

New Boater Education Law

Effective Date: July 1, 2025

Starting on July 1, 2025, a new law requires some adults and youth who operate motorboats—including personal watercraft—to have a valid watercraft operator's permit (commonly also known as a boater safety certificate). People who already have a watercraft operator's permit are not affected by the law, which is designed to make boating safer by ensuring everyone operating a motorized watercraft knows the rules and is properly trained. Here's a breakdown of the key points:

Adult operators:

- Permit requirement: Some adults (defined below) need a valid operator's permit to drive any motorboat or personal watercraft starting July 1, 2025.
- Exemptions: Some adults are exempt from this requirement. Check the law for specific exemptions.
- Supervised operation: People without a permit still can operate a boat, but only if there's an accompanying operator (defined below) onboard.

Young operators:

- Restrictions on high-powered watercraft: Young operators (people less than 12 years old), can't operate a personal watercraft or any motorboat with a motor over 75 horsepower.
- Low-powered motorboats: Young operators can operate a motorboat that's not a personal watercraft and has a motor under 75 horsepower as long as there is an accompanying operator in the motorboat.

Who is considered an adult operator?

- Is 12 years old or older, and
- Was born after these dates:
 - June 30, 2004 (started July 1, 2025)
 - June 30, 2000 (starts July 1, 2026)
 - June 30, 1996 (starts July 1, 2027)
 - June 30, 1987 (starts July 1, 2028)

This means people born after June 30, 2004, will need a permit to operate a boat starting in 2025. The permit requirement will gradually apply to older age groups over the next few years.

Who is considered an accompanying operator?

- A person 21 years of age or older who:
 - Is in a personal watercraft or other type of motorboat;
 - Is within immediate reach of the controls of the motor; and
 - Possesses a valid operator's permit or is an exempt operator.

Who is considered an exempt operator?

"Exempt operator" means a motorboat operator, including a personal watercraft operator, who is 12 years of age or older and who:

- Possesses a valid license to operate a motorboat issued for maritime personnel by the United States Coast Guard under Code of Federal Regulations, title 46, part 10, or a marine certificate issued by the Canadian government.
- Is not a resident of the state, is temporarily using the waters of the state for a period not to exceed 60 days, and:
 - meets any applicable requirements of the state or country of residency; or
 - possesses a Canadian pleasure craft operator's card;
 - is operating a motorboat under a dealer's license according to section 86B.405; or
 - is operating a motorboat during an emergency.

Key takeaways:

- **Adult and youth permits:** Young operators and some adults need a valid watercraft operator's permit to operate certain motorized watercraft. For adults born after June 30, 2004, the requirement started July 1, 2025. The law will extend to older age groups over time.
- **Youth restrictions:** Young operators can't operate boats with more than 75 horsepower. They can operate boats (that are not PWC) with less than 75 horsepower if they're with an accompanying operator.
- **Gradual rollout:** The law will phase in over the next few years. The operator permit requirement started July 1, 2025 and gradually expands through 2028.

This new law aims to improve safety on the water by making sure everyone operating a motorized watercraft is trained and qualified.

Rentals:

- **18 and older:**
 - If renting from a rental business and from Minnesota: Must be an exempt operator; complete the Minnesota watercraft rental course (certification is good for 180 days); or already have or obtain a watercraft operator's permit (certification is good for a lifetime).
 - If renting from a rental business, not from Minnesota, and using Minnesota's waterways for fewer than 60 days: Must meet any applicable requirements of state or country of residency.
 - If renting from a resort and from Minnesota: Must meet watercraft operator permit age requirements. (Those born after June 30, 2004, must hold a valid watercraft operator's permit.)
 - If renting from a resort, not from Minnesota, and using Minnesota's waterways for fewer than 60 days: Must meet any applicable requirements of state or country of residency.
- **Under 18:**
 - Cannot rent watercraft, but Minnesota residents may operate rental watercraft if they have a valid watercraft operator's permit. Non-residents under 18 also cannot rent watercraft but may operate rental watercraft if they're using Minnesota's waterways for fewer than 60 days and meet any applicable requirements of state or country of residency. (Please note: Rental businesses and resorts may also have their own requirements that are more stringent than state law.)

Low-powered motorboats

This new law does not affect individuals who operate motorboats powered by a motor with a factory rating of 25 horsepower or less. People of any age do not need a valid watercraft operator's permit or have an accompanying operator in the motorboat so long as it is not a personal watercraft and is powered by a motor with a factory rating of 25 horsepower or less.

SIGN UP NOW to take the watercraft operator's permit course:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/boatwater/education.html>.