Alaska: The Legal Requirements of Boating

Your Vessel’s Certificate of Number and Decals
◆ Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Alaska, you must have an Alaska Certificate of Number and validation decals to operate your vessel on public waters legally. The only exceptions are:
• Vessels registered in another state or country using Alaska waters for less than 90 consecutive days
• Vessels owned by the United States government
• Vessels documented with the U.S. Coast Guard
• Ship’s lifeboats used solely for lifesaving purposes
• Non-motorized boats, including handmade umiaqs with a walrus or sealskin covering
◆ The Certificate of Number and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to the Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles.
◆ This Certificate of Number 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 forward half of the vessel.
  • Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  • Number must be in at least three-inch-high BLOCK letters.
  • Number’s color must contrast with its background.
  • Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen: AK 3717 ZW or AK-3717-ZW.
  • No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
  • Decal must be placed within six inches of the number on both sides of the vessel.
◆ If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

Other Facts About Registering Your Vessel
◆ A Certificate of Number is valid for three years and expires on the last day of the month at the end of the three-year period.
◆ Vessels registered in another state may operate on Alaska waters for 90 consecutive days before Alaska registration is required.
◆ The owner of a numbered vessel must notify the Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) within 15 days if:
  • He or she changes address.
  • The vessel is stolen, recovered, destroyed, abandoned, or sold.
◆ If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or decals, you must apply to the Alaska DMV 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.
Hull Identification Number

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- Hull Identification Numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another—the same as serial numbers distinguish one car 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.
- Owners of homemade vessels must obtain a HIN from the Alaska DMV.
- It is illegal to deface, alter, remove, or destroy a HIN.

Who May Operate a Vessel

- Alaska does not have any minimum age requirements for vessel operators.
- Although Alaska currently does not require vessel operators to complete a boater education course, taking a safety course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) is highly recommended.
Unlawful Operation of a Vessel

◆ Prohibited Operation is operating a vessel in violation of Alaska laws. Specifically, it is illegal to operate a vessel:
  • For any recreational or other purpose, including towing a person on water skis, a surfboard, or similar device, in a reckless or negligent manner that causes danger to the life, limb, or property of any person
  • That does not have the required equipment on board

◆ Operating Near Marine Mammal Species is operating a vessel in an area where there are marine mammal species that are protected by federal law. According to federal law, vessel operators should:
  • Stay at least 300 feet from marine mammals.
  • Keep the time spent viewing the animals to less than 30 minutes.
  • Not chase the animals.
  • Make sure the animals have a clear escape route.
  • Put the engine in neutral to let any approaching animals pass.
  • Leave the area if an animal becomes upset.
  • Make sure no one on the vessel feeds the animals or touches a young animal.

Remember …

As the owner of a vessel, you are responsible for any injury or damage caused by the negligent operation of the vessel by others you knowingly allow to operate it. It is assumed that the boat is being operated with your consent if the operator is an immediate family member.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and U.S. Power Squadrons will perform a Vessel Safety Check (VSC) of your vessel and equipment free of charge. This inspection covers federal and state requirements. If your vessel meets all VSC requirements, you will receive a VSC decal. If your vessel fails to meet all requirements, no report is made to any law enforcement agency.
Alcohol and Drugs

Alaska law prohibits anyone from boating while intoxicated (BWI)—that is, operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol, an inhalant, a controlled substance, or any combination of alcohol, an inhalant, and a controlled substance. Alcohol and drugs cause impaired balance, blurred vision, poor coordination, impaired judgment, and slower reaction times. Alcohol is a major contributor to boating accidents and fatalities. Read more about the effects and risks of consuming alcohol in Chapter 5.

- Alaska law states that a person is considered to be intoxicated if the person has a blood or breath concentration of alcohol of 0.08% or more as measured within four hours of the time of vessel operation.
- Alaska law establishes the following penalties.
  - Upon a first conviction, the person will be subject to a fine of at least $1,500 and imprisonment for at least 72 hours.
  - Upon a second conviction, the person will be subject to a fine of at least $3,000 and imprisonment for at least 20 days.
  - Upon a third or subsequent conviction, the person will be subject to a fine of at least $4,000 and imprisonment for at least 60 days.
  - In addition to the penalties above, a person convicted of boating while intoxicated may lose his or her driver’s license for at least 30 days and have his or her vessel forfeited.

- By operating a vessel on Alaska waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if requested by a law enforcement official. Refusal to be tested may be used as evidence against you in court.

- Vessel operators and passengers are strongly encouraged not to consume alcohol when boating.

Obstructing Navigation

Vessel operators should always be considerate of other vessel operators even when stopping to anchor or moor. Keep in mind that it is illegal to:

- Operate any vessel in such a way that it will interfere unnecessarily with the safe navigation of other vessels on the waterway.
- Anchor a vessel in the traveled portion of a river or channel in a way that will prevent or interfere with any other vessel passing through the same area.
- Moor or attach a vessel to a buoy (other than a mooring buoy), beacon, light, or any other navigational aid placed on public waters by proper authorities.
- Move, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.
- Obstruct a pier, wharf, boat ramp, or access to any facility.

Homeland Security Restrictions

Recreational boaters have a role in keeping our waterways safe and secure.

- Violators of the restrictions below can expect a quick and severe response.
  - Do not approach within 100 yards and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Naval vessel. If you need to pass within 100 yards of a U.S. Naval vessel for safe passage, you must contact the U.S. Naval vessel or the U.S. Coast Guard escort vessel on VHF-FM channel 16.
  - Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise-line, or petroleum facilities.
  - Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc.
  - Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel.
  - Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary. Report all activities that seem suspicious to the local authorities, the U.S. Coast Guard, or the port or marina security.
Personal Flotation Devices (Life Jackets)

All vessels must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets, called personal flotation devices (PFDs). The quantity and type depend on the length of your vessel and the number of people on board and/or being towed. Each life jacket must be in good condition, be the proper size for the intended wearer, and very importantly, be readily accessible! Readily accessible means you must be able to put the life jacket on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency (vessel sinking, on fire, etc.). PFDs should not be stowed in plastic bags or in locked or closed compartments, and they should not have other gear stowed on top of them.

Vessel operators should ask everyone on their vessel to wear a life jacket whenever on the water. Life jackets can save lives, but only if they are worn!

PFD Descriptions

**TYPE I: Offshore Life Jackets**

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

**TYPE II: Near-Shore Vests**

These vests are good for calm waters when quick assistance or rescue is likely. Type II vests will turn some unconscious wearers face up in the water, but the turning is not as pronounced as with a Type I.

**TYPE III: Flotation Aids**

These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters when quick assistance or rescue is likely. They are not recommended for rough waters since they will not turn most unconscious persons face up. Type III PFDs are used for water sports such as water-skiing. Some Type III PFDs are designed to inflate when you enter the water.

**TYPE IV: Throwable Devices/Not Wearable**

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

**TYPE V: Special-Use Devices**

These vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs, and others are designed for specific activities such as windsurfing, kayaking, or waterskiing. Some Type V PFDs are designed to inflate when you enter the water. To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their label.
Fire Extinguishers

- Extinguishers are classified by a letter and number symbol. The number indicates the relative size of the extinguisher, and the letter indicates the type of fire it will extinguish.
  - **Type A** fires are of combustible solids like wood.
  - **Type B** fires are of flammable liquids like gasoline or oil.
  - **Type C** fires are electrical fires.
- All vessels are required to have a Type B, U.S. Coast Guard-approved fire extinguisher(s) on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Inboard engine
  - Double-bottoms that are not sealed to the hull or that are not filled completely with flotation materials
  - Closed living spaces
  - Closed compartments where portable fuel tanks may be stored or in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
  - 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.

Use this chart to determine the type and quantity of fire extinguishers required for your vessel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Vessel</th>
<th>Without Fixed System</th>
<th>With Fixed System*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 26 feet</td>
<td>one B-I</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 feet to less than 40 feet</td>
<td>two B-I or one B-II</td>
<td>one B-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 feet to less than 65 feet</td>
<td>three B-I or one B-II and one B-I</td>
<td>two B-I or one B-II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system

- 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.
- Fire extinguishers must be maintained in usable condition. Inspect extinguishers regularly to ensure the following:
  - Seals and tamper indicators are not broken or missing.
  - Pressure gauges or indicators read in the operable range.
  - There is no physical damage, corrosion, leakage, or clogged nozzles.

Remember …

Keep bilges clean and free of trash in order to reduce the risk of fire.
**Backfire Flame Arrestors**

Because boat engines may **backfire**, all powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have an approved backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor. Backfire flame arrestors are designed to prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

- Backfire flame arrestors must be:
  - In good and serviceable condition
  - U.S. Coast Guard–approved (must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards)
- Periodically clean the flame arrestor(s) and check for any damage.

**Ventilation Systems**

Ventilation systems are crucial. Their purpose 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. At least one exhaust duct must extend from the open atmosphere to the lower bilge. At least one intake duct must extend from a point at least midway to the bilge or below the level of the carburetor air intake.
- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes in either of these situations:
  - After fueling
  - Before starting the engine
- If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a personal watercraft), open the engine compartment and sniff for gasoline fumes before starting the engine.

**Mufflers**

Although Alaska does not have specific laws regarding mufflers, it is recommended that all vessel engines be equipped with an effective muffling device. Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.
Navigation Lights

- Vessel operators must make sure that their vessels are equipped with the proper navigation lights and use the lights during these conditions:
  - When away from the dock between sunset and sunrise
  - During periods of restricted visibility such as fog or heavy rain
- The different types of navigation lights are described in “Navigation Lights” in Chapter 3. No other lights that may be mistaken for required navigation lights may be exhibited. 
  Note: Blue or red flashing lights are restricted to use by law enforcement vessels only.
- The required navigation lights differ depending on the type and size of your vessel. The common lighting configurations for recreational vessels are discussed below. For other configurations and requirements for larger vessels, see the U.S. Coast Guard’s Navigation Rules.

Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet Long When Underway

If less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:

- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light (if less than 39.4 feet long) or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet (one meter) higher than the sidelights.

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

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

- If less than 65.6 feet long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2. The required lights are:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
  - A sternlight visible from a distance of at least two miles away.
- If less than 23.0 feet (7 meters) long, these vessels should:
  - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 65.6 feet in length.
  - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight shining a white light as shown in illustration 3.

All Vessels When Not Underway

All vessels are required to display a white light visible in all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area between sunset and sunrise.

Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23 Feet

To prevent a collision, vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.
### Visual Distress Signals

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 state or federally controlled waters** must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard–approved visual distress signals. All vessels, regardless of length or type, are required to carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise. Most vessels must carry day signals also; exceptions to the requirement for day signals are:
  - Recreational vessels that are less than 16 feet in length
  - Non-motorized open sailboats that are less than 26 feet in length
  - Manually propelled vessels
- **VDSs must be U.S. Coast Guard–approved, in serviceable condition, and readily accessible.**

### U.S. Coast Guard–Approved Visual Distress Signals

#### Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

- **Orange Smoke**
  - Day Signal

- **Red Meteor**
  - Night Signal
- **Red Flare**
  - Night Signal

#### Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

- **Electric Light**
  - Night Signal

- **Orange Flag**
  - Day Signal

### Pyrotechnic Devices

- **Pyrotechnics are excellent distress signals. However, there is potential for injury and property damage if not handled properly. These devices produce a very hot flame, and the residue can cause burns and ignite flammable materials.**
- **Pistol-launched and handheld parachute flares and meteors have many characteristics of a firearm and must be handled with caution. In some states, they are considered a firearm and are prohibited from use.**
- **Pyrotechnic devices should be stored in a cool, dry, and prominently marked location.**

### Non-Pyrotechnic Devices

- **The distress flag is a day signal only. It must be at least 3 x 3 feet with a black square and ball on an orange background.**
- **The electric distress light is accepted for night use only and must flash the international SOS distress signal automatically.**

### 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.

### federally controlled waters

Waters on which vessels must observe federal requirements, including VDS requirements; these waters include:

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

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

Changing Direction

• **One short blast** tells other boaters “I intend to pass you on my port (left) side.”
• **Two short blasts** tell other boaters “I intend to pass you on my starboard (right) side.”
• **Three short blasts** tell other boaters “I am backing up.”

Restricted Visibility

• **One prolonged blast** at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by power-driven vessels when underway.
• **One prolonged blast plus two short blasts** at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by sailing vessels.

Warning

• **One prolonged blast** is a warning signal (for example, used when coming around a blind bend or exiting a slip).
• **Five (or more) short, rapid blasts** signal danger or signal that you do not understand or that you disagree with the other boater’s intentions.

Diver-Down Flags:

Scuba divers or snorkelers may display a diver-down flag to mark their diving area. Vessel operators must not operate at greater than “no wake speed” within 100 feet of a displayed diver-down flag. Divers must stay within 100 feet of a displayed diver-down flag while at or near the surface. A diver-down flag may be displayed only while diving operations are underway. The two diver-down flags are:

- A rectangular red flag, at least 12 x 12 inches, with a white diagonal stripe. This flag may be displayed on the vessel or a buoy and must be displayed at least three feet above the surface of the water.
- A blue-and-white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag). This flag must be displayed on vessels on federally controlled waters, and it must be 3.3 feet (one meter) high and visible from all directions. It indicates that the vessel is involved in a diving activity.

Marine Permits:

Permits for regattas, motorboat or other boat races, marine parades, tournaments, or exhibitions to be held on federally controlled waters must be obtained by applying for authorization from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Local Regulations:

Many waterways in Alaska have special regulations such as restrictions on the type of vessel that can be used. Be sure to check for local regulations before you go boating.

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. The navigation rules for meeting head-on, crossing, and overtaking situations described in Chapter 3 are examples of when sound signals are required. Sound-producing devices must be capable of producing a blast that lasts at least four seconds.

The following requirements apply to vessels operating on Alaska state waters.

- Vessels less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length, which includes PWCs, are required to carry on board a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal audible for at least one-half mile.
- Vessels that are 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, and a bell that are audible for at least one mile.

These requirements apply to vessels operating on federally controlled waters.

- Vessels less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length, which includes PWCs, are required to carry on board a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal audible for at least one-half mile.
- Vessels that are 65.6 feet (20 meters) or more in length are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, and a bell that are audible for at least one mile.

Other Equipment and Regulations

- Diver-Down Flags: Scuba divers or snorkelers may display a diver-down flag to mark their diving area. Vessel operators must not operate at greater than “no wake speed” within 100 feet of a displayed diver-down flag. Divers must stay within 100 feet of a displayed diver-down flag while at or near the surface. A diver-down flag may be displayed only while diving operations are underway. The two diver-down flags are:
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- Marine Permits: Permits for regattas, motorboat or other boat races, marine parades, tournaments, or exhibitions to be held on federally controlled waters must be obtained by applying for authorization from the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Local Regulations: Many waterways in Alaska have special regulations such as restrictions on the type of vessel that can be used. Be sure to check for local regulations before you go boating.

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Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs)

In addition to adhering to all boating laws, personal watercraft (PWC) operators have requirements specific to their vessel.

- Although it is not required, everyone on board a PWC should wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket at all times.
- PWCs may not be operated between sunset and sunrise unless they are equipped with the proper navigation lights.
- PWCs must be operated in a responsible manner. You must:
  - Slow your PWC to 10 miles per hour while within 100 feet of another vessel that is underway.
  - Slow your PWC to “no wake speed”:
    - Within 100 feet of anchored vessels
    - Within 200 feet of the shoreline, a swimmer, a diver-down flag, a dock, or a launch ramp
- Obey regulatory markers such as “no wake” or speed limit signs.
- Not consume alcohol before or while operating a PWC.
- Avoid jumping the wake of another vessel.
- Avoid operating too close to popular areas such as anchorages or camping areas.
- Avoid operating in the same area for long periods of time.

Towing a Person With a Vessel Legally

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis, aquaplanes, surfboards, inner tubes, or any similar devices must obey these laws also.

- Any child under 13 years old being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device must wear a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III life jacket. Although not required, all other persons being towed behind a vessel also should wear a USCG–approved life jacket. Inflatable life jackets are not recommended for use by persons being towed behind a vessel.
- It is illegal for a vessel to tow a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or any other device unless:
  - A person at least 12 years old, in addition to the vessel operator, is on board observing the towed person(s) or ...
  - The vessel has a rearview mirror mounted such that the operator can observe the towed person(s) at all times.
- Operators of vessels towing a person(s) must maintain a reasonable distance from other vessels, people, and property so as not to endanger the life or property of any person.
  - Stay at least 100 feet away from other vessels.
  - Keep the skier out of shallow water and away from swimmers.

"no wake speed"

the slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering; the vessel should not produce a wake at this speed
Waste, Oil, and Trash Disposal in Alaska and Federal Waters

- It is illegal to discharge waste, oil, or trash into any state or federally controlled waters. This is for very good reasons.
  - Sewage carries disease and other pollutants that are harmful to people, aquatic plants, and animals.
  - Trash thrown into the water can injure swimmers and wildlife alike. It also can plug engine cooling water intakes.
  - Pollution is unsightly and takes away from your enjoyment of the water.
- Vessel operators need to be aware of the following regulations for waste, oil, and trash disposal that apply to both federally controlled and state waters. The Refuse Act prohibits throwing, discharging, or depositing any refuse matter of any kind (including trash, garbage, oil, and other liquid pollutants) into the waters of the United States.

Discharge of Sewage and Waste

If you have a recreational vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board.

- There are three types of MSDs.
  - Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large vessels. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged. Types I and II MSDs with “Y” valves that would direct the waste overboard must be secured so that the valve cannot be opened. This can be done by placing a lock or non-reusable seal on the “Y” valve or by taking the handle off the “Y” valve.
  - Type III MSDs provide no treatment and are either holding tanks or portable toilets. Collected waste should be taken ashore and disposed of in a pump-out station or onshore toilet.
- Vessels 65 feet or less in length may use a Type I, II, or III MSD. Vessels more than 65 feet in length must install a Type II or III MSD.
- All installed devices must be U.S. Coast Guard–certified.

Discharge of Trash

The Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships places limitations on the discharge of garbage from vessels. 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 in a prominent location. The Garbage Disposal Placard is a durable sign that is at least 4 x 9 inches and notifies passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.

Garbage Disposal Placard

Working together we can all make a difference!
Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

Regulations issued under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act require all vessels with propulsion machinery to be able to retain oil mixtures on board.

- You are not allowed to discharge oil or hazardous substances. The penalty for illegal discharge may be a fine of up to $10,000.
- You are not allowed to dump oil into the bilge of the vessel without means for proper disposal. Fuel spills can be removed using absorbent bilge pads.
- You must dispose of oil waste at an approved reception facility. On recreational vessels, a bucket or bailer is adequate for temporary storage prior to disposing of the oil waste at an approved facility.
- You must notify the U.S. Coast Guard immediately if your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water. Call toll-free 1-800-424-8802. Report the discharge’s location, color, source, substances, size, and time observed. You also must call the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation area response team and report the discharge.
- If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a 5 x 8-inch placard made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery spaces or at the bilge pump control station, stating the following:

**Waste Management Plan**

- Ocean-going vessels that are 40 feet or more in length with cooking and sleeping facilities must have a written Waste Management Plan.
- The captain of the vessel is responsible for implementing the Waste Management Plan.
- The Waste Management Plan, identifying the vessel’s name and home port, should be posted and should include directives to all persons on board about:
  - Discharging sewage and hazardous substances
  - Discharging garbage and other food waste
  - Disposing of plastics, bottles, and cans
  - Reading applicable placards for additional information
  - Advising the captain in case of oily discharges or diesel spills

**Discharge of Oil Prohibited**

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act prohibits the discharge of oil or oily waste upon or into any navigable waters of the U.S. The prohibition includes any discharge which causes a film or discoloration of the surface of the water or causes a sludge or emulsion beneath the surface of the water. Violators are subject to substantial civil and/or criminal sanctions including fines and imprisonment.

**Stop the Spread of Nuisance Species!**

Introducing non-native species into Alaska waters can upset the balance of the ecosystem, thereby harming the environment. Aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, milfoil, and hydrilla, most often spread between waterways by hitching a ride on vessels and trailers. When transplanted into new waters, these organisms proliferate, displacing native species and damaging the water resource.

To prevent spreading aquatic nuisance species:
- Inspect your vessel and trailer, and remove any plants and animals you see before leaving the area.
- Drain your motor, live well, and bilge on land before leaving the area.
- Empty your bait bucket on land. Never release live bait into a body of water or release aquatic animals from one body of water into another.
- Rinse your vessel, propeller, trailer, and equipment.
- Air-dry your vessel and equipment for as long as possible.

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Boating Accident Report Form

**Boating Accidents and Casualties ... What the Law Requires You To Do**

- 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.

- A vessel operator involved in a boating accident must submit a written report of the accident to the Alaska Office of Boating Safety or the Alaska Department of Public Safety if the accident caused:
  - Death of or disappearance of a person or …
  - Injury to a person which requires medical treatment beyond first aid or …
  - Damage to the vessel(s) or other property exceeding $500.

- A boating accident that results in the death, disappearance, or injury of person must be reported within 48 hours. All other boating accidents must be reported within 10 days.

- The boating accident report form is available from the Alaska Office of Boating Safety, the Alaska Department of Public Safety, or the U.S. Coast Guard, or on the Alaska Office of Boating Safety website.

**Enforcement**

Alaska Department of Public Safety officers and all other peace officers enforce the boating laws of Alaska. U.S. Coast Guard officers also patrol and have enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.

- Officers have the authority to stop your vessel in order to check that you are complying with state and federal laws.
- It is illegal to refuse to follow the directive of a person with law enforcement authority. An operator who has received a visual or audible signal from a law enforcement officer must bring his or her vessel to a stop.