MI 49837  
906-786-2351

## Gaylord Customer Service Center

1732 West M-32  
Gaylord, MI 49735  
989-732-3541

## Lansing Customer Service Center

4166 Legacy Pkwy  
Lansing, MI 48911  
517-284-4720

## Marquette Customer Service Center

1990 US-41 South  
Marquette, MI 49855  
906-228-6561

Visit the DNR website: [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)

## Obtain information about:

- State parks and recreation areas
- Trail information and maps
- More education courses
- Renewing licenses
- DNR's Law Enforcement Division

## Newberry Customer Service Center

5100 State Highway M-123  
Newberry, MI 49868  
906-293-5131

## Plainwell Customer Service Center

621 North 10th Street  
Plainwell, MI 49080  
269-685-6851

## Roscommon Customer Service Center

8717 N. Roscommon Road  
Roscommon, MI 48653  
989-275-5151

## Sault Ste. Marie Customer Service Center

4131 South M-129  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
906-635-6161

## Traverse City Customer Service Center

2122 South M-37  
Traverse City, MI 49685  
231-922-5280



To ensure the enjoyment for future boaters, report boating violations. Call or text

1-800-292-7800

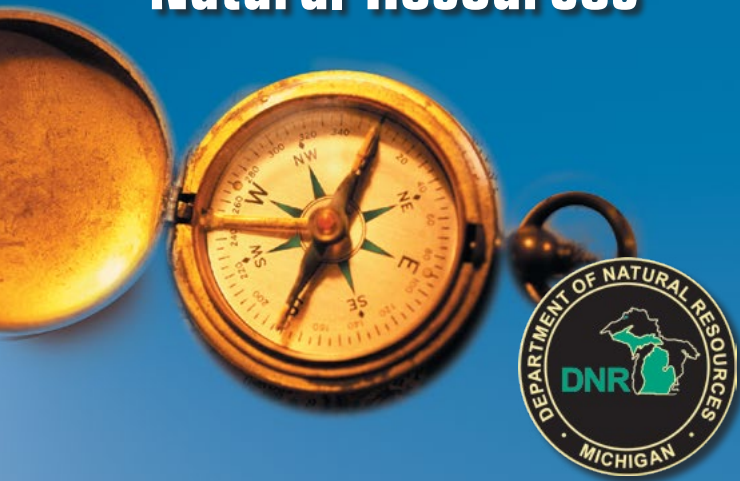
# Required Equipment Checklist



	PWC	Boat Less Than 16 Ft.	Boat 16 Ft. to Less Than 26 Ft.
Boating Safety Certificate on Board	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1
Certificate of Number on Board	✓	✓	✓
Validation Decals Displayed	✓	✓	✓
Wearable PFDs	✓ 2	✓ 3	✓ 3
Throwable Device			✓
Type 5-B Fire Extinguisher	✓	✓	✓
ECOS	✓		
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓	✓ 4	✓ 4
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓
Muffler	✓	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓ 5	✓ 5	✓
Daytime VDSs			✓ 5
Nighttime VDSs	n/a	✓ 5	✓ 5
Navigation Lights	n/a	✓ 6	✓ 6

1. Applicable for some operators.
2. Those on PWC must wear a PFD at all times. Inflatable PFDs may not be used.
3. Those under the age of 6 years must *wear* a wearable PFD when riding on the open deck of any vessel while underway.
4. Required on inboard and stern drives only.
5. Required only on the Great Lakes and waters connected to the Great Lakes.
6. Unpowered vessels (sailboats under sail, rowboats, etc.) are required only to have a flashlight or a lantern on hand.

# Michigan Department of Natural Resources



- ▲ **STAY CURRENT ON BOATING LAWS**
- ▲ **GET WEEKLY FISHING REPORTS**
- ▲ **PURCHASE FISHING AND HUNTING LICENSES ONLINE**
- ▲ **GET ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT:**
  - **BOAT REGISTRATION**
  - **FISHING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS**
- ▲ **FIND OUT ABOUT STATE PARKS:**
  - **LOCATIONS AND FEES**
  - **ACTIVITIES—CAMPING, FISHING, HIKING, BOATING**
- ▲ **MAKE CAMPGROUND RESERVATIONS ONLINE**

**Visit our website:**

**[www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)**

**Everything you want to know about what's going on  
outdoors in Michigan is just a click away.**