Your Vessel’s Certificate of Number and Decal
◆ In Virginia you must have a Certificate of Number (registration) and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on the public waters of Virginia. The only exceptions are:
  • Non-motorized vessels
  • Vessels properly registered in another state and on Virginia waters for 90 or fewer consecutive days
  • Vessels documented with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
  • Vessels operating under valid temporary registration
◆ For all other vessels, here’s what you need to do.
  • Submit the proper application form and fee to:
    Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries
    Boat Section
    P. O. Box 11528
    Richmond, VA  23230-1528
    Application forms are available from marine dealers, offices of the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), DMV Service Centers, and agents who sell fishing and hunting licenses.
    Forms also may be downloaded from the Internet at: www.dgif.virginia.gov/forms/index.html
  • Carry your Certificate of Number on board whenever you are operating your vessel.

- Display your number and validation decal(s) on the vessel.
  - The number must be displayed on 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 vertical BLOCK letters.
  - Number’s color must contrast with its background.
  - Letters and numbers must be separated by a space (VA 4696 AF) or a hyphen (VA-4696-AF).
  - No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
  - Decals must be displayed on each side of the vessel within six inches of, and in line with, the registration number. Expired decals must be removed.

Other Facts About Titling and Registering Your Vessel
◆ Vessels propelled by a motor (including gasoline, diesel, and electric motors) and sail-powered vessels over 18 feet in length must be titled.
◆ A Certificate of Number expires every three years.
◆ The owner of a vessel must notify the agency that issued the Certificate of Number within 15 days if:
  • The vessel is sold, destroyed, abandoned, lost, or stolen
  • The owner’s address changes
  • The certificate of number is lost or destroyed
◆ If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or decal, you must apply to the VDGIF for a duplicate.
◆ Larger recreational vessels may be documented (registered) by the USCG. Call the USCG at 1-800-799-8362 for more information.
Hull Identification Number

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a 12-digit number that uniquely identifies a vessel.
- All vessels manufactured after 1972 have an HIN marked on the transom.
- Write down your HIN and keep it in a safe place separate from your vessel.

Who May Operate a Vessel

Age and Boating Education Requirements

- No one under the age of 14 may operate a personal watercraft (PWC) in Virginia. Ages 14 and 15 must complete a boating safety education course to operate a PWC.
- Beginning in 2009, other operators of PWCs and all operators of motorboats with a motor of 10 horsepower or greater must meet a boating safety education requirement according to this phase-in schedule.

Safe Speed

- A safe speed is a speed less than the maximum at which the operator can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and stop within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.
- In establishing a safe operating speed, the operator must take into account visibility; traffic density; ability to maneuver the vessel (stopping distance and turning ability); background light at night; proximity of navigational hazards; draft of the vessel; limitations of radar equipment; and the state of wind, sea, and current.

Unlawful Operation of a Vessel

- Operators requiring boater safety education must carry their proof of compliance on board when operating a PWC or powerboat.

Exemptions to the Boating Education Requirement

The Virginia boating safety education law has provisions allowing for operation of a boat or PWC without meeting the education requirement. These provisions include exceptions for an operator who:

- Has a rental agreement listing the operator as the authorized operator of the boat or PWC, and the operator also has completed the “Dockside Safety Checklist” or ...
- Is operating under the onboard, direct supervision of another person who meets the boating safety education requirement or ...
- Is a registered commercial fisherman, according to the Code of Virginia, or is under the onboard, direct supervision of a commercial fisherman while operating his or her boat or ...
- Is returning the boat or PWC to shore because the initial operator is ill or physically impaired.
- Is a nonresident who:
  - Is temporarily using Virginia waters for a period of 90 days or fewer and ...
  - Is operating a boat or PWC not registered in Virginia and ...
  - Meets the boating safety education requirements of his or her home state or holds a Canadian Pleasure Craft Operator Card.

Unlawful Operation of a Vessel

- Reckless operation of a vessel is illegal in Virginia. Reckless operation of a vessel is defined as the failure to exercise the care necessary to prevent the endangerment of life, limb, or property of any other person. Here are some examples of illegal and reckless operation:

  - Operating in a reckless manner such as jumping wakes close to another vessel or weaving in and out of waterway traffic.
  - Failing to obey any regulatory marker. For example, it is illegal to boat in restricted areas, such as swimming areas, that have been marked clearly by buoys or in some other manner.
- Operating at speeds that are not reasonable and prudent based on the conditions. If no limits are posted, operate your vessel so that it does not endanger others. Vessel speed should always be maintained so that the vessel can be stopped safely.
- Operating any vessel at greater than no wake or idle speed when within 50 feet of:
  - Docks, piers, or boathouses
  - Boat ramps
  - Persons in the water (Note that this does not apply to your towed skier or those “accompanying” vessels with inboard motors.)
- Causing damage to a person or property with your vessel’s wake. You must reduce speed so as not to cause damage or danger when approaching or passing:
  - Vessels underway or vessels at anchor
  - Docks, piers, or boathouses
  - Persons in the water
  - Persons using water skis, surfboards, or similar devices
- Overloading your vessel (too many people or too much weight).
- Allowing persons to ride or sit on the bow, gunwale, or transom or on the deck or the side of the vessel while under power unless the vessel is provided with adequate guards or railing to prevent passengers from falling overboard. This restriction does not apply to persons who need to be in these locations in order to moor, anchor, or cast off a vessel.
- Chasing, harassing, or disturbing marine mammals or birds with your vessel.

**Obstructing Navigation**

Always be considerate of other vessel operators. Keep in mind that it is illegal to:
- 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, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.
- Interfere with the passage of large, deep-draft vessels which can navigate safely only inside such channels.

**Safe Navigation**

- Always be considerate of other vessel operators. Operate in a manner that allows all vessels to navigate safely.
- When operating in a narrow channel, keep to the side of the channel on your starboard, whenever it is safe and practical to do so.
- When your vision is obscured by bridges or other obstructions ahead, by sharp bends in a narrow waterway, or by fog and weather conditions, reduce the speed of your vessel so that you can stop if necessary.

**Homeland Security Restrictions**

- The following homeland security rules must be obeyed. Violating these rules can have severe consequences.
  - Slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Naval vessel. Do not approach within 100 yards.
  - Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port areas, especially those with military, cruise-line, or petroleum facilities.
  - Observe and avoid restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc.
  - Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in channels.
  - Do your part to help keep our waterways safe and secure.
    - Keep a sharp lookout for any peculiar activity.
    - Report any suspicious activity to local authorities, the USCG, or port or marina security.

**Alcohol and Drugs**

Virginia law prohibits anyone from boating while intoxicated (BWI). That is, it is illegal to operate any boat, sailboat, or personal watercraft or to manipulate any water skis, sailboard, or similar device while intoxicated due to alcohol or any combination of alcohol, controlled substance, and/or drugs. Alcohol and drugs affect balance, vision, coordination, judgment, and reaction time. Alcohol is a major contributor to boating accidents and deaths. Read more about the effects and risks of consuming alcohol in Chapter 5.

- Under Virginia law, you are “under the influence” if:
  - You are 21 years of age or older and have a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or higher, or are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs to a degree which impairs your ability to operate safely.
  - You are under 21 years of age and have any measurable blood alcohol concentration (0.02% or higher), or are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs to a degree which impairs your ability to operate safely.
- According to Virginia law, those convicted of operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs will:
  - Receive a fine of up to $2,500
  - Be imprisoned for up to 12 months
• Lose the privilege to operate a vessel for up to 12 months for a first conviction and for up to three years for a second and subsequent convictions.
• Be required to attend an Alcohol Safety Action Program.

By operating a vessel on Virginia waters, you have consented to be tested for the presence of alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicating substances if so requested by a peace officer. If you refuse to submit to testing for the presence of alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicating substances, you may lose your privilege to operate a vessel for up to 24 months.

Personal Flotation Devices (Life Jackets)
The U.S. Coast Guard requires all vessels to carry personal flotation devices (PFDs). PFDs are either wearable life jackets or throwable Type IV devices (see right). All required PFDs must be USCG–approved and in good condition. Here are the requirements:

◆ All vessels must have at least one wearable, USCG–approved life jacket (PFD) of a proper size for each person on board. Sizing is based on body weight and chest size.
◆ If life jackets are not worn at all times, they must be readily accessible. This means you must be able to reach the life jacket and put it on without delay in an emergency.
◆ All vessels 16 feet or more in length must have one throwable Type IV device on board, in addition to the required total number of PFDs, and immediately available. This means you must be able to reach the PFD quickly in an emergency. Exceptions are:
  • PWCs
  • Non-motorized canoes and kayaks 16 feet or more in length
  • Racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes, and racing kayaks
  • Sailboards
  • U.S. vessels used by foreign competitors while practicing for or racing in competitions
◆ No person may operate a recreational vessel underway on federal waters with any child under 13 years old on board unless each such child is either:
  • Wearing an appropriate approved PFD or …
  • Riding below decks or in an enclosed cabin. In Virginia, this rule is enforced only by the USCG and applies on waters over which they have jurisdiction (Atlantic Ocean, Chesapeake Bay, all tidal rivers, Smith Mountain Lake, etc.).
◆ Each person riding on, or being towed by, a PWC must wear a USCG–approved personal flotation device.
◆ Each person being towed behind a boat must wear a USCG–approved personal flotation device if no observer is on board.

PFD Descriptions

TYPE I: Offshore Life Jackets
These vests are best for rough or remote waters where rescue may take awhile. They are very buoyant and will turn most unconscious wearers face up in the water.

TYPE II: Near-Shore Vests
These vests are good for calm waters where quick rescue is likely. They will turn some unconscious wearers face up.

TYPE III: Flotation Aids
These vests or jackets are good for calm waters where quick rescue is likely. They will not turn most unconscious wearers face up. They are used for water sports such as water-skiing. Some Type III devices are inflatable.

TYPE IV: Throwable Devices/Not Wearable
These devices include cushions and ring buoys. They are meant to be thrown to a person who is in trouble but is still able to grab and hold the PFD. They are not meant to be worn. Therefore, they are not for rough waters.

TYPE V: Special-Use Devices
These devices include vests, deck suits, and other life jackets. They are designed for specific activities such as windsurfing or kayaking. Some Type V devices are inflatable. To be acceptable, Type V devices must be used as described on their label.

Types of Personal Flotation Devices
Read and follow the label restrictions on all PFDs.
Fire Extinguishers

- Fire extinguishers are identified by a letter and a number. The number gives the size of the extinguisher. The letter indicates the type of fire the extinguisher is designed to handle.
- The following types of vessels must carry one or more Type B, USCG–approved fire extinguishers:
  - Vessels with an inboard or stern-drive gas engine
  - Vessels that are 26 feet or more in length
  - Vessels with closed compartments under seats where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Vessels with double-bottoms that are not sealed to the hull or completely filled with flotation material
  - Vessels with closed living spaces
  - Vessels with closed storage compartments in which combustible or flammable materials may be stored
  - Vessels with permanently installed fuel tanks

- Extinguishers should be placed where they are accessible and can be reached immediately.
- Fire extinguishers must be kept in good working condition. Check for the following on a regular basis.
  - Seals and tamper indicators are not broken or missing.
  - Pressure gauges or indicators are not broken or missing.
  - There is no physical damage, corrosion, leakage, or clogged nozzles.
- All hand-portable fire extinguishers, semi-portable fire extinguishers, and fixed fire extinguisher systems must be U.S. Coast Guard–approved, must have an efficient charge, and must be in good and serviceable condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>Wood or paper fires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>Gasoline or oil fires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>Electrical fires</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Backfire Flame Arrestors

- Boat engines may backfire. Therefore, all powerboats (except outboards) with gasoline engines must have a backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor. These devices prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors if there is a backfire.
- Backfire flame arrestors must be in good working condition.
- Arrestors must be U.S. Coast Guard–approved and must comply with engineering standards.
- Periodically clean these devices and check for damage.

Ventilation Systems

- Ventilation systems remove gas fumes to reduce the risk of life-threatening explosions.
- Some gasoline-powered vessels are built in a way that could trap fumes. These vessels must have a natural ventilation system with at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls to remove trapped fumes.
- If your vessel has a power ventilation system, always let it run for at least four minutes before starting the engine.

Mufflers and Noise Level Limits

- All vessel engines must be equipped with an effective, permanently installed muffling system that muffles the noise of the exhaust in a reasonable manner.
- Cut-outs are prohibited.
Navigation Lights

Vessels must be equipped with proper navigation lights.
- Lights must be used:
  - When a vessel is away from the dock between sunset and sunrise
  - When visibility is limited such as during fog or rain
- Here are the lighting requirements for different types of recreational vessels.

Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet Long

Power-driven vessels include motorboats and sailboats using an engine. When underway, these vessels must use lights as shown in illustration 1.
- Red and green sidelights must be visible from at least two miles away. If the vessel is less than 39.4 feet long, the sidelights must be visible from at least one mile away.
- Vessels less than 39.4 feet long may use one all-around white light. Larger vessels must have both a white masthead light and a white sternlight.
  - White lights must be visible from at least two miles away.
  - The all-around white light or masthead light must be at least 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

Unpowered Vessels

Unpowered vessels include sailing vessels or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed. When underway, these vessels must use lights as shown in illustrations 2 and 3.
- Vessels less than 65.6 feet long must have red and green sidelights and a white sternlight visible from at least two miles away. If the vessel is less than 39.4 feet long, the sidelights must be visible from at least one mile away.
- Vessels less than 23.0 feet long should use the same lights as larger unpowered vessels, if practical. Otherwise, they should have at least one lantern or flashlight with a white light.

All Vessels When Not Underway

When moored or anchored outside a designated area, all vessels must display a white light visible in all directions.
Chapter Four

2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet

An alternative to sidelights and a sternlight is a combination light. This light must be near the top of the mast.

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23 Feet

Never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, an unforeseen situation might keep you out past nightfall.
Visual Distress Signals

Visual distress signals (VDSs) allow vessels to signal for emergency help. VDSs must be U.S. Coast Guard–approved, in serviceable condition, unexpired, and readily accessible. In Virginia, you are allowed to carry VDSs in excess of the minimum requirements on recreational vessels.

- Vessels on federally controlled waters (see below) must carry USCG–approved visual distress signals. All vessels must carry **night signals** when operating at night.

  Most vessels also must carry **day signals**. Exceptions to the requirement for day signals are:
  - Recreational vessels less than 16 feet long
  - Non-motorized open sailboats less than 26 feet long
  - Vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed

- Some **pyrotechnic** VDSs are for day use only. Others are for both day and night use. If pyrotechnic VDSs are used:
  - At least three night signals must be carried and …
  - If day signals are required, at least three must be carried.

- **Non-pyrotechnic** VDSs are either day signals or night signals. If non-pyrotechnic VDSs are used:
  - At least one night signal must be carried and …
  - If day signals are required, at least one must be carried.

  It is illegal to display visual distress signals if you do not need immediate, emergency assistance.

**Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals**
- Orange Smoke—Handheld
- Orange Smoke—Floating
- Red Meteor
- Red Flare
- **Day and Night Signal**

**Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals**
- Electric Light
- **Night Signal**
- Orange Flag
- **Day Signal**

**Federally Controlled Waters**

Waters on which vessels must observe federal requirements:
- Coastal waters
- The Great Lakes
- Territorial seas
- Bodies of water connected to any of the above, up to the point where the body of water is less than two miles wide

**Arm Signal**

*Use this arm action to summon help if you do not have an approved visual distress signal available.*
Sound-Producing Devices

Sound-producing devices are essential when visibility is limited. Boaters also use sound signals to let other boaters know what they plan to do (see Chapter 3). A sound-producing device may be a whistle, horn, or bell that is audible for one-half mile.

Here are the requirements.

- Vessels less than 65.6 feet long (including PWCs) must carry a whistle, horn, or other device to make an effective sound signal to communicate intentions or positions.
- Vessels 65.6 feet or longer must carry a whistle or a horn, and a bell.

Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs)

PWC operators must follow all boating laws. This includes all legal requirements previously discussed in this course. In addition:

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC between sunset and sunrise.
- If the PWC is equipped with an ignition safety switch, the lanyard must be attached to the operator, or to his or her clothing or life jacket.
- PWCs must be equipped with a fully operational self-circling device or a lanyard-type ignition safety switch. If the ignition safety switch is used, the lanyard must be attached to the operator, or to his or her clothing or life jacket.
- You may not carry more passengers on a PWC than the PWC was designed to carry by the manufacturer.
- When operating a PWC, you must reduce speed to no wake or idle speed when within 50 feet of:
  - Docks, piers, or boathouses
  - Boat ramps
  - Persons in the water (note this does not apply to your towed skier)
  - Another vessel other than a PWC

PWCs must be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times. It is illegal to:

- Weave your PWC through waterway traffic or anchored vessels.
- Steer toward another object or person in the water and turn sharply to spray or attempt to spray them with water.
- Follow closely behind another vessel or skier.
- Jump the wake of another vessel, or cross the path of another vessel, more closely than is reasonable and prudent.
- Cut between a vessel and the person(s) being towed by that vessel.
- It is illegal to chase, harass, or disturb marine wildlife with your PWC.

Towing a Person Behind a Vessel

When towing a person(s) on water skis, aquaplane or a similar device, vessel operators must follow all boating laws. In addition, these laws apply.

- You may tow a water-skier only between the hours of one half-hour before sunrise and one half-hour after sunset. PWCs are restricted to sunrise to sunset.
- A vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or similar device must have one of the following:
  - A person, in addition to the vessel operator, on board and observing the towed person(s) or...
  - Person(s) being towed are wearing a USCG-approved PFD. Ski belts and inflatable PFDs are not approved.
- The operator of the towing vessel and the skier must not operate in a manner which endangers the safety of persons or property. It is illegal to cause the person being towed to collide with any object or person.
Other Equipment and Regulations

◆ **Diver-Down Flag:** Scuba divers or snorkelers must display a diver-down flag to mark their diving area. Bubbles also may indicate that a diver is below. Vessels must maintain a distance of at least 25 yards from any displayed diver-down flag.

◆ **Races, Regattas, and Tournaments:** If an event is being held on Virginia waters and a patrol presence is desired, contact the Law Enforcement Division of the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries prior to the event. Permits may be required by the federal, county, or municipal body which has jurisdiction over the waters.

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Discharge of Sewage and Waste

State law prohibits vessels from discharging any sewage, treated or untreated, into fresh waters of Virginia. If you have a recreational vessel with an installed toilet, you must have a marine sanitation device (MSD).

◆ **Type I and II MSDs** are usually found on large vessels. These MSDs treat waste. Some Type I and II devices have a “Y” valve that would direct waste overboard. This valve must be secured so that waste is not discharged into the water.

◆ **Type III MSDs** do not treat waste. These devices are holding tanks or portable toilets. Collected waste must be taken ashore and disposed of in a pump-out station or an onshore toilet.

◆ Vessels 65 feet long or less may use a Type I, II, or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet long must use a Type II or III MSD.

◆ **All MSDs** must have U.S. Coast Guard certification.

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**Pump-Out Station Sign**

Signs like these are posted at pump-out stations.

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**Pump-Out Station**

“Y” valve must be secured
Drainage to pump-out station

Typical Marine Sanitation Device
Stop the Spread of Nuisance Species!

Aquatic nuisance species most often spread by hitching a ride on vessels or trailers.

Protection of the Environment

◆ Aquatic nuisance species include zebra mussels, quagga mussels, milfoil, and hydrilla. Introducing these non-native species into Virginia waters can upset the ecosystem and hurt the environment. To prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species:
  • Inspect your vessel and trailer before leaving a body of water. Remove any plants or animals.
  • 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. Never 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.

◆ Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) are underwater grasses often found in shallow (usually less than 6 feet), tidal, and non-tidal areas.
  • SAV are an important habitat for fish and shellfish, and are a food source for several waterfowl species.
  • SAV protect shorelines and bottoms by adding oxygen to the water and reducing wave energy.
  • SAV beds can be scarred by propellers of small vessels or by larger craft if they run aground. Recovery from this scarring can take years.
  • Avoid damaging SAV when operating your vessel in shallow areas, particularly at low tide.

Discharge of Trash

◆ It is illegal to dump garbage or plastics into any state or federally controlled waters. Bring all trash back to shore to dispose of properly.
◆ If boating on federally controlled waters in a vessel 26 feet or longer, you must display a garbage disposal placard in a prominent place. The placard must be at least 4 x 9 inches. It must give information about restrictions on dumping trash.

Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

◆ It is illegal to discharge oil, fuel, cleaning products, or other hazardous substances into any U.S. waters. If you do, you may be fined up to $10,000.
◆ It is illegal to dump oil into the bilge of a vessel without means for proper disposal.
◆ Vessel operators must dispose of oil waste at an approved facility. Oil waste must be stored on board the vessel prior to proper disposal.
◆ If your vessel discharges oil into the water, you must notify the National Response Center immediately. Call 1-800-424-8802. Also call the Virginia Department of Health—804-864-7468—and report the discharge.
◆ If boating on federal waters in a vessel 26 feet or longer, you must display an oil discharge placard in a prominent place. The placard must be 5 x 8 inches. It must state the following:
Waste Management Plan
◆ Any ocean-going vessel 40 feet or longer, with cooking and sleeping facilities, must have a written Waste Management Plan.
◆ The captain of the vessel is responsible for implementing the plan.
◆ The plan should include instructions for everyone on board. These instructions should address the discharge of:
  • Sewage and hazardous waste
  • Garbage and food waste
  • Plastics, bottles, and cans
  • Oil or diesel fuel

Boating Accidents and Casualties …
What the Law Requires You To Do
◆ If you are involved in a boating accident, you must:
  • Stop immediately and …
  • Give your name, address, and vessel identification and …
  • Assist injured persons, if it is safe to do so.

Immediate Report of the Accident
◆ When an accident occurs that requires a written report (see below), the operator must, without delay and by the quickest means available, notify the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) in Richmond, Virginia, or the most immediately available Conservation Police Officer:
  • The date, time, and exact location of the occurrence and …
  • The major details of the accident, including the name of each person who died or disappeared and …
  • The number and name of the vessel and …
  • The names and addresses of the owner and operator.
◆ When the operator of a vessel cannot give the notice described above, each person on board the vessel must notify VDGIF or a member of its law enforcement force, or determine that the notice has been given.

Written Report of the Accident
◆ In addition to the notification required above, the operator of a vessel must submit a written casualty or accident report to VDGIF when, as a result of an occurrence that involves the vessel or its equipment:
  • A person dies or …
  • A person is unable to perform normal or usual activities or …
  • Damage to the vessel and other property damage totals more than $2,000 or complete loss of the vessel or …
  • A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate probable death or injury.
◆ A written report must be made:
  • Within 48 hours of the occurrence if a person dies within 24 hours of the occurrence or if a person is unable to perform normal or usual activities or if a person disappears from a vessel or …
  • Within 10 days of the occurrence or death if an earlier report is not required.
◆ When the operator of a vessel cannot submit the written report required by this section, the owner must submit the required report.

Boating Accident Report Form
Boating accident report forms can be obtained from any office of the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries or online at: www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/boating_accident_form.pdf

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Enforcement

◆ The boating laws of Virginia are enforced primarily by Conservation Police Officers employed by the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries. These officers have full police powers and have the lawful right to stop and board your vessel at any time to check that you are complying with federal and state laws.

◆ The U.S. Coast Guard also has enforcement authority on federally controlled waters.

◆ Although this is sometimes a minor inconvenience, treat the officers courteously because proper enforcement of regulations makes the water safer for you as well as others.

State and federal officers have the authority to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with laws.
Notes
Use the space here to take notes about Virginia laws and regulations.