

MI Boating Laws and Responsibilities

It is a boater's responsibility to know Michigan safe boating laws.

Below are highlights of some of the safe boating laws as defined by the Michigan DNR. We recommend all boat owners review and follow the boating laws for everyone's safety. For the complete information contained in the "Handbook of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities" go to a MI Secretary of State office or visit this link: https://assets.kalkomey.com/boater/pdfs/handbook/mi_handbook_entire.pdf

On the Water

- No High Speed Boating after Dark.
- No High Speed Boating between the islands when swimmers are present.
- No Wake in bays.
- Boat traffic goes in a Counterclockwise (CCW) direction around the lake and islands.
- No Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel.
- No Causing damage from the wake of your vessel.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel: In excess of 55 mph. Faster than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions (darkness, weather, vessel traffic, etc.)

Age and Operator Restrictions

Persons less than 12 years of age:

- May operate a boat powered by a motor of no more than 6 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.
- 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 operate a boat legally only if they have been issued a boating safety certificate and have it on board the boat.

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

Personal Watercraft (Jet Skies):

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 their parent or legal guardian or by 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.

Laws Specifically for PWC (Jet Skies)

Personal watercraft (PWC) operators must obey additional legal requirements that apply specifically to the operation of PWC on Michigan waters. Requirements Specific to Personal watercraft (PWC):

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)–approved wearable Type I, II, or III personal flotation device (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 engine cut-off switch 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 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.

Laws Specifically for towing a person

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

Requirements for Towing a person behind a boat:

- Every person being towed behind a vessel on water skis, a surfboard, or similar device must wear a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)–approved wearable Type I, II, or III personal flotation device (PFD). Inflatable PFDs may not be used.
- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis, surfboard, or 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. Between 8:00 a.m. and sunset if towed behind a personal watercraft (PWC)
- Persons being towed must stay at least 100 feet away from: Any moored or anchored vessel, A dock or raft, or Any marked swimming area or person(s) in the water.