Connecticut: The Legal Requirements of Boating

Your Vessel’s Certificate of Number and Decals

- Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Connecticut, you must have a Connecticut Certificate of Number and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on public waters in Connecticut. The only exceptions are:
  - Non-motorized vessels
  - Sailboats less than 19.5 feet in length
  - Vessels registered in other states using Connecticut waters for 60 days or less
  - Vessels documented with the U.S. Coast Guard (must have a decal)
- The Certificate of Number and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to:
  Department of Motor Vehicles, Marine Vessel Section
  60 State Street
  Wethersfield, CT  06109
- The Certificate of Number (registration card) or Connecticut Certificate of Decal must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is 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 and positioned to be visible from at least 100 feet away.
  - 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; for example: CT  3717  ZW spaced as shown on the right.
  - No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
  - A decal must be affixed on each side of the vessel, placed two inches to the right of and in line with the registration number.
- If your vessel requires registration or a Certificate of Decal, 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 until April 30 of the decal year. Owners of vessels which have been registered previously will be sent a renewal notice.
- The owner of a numbered vessel must notify the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles, Marine Vessel Section (DMV) within 15 days if:
  - He or she changes address.
  - He or she loses or destroys the Certificate of Number or a decal. The owner must apply to the DMV for a duplicate and submit a processing fee.
  - The vessel is lost, stolen, or abandoned; also report the loss or theft to local authorities.
  - The ownership of the vessel is transferred to another person.
- Vessels registered in another state may operate on Connecticut waters for 60 days before Connecticut registration and validation decals are required.
- 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’s Documentation Center at 1-800-799-8362 for more information.
- You can call the Connecticut DMV at 1-800-842-8222 for questions about registration.
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 vessels manufactured after October 1, 1972, that do not have a HIN should call the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Boating Division (DEEP) at 860-434-8638.

Who May Operate a Vessel

The following boating certificate and age restrictions apply to operation of vessels on Connecticut public waters.

Boating Certificates

- A boating certificate is required for operation of certain boats and for operation of all PWCs in Connecticut. The type of certificate depends on the vessel being operated.
  - A Safe Boating Certificate allows you to operate boats only.
  - A Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation allows you to operate boats and personal watercraft.
- The following persons, regardless of age, must obtain a Safe Boating Certificate to operate any boat with an engine or any sailboat 19.5 feet and longer in length legally:
  - A resident of Connecticut
  - An owner of real property in Connecticut
  - An owner of a boat required to be registered or numbered in Connecticut
  - Anyone using Connecticut waters for more than 60 days in a year
- To operate a personal watercraft (PWC) regardless of age, you must have a Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation. A Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation will allow you to operate any recreational vessel, including both PWCs and boats.
- You may have only one type of certificate, either a Safe Boating Certificate or a Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation. If you already hold a Safe Boating Certificate, you must return it in order to receive a Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation.
- The certificate must be carried on board the vessel whenever it is operated by someone required to have a certificate.

Age Restrictions

Anyone less than 12 years of age who has received a Safe Boating Certificate or Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation and will be operating a boat powered by a motor of greater than 10 hp (not a PWC) also must have on board a person at least 18 years of age who also has been issued a boating certificate.

How To Obtain a Certificate

You must register for a Connecticut Conservation ID number before taking a boating safety course to obtain a Safe Boating Certificate or a Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation. If you have a Connecticut hunting or fishing license, you are already registered for a Conservation ID number. See the inside cover for more information about obtaining a permanent certificate.

Reciprocity

Unlawful Operation of a Vessel

Connecticut law designates these dangerous operating practices as illegal.

◆ **Reckless Operation** of a vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or similar device is the failure to exercise the care necessary to prevent the endangerment of another person or their property. Examples of reckless operation are:
  - Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic or swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid a 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

◆ **Improper Speed** is operating at excessive speeds or speeds greater than allowed by law. Specifically:
  - It is illegal to operate at speeds that cause danger to others or their property or that do not allow the operator to bring the vessel to a stop safely within a clear distance ahead. Under crowded conditions or periods of poor visibility, you must reduce your speed to account for these conditions.
  - Unless taking off or landing a water-skier, it is illegal to operate at greater than “slow, no wake speed” within 100 feet (or if a PWC, within 200 feet) of:
    - Shore
    - Dock, pier, or float
    - Another vessel at anchor or moored
  - It is illegal to operate at greater than “slow, no wake speed” within 100 feet of buoys marking a restricted swimming area or boat access area.
  - It is illegal to cause damage from the wake of your vessel. Reduce speed when passing near marinas, fishing areas, swimming areas, and vessels at anchor.
  - You must obey all other posted speed regulatory signs. Some waterways may have additional local speed restrictions; refer to Part Four of the Connecticut Boater’s Guide for local restrictions.

◆ **Riding on the Bow, Deck, or Gunwale** is allowing passengers to ride on the bow, gunwale, transom, seat backs, seats on raised decks, or any other place where there may be a chance of falling overboard. Specifically, operators may not allow passengers to:
  - Sit or stand on the bow or gunwale of open-bow boats while underway
  - Sit or stand on the bow or gunwale of a boat with a closed bow while underway, unless the boat is equipped with handrails and all passengers are inward of the handrail
  - Hang any portion of their body over the bow or gunwale, or beyond the handrail, if operating at greater than “slow, no wake speed”

◆ **Hazardous Condition** is operating a vessel in a condition that causes a hazard to the occupants or to others on the waterways. Peace officers may instruct the operator to return to the nearest mooring for any of the following problems.
  - There are insufficient personal flotation devices, fire extinguishers, backfire flame arrestors, ventilation systems, or navigation lights.
  - The vessel is overloaded or overpowered.
  - The vessel is leaking fuel.
  - An excessive amount of water is accumulating in the vessel.

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**REMEMBER ...**
As the owner of a vessel, you may be held liable for the unlawful operation of your vessel by others.

**Stay up-to-date on new boating laws!**
Be sure to stay abreast of new boating laws and requirements.

For state boating law information, contact the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Boating Division.
- Call 860-434-8638
- Visit our website at [www.ct.gov/deep/boating](http://www.ct.gov/deep/boating)

For federal boating laws, visit the U.S. Coast Guard’s boating safety website:
- [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org)

Information in this manual does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in Connecticut, which is found in the Connecticut statutes and federal laws.

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“slow, 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.

**gunwale**
Upper edge of vessel’s side (generally pronounced “gunnel”)

**overboard**
Over the side or out of the vessel

**REMEMBER ...**
Personal watercraft operators must obey all boating laws and also must obey additional laws that apply only to PWCs. See “Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWC)” in this chapter for unlawful operation laws that apply specifically to PWCs.
State Law

Alcohol and Drugs

Connecticut law prohibits anyone from boating under the influence (BUI)—that is, operating a boat or a personal watercraft, or manipulating water skis or similar devices, while under the influence of alcohol or any drug or both. 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.

- Connecticut law states that a person is considered to be “under the influence” if the concentration of alcohol in his or her blood is 0.08% or more based upon a chemical analysis of breath, blood, or urine.
- If an operator is under the age of 21, the legal BAC limit is 0.02%.
- Connecticut law establishes the following penalties for BUI.
  - Penalties for BUI are severe with fines ranging from $500 to $8,000, loss of boating privileges from one year to lifetime, and jail time from six months to three years. There also may be probation and community service.
  - When you operate a vessel, you are implying that you will consent to a blood, breath, or urine test to check for alcohol content.
- Remember—Boat Safe, Boat Sober.

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.

Special care should be taken around high-speed ferries found on Long Island Sound and other waters.
- Obey the navigation rules (see Chapter 3).
- Make course or speed corrections obvious and early. It is recommended by ferry operators that you make no course or speed changes within one mile of the ferry.
- At night and during reduced visibility, display proper navigation lights and show a radar reflector.

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Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

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 PFD 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 PFD 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 PFD whenever on the water. **PFDs can save lives, but only if they are worn!**

**PFD Requirements**

- All vessels must carry one Type I, II, III, or V U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD for each person on board or being towed.

- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and must be readily accessible. The PFDs must be of the proper size for the intended wearer. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

- In addition to the above requirements, vessels 16 feet in length or longer must have one Type IV U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD on board and immediately available.

- Children under 13 years of age must wear a PFD whenever underway unless the child is below deck or in an enclosed cabin. Inflatable PFDs are not legal for persons under 16 years of age.

- Each person on a personal watercraft or anyone being towed on water skis or similar devices must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD. Ski belts and inflatable PFDs are not legal for persons engaged in these activities.

- From October 1 through May 31, all persons on board any manually propelled vessel must wear a Type I, II, III, or V U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD.

**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 water-skiing. 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 (including PWCs) are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher(s) 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
  - Closed living spaces
  - Double-bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation material
  - 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.

- 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.

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

Remember ...

As the owner of a vessel, you may be held liable for the unlawful operation of your vessel by others.
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 and Noise Level Limits

All vessel engines must be equipped with an effective muffling device. Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.

- Vessels built on or after January 1, 1993, must not exceed a noise level of 88 dB when measured at stationary idle speed from a distance of 40 inches or more.
- Vessels built before January 1, 1993, must not exceed a noise level of 90 dB when measured at stationary idle speed from a distance of 40 inches or more.
- No one should operate or let anyone else operate a vessel that exceeds a noise level of 75 dB when measured from a distance of 50 feet or more.
- Some valves that divert exhaust around mufflers may be approved in Connecticut.
- It is illegal to modify your engine exhaust system if the result is more noise.
- A law enforcement officer may request the operator to submit to an on-site noise level test. Failure to submit to this test may result in substantial fines.
State Law

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 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.

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.

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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 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.

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 (in Connecticut, this means Long Island Sound and Fisher's Island Sound)
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.

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. All vessels on state and federally controlled waters must have a sound-producing device to communicate. The sound-producing device may be a whistle, horn, or bell and must be capable of producing a blast of two seconds or more in duration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Powerboat</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Audible for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 16 feet</td>
<td>must have a means of producing a sound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 feet to less than 26 feet</td>
<td>mouth-, hand-, or power-operated whistle or horn</td>
<td>one-half mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 feet to less than 40 feet</td>
<td>hand- or power-operated whistle or horn</td>
<td>one mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 feet to less than 65 feet</td>
<td>power-operated whistle or horn and a bell</td>
<td>one mile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Equipment and Regulations
◆ **Diver-Down Flags:** Connecticut and federal laws require that scuba divers or snorkelers display a diver-down flag to mark the diving area. You may not operate a vessel or manipulate water skis or similar devices within 100 feet of a displayed diver-down flag. Divers must stay within 50 feet of their flag. Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.
- A rectangular red flag, at least 13 inches high x 15 inches wide, with a white diagonal stripe is displayed if on state waters.
- A blue and white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag), at least 3.3 feet (one meter) high and visible from all directions, must be displayed on vessels on federally controlled waters. This flag indicates that the vessel is involved in a diving activity.
◆ **VHF Radio:** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires some vessels equipped with VHF radios to have a Ship Station License.
- As of 1996, most recreational vessels no longer need an FCC license if operating domestically. “Domestically” means not traveling to foreign ports or transmitting to foreign stations, including Canada.
- Recreational vessels still required to carry an FCC Ship Station License are powerboats over 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length and any vessel on an international voyage.
◆ **Local Regulations:** Local waterways may have specific equipment and operational requirements in addition to those covered in this chapter. Refer to Part Four of the **Connecticut Boater’s Guide** for local requirements.
◆ **Marine Event Permits and Markers:** You must obtain authorization from the DEEP to hold a marine parade, regatta, race, tournament, or exhibition on Connecticut waters. Placing any marker, other than a diver-down flag, also requires a permit. If a marine event is being held on federally controlled waters, you must apply for a permit from the U.S. Coast Guard at least 30 days prior to the event.
◆ **Trailers:** The Department of Motor Vehicles has regulations for boat trailers. Trailers with a gross weight greater than 3,000 pounds must have brakes on each axle. The brakes must be capable of being controlled or operated from the driver’s seat of the towing vehicle.
Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs)

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

◆ All persons on board a PWC must wear a Type I, II, III, or V U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD. Inflatable PFDs are not allowed. Impact-rated PFDs are recommended.
◆ You may operate a PWC during daylight hours only (between sunrise and sunset).
◆ PWCs do not have navigation lights, and you are not allowed to install or use navigation lights.
◆ An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ignition safety switch must attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD.
◆ No passenger may ride in front of the operator on a personal watercraft.
◆ No passenger may ride on a personal watercraft unless he or she is able to hold securely onto the person in front of them or to the handholds, and is able to keep both feet on the deck of the personal watercraft in order to maintain balance while the personal watercraft is in operation.
◆ PWCs should not be operated in a manner that requires the operator to swerve at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision.
◆ PWCs are not allowed to jump the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of that vessel in such a way that the PWC’s hull leaves the water completely.
◆ In addition to the speed restrictions given earlier in this chapter, PWCs must be operated at no more than “slow, no wake speed” when within 200 feet of a shore, a dock, a pier, a float, or a moored or anchored vessel except when enabling a person engaged in water-skiing to take off or land.
◆ It is illegal to chase, harass, or disturb wildlife with your PWC.

Towing a Person With a Vessel Legally

In addition to adhering to laws as they apply to all vessels, operators towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device must obey these laws.

◆ All persons being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD. Ski belts and inflatable PFDs are not approved. Impact-rated PFDs are recommended.
◆ Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device must have a responsible person at least 12 years of age, in addition to the vessel operator, observing the towed person(s) at all times.
◆ It is illegal to tow a person on water skis or other devices from one-half hour after sunset until sunrise.
◆ The towing line (rope) must not exceed 100 feet when measured from the tow post to the skier’s handle.
◆ You may not tow a person on an inner tube that is not equipped with handholds.
◆ A reasonable distance from other vessels, people, and property must be maintained so as not to endanger life or property. It is illegal to cause the person being towed to collide with any object or person.
◆ Operators towing a person behind a PWC must obey these laws also.
  • The PWC must be rated for three people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.
  • The observer must sit facing the skier, and the PWC must be equipped with handholds at or near the rear of the seat for use by the observer.
  • The PWC must meet these minimum size requirements:
    - Overall length of at least 119 inches
    - Overall width of at least 46 inches
    - Horizontal seat length of at least 39 inches

Check the Connecticut Boater’s Guide for a specific waterway’s local regulations on PWCs and water-skiing before you go boating.
Waste, Oil, and Trash Disposal in Connecticut and Federal Waters

◆ It is illegal to discharge waste, oil, or trash into any federally controlled or Connecticut state waters and 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 Graywater

All vessels with an installed toilet are required to have a U.S. Coast Guard–certified Marine Sanitation Device (MSD) attached to the toilet. A macerator alone is not a certified MSD.

◆ There are three types of MSDs.
  • Type I: A flow-through device for vessels less than 65 feet in length that filters and treats sewage for overboard discharge with no visible solids.
  • Type II: A treat-and-release system for vessels greater than 65 feet in length that treats sewage to a higher level than the Type I. This type requires more electricity to run.
  • Type III: The simplest and most common MSD, consisting of a tank to hold untreated sewage for shore-based disposal or discharge beyond the U.S. territorial seas demarcation line. Most Type IIIs are holding tanks; but there are also vacuum collection systems, incineration systems, recirculation systems, and composting systems.

◆ It is illegal to discharge untreated sewage from your vessel into any of Connecticut’s waters. This prohibition includes waste from direct discharge toilets, holding tanks, portable toilet holding tanks, and even buckets. A Type III MSD can have a through-hull “Y” valve that directs waste overboard. The “Y” valve must be adequately secured while on all U.S. waters to prevent discharge of raw sewage. Use of a padlock or non-reusable seal or removal of the valve handle is considered adequate securing of the valve.

◆ Like holding tanks, portable toilets also retain untreated waste and should be emptied only at a dump station or pump-out station facility. They are not considered MSDs.

◆ State and federal law prohibits the discharge of untreated sewage from vessels into the waters of the state. Boaters may be fined up to $2,000 for discharging untreated waste in Connecticut waters and up to $25,000 for discharge of treated or untreated waste in a “No Discharge Area” (see sidebar on next page).

◆ Graywater is defined as drainage from a dishwasher, shower, laundry, bath, or washbasin drain and generally may be discharged overboard in Connecticut. Some states prohibit graywater discharge.

◆ 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 U.S. Coast Guard–certified Type I and Type II MSDs have a certification label affixed by the manufacturer. Holding tanks are not required to have a certification label.
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 federally controlled or state 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.
◆ The penalty for littering from a vessel includes a fine and suspension of the vessel’s certificate of number.
◆ 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.

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 National Response Center 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 Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection at 860-424-3338 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

No Discharge Areas

“No Discharge Area” (NDA) designates waterways where discharge of any waste, treated or untreated, is illegal and where only Type III MSDs are legal.

While in an NDA, locking the door to the toilet with a padlock or door handle key lock is an acceptable method of securing the Type I or II MSD. Type III MSDs are recommended for long-term operation in an NDA and must be secured as described on the previous page.

Currently, the EPA has approved the following NDAs in local coastal waters.

◆ Connecticut: All waters.
◆ New York: Huntington, Lloyd, Mamaroneck, and Port Jefferson Harbors; Hudson River; and Peconic Bay.
◆ Rhode Island: All waters.

Visit the EPA website at: www.epa.gov/region1/eco/nodiscrg/index.html for a list of NDAs in New England waters.
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, their name, address, and identifying number of their vessel to the other vessel’s operator and/or owner of damaged property.

◆ Vessel operators involved in an accident must report the accident to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Boating Division (DEEP).

◆ The operator must notify the nearest law enforcement agency immediately and report the accident in writing to the DEEP within 48 hours if:
  - A person dies or disappears or …
  - An injury occurs causing any person to require medical attention beyond simple first aid.

◆ The operator must submit an accident report in writing to the DEEP within five days if damage to the vessels and other property exceeds $500.

◆ Written reports must be made on accident report forms supplied by the DEEP.

◆ Passengers are responsible for reporting the accident if the operator is physically incapable of doing so.

Enforcement

Several different law enforcement agencies enforce Connecticut’s state statutes and regulations, and federal navigational laws. All officers of these agencies have the authority to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with state and federal laws.

◆ Department of Energy and Environmental Protection law enforcement officers, municipal police officers, state conservation officers, town marine officers, lake patrolmen, harbormasters, U.S. Coast Guard officers, and any other authorized law enforcement officers have the right to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with state and federal laws.

◆ The U.S. Coast Guard patrols federally controlled waters and enforces federal laws.

◆ You must not interfere with a law enforcement or fire rescue vessel that is displaying flashing lights or sounding a siren. Specifically:
  - If the vessel is stopped, you may not operate within a 200-foot radius of it unless you are operating at “slow, no wake speed.”
  - If the vessel is approaching, you must take the following actions as soon as you can do so safely:
    - Slow to “slow, no wake speed.”
    - Alter your course to allow the law enforcement or fire rescue vessel to pass you easily and safely.
    - Remain at “slow, no wake speed” until you are well clear of the law enforcement or fire rescue vessel unless an officer directs you differently.