Your Vessel’s Certificate of Registration and Decals

- Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Mississippi, you must have a Mississippi Certificate of Number (boat registration) and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on Mississippi waters. Vessels that are required to be registered in Mississippi are:
  - Any motorized vessel
  - All sailboats (with or without motors)
- The Certificate of Number and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper application (see page 26) and fee to:
  Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks
  Boat Registration Division
  1505 Eastover Dr.
  Jackson, MS 39211-6374
- The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized, plastic registration card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is being operated.
- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.
  - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow.
  - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  - Number must be in at least three-inch-high BLOCK letters.
  - Number’s color must contrast with its background.
  - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen: MI 3717 ZW or MI-3717-ZW.
  - No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
  - Decals must be affixed on both sides of the vessel preceding the prefix letters of the registration number and 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 Titling and Registering Your Vessel

- Effective July 1, 1998, you may choose to title your vessel and/or outboard motor; however, titling is not mandatory.
- A Certificate of Number is valid for three years from the last day of the month in which the original or transferred certificate was received. Owners of vessels that have already been registered will be sent a renewal notice to their residence without any action by the owner.
- If you change your address, you must notify the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks (MDWFP) within 15 days of the change.
- If a numbered vessel is lost, stolen, or abandoned, the owner should report it to local authorities and to the MDWFP within 15 days of such event.
- If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or decal(s), you must apply to the MDWFP for duplicates and submit processing fees.
- Vessels registered in another state may operate on Mississippi waters for 60 days before Mississippi registration and numbering 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 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.

Buying and Selling a Vessel

The procedure for transferring ownership of a vessel is outlined here.

■ The steps are essentially the same whether the “seller” is a marine dealer or the “buyer” is an individual purchasing a pre-owned vessel from an individual “seller.”

■ If a registered vessel is sold or otherwise transferred to another person:
  • The “buyer” must apply for the Certificate of Number to be transferred to his or her name within 10 days from the date of purchase.
  • The “seller” is required to report the transaction to the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks.

Who May Operate a Vessel

All persons born after June 30, 1980, must have passed a boating education course approved by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks to operate a vessel legally.

■ In addition, a person younger than 12 years of age must be accompanied on board by someone who is at least 21 years old.

■ The boater safety certification card must be carried on board the vessel whenever the vessel is operated by someone required to have a certificate.

Registration and title application forms can be obtained from:
- The website at www.mdwfp.com
- Any tax collector’s office
- Many marine dealers, marinas, and bait shops
- Any Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks office
- The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Registration Renewal

A vessel registration can be renewed at www.mdwfp.com, at any hunting and fishing license agent, by calling 1-800-5GO-HUNT, by mail, or by visiting any MDWFP office. Duplicate registration cards also can be obtained through any of these outlets.

Registration Questions?

Contact:
- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks at 601-432-2400
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Marine Patrol at 228-523-4134

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Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

Mississippi law prohibits reckless or negligent operation of a vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or any similar device. Reckless operation or manipulation is the failure to exercise the care necessary to prevent the endangerment of life, limb, or property of any other person. Examples of illegal and reckless operation are:

- Operating a vessel at speeds that may cause danger, injury, damage, or unnecessary inconvenience. Be aware of and obey all regulatory markers, including those marked as “idle speed” or “no wake speed.”
- 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 unnecessarily close to the other vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is restricted.
- Loading the vessel beyond the recommended capacity shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer.
- Caus­ing damage from the wake of your vessel.
- Boating in restricted areas without regard for other boaters or persons, posted speeds and wake restrictions, diver-down flags, etc.
- 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. (It also interferes with the operator’s visibility and the stability of the vessel.)
- Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel.

In addition to the above examples of reckless or negligent operation, Mississippi Ordinance No. 16.003 states that on marine waters south of Interstate Highway 10 (I-10), it is illegal for vessel operators to:

- Operate at an excessive speed within 100 feet of another occupied vessel except in a crossing situation or when overtaking in accordance with the navigation rules.
- Jump, or attempt to jump, the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of that vessel.
- Follow within 100 feet of a water-skier.
- Create a potentially damaging wake within 100 feet of:
  - Harbors, public marinas, or anywhere else vessels are typically docked or …
  - Any public boat launching ramp facility.
- Operate the vessel with passengers positioned such that they block the operator’s view of other waterway traffic or of persons and objects in the water.

Remember, in order to avoid a collision with other boaters on the waterway, you must:

- Keep a sharp lookout for others on the waterway.
- Follow the navigation rules when approaching other vessels.
- Be courteous.

Remember …

As an owner of a vessel, you may be held civilly liable if you allow others to operate your vessel in a reckless manner.

“idle speed” or “no wake speed”

The slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering and which does not produce a wake

**gunwale**

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

**overboard**

Over the side or out of the vessel

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.
Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). The best thing you can do for your safety and the safety of your passengers and other boaters is simple... Don't Drink and Boat!

Areas of Impairment Due to Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BAC</th>
<th>Areas of Impairment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>Visual function, reaction time, divided attention, coordinating, tracking and steering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>Steadiness, control, eye movement, head position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Information processing, judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Concentration, speed control, attention, coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>Reaction time, divided attention, coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>Concentration, speed control, attention, coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>Reaction time, divided attention, coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>Reaction time, divided attention, coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>Reaction time, divided attention, coordination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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).

Alcohol and Drugs

The Mississippi Alcohol Boating Safety Act prohibits anyone from boating while intoxicated—that is, operating a boat powered by a motor of 25 horsepower or greater 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 times. Alcohol is a major contributor to boating accidents and fatalities. Read more about the effects and risks of consuming alcohol in Chapter 5.

- The Mississippi Alcohol Boating Safety Act defines intoxicated as 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. A concentration of alcohol of 0.08% or more, based upon a chemical analysis of breath, blood, or urine, is evidence that a person is intoxicated.

- The Mississippi Alcohol Boating Safety Act establishes the following penalties.
  - Those arrested and convicted of boating while intoxicated may be fined up to $1,000 and jailed for two days for a first conviction.
  - Upon a second conviction within five years, a person may be fined and jailed, and also will lose the privilege of operating a vessel for one year. 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 vessel on Mississippi waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if requested by a law enforcement official. If you refuse, you will be subject to arrest and punishment consistent with the penalties described above and lose your privilege of operating a vessel 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 (PFDs)

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 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 wearable U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD (life jacket) for each person on board.

- 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 U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type IV PFD on board and readily accessible.

- Children 12 years old and younger* must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III PFD whenever underway in a vessel less than 26 feet in length. Although not required, it is strongly recommended that all persons on board a vessel wear a PFD.

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a personal watercraft must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III PFD.

* This includes all persons who have not reached their 13th birthday.

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

- 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

- 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(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

A vessel’s engine must have a factory-installed muffler or exhaust water manifold for noise reduction, or another effective muffling system. Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.
Navigation Lights

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

Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet Long When Underway

If less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:
- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light (if less than 39.4 feet long) or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet (one meter) higher than the sidelights.

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

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

All Vessels When Not Underway

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

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.

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

**Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals**
- Orange Smoke—Handheld
- Orange Smoke—Floating
- 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

If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, a minimum of three must be carried in the vessel. Also, pyrotechnic VDSs must be dated and may not be carried past their expiration date.

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
- 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
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### 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.

- **Mississippi state law** does not require that vessels carry a sound-producing device; however, it is always a good idea to have one on board.
- **Federal law** requires that vessels boating on federally controlled waters, such as Mississippi's coastal waters, carry sound-producing devices.
  - Vessels less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length, which includes PWCs, are required to carry on board a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal audible for at least one-half mile.
  - Vessels that are 65.6 feet (20 meters) or more in length are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, and a bell that are audible for at least one mile.

### Other Equipment and Regulations

- **Diver-Down Flags:** Federal law requires that scuba divers or snorkelers on federally controlled waters display the Alfa diver-down flag to mark the diving area. Vessels should stay as far away from a diver-down flag as is reasonable and prudent for the circumstances. The suggested safe distance from a flag is 100 yards. Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.
  - A rectangular red flag, at least 15 x 15 inches, with a white diagonal stripe, is used on Mississippi 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.
- **Marine 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 a FCC license if operating domestically. “Domestically” means not traveling to foreign ports or transmitting to foreign stations, including Mexico.
  - Recreational vessels still required to carry a FCC Ship Station License are power-driven vessels over 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length and any vessel on an international voyage.
- **Local Regulations:** Some waterways in Mississippi may have special regulations such as size and horsepower restrictions. Check with the governing body of the county or municipality where the waterway is located before you go boating.

#### 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.

---

### Scuba Divers and Snorkelers

- 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.

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### For FCC information …

- Call the FCC for a recorded message at: 1-888-225-5322
- On the Internet, go to the FCC website: http://wireless.fcc.gov/marine
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 Type I, II, or III PFD (life jacket). It is recommended that those on board a PWC wear PFDs designed to withstand the impact of hitting the water at high speed.
- PWCs should not be operated in a manner that requires the operator to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid a collision. Furthermore, a PWC should not jump the wake of another vessel recklessly or unnecessarily close to that vessel.
- It is illegal to operate a personal watercraft while you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- It is illegal to chase, harass, or disturb wildlife with your PWC.
- It is also strongly recommended that:
  - An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ignition safety switch always attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD
  - PWCs are operated during daylight hours only
- In addition to the requirements above, Mississippi Ordinance No. 16.003 states that on marine waters south of Interstate Highway 10 (I-10), PWCs:
  - Must have a self-circling device or lanyard-type ignition safety switch with the lanyard attached to the operator’s person, clothing, or PFD.
  - Must not be operated at an excessive speed within 100 feet of another occupied vessel except in a crossing situation or when overtaking in accordance with the navigation rules.
  - May not jump, or attempt to jump, the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of that vessel.
  - May not follow within 100 feet of a water-skier.

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, surfboard, or a similar device must obey these laws.

- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or a similar device must have a person older than 10 years of age, in addition to the vessel operator, observing the towed person(s) at all times.
- 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.
- It is illegal to be towed on water skis, a surfboard, or a similar device while you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- If towing a person behind a personal watercraft, the PWC must be rated for three people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.
- In addition, it is also strongly recommended that:
  - All persons being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD (this is required by law if being towed behind a PWC). Ski belts are not U.S. Coast Guard–approved.
  - Persons be towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device only during daylight hours.

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:
- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks at 601-432-2182
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Marine Patrol at 228-523-4134
- For federal boating laws, visit 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 Mississippi, which is found in the Mississippi Boating Act and federal laws.

Remember …

As an owner of a PWC, you are civilly liable if you allow anyone else to operate your PWC in violation of Mississippi law.

If towing a skier with a personal watercraft, the PWC must be rated for at least three people—the operator, the observer, and the skier.

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Waste, Oil, and Trash Disposal in Mississippi and Federal Waters

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

Discharge of Sewage and Waste

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

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

Discharge of Trash

- The Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships places limitations on the discharge of garbage from vessels in federally controlled waters. Mississippi Ordinance No. 10.003 places similar restrictions on Mississippi marine waters. 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 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.
- In addition, all vessels on marine waters south of Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) must:
  - Have on board a clearly marked, closed container for proper disposal of waste, trash, and other garbage. Closed containers must be sealed and of sufficient size for the number of people on board and the length of the cruise. Examples of closed containers include clearly labeled cans with lids or watertight garbage bags with appropriate ties.
  - Display a sign informing all on board that it is illegal to dispose of waste, trash, and other garbage into the marine waters of Mississippi.
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 Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (1-800-222-MEMA) 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 include directives to all passengers and/or crew 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

Stop the Spread of Nuisance Species!

Introducing non-native species into Mississippi’s 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.
Boating Accidents and Casualties … What the Law Requires You To Do

- Vessel operators involved in an accident must report the accident. A boating accident includes, but is not limited to, capsizing, collision, foundering, flooding, fire, explosion, and the disappearance of a vessel other than by theft.
- The operator must file an accident report form if:
  - A person dies or disappears or …
  - An injury occurs causing any person to remain incapacitated for more than 24 hours or …
  - Damage to the vessel and other property exceeds $100.
- Report accidents to:
  - Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks if the accident occurs north of Interstate Highway 10 (I-10)
  - Mississippi Department of Marine Resources if the accident occurs south of Interstate Highway 10 (I-10)
- Most reports of accidents must be made within five days of the accident. However, you must file an accident report within 48 hours if a person dies as a result of the accident.
- It is also the duty of any operator involved in a boating accident to remain at the scene until he or she has rendered all necessary aid and assistance, including ensuring that any injured person involved in the accident receives medical treatment.
- You cannot be held liable for any civil damages for any assistance rendered in good faith and in a prudent manner.

Enforcement

The boating laws of Mississippi are enforced by the officers of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks, the officers of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, U.S. Coast Guard officers, and any other authorized peace officers or law enforcement officers. They 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 all federally controlled waters.

Remember …

You are still responsible for meeting all of the Mississippi boating regulations even when you are operating a livery boat or PWC rather than your own vessel. (A livery vessel is a vessel for rent or hire.)