Your Vessel’s Certificate of Number and Decals

Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Louisiana, you must have a Certificate of Number (registration) and validation decals to operate a motorboat or sailboat legally on public waters. A motorboat is defined as any vessel equipped with or propelled by any type of machinery whether or not such machinery is the principal source of propulsion. The only exceptions are:

- A sailboat 12 feet or less in length
- A sailboard
- Motorboats/Sailboats documented with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), unless it is a recreational use vessel
- Motorboats/Sailboats with valid registration in another state or country, on the waters of Louisiana for 90 or fewer consecutive days

The Certificate of Number and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to:

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Boat Registration
P.O. Box 14796
Baton Rouge, LA  70898
or by applying online at www.wlf.louisiana.gov.

The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized registration card) 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.
- Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
- Number must be in at least three-inch-high, plain BLOCK letters.
- Number’s color must contrast with its background.
- Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen equal in length to a letter: LA 3717 ZW or LA-3717-ZW.
- No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
- Decals must be affixed on both sides of the vessel within six inches of the registration number.

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 from the date of issue. The registration must be renewed within 60 days of the expiration date.
- If you change your address, you must write the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) within 15 days of the change.
- If your numbered vessel is sold, lost, destroyed, or abandoned, you must report it to the LDWF within 15 days. If your numbered vessel is stolen, you must report it to the LDWF within 5 days.
- If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or decal, you must apply to the LDWF for a duplicate and submit a processing fee within 15 days of the loss.
- Vessels registered in another state or country may operate on Louisiana waters for 90 consecutive days before Louisiana registration and numbering is 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.
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, or of homemade vessels that do not have a HIN must request an inspection by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Upon favorable inspection, an agent of the LDWF will stamp an identification number on the hull.

It is illegal to remove or alter the HIN.

Who May Operate a Vessel

Persons born after January 1, 1984, may not operate a motorboat or PWC powered by a motor in excess of 10 horsepower unless he or she has successfully completed a boating safety course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).

- These persons must be in possession of evidence of completion of the approved course whenever operating such a vessel.
- Note: Previously, only persons born after January 1, 1988, were required to take a boating safety course. Due to this change in the law, persons born between January 1, 1984, and January 1, 1988, have until July 1, 2010, to complete a course successfully.

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 years to operate a personal watercraft (PWC).

It is also unlawful for a person who owns or has charge of a personal watercraft to knowingly permit a person under the age of 16 years to operate the PWC. It is illegal for a rental company to rent a personal watercraft to anyone under 16 years of age.

Questions?

Call the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ Boat Registration Office at 225-765-2898. Also, you can call or visit one of the LDWF offices listed at the back of this manual, or visit LDWF’s website at www.wlf.louisiana.gov on the Internet.
Unlawful Operation of a Vessel

Louisiana law states that these dangerous operating practices are illegal.

- **Reckless Operation** is operating any vessel in a criminally negligent or reckless manner. Examples of illegal, reckless operation are:
  - Boating in a restricted area such as a marked swimming area
  - Weaving through congested waterway traffic
  - Swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision
  - Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel

- **Careless Operation** is failing to operate a vessel in a careful and prudent manner, and thereby endangering the life, limb, or property of any person. Examples of illegal, careless operation are:
  - Causing danger or damage from the wake of your vessel
  - Operating a vessel at speeds that may cause danger, injury, or damage; be aware of and obey all regulatory markers

- **“No Wake” Zones**: “No wake” zones have been established on all Louisiana waterways within 300 feet of:
  - A boat ramp that is open to the general public.
  - A dock adjacent to a boat ramp that is open to the general public. Vessels must be operated at **“bare steerage speed”** and produce no wake.

- **Riding on Bow or Gunwales** is allowing passengers to ride where there may be a chance of falling **overboard** while underway on a powerboat 26 feet or less in length. Specifically, this means allowing passengers to ride on the covered bow or **gunwales**, unless the powerboat has adequate guards or a railing to prevent falls **overboard**.

- **Overloading** is loading the vessel beyond its safe carrying capacity, taking into consideration the weather and other operating conditions.

- **Overpowering** is equipping the vessel with a motor that is beyond its safe power capacity, taking into consideration the type and construction of the vessel and other operating conditions.

- **Unsafe Condition** is operating a vessel in a condition that causes a hazard to the occupants or others on the waterways. Enforcement officers may instruct the operator to immediately take corrective action or return to port if:
  - There are insufficient personal flotation devices, fire extinguishers, backfire flame arrestors, ventilation, or navigation lights.
  - The vessel is overloaded or overpowered.
  - The vessel is leaking fuel.

Remember …

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

---

**“bare steerage speed”**

The slowest speed the vessel can travel while allowing operator to maintain directional control of the vessel to produce minimum water turbulence

**overboard**

Over the side or out of the vessel

**gunwale**

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

---

Copyright © 2013 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, 14086 Proton Road, Dallas, TX, 75244
Alcohol and 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.

- Louisiana law prohibits anyone from operating a vessel of any kind while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. A person is considered to be intoxicated if:
  - Has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or greater and is 21 years of age or older
  - Has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.02% or greater and is under 21 years of age.

- The law also prohibits the owner or person in charge of a vessel from knowingly allowing a person who is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs to operate the vessel.

- Penalties for operating a vessel of any kind while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs include a fine of up to $1,000, imprisonment up to six months, or both without suspension of sentence.

- By operating a vessel on Louisiana waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if arrested by a law enforcement officer.

- Any arrest for DUI while boating will affect your automobile driving privileges.

- Persons operating a vehicle or vessel who commit a DUI offense and have their automobile driver’s license suspended or revoked also will have their boating privileges suspended or revoked.

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 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.

Areas of Impairment Due to Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

Because you can drink faster than your system can burn off the alcohol, there is an increasing level of alcohol in your blood. This level is referred to as Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC).

Avoid all security zones and restricted areas. Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary.
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 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 boats must have at least one U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III personal flotation device that is wearable, and of the proper size for each person on board or being towed. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

- Each person on board must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD while underway on a motorboat less than 16 feet long using an outboard motor that is steered by a hand tiller or steering arm attached to the motor. This requirement does not apply to electronic trolling motors.

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

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

- Louisiana law requires that all children 16 years of age and younger wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD while underway on a vessel less than 26 feet long. The PFD must be fastened and of the proper size for the child.

- Each person riding on a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device.

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 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 fire extinguisher(s) on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Inboard engine
  - Closed compartments where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Double-bottoms which are not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation material
  - Closed living spaces
  - Closed storage compartments in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks (any tank where the removal of the tank is hampered by the installation of tie-down straps or clamps)

- 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.

---

**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 and check for any damage.

Ventilation Systems

The importance of ventilation is crucial. The purpose of ventilation systems 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 after fueling and before starting your 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 must be equipped with an efficient muffler, underwater exhaust, or other 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.

- 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.

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.

1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23 Feet
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.

If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, they must be dated. Expired VDSs may be carried on board, but a minimum of three unexpired VDSs 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 handheld red flares (day and night)
- One handheld red flare and two red meteors (day and night)
- One handheld orange smoke signal (day), two floating orange smoke signals (day), and one electric light (night only)
- It is prohibited to display visual distress signals while on the water unless assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board a vessel.

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 (includes territorial waters, harbors, and bays and rivers as far as they are affected by the tides)
- 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

Copyright © 2013 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, 14086 Proton Road, Dallas, TX, 75244
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 Louisiana state waters.

- Vessels 16 feet or longer, but less than 26 feet in length, are required to carry a whistle or some other mechanical means (horn) to make a sound.
- Vessels that are 26 feet or more in length are required to carry a whistle or some other mechanical means (horn) to make a sound, and an efficient bell.

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 Flag**: Scuba divers or snorkelers must display a diver-down flag that marks their diving area. Vessels should remain at least 100 feet away from the flag. Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.
  - A rectangular red flag with a white diagonal stripe if on Louisiana 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.

- **Emergency Ignition Safety Switch**: An emergency ignition safety switch that is fully functional, in operable condition, and attached with a lanyard to the operator’s person, clothing, or PFD is required on any motorboat less than 26 feet long that:
  - Is powered by an outboard motor in excess of 10 horsepower and …
  - Is steered by a hand tiller or steering arm attached to the motor and …
  - Has or is designed to have a safety switch.

- **Marine Events**: In order to hold a race, regatta, or tournament, you must notify the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries prior to the event. If the 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.

- **Local Regulations**: Some waterways in Louisiana have special regulations such as horsepower restrictions or speed limits. Be sure to check for special restrictions on a waterway before you go boating.

- **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 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.

Copyright © 2013 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, 14086 Proton Road, Dallas, TX, 75244
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 a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (life jacket).
- 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.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC between sunset and sunrise.
- PWCs must be operated in a careful and responsible manner. For example, it is illegal for PWC operators to:
  - Weave the PWC through congested waterway traffic.
  - Jump the wake of another vessel when visibility is obstructed.
  - Operate in a manner that requires swerving at the last possible moment to avoid collision.
- PWC operators have age and boater education requirements.
- No one under the age of 16 years may operate a PWC.
- It is illegal to chase, harass, or disturb wildlife with your PWC.
- PWC operators should avoid operating around fishermen, anchored vessels, or swimmers.

Towing a Person With a Vessel Legally

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

- Each person being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
  - Inflatable PFDs are not approved for use by persons being towed.
  - This law does not apply to persons participating in a marine permitted barefoot or trick water-skiing event. An approved PFD must be on board the vessel for each of these skiers.
- A vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or any other device must have at least two competent persons on board—one to operate the vessel and a second person to observe the towed person(s).
  - This law does not apply to vessels that are operated by a person at least 16 years old and that are equipped with a wide-angle, convex rearview mirror, at least 7 x 14 inches in size, which is positioned to allow the operator to observe the person(s) being towed.
  - This law does not apply to vessels engaged in authorized water-skiing tournaments or competitions.
- It is illegal to tow a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or similar device between the hours of one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.
- The operator of the towing vessel and the skier must operate in a safe manner. A reasonable distance from other vessels, people, and property must be maintained so as not to endanger the life or property of others.

Remember ...

As the owner or person in charge of a PWC, it is illegal for you to allow anyone else to operate the PWC in a way that violates the laws of Louisiana.

Stay up-to-date on new boating laws!

Be sure to stay abreast of new boating laws and requirements.

For state boating law information, call the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at:
- 225-765-2984
or visit our website at:
- www.wlf.louisiana.gov

For federal boating laws, visit the U.S. Coast Guard’s Boating safety website at:
- www.uscgboating.org

Information in this manual does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in Louisiana, which is found in the Louisiana Revised Statutes and federal laws.
The Clean Vessel Act (CVA) was passed in 1992 with the goal of reducing the overboard discharge of sewage from recreational boats—by educating boaters and by providing convenient access to sewage disposal facilities. The program receives funding from the Wallop-Breaux Sportfish Restoration Fund.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) administers the CVA Grant Program in Louisiana, which began in 1994 with the development of a statewide plan assessing the need for sewage disposal facilities.

Grants are available to both private businesses and state/local government agencies. For information, please contact Lee Buckner, Louisiana CVA Coordinator, at 225-763-5508 or mbuckner@wlf.la.gov.

**Waste, Oil, and Trash Disposal in Louisiana and Federal Waters**

- It is illegal to discharge waste, oil, or trash into any federally controlled or Louisiana state 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 Clean Water 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**

- State and federal law prohibits vessels from discharging any untreated sewage into the waters of Louisiana.

- Recreational boats are not required to be equipped with a toilet. However, the Clean Water Act requires that if a toilet is installed, it must be equipped with an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) that is U.S. Coast Guard–certified. Installed toilets that are not equipped with an MSD, and that discharge raw sewage directly over the side, are illegal.

- Portable toilets or “porta-potties” are not considered installed toilets and are not subject to the MSD regulations. Portable toilets are subject to disposal regulations which prohibit the disposal of raw sewage within territorial waters (three-mile limit), the Great Lakes, or navigable rivers.

- There are three types of MSDs.
  - **Type I**: This device is certified to treat the sewage with chemicals before the sewage is discharged into the water. The treated discharge must meet health standards for bacteria content and must not show any visible floating solids.
  - **Type II**: This MSD is also a treatment device, but it is certified to provide a higher level of sewage treatment. Because it is larger than a Type I, it is usually installed in larger recreational boats.
  - **Type III**: This MSD does not allow the discharge of sewage. Type III devices include recirculating and incinerating MSDs and holding tanks. With a holding tank, sewage is stored in the tank until it can be pumped out to a reception facility on shore or at sea beyond the territorial waters of the United States.

- Vessels 65 feet in length and under may use a Type I, II, or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must install a Type II or III MSD.

- Holding tanks (Type III MSDs) will not be labeled as U.S. Coast Guard–certified; however, they will be considered certified if they are used to store only sewage and flushed water and if they operate at ambient (outside) air temperature and pressure.

**No Discharge Zones**

“No Discharge Zones” are areas of water that require greater environmental protection and where even the discharge of treated sewage could be harmful.

- Whenever a vessel equipped with a Type I or Type II MSD (these types discharge treated sewage) is operating on water that has been declared a “No Discharge Zone,” the MSD may not be used and must be secured to prevent discharge. Closing and padlocking the “Y” valve by using a non-releasable wire-tie or removing the “Y” valve handle is sufficient. Locking the door to the toilet with a padlock or a door handle key lock is another acceptable method of securing the MSD while in a “No Discharge Zone.”
Generally, all freshwater lakes (and similar freshwater impoundments or reservoirs that have no navigable connections with other bodies of water) and rivers not capable of interstate vessel traffic are considered “No Discharge Zones.”

**Discharge of Trash**

The Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships limits 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 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 Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality 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:

**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.

**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
  - Advising the captain in case of oily discharges or diesel spills
  - Advising the captain in case of oily discharges or diesel spills
  - Advising the captain in case of oily discharges or diesel spills
  - Advising the captain in case of oily discharges or diesel spills

**What To Do in Case of Discharge**

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water, notify the National Response Center by calling:

- 1-800-424-8802

You also should report the discharge to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality by calling (answered 24 hours):

- 1-888-763-5424

**Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers**

Aquatic hitchhikers can spread in many ways such as on aquatic plants, on recreational equipment, and in water. Fortunately, there are a few simple actions you can take to prevent them from spreading.

- Inspect your boat, trailer, and equipment and remove visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud before leaving the area. Carefully remove all plant fragments before you leave to ensure you are not transporting an invasive plant species or attached zebra mussels.
- Drain water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells, and bait containers before leaving the area. Many types of invasive species are very small and easily overlooked and can be carried in water. Draining water before you leave the area will reduce the chance that any remaining plants and animals survive.
- Report new sightings. If you suspect a new infestation of an invasive plant or animal, save a specimen and report it to a local natural resource or Sea Grant office.
- Spray, rinse, or dry boats and recreational equipment to remove or kill species that were not visible when leaving a body of water. Before going to another waterway, spray/rinse with high pressure and/or hot tap water (above 104° F) or dry for at least five days.
- Dispose of unwanted bait and other animals or plants in the trash. Releasing live animals and plants in a lake, river, or along the shore often causes invasive species to become established. Identifying fish when they are small is difficult, and it is hard to be absolutely sure there are no invasive fish in your bait bucket.
- Consult the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (LDWF) for information on controlling aquatic invasive species. Do-it-yourself control treatments could be illegal and can make matters worse by harming native fish, wildlife, and plants. Call 225-765-2328 or visit www.wlf.louisiana.gov.
**Boating Crash Incident and Casualties …**

**What the Law Requires You to Do**

- An operator involved in a boating crash incident or other casualty must:
  - Stop his or her vessel *immediately* at the scene of the boating crash incident and ...
  - Give assistance to anyone injured in the boating crash incident or minimize any danger caused by the boating crash incident unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her vessel or passengers and ...
  - Give his or her name, address, and the identifying number of his or her vessel in writing to anyone injured from the boating crash incident and to the owner of any damaged property.

- Boating crash incidents must be reported if they result in the death or injury of anyone or in property damage over $500.

- The operator must give notice of the boating crash incident immediately, by the quickest means possible, to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the nearest law enforcement agency, or the State Police. To contact LDWF in an emergency, call **1-800-442-2511**.

- The operator also must file a written report on a boating crash incident report form within five days of the boating crash incident. Boating crash incident report forms are available from any LDWF office or may be downloaded from the LDWF’s website, [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov).

**Enforcement**

The boating laws of Louisiana are enforced by Wildlife Agents of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the U.S. Coast Guard, and any other authorized peace officer of the state. They have the right to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with federal and state laws. The U.S. Coast Guard and Wildlife Agents have enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.