Indiana: The Legal Requirements of Boating

Your Vessel’s Registration

- Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Indiana, you must have an Indiana certificate of registration to operate a vessel legally on public waters in Indiana. The only exceptions are:
  - Non-motorized vessels (vessels using an electric trolling motor require registration).
  - Vessels that are registered in another state and …
    - Are operated on Indiana waters for 60 consecutive days or less or …
    - Have paid the current year’s Indiana boat excise tax.
- Apply to any Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) License Branch to obtain a certificate of registration.
- You must keep the certificate on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.
- If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate it unless it is registered and properly numbered.
- If you lose or destroy your certificate of registration, you must apply to the BMV for a duplicate and pay a processing fee.
- Registration information must be kept current.
  - If you change your address, you must notify a BMV License Branch within 30 days of the change.
  - If you transfer ownership of your vessel or if it is destroyed, you should report it to your local BMV License Branch within 15 days.
- 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. USCG–documented vessels also must be registered but are exempt from displaying the “IN” registration number.

Display of Number and Decals

- The registration number and excise tax decals must be displayed as follows.
  - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow.
  - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  - Number’s color must contrast sharply with its background.
  - Number must be in at least three-inch-high BLOCK letters.
  - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a two-inch space.
  - Number must be a single color and clearly legible from a distance of 100 feet.
  - Excise tax decals must be affixed on both sides of the bow, to the right of and within three inches of the number.
- Certain sailboats may qualify for an alternate display location for these decals.

Titling Your Vessel

- A vessel that must be registered also must have a certificate of title unless the vessel was:
  - Acquired by the owner before January 1, 1986 or …
  - Less than $3,000 in value when new or …
  - Home-built for personal use and not for resale.
- Although there are exemptions from titling, you still may want to title your vessel. A title verifies ownership in case the vessel is stolen.
State Law

Boat Excise Tax

Indiana law requires owners of vessels that are operated, used, docked, or stored in Indiana to pay the boat excise tax.

- Vessels subject to excise tax include:
  - Motorboats registered in Indiana
  - Sailboats
- The amount of boat excise tax paid:
  - Is based on the value of the vessel when new and is reduced 10% each year up to a 50% reduction of the original amount.
  - Is a set fee for vessels that are stored in Indiana for 60 consecutive days or more in a boating year but are not used or docked in Indiana waters.
- When you receive your certificate of registration, you also receive two excise tax decals.
- Decals include the date of expiration. Only the current decals may be displayed.
- The boat excise tax decals are valid for one year. Owners of registered vessels will be sent a renewal notice to their residence automatically.
- If you lose or destroy your decals, you must apply to the BMV for duplicates and submit a processing fee.

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.
- You may obtain a HIN for a home-built boat or replace a missing HIN by applying to your local BMV License Branch.

Who May Operate a Vessel

- All motorboat or PWC operators must have a valid vehicle driver’s license to operate on all Indiana public waters.
- Motorboat operators who are 15 years of age may operate a motorboat or PWC until they become a licensed driver only if they complete a boater education course approved by the Department of Natural Resources and have on board an ID card issued by the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). A person who has never been licensed by the BMV must complete an approved boater education course successfully and have on board an ID issued by the Indiana BMV to operate a motorboat legally.
- No one under 15 years of age may legally operate a motorboat greater than 10 horsepower or a PWC.
- If you operate your motorboat recklessly while intoxicated or break the PWC laws, you could have points assessed against your vehicle driver’s license.
- On Indiana boundary waters, Indiana residents are required to have a driver’s license. Non-residents are not required to have a license unless operating in an embayment, river, or stream in Indiana.

Copyright © 2009 by Boat Ed. All rights reserved. Boat Ed is not responsible or liable for any claims, liabilities, damages, or other adverse effects or consequences to any person or property caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly from the application or use of the information contained in this publication. Boat Ed, 2906 Ladybird Lane, Dallas, TX, 75220
Reckless Operation of a Vessel

Indiana law prohibits reckless operation of a vessel or the reckless manipulation of water-skis, an aquaplane, or any similar device. Reckless operation or manipulation is operating a vessel carelessly in willful disregard of the rights, safety, or property of others.

◆ Examples of illegal and reckless operation are:
  • Operating a vessel at speeds that endanger human life, endanger human physical safety or property, or prevent stopping within an assured clear distance ahead. Be aware of and obey all regulatory markers, including those marked as “idle speed” or “slow, no wake speed.”
  • Operating a vessel at speeds of more than 10 miles per hour between sunset and sunrise.
  • Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic or swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision.
  • Jumping the wake of another vessel such that you endanger human life, human physical safety, or property.
  • Loading the vessel beyond the recommended capacity shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer.
  • Causing a hazardous wake or wash from your vessel.
  • Boating in restricted areas without regard for other boaters or persons, posted speeds and wake restrictions, diver-down flags, etc.
  • Operating in a circular course around another vessel engaged in fishing or around a person swimming.
  • Operating within 150 feet of a diver-down flag unless assisting the diver.
  • Allowing passengers to ride on the gunwale or, if the vessel is less than 21 feet in length, on the bow where they may fall overboard.
◆ Lake and channel restrictions vary depending on the size of the waterbody or waterway. You may be restricted to speeds up to 10 miles per hour anywhere from 50 to 200 feet from the shoreline, depending on the size of lake or width of the channel.

Remember …

As an owner of a vessel, you are legally responsible if you allow others to operate your vessel in a reckless manner.

“idle speed” or “slow, no wake” speed
A speed at which the vessel does not produce a wake, not to exceed 5 miles per hour

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

overboard
Over the side or out of the vessel

Voluntary Safety Check

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

Indiana law prohibits anyone from boating while intoxicated—that is, operating a motorboat or a personal watercraft while intoxicated due to alcohol or any combination of alcohol, controlled substance, or drugs. Alcohol and drugs cause impaired balance, blurred vision, poor coordination, impaired judgment, and slower reaction time. Alcohol is a major contributor to boating accidents and fatalities. Read more about the effects and risks of consuming alcohol in Chapter 5.

- It is unlawful for owners of motorboats or PWCs to operate or allow anyone else to operate their motorboat or PWC while that person is intoxicated.
- Indiana law defines intoxication as having a blood alcohol level of 0.08% or greater, or being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs such that a person’s thoughts and actions are impaired and he or she has a loss of normal control of faculties to such an extent as to cause danger to others.
- You also may be arrested if your blood alcohol level is less than 0.08% but over 0.05%.

Indiana law establishes the following penalties.

- If you are arrested and convicted of boating while intoxicated, you will face the penalties of a Class C misdemeanor. In addition, if this is your first offense or the first in 10 years, you may lose all your driving privileges (motorboat and motor vehicle) for at least 90 days and up to two years.
- For a second conviction within five years, you may be fined and jailed and lose the privilege to operate a vehicle, motorboat, or PWC for one to two years. More severe penalties exist for additional convictions.
- A person boating while intoxicated who causes the death or serious injury of another person will, upon conviction, be guilty of a felony.

By operating a motorboat or PWC on Indiana waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if requested by a law enforcement official. If you refuse to be tested, you will be subject to arrest and punishment consistent with the penalties described above and lose your privilege to operate a motorboat or PWC for at least one year.

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 depends on the length of your vessel, the number of people on board and/or being towed, and where you are boating. The requirements differ if you are on “Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction” such as Lake Michigan, the Ohio River, and the portion of the Wabash River that forms a border between Indiana and Illinois.

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 wearable (Type I, II, III, or V) USCG–approved PFD for each person on board or being towed.

- In addition to the above requirement, vessels 16 feet in length or longer (except a canoe or kayak) must have one Type IV USCG–approved PFD on board and readily accessible.

- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and 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.

- Each person on board a personal watercraft must wear a PFD.

- All persons being towed behind a PWC on water skis or any other device must wear a USCG–approved PFD. Ski belts are not USCG–approved.

- In addition to the requirements above, on Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction:
  - A child under 13 years of age must wear a PFD except when the child is below deck in an enclosed cabin or the vessel is docked or at anchor.
  - Anyone towed on water skis, a surfboard, a kite, or similar device must wear a Type I, II, or III PFD (Type V PFDs are not approved for these activities).

### 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 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

Although it’s always wise to carry a fire extinguisher, the requirements discussed below apply only to those operating on “Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction.”

◆ 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 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
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks
◆ You are not required to carry a fire extinguisher on a motorboat with an outboard motor.
◆ 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 make sure that:
  - 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

All vessel engines have a factory-installed muffler or exhaust water manifold for noise reduction or another effective muffling system. It is illegal to operate a motorboat equipped with a muffler cutout, bypass, or similar 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 “Night Navigation” 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Vessel:</th>
<th>That Is:</th>
<th>Must Display These Lights When Underway:</th>
<th>As Shown In:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Motorboat</td>
<td>Powered by engine less than 15 hp</td>
<td>• An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight visible from a distance of at least two miles</td>
<td>Figure 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sailboat under power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motorboat</td>
<td>Powered by engine 15 hp or greater</td>
<td>• Red and green bowlights visible from a distance of at least one mile</td>
<td>Figure 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sailboat under power</td>
<td></td>
<td>• An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight visible from a distance of at least two miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sailboat under sail</td>
<td>More than 22 feet in length</td>
<td>• Red and green bowlights visible from a distance of at least one mile</td>
<td>Figure 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Canoe or kayak</td>
<td></td>
<td>• A sternlight visible from a distance of at least two miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vessel with an electric motor</td>
<td>22 feet in length or less</td>
<td>• One lantern or flashlight shining a white light visible from a distance of at least two miles; the operator must display the light in sufficient time to avoid a collision with another vessel</td>
<td>Figure 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An alternative to the sidelights and sternlight is a combination red, green, and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.

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.

Copyright © 2009 by Boat Ed. All rights reserved. Boat Ed is not responsible or liable for any claims, liabilities, damages, or other adverse effects or consequences to any person or property caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly from the application or use of the information contained in this publication. Boat Ed, 2906 Ladybird Lane, Dallas, TX, 75220
Visual Distress Signals Required by Federal Law

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 Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction, including Lake Michigan, 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
  Day and Night Signal
- Red Flare
  Day and 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 hand-held 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.

Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction

Lake Michigan (Indiana portion), the Ohio River, and the portion of the Wabash River that forms a border between Indiana and Illinois

If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, a minimum of three must be carried in the vessel.

The following combinations of signals are examples of VDSs that could be carried on board to satisfy U.S. Coast Guard requirements:
- Three hand-held red flares (day and night)
- One hand-held red flare and two red meteors (day and night)
- One hand-held orange smoke signal (day), two floating orange smoke signals (day), and one electric light (night only)

It is prohibited to display visual distress signals on the water unless assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board a vessel.
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.

The following requirements apply to vessels operating on “Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction.”
- **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, a bell that are audible for at least one mile.

Other Equipment and Regulations
- **Diver-Down Flag**: Indiana law requires that scuba divers or snorkelers display a diver-down flag to mark the diving area. The diver must stay within 100 feet of the flag. Vessels must stay at least 150 feet away from the flag unless directly involved in supporting the diver. Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.
  - A rectangular red flag, at least 12 x 12 inches in size, with a white diagonal stripe is used to indicate the presence of a submerged diver in the area. Indiana law requires that divers display this flag prominently and stay within 100 feet of the flag.
  - 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 federal waters whenever these vessels are restricted in their ability to maneuver by the diving operation. This flag indicates that the vessel is involved in a diving activity.
- **VHF Radio**: Some vessels equipped with VHF radios are required to have a Ship Station License by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
  - 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 that are still required to carry an FCC Ship Station License are powerboats more than 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length and any vessel on an international voyage.
- **Marine Events**: Major organized boating activities to be conducted on public waters require a permit. If you plan to host an event that involves 15 or more watercraft as participants or an event that will draw 50 or more boats as spectators, you will need this permit. Also, if you conduct an event on public waters that will disrupt normal boat traffic, you will need to apply.

Scuba divers and snorkelers should not place a flag in an area already occupied by other boaters or where their diving operation will impede the normal flow of waterway traffic. Divers also should follow all of the water safety rules themselves.

For FCC information ...
- Call the FCC for a recorded message at: 1-800-322-1117
- On the Internet, go to the FCC website: http://wireless.fcc.gov/marine

Copyright © 2009 by Boat Ed. All rights reserved. Boat Ed is not responsible or liable for any claims, liabilities, damages, or other adverse effects or consequences to any person or property caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly from the application or use of the information contained in this publication. Boat Ed, 2906 Ladybird Lane, Dallas, TX, 75220
Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs)

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

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved wearable personal flotation device (life jacket). Recommended are PFDs designed to withstand the impact of hitting the water at high speed.
- PWCs must either be equipped with an ignition safety switch or have a self-circling feature in case the operator falls off. An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ignition safety switch must always attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD.
- PWCs may be operated during daylight hours only unless equipped with the appropriate lighting.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- You must operate a PWC in a reasonable and prudent manner. It is illegal to endanger human life, safety, or property. You may not:
  - Weave through congested traffic
  - Follow a vessel that is towing other individuals
  - Jump the wake of another vessel
  - Cut between a vessel and an individual being towed
  - Cross paths with another vessel when vision is obstructed
  - Steer toward an object or person in the water and turn sharply at close range
  - Operate while facing backwards

Towing a Person with a Vessel Legally

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis, aquaplane, or a similar device must obey these laws.

- All vessels towing a person(s) on water skis, an aquaplane, or a similar device must have a person on board, in addition to the vessel operator, observing the towed person(s) at all times.
- If towing a person behind a personal watercraft, the PWC must be at least nine (9) feet in length and be rated for three people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.
- 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 are not U.S. Coast Guard–approved.
- Persons may be towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device during daylight hours only.

Water-Skiing/Tubing on the Ohio River

Several laws for water-skiing and tubing on the Ohio River differ from those of other Indiana waterways.

- The operator of the towing vessel may have either an observer on board or use a rearview mirror.
  - If an observer is used, he or she must be at least 12 years of age.
  - If a rearview mirror is used, the mirror must have at least a 160-degree-wide angle of vision and be mounted so that the operator can see the person being towed.
  - A mirror is not allowed if towing a kite. There must be an observer at least 12 years of age on board.
- The hours are extended to one (1) hour before sunrise to one (1) hour after sunset.
- Anyone being towed on water skis, a surf board, a kite, or similar device must wear a Type I, II, or III PFD (Type V PFDs are not approved).

Remember …

As an owner of a PWC, you are legally responsible if you allow anyone else to operate your PWC in violation of Indiana law.
Waste, Oil, and Trash Disposal in Indiana and Federal Waters

- It is illegal to discharge waste, oil, or trash into any Indiana 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

It is illegal to discharge untreated waste into any state or federally controlled waters.

- If you have a recreational vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) on board that is approved by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. You may get more information on treatment systems by contacting them at 1-800-451-6027.
- 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. A Type I or II MSD can be operated lawfully on Lake Michigan only if maintained according to U.S. Coast Guard regulations.
  - 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.
**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 Indiana Department of Environmental Management 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](image)

  **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.

**Oil Discharge Placard**

A 5 x 8-inch sign that states the law pertaining to oil discharge

**What to Do in Case of Discharge**

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances into the water, notify the U.S. Coast Guard by calling:
- **1-800-424-8802**

Also notify the Indiana Department of Environmental Management by calling:
- **1-888-233-7745**

Turn in a polluter or poacher at:
- **1-800-TIP-IDNR**

**Stop the Spread of Nuisance Species!**

Introducing non-native species into Indiana 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.
The boating laws of Indiana are enforced by the conservation officers of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Coast Guard officers, and any other authorized peace officer or law enforcement officer.

- Officers have the authority to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with state and federal laws.
- The U.S. Coast Guard also has enforcement authority on “Waters of Concurrent Jurisdiction.”