Oregon: The Legal Requirements of Boating

Your Vessel’s Certificate of Title, Registration, and Validation Decals

◆ Requirements for vessel registration vary from state to state. In Oregon, you must have a Certificate of Title, Oregon Certificate of Number (see right), and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on public waters. Exceptions include:

• Non-motorized vessels
• Sailboats less than 12 feet in length
• Vessels registered in other states using Oregon waters for 60 days or less
• Vessels documented by the U.S. Coast Guard whose principal use is in another state

◆ The Certificate of Title, Certificate of Number, and validation decals are obtained by submitting the proper documents, application, and fee to an authorized boat registration agent or to:
  State Marine Board
  P. O. Box 14145
  Salem, OR 97309-5065

◆ 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 forward half of the vessel, placed above the water line where it can be read easily.
  • Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
  • Number must be in at least three-inch-high BLOCK letters (not slanted).
  • Number’s color must contrast with its background.
  • Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space: OR 371 ZW, as shown on the right.
  • No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
  • Validation decals must be affixed on each side of the vessel. They should be placed in line with, and three inches toward the stern 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 or unless you have on board a valid temporary permit to operate a boat.

Other Facts About Titling and Registering Your Vessel

◆ A Certificate of Number is issued for two calendar years and is valid until December 31st of the year indicated. Owners of vessels that have already been registered will be sent a renewal notice in November.

◆ If you change your address, you must notify the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) in writing, by e-mail, or by phone within 30 days of the change.

◆ If a numbered vessel is destroyed, stolen, or abandoned, the owner should report it to OSMB within 30 days of such event. If stolen, first report it to the local sheriff’s department so that a case number can be issued before reporting the theft to OSMB.

◆ If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Title, Certificate of Number, or decal, you must apply to OSMB for a duplicate and submit a processing fee.

◆ Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) apply for a U.S. Coast Guard “Certificate of Documentation” in lieu of an Oregon title. Call the USCG’s Documentation Center at 1-800-799-8362 for more information. Documented recreational vessels still require state registration.
State Law

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.
- Altered, improper, or missing Hull Identification Numbers may be cause for marine enforcement officers to seize your vessel.
- A Hull Identification Number is required before a vessel may be sold in Oregon. The Oregon State Marine Board will assign a HIN for a home-built vessel or for an older vessel that does not have a HIN. Check with the Marine Board for requirements and procedure information.

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 an Oregon-registered vessel is sold or otherwise transferred to another person, the “buyer” must apply to the Oregon State Marine Board or an authorized agent for a title within 30 days from the date of purchase. Submit the original Oregon Title that has been released by all owners listed and has the Application by New Owner(s) section completed. (There is a $25 late fee charged after 30 days.)
- A vessel new to Oregon requires a completed application for Boat Title and:
  - The title if the vessel was titled in another state or …
  - The bill of sale and previous owner’s Certificate of Number if purchased from a non-title state or …
  - The manufacturer’s statement of origin for a new vessel.

Who May Operate a Powerboat

The Oregon Mandatory Boater Education Law passed in 1999. It requires all Oregon recreational powerboaters operating a vessel powered by greater than 10 horsepower (hp) to complete an approved boater education course and apply for an Oregon Boater Education Card. This card is required for anyone operating the craft and must be carried on board. The law includes PWCs with engines over 10 hp. The law also establishes special requirements for younger boaters.

- Those less than 12 years of age:
  - May not legally operate any size powerboat.
- Those 12 to 15 years of age:
  - May legally operate a vessel powered by a motor of 10 hp or less alone only if he/she has received his/her Boater Education Card and is carrying it on board.
  - May legally operate a vessel powered by a motor of greater than 10 hp only if he/she:
    - Has received his/her Boater Education Card and …
    - Is accompanied on board and is under the direct supervision of a parent, guardian, or responsible person 16 years old or older who possesses a valid Boater Education Card. If the vessel is a personal watercraft, the supervising person must be at least 18 years old and possess a valid Boater Education Card.
Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Permit

- **Motorboats and Sailboats**: As of January 1, 2010, all motorboats and sailboats must have an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) prevention permit.
  - For Oregon residents, the permit fee is included in the registration fee. Current validation decals affixed to your vessel are proof that you have paid the AIS permit fee.
  - Out-of-state operators must purchase an AIS prevention permit annually. You can purchase the permit online at [www.dfw.state.or.us](http://www.dfw.state.or.us) or from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife license agents.
- **Non-Motorized Boats**: As of January 1, 2010, Oregon and out-of-state operators of canoes, kayaks, drift boats, and other manually powered boats 10 feet in length or longer must purchase an AIS prevention permit.
  - The permit must be purchased annually and carried on board when paddling on Oregon waters.
  - One permit per boat is required to operate the vessel on Oregon's waters. The permit is transferrable to other manually powered boats.
- **Out-of-State Boats**: All operators must clean their boats before entering Oregon waters, especially if the boat is coming from a state that is infested with zebra mussels or quagga mussels.
  - See [www.boatoregon.com](http://www.boatoregon.com) for more information on the new fees.

Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

These dangerous operating practices are illegal under Oregon law.

- **Reckless Operation** of a vessel is operating a boat carelessly in willful disregard of the rights, safety, or property of others. Some examples of reckless operation are:
  - Boating in restricted areas without regard for other boaters or persons, posted speeds and wake restrictions, diver-down flags, etc.
  - Jumping the wake of another vessel unnecessarily close to that vessel or buzzing other vessels
- **Unsafe Operation** of a vessel is operating in a manner that endangers or is likely to endanger others or their property. An example of unsafe operation is causing danger or damage from the wake of your vessel.
- **Failure To Regulate Speed** is operating at speeds greater than that which allows the operator to bring the vessel to a stop within an assured clear distance ahead. It is illegal to exceed any posted speed limitations.
- **Improper Distance** is not maintaining a proper distance while operating a vessel or while towing a person on water skis or any similar device. Specifically, it is illegal to operate a vessel at speeds greater than "idle speed" or "slow, no wake speed" within 200 feet of a boat launch ramp, a marina, or a mooring area.
- **Overloading** is loading the vessel beyond the recommended capacity shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer.
- **Riding on the Bow, Deck, or Gunwale** is allowing passengers to ride or sit on the bow, gunwale, transom, seat backs, seats on raised decks, or any other place where there may be a chance of falling overboard while operating at a speed greater than 5 mph unless the vessel has adequate guards or railing. It is illegal to allow any person(s) to ride on any portion of the boat aft of the transom (including a step, ladder, platform, or deck) while underway.
- **Failure To Maintain a Proper Lookout** is operating a vessel while failing to keep a constant lookout for other vessels and persons in the water.
- **Especially Hazardous Condition** is operating a vessel in a condition that causes a hazard to the occupants or others on the waterways. Peace officers may instruct the operator to move the vessel to the nearest safe moorage if:
  - There are improper or insufficient personal flotation devices; fire extinguishers; backfire flame arrestors; or navigation lights between sunset and sunrise.
  - The vessel is overloaded or overpowered.
  - The vessel is leaking fuel.
Alcohol and Drugs

Oregon law prohibits anyone from boating under the influence of intoxicants (BUII)—that is, operating any boat 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.

- Oregon law states the following.
  - No person under the influence of alcohol or drugs shall operate, propel, or be in actual physical control of any boat.
  - It is also unlawful for the owner or person in charge of a boat to allow anyone else to operate the boat if the operator is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
  - If a person’s Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is 0.08% or greater, he/she is considered to be under the influence.
  - **NOTE:** A boat operator showing any sign of impairment due to alcohol or drugs is subject to arrest.

- Oregon law establishes the following penalties for those arrested and convicted of boating under the influence of intoxicants. They may:
  - Be fined up to $6,250 and/or sentenced to one year in jail.
  - Lose operating privileges for one year and be required to complete a boating safety course.
  - Have all boat registrations in their name canceled for up to three years.

- By operating a boat on Oregon waters, you have given consent to submit to field sobriety and breath tests. Refusal to be tested can be used as evidence in a court trial.

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 within a narrow channel or fairway.
- 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.

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.

PFD Requirements

- All vessels must carry one U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD for each person on board or being towed.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and must be readily accessible. The PFDs must be of the proper size for the intended wearer. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.
- In addition to the above requirements, vessels 16 feet in length or longer must have one U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type IV PFD on board and immediately accessible.
- A Type V PFD may be carried instead of any required PFD, but not on personal watercraft, and only if the Type V is approved for the activity for which the boat is being used. Most Type Vs must be worn to meet the carriage requirements.
- A child 12 years old and younger must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD at all times while on an open deck or cockpit of a vessel that is underway or when the child is being towed. Inflatable PFDs are not approved for children.
- Each person on board a personal watercraft (PWC) must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III PFD. Inflatable PFDs are not approved for persons on PWCs.
- As of January 1, 2010, all persons boating on sections of a river rated as Class III or higher MUST wear a properly fitted, USCG–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- USCG–approved inflatable PFDs are authorized for use on recreational vessels only by persons at least 16 years of age.
- Discolored or torn PFDs should be discarded and replaced.

PFD Descriptions

**TYPE I: Offshore Life Jackets**

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

**TYPE II: Near-Shore Vests**

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

**TYPE III: Flotation Aids**

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

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

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

**TYPE V: Special-Use Devices**

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

Remember …

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!
Fire Extinguishers

- Extinguishers are classified by a letter and number symbol. The number indicates the relative size of the extinguisher, and the letter indicates the type of fire it will extinguish.
  - **Type A** fires are of combustible solids like wood.
  - **Type B** fires are of flammable liquids like gasoline or oil.
  - **Type C** fires are electrical fires.

- All vessels, including PWCs, are required to have a Type B U.S. Coast Guard–approved 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
  - Installed inboard engines
  - There are double bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation materials
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks

- In Oregon, outboard motorboats that are less than 26 feet in length and of open construction are not required to carry a fire extinguisher.

- 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 Without Fixed System</th>
<th>With Fixed System*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 26 feet</td>
<td>one B-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 feet to less than 40 feet</td>
<td>two B-I or one B-II</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system

- If there is space available on your vessel, carry larger or more extinguishers than required.
- 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.
  - Extinguishers should be serviced at least every two years. See the label for additional servicing information.
  - 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 to ensure proper operation.

**Ventilation System**

Ventilation systems are crucial. Their purpose is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases. Properly installed ventilation systems greatly reduce the chance of a life-threatening explosion.

- All gasoline-powered vessels, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with **cowls** to remove the fumes. At least one exhaust duct must extend from the open atmosphere to the lower bilge. At least one intake duct must extend from a point at least midway to the bilge or below the level of the carburetor air intake.
- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes in either of these situations:
  - After fueling
  - Before starting the engine
- If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a personal watercraft), open the engine compartment and sniff for gasoline fumes before starting the engine.

**Mufflers and Noise Level Limits**

Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.

- A vessel’s engine must have a factory-installed muffler or exhaust water manifold for noise reduction or another effective muffling system.
  - Vessels built after January 1, 1993, must not exceed a noise level of 88 dBA.
  - Vessels built before January 1, 1993, must not exceed a noise level of 90 dBA.
- If water is used for muffling, it must be in conjunction with a marine-designed exhaust manifold. Simply injecting water into an exhaust header does not satisfy the requirements for a muffling system.
- The use of cutouts or exhaust stacks is prohibited.
- Outboard motors, because of their exhaust design, do not require a muffling system.
Navigation Lights

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

Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet Long When Underway

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

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

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

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

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

All Vessels When Not Underway

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

Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23 Feet

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

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency. VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night), or both day and night signals. VDSs are either pyrotechnic (smoke and flames) or non-pyrotechnic (non-combustible).

- Vessels on federally controlled waters must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard–approved visual distress signals. In Oregon, federally controlled waters include the mouth of the Columbia River and all coastal waters. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orange Smoke</th>
<th>Red Meteor</th>
<th>Red Flare</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day Signal</td>
<td>Day and Night Signal</td>
<td>Day and Night Signal</td>
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</tbody>
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Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electric Light</th>
<th>Orange Flag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Night Signal</td>
<td>Day Signal</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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
- Waters that are two miles wide or wider and are directly connected to one of the above (in Oregon, this occurs at the mouth of the Columbia River)

If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, a minimum of three must be carried in the vessel. Also, pyrotechnic VDSs must be dated and will not meet VDS equipment requirements if past their expiration date.

The following are just a few examples of the combinations 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.

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Common Sound Signals

Some common sound signals that you should be familiar with as a recreational boater are as follows.
- A short blast lasts one second.
- A prolonged blast lasts 4-6 seconds.

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.

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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. The sound-producing device may be a whistle, horn, or bell that is audible for one-half mile. All vessels on state and federally controlled waters must have a sound-producing device to communicate.

- Vessels less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length, which includes PWCs, are required to carry on board a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal to signal intentions or positions.
- Vessels that are 39.4 feet (12 meters) or more in length are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, and a bell.

Other Equipment

- **Diver-Down Flags**: Federal law requires that scuba divers or snorkelers on federally controlled waters display the Alfa diver-down flag to mark their diving area. Two types of flags are used to indicate diving activity.
  - 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 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.
  - A rectangular red flag, at least 15 x 15 inches, with a white diagonal stripe is used to indicate the presence of a submerged diver in the area. Display of this flag is not required by Oregon law and does not in itself restrict the use of the water; however, boaters should always use caution and slow to “slow, no wake speed” (maximum 5 mph) when operating within 200 feet of a displayed flag.
- **Skier-Down Flag**: Oregon law requires that vessels towing person(s) on water skis or other similar devices carry and use a red or orange skier-down flag whenever the towed person(s) is in the water.
- **Range Markers**: To help boaters navigate within channels, range markers have been erected in many Oregon rivers and bays. These consist of widely separated, brightly painted pairs of markers. They are mounted on skeleton towers or on pilings and may be in the water or on shore. Consult the appropriate navigation chart for locations of range markers. Steering a course that keeps the two range markers lined up vertically while operating in a channel marked by buoys will keep the vessel within the navigable channel.
- **VHF Radio**: The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires some vessels equipped with VHF radios to have a Ship Station License.
  - As of 1996, most recreational vessels no longer need a 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 a FCC Ship Station License include power-driven vessels over 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length and any vessel on an international voyage. For FCC information, call 1-888-225-5322 or go to http://wireless.fcc.gov/marine/ on the Internet.

Oregon Required Equipment Summary

See page 60 of this manual for a complete summary of the equipment required for recreational vessels operating on Oregon waters.
Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs)

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

- Everyone on board a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III PFD. Inflatable PFDs are not acceptable on PWCs.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC under the age of 16 unless accompanied by a person of age 18 or older who holds a Boater Education Card.
- Persons under age 18 may not rent a PWC.
- 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.
- PWCs must be muffled effectively and also must display the required navigation lights if operated between sunset and sunrise.
- PWCs have the following speed restrictions.
  - Slow to 10 mph when you are approaching within 100 feet of another powerboat or sailboat underway.
  - Slow to “slow, no wake speed” (maximum 5 mph) when within:
    - 100 feet of any anchored vessel or non-motorized craft
    - 200 feet of a shoreline of a lake, bay, or reservoir (safe take-offs and landings are excepted)
    - 200 feet of a swimmer, a surfer, a shoreline angler, or a diver-down flag
    - 200 feet of a dock, launch ramp, marina, mooring area, floating home, boathouse, pier, or swim float
- Do not operate PWCs within 200 feet behind a person being towed on water skis or other similar devices.
- PWCs must be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner. It is illegal to:
  - Weave your PWC through congested waterway traffic.
  - Jump the wake of another vessel unreasonably close to that vessel or when its operator’s vision is obstructed.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC if under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- It is illegal to chase, harass, or disturb wildlife, birds, or marine mammals.
- Personal watercraft may be prohibited or have additional restrictions on some Oregon waterways. Check the Oregon Boater’s Handbook for specific waterways’ regulations on PWCs before you go boating.

Towing a Person With a Vessel Legally

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

- It is illegal for vessels to tow persons on water skis or any device of this type between sunset and sunrise.
- Children 12 years old and younger being towed must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, or III PFD.
- Vessels towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device must carry on board a red or orange skier-down flag and display it whenever the skier is in the water.
- The operator of the towing vessel and the skier must not operate in a manner that endangers the safety of persons or property. Also, they must not operate while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Every vessel towing a person on water skis or a similar device must have a person, in addition to the operator, continuously observing the towed person.
- If the towing vessel is a PWC, the PWC must be rated for at least three people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.
- It is illegal to tow a person(s) holding onto any portion of the boat aft of the transom (including a step, ladder, platform, or deck) while underway.
Waste, Oil, and Trash Disposal in Oregon and Federal Waters

◆ It is illegal to discharge untreated waste, oil, or trash into any federally controlled or Oregon state waters. This is for very good reasons.
  • Sewage carries disease and is 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

◆ The discharge of any sewage from marine toilets is prohibited on Oregon’s freshwater lakes, impoundments, and reservoirs that are not accessible by boat from the ocean.
◆ The use of approved types of marine sanitation devices (MSDs) is required on the Columbia, Willamette, and Snake Rivers and on the navigable portions of all coastal rivers. Discharge of untreated sewage is permitted only beyond the three-mile ocean limit.
◆ There are three types of approved marine sanitation devices (MSDs).
  • Types I and II MSDs treat waste with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged at sea. 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, the simplest and most common, consist of holding tanks or portable toilets. They require only a small storage space and are simple to operate. Type III MSDs have the least effect on the environment since the waste is to be taken ashore and discharged into a local sewage treatment facility.
◆ Holding tanks or potties should be emptied at public pump-out and dump stations. A complete list of free, public pump-out and dump stations is available from the Oregon State Marine Board.
◆ 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.
◆ Report illegal sewage discharge to the U.S. Coast Guard or the Water Quality Division of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Discharge of Trash

The Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships “Marpol Annex V” places limitations on the discharge of garbage from vessels. It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into federally controlled or state waters. Many forms of litter can kill birds, fish, and marine mammals.

◆ You must store trash in a container while on board and place it in a proper receptacle after returning to shore.
◆ The penalty for littering from a vessel includes a fine and suspension of the vessel’s Certificate of Number.
◆ If boating on federally controlled waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a Garbage Disposal Placard in a prominent location. The Garbage Disposal Placard is a durable sign that is at least 4 x 9 inches and notifies passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.
Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

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

- You are not allowed to discharge oil or hazardous substances. The penalty for illegal discharge may be a fine of up to $10,000.
- Do not use soap or dish detergent to disperse fuel or oil spills. Using detergents to disperse fuel worsens the problem and violates federal law.
- 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 Oregon Emergency Response System at 1-800-OILS-911 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:

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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.
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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

Outboard Emissions

- Many boats and some PWCs are equipped with two-stroke engines. Conventional two-stroke engines produce roughly 14 times as much ozone-forming pollution as four-stroke engines. Also, 25-30% of the fuel and oil of two-stroke engines is discharged unburned with a portion lingering in the water column for a period of time.
- Federal law requires marine engines to meet tough emission standards. Many new, clean-burning engines are already available; and the new technology provides easier starting, faster acceleration, quicker throttle response, improved fuel economy, and reduced fumes and noise. See www.boatoregon.com/OSMB/Clean/index.shtml for more information.
- Even though vessel engines currently in use are not affected by the phase-in, the Marine Board encourages retiring old engines and replacing them with newer, more efficient models.

Stop the Spread of Nuisance Species!

Introducing non-native species into Oregon waters can upset the balance of the ecosystem, thereby harming the environment. Aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, milfoil, hydrilla, and mitten crabs, 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. Use of live bait is illegal in most Oregon waters.
- Rinse your vessel, propeller, trailer, and equipment.
- Air-dry your vessel and equipment for as long as possible.
Boating Accident Report Form

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

◆ An operator involved in a boating accident must:
  • Stop their vessel immediately at the scene of the accident and ...
  • Give assistance to anyone injured in the accident and ...
  • Give their name, address, and identifying number of their vessel as well as the names and addresses of passengers to the other vessel’s operator and/or passengers.

◆ Witnesses to a boating accident must give their names and addresses to the operators, passengers, or injured person.

◆ The operator or owner of a vessel involved in an accident must file a written report with the Oregon State Marine Board if:
  • A person dies, disappears, or is injured and receives medical treatment or ...
  • Damage to property exceeds $2,000.

◆ Reports of accidents involving only property damage must be made within 10 days of the accident. However, you must file an accident report within 48 hours in cases involving a death, disappearance, or injury.

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

Enforcement

The boating laws of Oregon are primarily enforced by county sheriffs and Oregon State Police officers. The U.S. Coast Guard also has enforcement authority on all federally controlled waters.

◆ They have the authority to stop any boat in order to conduct a safety inspection (check for compliance with equipment and documentation requirements).

◆ Whenever contacted by one of these officers, you must stop and permit the officer to come alongside to check your Certificate of Number and required safety equipment.

◆ When you are being approached by a law enforcement boat using its blue flashing light and/or siren, you must slow to the slowest speed at which you can safely steer your vessel. You may proceed unless otherwise directed by the law enforcement officer.

◆ When approaching a stationary law enforcement boat displaying its blue lights, consider it to be the same as a boat ramp with a 200-foot, “no wake” speed zone around it. You should slow immediately to the slowest speed at which it is possible to maintain steering. You also should alter your course so that you do not interfere or inhibit the operation of the law enforcement boat. You may increase your speed only when you are out of the vicinity of the law enforcement boat.

◆ Please pick up the current Oregon Boater’s Handbook for further explanation of Oregon’s boating rules and regulations.