

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Prepare for safe boating in Wisconsin.



LIFE JACKET FACTS

Drowning. It is human nature to think it can't happen to you — but it can. The majority of people who drown in boating accidents know how to swim but become incapacitated in the water.

- Sometimes they are injured or unconscious.
- Others develop hypothermia or become exhausted.
- Some are weighed down by clothing.

It is important to wear a life jacket at all times while boating.

- An accident can happen without warning.
- Usually after the accident, life jackets are not within reach — they can be in cabinets, trapped under the boat or floating far away in the water.

LIFE JACKETS FOR ALL WATER SPORTS

The common reasons people give for not wearing a life jacket are that it is too hot, it will mess up their tan line or it is simply not comfortable. Many people don't realize the variety of new life jackets (also called personal flotation devices or PFDs) that are on the market today — belt packs and other jackets that are low profile, lightweight, easy to move in, and come in many sizes, styles and shapes for every person and every sport. Visit the National Safe Boating Council webpage to learn more: safeboatingcampaign.com/new-jacket-pages/recreational-jackets.htm.



Life jackets come in many sizes, styles and shapes.

BOATER EDUCATION IS MANDATORY IN WISCONSIN

Boating is a major Wisconsin recreational activity as well as a significant part of the state's economy and tourism industry. Wisconsin ranks fifth in the nation in the number of registered boats with over 628,000 boats registered. Additionally, about 335,000 non-motorized boats use Wisconsin waterways each year.

"Safe boating is a critical part of a pleasant on-the-water experience and safe boating starts before you launch," explains Roy Zellmer, DNR Boating Law Administrator.

Zellmer asks boaters to start the season on a safe note and boat smart. The DNR offers boating safety courses in cooperation with schools, private clubs and organizations. Online boating safety courses are also available.

The Mandatory Boating Safety Education Law requires any boat operator, born on or after Jan. 1, 1989, and who is 16 years of age or older, to take and pass a Boating Safety Course to legally operate a motorboat. Those who do not have this certification are prohibited from operating a motorized boat or personal watercraft in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin law also requires anyone who does not already possess this certification, but who wishes to rent a boat or personal watercraft, to complete a condensed boating safety course and pass an exam in order to be issued a Temporary Boat Safety Certificate. This temporary certification only applies to the operation of boats that

are rented or leased by the certificate holder and expires at the end of the calendar year of issuance. The course is available online and at some boat rental businesses.

BOATING SAFETY COURSES

Boating safety courses are mostly offered in March, April, May and June. Course cost is \$10 and includes instruction in:

- 1 Boat classification, hull designs and motors.
- 2 Legal requirements, registration and equipment requirements.
- 3 Navigation rules, basic safety regulations and waterway marking systems.
- 4 Preparation, loading, boarding, cruising, docking, anchoring, knots, trailering, courtesy and maintenance.
- 5 Boat accidents, emergency measures, aquatic safety, alcohol usage, visual distress signals, fire on board and first aid.

For more information or to register for a boating safety course, visit dnr.wi.gov/education/outdoorskills/safetieducation.html.

TOP 10 WISCONSIN BOATING VIOLATIONS

1. Failure to provide an adequate number of life jackets.
2. Personal watercraft violations.
3. Operating a boat in excess of the speed limit or in a prohibited area.
4. Operating a boat without a valid safety education certificate.
5. Operating a boat without a valid certificate of number (begins with "WS").
6. Operating a motorboat while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substance.
7. Allowing persons to ride on decks or gunwales.
8. Operating a boat towing a water-skier without a required observer.
9. Local ordinance violations.
10. Failure to display proper registration.



Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "BOAT" for more information about boating in Wisconsin.

ACCIDENTS

Incompetent boaters cause more severe accidents. In 2014, Wisconsin reported 115 boating accidents resulting in 81 injuries and nine fatalities. Of the nine fatalities, 89 percent were not wearing a life jacket and drowning was determined to be the cause of death. Operator inexperience and lack of boating safety education continue to be factors in boating accidents: 56 percent of the operators involved in an accident reported not completing a safety education course.



PHOTO COURTESY U.S. COAST GUARD

WHEN TO CALL

Boat accidents must be reported immediately to a conservation warden or other law enforcement officer if the accident results in:

- Loss of life
- Any injury that requires medical treatment beyond first aid
- Any boat or property damage in excess of \$2,000
- Complete loss of a boat

To report a boating accident or other violation, call 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367). In addition, within 10 days of the accident, the operator must submit a Boat Operator Incident Report (Form 4100-20) to the DNR. This form can be downloaded from the DNR website (dnr.wi.gov/topic/boat/crashinfo.html), or is available at DNR offices, sheriffs' departments and many local police departments. Mail completed forms to:

WI Department of Natural Resources
Boating Program - LE/8
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

TOP 10 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BOATING ACCIDENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Operator inattention | 6. Alcohol use |
| 2. Improper lookout | 7. Navigation rules violation |
| 3. Operator inexperience | 8. Force of wave/wake |
| 4. Excessive speed | 9. Hazardous waters |
| 5. Machinery failure | 10. Weather |

REGISTRATION AND TITLING

There are several ways to register or renew your boat.

- **Online.** Online registration allows you to process transactions for the boat you currently own or to register recently purchased boats. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "Registration."
- **License agent.** Locate an agent near you to complete your boat renewal or duplicate decal needs. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "License Agent."
- **Service center.** DNR service centers provide full registration service, including transferring titled boats to new owners, lien releases and documenting boats and fleets. To find a center near you, go to dnr.wi.gov and search "Service Centers."
- **Mail.** Complete the Boat Registration and Titling Application (Form 9400-193), make a photocopy for your records and mail the original application and appropriate fees to the address on the form. This form can be downloaded from the DNR website (dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/9400/9400-193.pdf).



BE BOAT READY

Before getting on the water, you should conduct an annual boat maintenance check and make sure your registration is up to date and you have a current year's sticker displayed. Here are a few other items to add to your check-up:

- **Trailer.** Clean and check trailer hitches, rollers and pads for rust and tighten bolts. Check tire pressure and tire tread. Keep the tires and spare inflated to the proper pressure. Check the safety chains from the car to the trailer and from the winch to the boat.
- **Lights.** For both trailer and boat, check electrical systems to make sure all lights are in working order. Charge up those batteries.
- **Boat.** Check the hull, pulleys, carpeting and fittings. Grease pulleys and check for signs of wear. Check and lubricate steering cables. Check the electrical conduits, live well, compartments, chairs, benches, transom and the motor. Get your motor tuned-up for the season.
- **Lines.** Check all your lines including the anchor ropes. Replace if frayed.
- **Fuel system.** Inspect the fuel lines for wear and cracks. Install a fresh fuel filter. Inspect your fuel tanks and cap vents.
- **Safety equipment.** Check your safety equipment including the number of life jackets on board, and make sure the fire extinguisher, flare kit, flashlights and first-aid kit are up to date.
- **Towing vehicle.** Check the vehicle you will be using to tow the trailer and boat. Inspect the ball and hitch assembly and make sure the brakes on your vehicle are in good shape.

SAFETY TIPS FOR BEGINNERS AND SEASONED BOATERS

Even if you have taken a boater education course it helps to brush up on these important boating safety tips before your season on the water begins.

- 1 Carry one wearable U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved life jacket of the proper size for every boat occupant. All life jackets must be ready at hand and not enclosed in plastic bags or locked compartments. **The best advice: Wear one every time you go boating.**
- 2 Life jackets must be in good shape before you use your boat:
 - Check your life jacket often for rips, tears and holes and ensure that seams, fabric straps and hardware are good and working. Give the belts and tie tapes a quick, hard pull to make sure they are secure.
 - Store your life jacket in a dry, cool, dark place. You should find no signs of waterlogging or mildew odor.
 - Fading could indicate loss of strength. A weathered life jacket might tear more easily and lose flotation material.
 - Discard any life jacket in poor shape.
- 3 Boats 16 feet and over must also carry one USCG-approved throwable flotation device.
- 4 If your boat has enclosed compartments or a false floor, you must carry a USCG-approved fire extinguisher. Make sure that it is charged and accessible.
- 5 Test your boat lights before leaving the dock. If you use battery-operated lights, always carry extra batteries. Even if you plan to be back before dark, an equipment malfunction or bad weather may change your plans.
- 6 Be weather wise. Sudden wind shifts, lightning flashes and choppy water can all mean a storm is brewing. Bring along a radio and keep a close eye on the weather.
- 7 Bring emergency supplies such as maps, flares and a first-aid kit. Keep them in a floatable pouch.

- 8 Tell someone where you are going and when you will return. Bring a cell phone.
- 9 Check the boat landing for local regulations. If boating on the Great Lakes or Mississippi River, review the additional federal regulations.
- 10 Ventilate tank after refueling. Open all hatches and run the blower. Sniff for fumes before starting the engine and do not start the engine until the air smells clean.
- 11 Learn proper anchoring procedures. Improper anchoring causes many fatal accidents.
- 12 Never consume alcohol or drugs before or during boat operation. A person is considered to be operating a vessel under the influence if he or she:
 - Has a blood or breath alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent or greater or
 - Is under the influence of any controlled substance or any other unprescribed drug, or any combination that renders that person incapable of operating safely.
- 13 If you loan your boat or personal watercraft to someone, teach them how to operate it. If you share the boat — share the knowledge!
- 14 Never allow passengers to ride on gunwales, seatbacks or outside of protective railings, including the front of a pontoon boat. A sudden turn, stop or start could cause a fall overboard.
- 15 Make certain your registration is up to date and that the current year's sticker is displayed. Carry your registration card on board with you.
- 16 Practice good boat launch etiquette.
- 17 Practice loading and unloading on a day that is not too busy at the ramp.
- 18 Remove boat covers and straps before you get in line to launch.
- 19 Load equipment into the boat before you reach the ramp. Make sure all equipment is working and that the drain/boat plug is in.

- 20 Once in line to launch, have a person available to hold the bow line and assist in boat handling at the pier.
- 21 Have one person drive the boat off the trailer and out of the way of other boaters while another person is parking the tow vehicle.
- 22 When leaving a boat launch, maintain slow-no-wake speed for a safe and legal distance from the boat launch.
- 23 If bad weather is approaching, get off the water early to avoid a long waiting line.
- 24 Drop one person off at the pier to get the tow vehicle and then get in line.
- 25 Once loaded, pull well away from the launch area before securing the boat for traveling.



PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES. IT'S THE LAW.

Clean boats mean clean waters. The DNR reminds you that before launching and before leaving any waterbody you must:

- ✓ **INSPECT** boats, trailers and equipment
- ✓ **REMOVE** all attached aquatic plants and animals
- ✓ **DRAIN** all water from boats, vehicles and equipment
- ✓ **NEVER MOVE** plants or live fish away from a waterbody
- ✓ **DISPOSE** of unwanted bait in the trash

These steps ensure that your actions are not part of the problem but the solution. To learn more, visit dnr.wi.gov/lakes/invasives/.

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