

Alaska

Boater's Handbook



STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION
OFFICE OF BOATING SAFETY

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Dear fellow Alaskan,

Alaska has over 33,000 miles of coastline (more than the entire lower 48 states put together), over 3,000 rivers, and more than 3 million lakes. While most of Alaska's 621,000 residents live in our 10 largest cities, many others live miles from the road system in towns and villages spread along our vast coastline and interior rivers. Alaskans certainly use their boats to enjoy Alaska's world-class boating and fishing, but also as an important means of transportation, and for subsistence. Alaskans are truly "lifestyle boaters".

Perhaps it's not surprising that drowning is second only to highway fatalities as the leading cause of unintentional death in Alaska. Over the last 10 years, Alaska experienced one of the highest non-commercial boating fatality rates in the nation, a rate that from year to year was as much as 20 times the national average.

Working closely with the U.S. Coast Guard, the USCG Auxiliary, and others, the State Office of Boating Safety is dedicated to promoting safe and enjoyable boating, primarily through boater education.

The "*Alaska Boater's Handbook*" provides important information for Alaska boaters on pre-departure preparation, legal requirements, safe boat operation and tips for handling common boating emergencies. Keep it on board as a handy reference.

All boaters should also take boating safety courses, and continue to enhance their boating knowledge and skills. For more information, please contact Jeff Johnson, Boating Law Administrator, at (907) 269-8705, email: jeffj@dnr.state.ak.us, or write:

State of Alaska
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Office of Boating Safety
550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1370
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I hope your boating experiences are always safe and enjoyable. And please remember to boat smart from the start; always wear a life jacket when in an open boat or on deck.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey S. Johnson
Boating Law Administrator

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INTRODUCTION

From powerboating and kayaking on our coastal waters to air boating, rafting, and canoeing our interior rivers and lakes, Alaska's boating opportunities are superlative. However, Alaska also has one of the highest boating fatality rates in the nation. Our cold water, fast changing weather, and remote conditions can be a deadly formula. Statistics show us that most who died in boating accidents in Alaska:

- Had not taken a boating course
- Experienced a sudden capsizing or fall overboard
- Were not wearing a life jacket

It has been said that a boat in the harbor is safe, but that's not why boats are made. All boating entails a certain amount of risk. A safe and enjoyable boating experience begins with risk management. Whether a sailor, a paddler, or a powerboater, you should be able to enjoy every trip and get safely back home, every time. By assessing and effectively managing risk, we will go a long way toward achieving this goal in Alaska.

EDUCATION

Nationwide, 8 out of 10 boating fatalities occur on boats where the operator had no boating safety education. The Alaska Office of Boating Safety recommends that all boaters take boating safety courses appropriate to their type of boating, and then continue to learn and build boating knowledge.

Courses that are approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) meet the national boating education standards. Completing a NASBLA-approved boating course also fulfills the mandatory boating education requirements of many states, and may even qualify boaters for discounts on their boat insurance.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, a civilian component of the U.S. Coast Guard, conducts NASBLA-approved boating classes in Alaska. Boaters can call 1-(800) 478-6381 for information.

The Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) also conducts a variety of excellent marine safety and instructor courses, and trains instructors to teach *Alaska Water Wise*, Alaska's NASBLA-approved state boating course. Call (907) 747-3287.

Paddlers should look for courses appropriate for their sport that are sponsored by the American Canoe Association or local paddling organizations.

The Alaska Office of Boating Safety provides a web site at: www.alaskaboatingsafety.org with information on boating laws, NASBLA-approved courses, and links to other interesting boating sites.

SKILLS

All boaters should have the skill and ability to trailer, launch, load, and fuel their boats, recognize and avoid hazards, safely operate their boats under a variety of conditions, troubleshoot common boating problems, and handle boating emergencies. It takes time and practice to develop skills. Never put yourself in a situation that is beyond your skill level.

ATTITUDE

As a boater's knowledge and skills develop, so should a proper attitude toward safety. Safe boating is not just a list of rules and guidelines; it's an attitude. An "amusement park" mentality in a natural, ever-changing environment is a recipe for trouble. Complacency and carelessness have no place on the water.

JUDGMENT

Sound judgment, unimpaired by alcohol, drugs, or fatigue is a boater's most important tool. Trust your inner feelings, and use common sense. Your life and the lives of others are in your hands.

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Equipment required under law depends on the size of the boat, its propulsion, construction, and where the boat is used. Depending on jurisdiction federal, and/or state requirements may apply.

Federal Requirements

Federal boating laws apply on all salt water and many inland waterways in Alaska. Federal requirements are found in the brochure, "[Federal Requirements and Safety Tips for Recreational Boats](#)", or through the U.S. Coast Guard's web site at: www.uscgboating.org.

Alaska Requirements

State requirements are very similar to the federal requirements. They apply on all waters of the state, including saltwater within the territorial limits of the state. This section provides an overview of the requirements under state law, as of this printing. Please note these requirements are the minimum. Every boater should carry additional equipment appropriate for the boat and the operating conditions. Suggestions may be found in the [PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST](#) section.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

The most important piece of boating equipment in Alaska is a properly selected and fitted PFD. Alaska’s cold water kills good swimmers every year. EVERYONE in Alaska should wear a PFD when in an open boat or on deck. By law, kids under 13 years old must wear a PFD when in an open boat, or when water skiing.

PFDs:

- Provide a few extra precious minutes for self-rescue or to rescue someone else
- Assist with breath control in rough water
- Keep a person floating, even if injured or disabled
- Make us more visible to each other and to potential rescuers
- Slow the body heat loss that leads to hypothermia

USCG approved wearable PFDs must be carried for each person on the boat. They must be properly sized for the intended wearer. For example, adult sizes do not satisfy the legal requirements for children, or vice versa. All devices must be in serviceable condition, meaning they must be free of defects such as rips, tears, waterlogged flotation material, or broken zippers, buckles, or straps. PFDs should be inspected every time you use them. Special attention should be given to inflatable devices, which should be maintained per the manufacturer’s recommendations. All PFDs must be readily accessible for use during an emergency. Of course, the best way to meet this requirement is to wear it!



Alaska Requirements Summary

REQUIREMENT	BOATS LESS THAN 16'	BOATS 16' TO LESS THAN 26'	BOATS 26' TO LESS THAN 40'	BOATS 40' TO LESS THAN 65'
WEARABLE PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES(PFDs)	One USCG approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person. All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition, properly sized for the wearer, and readily accessible. Children under 13 must wear a USCG approved PFD in an open boat, on the deck of a boat, or when waterskiing.			
TYPE IV THROWABLE DEVICE	Type IV not required	Except for canoes and kayaks, boats must have one throwable Type IV (seat cushion or throw ring) device.		
FIRE EXTINGUISHERS	At least one B-I, USCG approved fire extinguisher for all power boats with enclosed engine compartments, inboard engines, living space, permanent fuel tanks, closed storage compartments, or double bottoms not sealed or filled with flotation.		At least two B-I, USCG approved fire extinguishers; OR at least one B-II approved fire extinguisher.	At least three B-I, USCG approved fire extinguishers; OR at least one B-I plus one B-II approved fire extinguishers.
VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS	When boating between sunset and sunrise, all boats must carry USCG approved night signals.	Except that manually propelled boats or open sailboats under 26' in length not equipped with propulsion machinery are <u>not</u> required to carry day signals, boats must carry USCG approved visual distress signals for both day and night time use. For pyrotechnic devices (hand-held flares, etc.), a minimum of three must be carried in any combination that adds up to three day and three night signals. Pyrotechnics must be in serviceable condition, not expired, and accessible.		
SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE (BELL/ WHISTLE)	Every vessel less than 12 meters (39.4') in length must carry a whistle or horn, or some other means to make an efficient sound signal. The navigation rules require sound signals to signal intentions and during periods of reduced visibility.			Every vessel 12 meters (39.4') or more in length must carry a whistle or horn and a bell.
VENTILATION	Boats with a permanently installed gasoline engine, closed compartments or permanently installed fuel tanks must be equipped with an efficient natural or mechanical ventilation system.			
BACKFIRE FLAME ARRESTER	One USCG approved device on each carburetor of all inboard gasoline engines.			
NAVIGATION LIGHTS	Display required from sunset to sunrise and during periods of reduced visibility. International configuration required (varies with length of vessel, and mode of operation).			
REGISTRATION	Required for undocumented motorized boats, and non-motorized boats 10' and longer. Numbers and validation decals must be properly displayed on motorized boats. Non-motorized boats need only to display a single validation decal. Certificate of Number must be on board all registered boats.			

PFD Selection

In choosing PFDs, it is helpful to first understand the term “buoyancy”. Buoyancy, measured in pounds, is the upward force exerted on an object in the water that is less dense than the water it displaces, causing the object to float. If an object is more dense than the water it displaces, it will sink. An average adult human is slightly more dense than the water he or she displaces, and has about 7.5 lbs of negative buoyancy. A PFD compensates for this negative buoyancy, helping a person float with far less effort. The more buoyancy a PFD has, the higher a person will float in the water.

PFDs come in wide variety of colors and designs, many with a specific application in mind. No one PFD is perfectly suited for all situations, and some PFDs are inappropriate for certain uses. For example, inflatable devices are not recommended for PWC or water skiing. When choosing a PFD, first carefully read the manufacturer’s label and owner’s manual to determine if the PFD is U.S. Coast Guard approved and recommended for the intended use. When searching for a child’s PFD, know their exact weight and chest size to ensure a proper fit. Finally, letting kids get involved in selecting their own PFD truly makes a personal flotation device “personal.”

All PFDs perform differently in the water; even identical PFDs perform differently on different people. If possible test PFDs in the warm water of a pool, tub or spa when new, and then again before each boating season, to make sure they fit the intended wearer well and work the way they are supposed to. This is especially important for children. Many PFDs are designed to float a person on their back at an angle; a position that sometimes feels unnatural to young children, causing them discomfort. Experiencing how the supplemental buoyancy of a PFD affects the way they float is a confidence booster. As kids become more accustomed to their PFD, they will be more willing to wear it.

U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices are classified by “type”. There are five types, each with their advantages and disadvantages. The following chart offers a comparison of PFD types:



Be Cool, Not Cold!

PFD TYPES		
Type	Buoyancy	Comments
I "Offshore"	22 lbs. min.	Intended for use off-shore, in open or coastal waters, or potentially rough seas where quick rescue may not be likely. Very good buoyancy. Tends to float an unconscious person face up. Uncomfortable. Very little hypothermia protection.
II "Near Shore"	15.5 lbs. min.	Designed for general boating activities. Suitable for protected areas where rough water is not likely or for activities where quick rescue is available. Inexpensive. Tends to float a person face up. Very little hypothermia protection.
III "Flotation Aid"	15.5 lbs. min.	Intended for general boating activities or specialized activities such as canoeing, water skiing, or fishing due to the freedom of movement it allows. Suitable for protected areas where rough water is not likely or where quick rescue is likely. Comfortable. Some models offer hypothermia protection.
IV "Throwable"	16.5 lbs. min.	Intended to be thrown to a person who is in the water. Of no use to an unconscious or exhausted person. No hypothermia protection.
V Restricted Use	Varies	Designed and approved for specific uses or activities. May need to be worn to count legally as a PFD. Read and follow instructions on labels carefully. Some models offer hypothermia protection.

IT'S NOT A LIFE JACKET IF YOU'RE NOT WEARING IT!

Other Personal Flotation Devices

Immersion (survival) suits have saved many lives in the commercial fishing industry. Of all PFDs, they are the best choice for in - water hypothermia protection. Properly used and maintained, they completely cover the wearer, dramatically slowing heat loss. Keep in mind, however, that immersion suits do not meet PFD carriage requirements. If you carry immersion suits, the appropriate U.S. Coast guard approved PFDs must also be carried on the boat.

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are required on all powerboats with enclosed engine compartments, permanently installed fuel tanks, or enclosed areas that could trap fumes. Extinguishers are classified by the fire type (A, B, or C) and the size of extinguisher (I, or II). The following are the fire types:

- A. Fires of ordinary combustible materials such as wood or paper.
- B. Gasoline, oil, and grease fires.
- C. Electrical fires.

Hand portable extinguishers approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for marine use are of either B-I or B-II classification. The size and the number of extinguishers that are required to be carried on a boat vary with the length of the boat. A U.S. Coast Guard approved extinguisher bears the label of a testing laboratory and will include either a U.S. Coast Guard approval number or specify “Marine Type USCG.”

Boaters should be familiar with the correct use of fire extinguishers. Fire drills are highly recommended (also see the **FIRE** section).

Some Additional Points:

- Do not test fire an extinguisher (this breaks the seals and causes leakage). See label for additional information.
- Place extinguishers in readily accessible locations, but NOT where fire is likely to break out. For example, an extinguisher mounted over a galley stove or inside an engine compartment may be impossible to reach if a fire breaks out.
- Dry chemical extinguishers stored horizontally are less susceptible to packing or caking of the powder charge due to settling. Occasionally, remove extinguishers from their brackets and give them a good shake to redistribute the agent.

Visual Distress Signals

Signals help take the “search” out of search and rescue. Boating emergencies and other problems occur for many reasons and you will need help with those you can’t handle yourself. Those assisting you must first be able to recognize that you are having a problem and, eventually, be able to see you. Visual distress signals can help if you have the right type for the conditions, and you know how to use them.

Visual distress signals are classified and approved by the U.S. Coast Guard as day signals, night signals, or combination day and night signals. Boats under 16 feet in length, manually propelled boats, and open sailboats under 26 feet without engines, are not required to carry day signals. However, those boats must carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise. Other boats must carry both U.S. Coast Guard approved day and night signals at all times. All types have their advantages and disadvantages. If pyrotechnic devices such as smoke signals and flares are used to meet legal requirements, at least 3 must be carried. All U.S. Coast Guard approved pyrotechnic devices are marked with an expiration date.

Three flares don’t last long in an emergency. For that reason many boaters carry (in ADDITION to the legal requirements) other signal devices including expired pyrotechnics, survival mirrors, floating streamers, signal kites, whether or not they are approved. If you do carry expired flares, they can be used first. If the expired devices work, then you now have additional devices as a backup.

Examples of U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals are as follows:

- Orange flag with distress symbol - day signal
- Orange smoke (3) - day signal
- Electric, automatic SOS distress light - night signal
- Hand held flares (3) - both day and night signal
- Red meteor aerial flares (3) - both day and night signal
- Parachute flares (3) - both day and night signal

All visual distress signals should be clearly marked, and placed in an easily accessible location. Pyrotechnic devices should be packaged in a watertight container.

Carry extra visual and sound signaling devices either in your pockets or on your PFD. If you get separated from your boat, you will be glad you did! (Also see **DISTRESS SIGNALS**.)

Sound Signals

According to the Navigation Rules and state law, vessels less than 39 feet, 4 inches (12 meters) are not specifically required to carry a sound signaling device such as a whistle, horn or bell but they must have some means of making an “efficient sound signal”. Fastening a whistle to each PFD is a great way to meet this requirement. Vessels over 39 feet, 4 inches (12 meters) are required to carry both a bell and a powered whistle or horn.

Note:

The Navigation Rules (International) apply to all boats on all Alaska waters. Rules 32-37, in Part D, address the signals used when maneuvering, warning other boaters, and attracting attention. It is the responsibility of the boat operator to learn and use these signals. Additional information, including all recognized signals and the proper use of signals are found in the complete Navigation Rules, which may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954, (202) 512-1800 or via the internet at: www.uscg.mil/vtm/pages/rules.htm.

Ventilation

An enclosed space containing explosive vapors is a bomb waiting to go off! Any boat equipped with a gasoline engine installed inside an enclosed engine or fuel tank space (not open to the atmosphere) must have an efficient ventilation system to disperse explosive gases.

Natural ventilation consists of at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls or their equivalent. At least one exhaust duct extending to the lower portion of the bilge and at least one intake (supply) duct extending to a point midway to the bilge (or at least below the level of the carburetor air intake) is required.

Boats built after July 31, 1980, are required to have powered ventilation (exhaust blower) for engine compartments that are not open to the atmosphere. Such boats are also required to display a warning label such as this:

“Warning - Gasoline vapors can explode. Before starting engine, operate blower for 4 minutes and check engine compartment bilge for gasoline vapors.”

Check the galley! Butane and propane are even more dangerous than gasoline. Heavier than air, they flow rapidly into the lower part of the boat and are extremely difficult to remove. If you cook with a liquid petroleum gas such as propane or butane, be sure the fuel tank enclosure is properly vented.

Flame Arresters

Backfire flame arresters are devices installed on inboard gas engine carburetors that prevent fire and explosion due to engine backfire. These devices must be kept clean, and periodically inspected for damage. They are required on all motorboats with inboard gas engines manufactured after April 25, 1940.

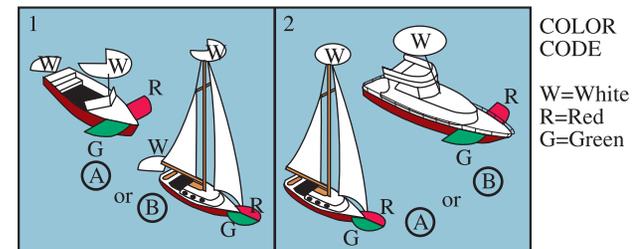
Exceptions:

- A vessel which has an attachment to the carburetor, or has the engine located so that flames caused by engine backfire, will be dispersed outside the vessel so neither the vessel nor the persons on board are endangered.
- A vessel whose air and fuel intake system bears a U.S. Coast Guard approved label stating that such a system is safe without a flame arrester.

Navigation Lights and Shapes

The Navigation Rules (International) apply on Alaska waters. Rules 20-31, found in Part C, address navigation lights and day shapes. According to the rules and state law, all boats must display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise, and during periods of restricted visibility. Different light and day shape requirements apply to and identify many different kinds of boats under a variety of conditions, and it is the responsibility of the boat operator to know the ones that are used in the areas where they boat. The complete lighting and day shape requirements are found in the Navigation Rules which may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954, (202) 512-1800 or via the internet at: www.uscg.mil/vtm/pages/rules.htm.

This section summarizes the lighting requirements for boats under 20 meters (65 feet, 7 inches).



Power-Driven Boats

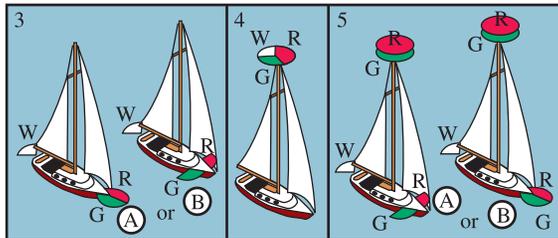
Power-driven boats shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in No. 1. Vessels less than 12 meters (39 feet, 4 inches) may show the lights shown in Nos. 1 or 2. A power-driven boat of less than 7 meters (23 feet) in length whose maximum speed cannot exceed 7 knots may exhibit an all-round white light and if practicable, also exhibit side lights.

Sailboats and Boats Under Oars

A sailboat operating under both machinery and sail power is considered a power-driven boat.

Sailboats under sail alone must exhibit navigation lights, as shown in Nos. 3, 4, or 5. A sailboat of less than 7 meters (23 feet) in length may carry an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision (see No. 6c).

A boat under oars may (a) display those lights prescribed for sailboats or (b) have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision (see No. 6).

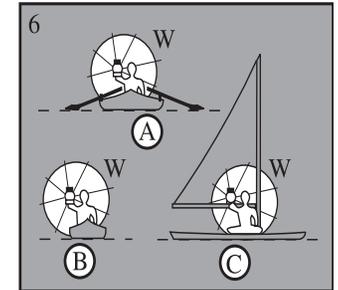


Anchor Lights

Power-driven boats and sailboats at anchor must display anchor lights. An anchor light is an all-round white light visible for 2 miles and exhibited forward where it can best be seen.

Vessels less than 7 meters (23 feet) are not required to display anchor lights unless anchored in or near a narrow channel, fairway, anchorage, or where other vessels normally navigate.

Anchor lights are not required on vessels less than 20 meters anchored in a special anchorage designated by the Secretary of Transportation.



REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Nationwide, all undocumented boats equipped with propulsion machinery must be registered by the state in which principal use occurs. In Alaska, non-motorized boats must also be registered if 10 feet or longer. Exceptions to the state registration requirement apply to:

- Boats owned by government agencies and used for official purposes.
- Foreign vessels.
- Boats with current registration from another state (though not to exceed 90 days).
- Ship's lifeboats that are used solely for lifesaving purposes.
- Large boats documented by the U.S. Coast Guard's vessel documentation center.

Boats with current boat registration issued by the U.S. Coast Guard. When a boat is registered, the owner is issued a Certificate of Number and a Validation Decal for that boat. The certificate must always be kept on the boat when the boat is in use. Once issued by the state, this registration cannot be reassigned or transferred to another boat. In Alaska, registration is valid for a three-year period.

In the event of a boating emergency or a theft, boat registration provides valuable information to rescuers and to law enforcement officers.

How to Register

The Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is the agency that registers boats in Alaska. To register, the owner must complete a state application for boat registration, and present the application together with the appropriate fees to the Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles. An owner of a boat that has not yet been assigned a Certificate of Number in Alaska and is applying for a new certificate of number must also provide one of the following ownership documents with their application:

1. Manufacturer's statement of origin (new boats only)
2. Carpenter's certificate
3. Bill-of-Sale from a dealer or the previous owner
4. Title or Certificate of Number from another state
5. Affidavit of ownership

Registration forms are available at any Alaska DMV office. Forms and additional information are also available on the internet through the Alaska Boating Safety Program's web page at www.alaskaboatingsafety.org or the DMV web page at: www.state.ak.us/dmv/reg/boat.htm.

Registration Fees

Boats equipped with mechanical propulsion, including non-powered boats with auxiliary machinery propulsion (for 3 years):

Original Certificate of Number, transfer of ownership, or renewal: \$24.00
 Duplicate Certificate of Number or replacement decal: \$5.00

Boats 10 feet and longer **NOT** equipped with mechanical propulsion (for 3 years):

Original Certificate of Number, transfer of ownership, or renewal: \$10.00
 Duplicate Certificate of Number or replacement decal: \$5.00

Notification Requirements

The boat owner is required to notify the DMV, in writing, within 15 days of:

1. Any change in address
2. The theft or recovery of the boat
3. The loss or destruction of a valid Certificate of Number
4. The transfer of all or part of the owner's interest in the boat
5. The destruction or abandonment of the boat

The boat owner is also required to surrender the Certificate of Number to the DMV within 15 days if the Certificate of Number becomes invalid due to any of the following:

1. The U.S. Coast Guard documents the boat
2. The owner transfers all of their ownership of the boat
3. The boat is destroyed or abandoned
4. Fees are not paid
5. The application contains a fraudulent statement
6. The boat is no longer principally used in Alaska
7. The owner involuntarily loses their interest in the boat by legal process

Display of Number

If a boat has mechanical propulsion, the "AK" number designated for the boat by the Certificate of Number must be painted on or otherwise permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the boat. Non-powered boats are **not required** to display the number, but doing so speeds identification in an emergency.

A "backing plate" made of plastic or other suitable material may be used as a surface on which to place the number if the boat is an inflatable, or if the boat is so configured that the number would not be easily seen if it was affixed to the hull or superstructure.

Boat dealers may use a removable backing plate to display the number, but only if the boat is actually being tested or demonstrated.

Only the registration number issued for that boat shall be displayed.

Numbers must be plain, vertical block letters not less than 3 inches in height. Numbers must contrast with the color of the background. They must be distinctly visible and legible. They must read left to right, and have either a space or hyphen that is the width of a letter or number (except the width of an I or a 1) between each group of letters and numbers (Example: AK 5678 AA).



Display of Validation Decals

All registered boats, including non-powered boats, must display the validation decal(s) issued with the Certificate of Number. The decal(s) must be visible when the boat is in operation. Only a current decal may be displayed. Expired decals must be either covered or removed.

A boat equipped with mechanical propulsion that also displays the “AK” registration number must display this decal within 6 inches of the number on each side of the boat.

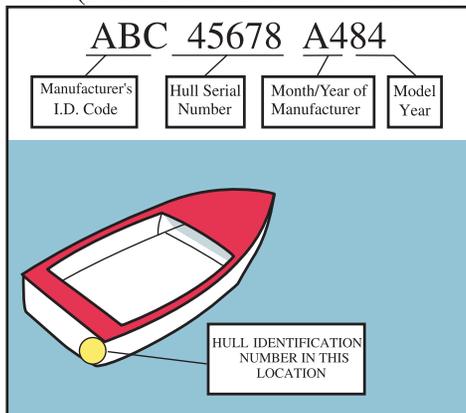
Non-motorized boats, though not required to display numbers, must display a single validation decal on either the side or top, on the forward half of the boat.

Decals may be applied to a backing plate if the plate is attached to the boat in the proper location and if it is impractical to attach the decal directly on the boat.

Hull Identification Number (HIN)

State law requires a permanent Hull Identification Number (HIN) on every boat registered in Alaska. The HIN is like the vehicle identification number of an automobile. The number identifies the manufacturer, and when the boat was built. Manufacturers are required under federal law to put a HIN on the boat during construction. Some boats, such as those manufactured before 1972 and home made boats, do not have one. In this case the owner must obtain a HIN from the DMV. HINs must be permanently inscribed in accordance with 02 AAC 70.080. It is unlawful for a person to remove, alter, deface, destroy, or otherwise make a HIN illegible.

HIN (Hull Identification Number)



OTHER BOATING LAWS

Reckless Operation

A person may not operate a boat or manipulate a device on the waters of the State in a reckless or negligent manner that endangers the life or property of another person (AS 05.25.060).

Alcohol and Boating

Operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance is against the law (AS 28.35.030). Alcohol and boating do not mix!

- Drinking and boating is as dangerous as drinking and operating an automobile. According to a recent study, 30% of all fatal motorboat accidents involve alcohol. Alcohol is the leading cause of nighttime boating accidents.
 - Alcohol affects your sense of balance. Most alcohol related boating deaths are due to drowning, and the majority of these involve a fall overboard.
 - Alcohol affects vision. Alcohol can seriously affect peripheral vision, night vision, and ability to focus.
 - Alcohol affects judgment. Operators under the influence are more likely to take risks they normally wouldn't take AND are more likely to make the wrong decisions in a life-threatening situation.
 - Alcohol slows reaction time. In a hazardous situation, seconds may be all you have to take the appropriate action. Even without alcohol, reaction time is slowed in boating by motion, sun, winds, and noise. Include alcohol, and the effects are multiplied.
 - Alcohol increases heat loss and the risk of hypothermia.
- The Alaska State Office of Boating Safety strongly encourages boaters and passengers to refrain from consuming alcohol when boating.

Littering and Waste Disposal

It is unlawful to litter on state or federal waters. Many forms of litter including polystyrene cups, plastic bags, bait packages, and monofilament line can kill or injure birds, fish, and marine mammals. Properly dispose of litter on shore.

It is illegal to discharge human waste from a boat within 3 miles of the shoreline.

Federal law requires an operable U.S. Coast Guard certified marine sanitation device (MSD) be installed on boats with toilets when on U.S. navigable waters.

The federal Water Pollution Control Act also prohibits the discharge of oil, or hazardous or toxic substances into navigable waters.

Boating Accidents

The operator of a boat involved in a collision, accident, or casualty shall render assistance as is practicable and necessary to save other persons from danger or to minimize the danger to other persons to the extent that the operator can do so without serious danger to the operator's boat, crew, and passengers. The operator must also give the operator's name, address, and identification number of the operator's boat in writing to each person injured in the collision, accident, or casualty and to the owner of property damaged in the collision, accident, or casualty. (AS 05.25.030).

Report Required

If a boating accident occurs and results in a fatality, injury, or property damage over \$500, the boat operator or owner must make a written report of the accident to the Dept. of Public Safety (AS 05.25.030). Under federal law, if a person dies or there are injuries requiring more than first aid, the report must be filed within 48 hours. If a boat accident involves loss or damage greater than \$500, the report must be filed within 10 days. Reports are used primarily to gather important statistical information.

An accident report form can be obtained from the State Office of Boating Safety, the Dept. of Public Safety, or the U.S. Coast Guard.

Marine Patrols

Alaska State Troopers, State Park Rangers, some municipal police departments, and the U.S. Coast Guard all enforce boating laws.

Whenever you are contacted by one of these officers, you must stop and permit the officer to come alongside to check for boat registration and required safety equipment. Law violators can expect to be cited. When approached by a law enforcement vessel using its siren or flashing light, you must slow to a speed sufficient for safe steering only. You may resume speed when out of the vicinity or at the direction of the officer.



Safe boaters will find these officers helpful friends. On occasion, you may be stopped and warned of an anticipated storm or cautioned of potential dangers.

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Although meeting minimum federal and Alaska requirements is important, boaters should carry additional gear and make other safety checks that will vary depending on the boat and operating conditions. Alaska boaters are often a long way from help. That means we must be as self-sufficient as possible. Experienced Alaska boaters know conditions can change quickly on the water. Adequate pre-departure preparation will prevent or help resolve many common boating problems. Boaters will also be better prepared to assist others. This example of a pre-departure checklist for a powerboat incorporates federal and Alaska requirements, and some additional recommendations. Develop your own pre-departure checklist that is specific to your boat. Complete it before each boating season and again before each trip.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- Carefully inspected, properly sized, worn and properly fastened by each person.
- Type IV throwable PFD (seat cushion or throw ring with attached floating, 1/4" minimum diameter, poly line) readily accessible, with other end secured to the vessel.
- Survival (immersion) suits inspected. Zippers adequately waxed, and unzipped in down position. Suits are readily accessible.
- Mark PFDs (especially Type IVs) with boat registration number.

Signals/Communication

- Horn or whistle, operational, capable of a 4 second blast, audible for 1/2 a mile. If air horn, have a spare can of air. Bell required if vessel is 39 feet or longer.
- Day and night visual distress signals packed in an easily accessible waterproof container, and clearly marked. Flares must have current dates. (see [Visual Distress Signals](#)).
- EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) working, and battery current and EPIRB readily accessible (for off-shore boaters).
- VHF marine radio(s).
- Cell phone with waterproof bag.

Fire Extinguishers

- Fire extinguisher(s) with gauge, corrosion free, clear nozzles, and FULLY CHARGED.
- Secured in a horizontal position in a readily accessible location, but NOT where fire is likely to occur.
- Secure mounts and brackets.
- Current inspection tags, if required.

Fuel and Oil

- Adequate fuel for the trip. “Rule of Thirds” = 1/3 out, 1/3 back, 1/3 spare. The only time you have too much fuel is during a fire! (see **FUELING**).
- Fuel filter, tanks, tank vents, fuel lines and all fuel fittings carefully inspected for leaks, cracks, clogs, and water/dirt contamination.
- Engine oil checked and/or proper fuel/oil mixture checked.
- Tanks over 7 gallons grounded and vented.

Bilges/Engine Compartments

- Ventilation ducts clear and functional, connections secure for all closed compartments with potential for explosive vapors, and potential ignition source.
- “Sniff test” around the engine and bilge areas for fuel leaks or vapors before ventilating. If detected, stop and search for the source.
- Blower checked, engine area ventilated for 5 minutes. Before starting engines, do sniff test again. If odor detected after ventilating, stop and search for source before starting engine.
- Bilge clean and reasonably dry.
- Oil or waste cleaned up to prevent an illegal discharge. Dispose of waste properly.
- Bilge pumps start, run, and shut off properly.

Main and Auxiliary Engines

- Belts, hoses, and fittings checked.
- Backfire flame arrestor tight, clean, and in good condition (inboard gas engines).
- Seawater strainer clean, in good condition, and correct coolant level (inboard).
- Water pump operational--“telltale” water stream (outboard).
- Props and lower units inspected.

- Engine(s), secure on transom--clamps or bolt nuts tight, secure, tighten if necessary and wire transom clamps together.
- Start/warm-up all engines for 5 minutes--monitor gauges, and check fuel and cooling systems for leaks.
- Test forward and reverse gears, steering, and emergency cut-off switches.
- Inspect exhaust hoses and each of the metallic exhaust components for cracks, leaking, rusting, or other deterioration. Replace if necessary.

Hull

- Hull bottom inspected before launch.
- Drain plug(s) installed before launch.
- Registration numbers/decals properly displayed.
- General inspection/walk around.
- Galley and heating systems secure, tanks properly installed, fuel lines secure, and connectors secure. No flammable material nearby.
- Marine sanitation devices (MSD) checked and working properly.

Electrical/Electronics

- Battery switches operational and in proper positions.
- Volt meters working and confirm proper charging voltage.
- Batteries fully charged, with proper electrolyte level.
- Battery terminal connections secure, with no corrosion.
- Batteries encased in plastic boxes with terminals covered, and secured with a strap.
- Spare batteries for battery powered accessories (cell phone, marine radio, flashlight).
- Navigation and anchor lights on board, checked, working, and showing proper configuration.
- Electric bilge pumps start, run, and shut off properly.
- Jumper cables.
- All other gauges operational.
- All electronic devices operational.

Ground Tackle and Dock Lines

- Main and auxiliary anchors, each with chain and line. At least one anchor system attached to the boat and ready. Anchors and tackle selected for the bottom type and weather/water conditions.
- Sea anchor, with a 200-foot line.

- Four dock lines, and two or three spare.
- All dock and anchor lines inspected for chafing and wear.
- Two (or more) fenders.

Other Equipment, Tools, and Spare Parts

- Tools - adequate and in good condition, including fuel filter wrench, adjustable wrenches, screw drivers, open end wrench set, pliers, spark plug wrench, electrical repair kit, and locking pliers.
 - Manual bailing device (even if the boat has an electric bilge pump).
 - Knife and anchor shackle key.
 - Sunglasses or goggles.
 - Hearing protection.
 - Fuel cap key/wrench.
 - Foot pump, and fabric repair materials (inflatables).
 - First aid kit and prescription medicines in waterproof container.
 - Personal survival kit - always on your person.
 - Watch or small clock.
 - Manual propulsion (oars, paddles), especially if boat is under 16 feet.
 - Compass (with headings list).
 - Signal mirror.
 - Flashlight.
 - Radar reflector.
 - Depth soundings marked on oar, sounding pole, or a line.
- Water and food, tarp or tent, fire making materials, and spare clothing (in case of an overnight).
 - Inflatable raft or dinghy (for larger boats).
 - Fuel additive for water/condensation.
 - Push poles (river boats).
- Spare parts (marine, not automobile), appropriate for the vessel [such as hull repair materials, right size prop, prop nut and thrust washer, shear pins, spark plugs, various sized hose clamps, starter rope, fuses, bailing wire, fuel filter cartridge, duct tape, drain plugs, light bulbs, spare ignition and lock keys, and water pump kit]. Consult your marine dealer to determine what other spare parts are recommended for your boat.

Documents

- Registration certificate or vessel documentation (See the **REGISTRATION** section).
- Capacity plate and Hull Identification Number (HIN) visible and legible.

- Certificate of compliance label (boats under 20 feet with inboard engines, manufactured after October 31, 1972).
- Licenses and permits (moorage stickers, fishing licenses, etc.).

References

- Navigation Rules
- Owner's manuals
- Charts
- Maps
- Tide book
- Log book

Float Planning

Like the flight plans used by Alaska pilots, experienced boaters use float plans to provide family or friends (and rescuers) with the information necessary to assist them in case they become overdue. Completed before each trip, float planning is a four-step process:

1. Risk assessment. Gather information about possible boating hazards, especially if you are unfamiliar with the area. Consult charts, local boaters, the weather forecast, and check existing conditions. Never start a trip leg at the upper limit of your ability. Conditions can change quickly requiring a much higher level of skill.
2. Make a go/no go determination. This is based on the results of the pre-departure check and risk assessment. Remember, safe arrival is mandatory but a departure optional. It is always wise to wait for conditions to improve. It is always better to be on shore wishing you were boating, than to be boating and wishing you were on shore!
3. If a "go", write up the float plan, and provide it to a family member or friend. The plan should include a description of your boat and equipment, your boat registration, passenger names, where you are going and what route you will take, when you expect to return, and when and who to call for help.
4. Notify the same person(s) immediately if your plan changes, and upon your return. If you wait too long or forget, it could result in an unnecessary and costly search.
5. If you can't leave it with someone, at least put it in the front window of the tow vehicle.

Use the example on the following page as a guide for developing float plans.

ALASKA FLOAT PLAN

I. If Overdue, Contact: _____
 Phone: _____
 On (date): _____

II. Vessel Information: Vessel Name: _____
 Boat Registration (or U.S. Coast Guard documentation) No.: _____

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Vessel Type:
<input type="checkbox"/> Kayak
<input type="checkbox"/> Canoe
<input type="checkbox"/> River raft
<input type="checkbox"/> Row boat
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal watercraft
<input type="checkbox"/> Center console/skiff
<input type="checkbox"/> Runabout/bow rider
<input type="checkbox"/> Cabin cruiser/overnighter
<input type="checkbox"/> Sailboat | Hull Type:
<input type="checkbox"/> Canvas/skin
<input type="checkbox"/> Plastic
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiberglass
<input type="checkbox"/> Wood
<input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum
<input type="checkbox"/> Inflatable
<input type="checkbox"/> Rigid hull inflatable
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | Communication/Signals:
<input type="checkbox"/> Installed Marine VHF
<input type="checkbox"/> Handheld Marine VHF
<input type="checkbox"/> Single side band
<input type="checkbox"/> EPIRB
<input type="checkbox"/> Flares
<input type="checkbox"/> Mirror
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell no. _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other signals _____ | Survival Equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal survival kits
<input type="checkbox"/> Tender/raft/dinghy
<input type="checkbox"/> Water
<input type="checkbox"/> Spare food
<input type="checkbox"/> Spare clothing
<input type="checkbox"/> Shelter (tent, tarp)
<input type="checkbox"/> Matches/lighter
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
|--|---|--|--|

Length: _____ Engine(s) make: _____ hp: _____ Hull color: _____ Cabin/top color: _____

III. Vehicle Information:
 License No.: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____ Year: _____ Color: _____
 Location vehicle is parked: _____

IV. Boat Trailer Information:
 License No.: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____ Year: _____ Color: _____
 Location trailer is parked: _____

V. All Persons On Board (POB):

Names/ages:	Phone:	Can operate boat? (Y/N)
		Skipper

VI. Trip Plan:

Depart from:	Departure date/time:	To:	Arrive date/time:

Passenger Briefing

- A moving boat, even on a nice day, makes its own “weather”. Is everyone properly dressed? Carry rain gear and some spare clothing.
- Passengers should know:
 - The float plan, and the alternate plan in case of problems or delays.
 - How to start, shift gears, steer, and stop the boat.
 - Stability rules (such as remaining seated, and refraining from sudden movements).
 - The location of and how to use radios, battery switches, fuel valves, PFDs, survival suits, fire extinguishers, signal devices, EPIRB, rescue devices, survival kit, tool kit, and first aid kit.
 - If survival suits are carried, passengers should be proficient in their use.

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Mechanical breakdown is the most common powerboating problem. Inadequate fuel, a poorly maintained electrical/ignition system, fouled spark plugs, a damaged propeller, or a bad water pump, are just a few of the culprits. Fuel contamination due to condensation is an ever-present problem, especially in coastal areas. Installing even an inexpensive water/fuel separator filter between the fuel tank(s) and engine(s) helps prevent fuel contamination and engine damage.

Keep your boat clean, organized, and well maintained. Follow maintenance schedules in the owner’s manuals. Keep boat, engine, and trailer maintenance records up to date and organized.

WEATHER AND TIDES

Before deciding whether or not to begin a trip, always check the local weather forecast and current weather and water conditions. NEVER try to outrun a bad weather forecast. It is always better, even if inconvenient and disappointing, to wait until conditions improve. Experienced boaters know how to walk away. For detailed weather information, listen to the National Weather Service VHF/FM broadcasts on frequencies of 162.400, 162.425, 162.475 and 162.550 MHz in areas where available. Visit the National Weather Service’s web site at: www.arh.noaa.gov. Boaters can also call the Alaska Weatherline at 1-800-472-0391 for up to date weather forecasts.

If boating in salt water, always carry and use a tide book. Tidal currents can be very strong in some areas of Alaska, and can cause dangerous “rips” or standing waves. In those areas, it is usually better to wait for the “slack” between the changes in the currents’ direction. Remember that tides and currents can greatly affect fuel consumption.

FUELING

Most boat fires and explosions happen during or just after fueling. To prevent an accident, follow these rules:

1. Fuel before dark.
2. Secure and cover batteries to prevent terminals from shorting and sparking fuel vapors.
3. Do not smoke or strike matches.
4. Shut off motors.
5. Turn off all battery switches and electrical equipment.
6. Close all cabin windows, doors.
7. Take portable tanks out of the boat to fill them.
8. Keep the fill nozzle in contact with the tank while filling, to prevent a static discharge.
9. Catch drips and wipe up any spilled gasoline with oil absorbant pads. Discard in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.
10. Before starting the engine, ventilate engine compartment for at least five minutes, and sniff around to make sure there is no odor of gasoline anywhere in the boat.

BOAT CAPACITY AND LOADING

Buoyancy and stability on the water is not just a good idea; it’s a law of physics. Proper loading is critical to safe boat operation. Overloading, or shifting loads make for dangerous situations, even on calm water. Always use great care when loading. Properly position items and passengers for existing conditions, and then adjust as necessary for safety and the best boat performance. Carefully secure heavy items from shifting, and instruct passengers in small boats to remain seated unless otherwise instructed.

A U.S. Coast Guard boat capacity plate must be installed by the manufacturer on all powerboats built after 1972. The plate lists the maximum number of persons, total weight of passengers, and the maximum total weight of the passengers, gear, and motor. If the boat is designed to be equipped with an

outboard engine, the plate will also list the maximum horsepower. Never exceed a boat’s recommended capacity. If you don’t have a capacity plate, use the following formula to estimate the number of persons the boat will safely carry in calm conditions:

$$\text{Boat Length in Feet} \times \text{Boat Width in Feet} = \text{Number of Persons}$$

15

The results give the number of persons (150 lb. average per person) that can be put aboard without crowding in good weather conditions.

BOAT TRAILERS

- Alaska law requires that boat trailers be registered.
- Boat trailers are also subject to the lighting requirements of Title 13 of the Alaska Administrative Code (AAC). Check trailer lights before each trip.
- The driver of the towing vehicle must be able to safely stop in a reasonable distance. Check the function of the brakes on flat ground before traveling. Allow more time and distance for braking while towing. Booster brakes are best with heavy boats.
- Carefully follow the trailer manufacturer’s recommendations for maintenance. In particular, carefully inspect wheel bearings routinely for proper lubrication and wear. If necessary, change them.
- Before towing, consider: Does the tow vehicle have adequate power? Is the transmission capable of towing? Are adequate cooling systems installed?
- Check capacities before hauling:
 - Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR).
 - Gross Vehicle Axle Weight Rating (GVAWR).
 - Trailer tongue weight.
 - Trailer capacity.
- Adequate tie-downs are necessary at the bow and stern.
- Bumper hitches are not recommended. Hitches should be welded or bolted to the frame of the towing vehicle.
- The tow ball and ball coupler must be the same size. Secure the ball coupler with a pin or lock after it is placed onto the ball and closed. Two safety chains crossed under the coupler will prevent the trailer tongue from dropping to the ground in the event the tow bar or coupling device fails. The chains must have a tensile strength equal to the weight of the trailer, and be long enough to permit the turning of the vehicle. The tip of the chain hook should face the vehicle, not the boat.

- Check overhead and side clearances every time the trailer is moved. Place all overhead antennas in the down position.

- Check the tires and spare for correct pressure and wear.
- Make sure you have a proper size jack and lug nut wrench for the trailer.
- Secure all loose items in the boat.
- Stop periodically during each trip to check the tires for proper inflation, and the wheel hubs/bearings for overheating.
- ALWAYS carry a spare set of boat trailer bearings and wheel bearing grease when on the road. With the wide variety of trailer models available, it may be impossible to find a set when you need them the most.

LAUNCHING AND RETRIEVAL

When launching and loading boats, avoid blocking ramps and docks when others are waiting to use the facility. The following tips are offered to assist you when launching:

1. Check that engine and hull were not damaged during the trip.
2. Check the ramp for hazards or obstructions.
3. All passengers should be out of the vehicle.
4. Remove all tie down straps that are securing the boat to the trailer.
5. Tilt engines/out drives up, disengage travel brackets or remove transom saver.
6. Check that the ball hitch and safety chains are secure.
7. Check that drain plug(s) are in place and secure!
8. Check that winch line and bow safety cable are secure.
9. Unplug wire harness.
10. Prepare wheel chocks (keep at the ready).
11. Unlock all vehicle doors.
12. Unfasten seat belt.
13. One person acts as lookout and is ready with chocks.
14. Back boat in just until it floats or can easily be pushed off of trailer. If possible, do not immerse rear wheels of vehicle.
15. Put truck in first gear, or park, and put on parking brake.
16. Place chocks behind tires.
17. Secure bow line or hand to assistant, and remove the winch cable and bow safety cable.
18. Guide boat off trailer and secure to dock (away from the launch ramp), or guide up to shore.

Practice backing the boat and trailer until you are proficient. A crowded boat launch ramp is not the place to learn!

Retrieving:

1. Essentially the opposite of launching.
2. Be cautious while winching the boat into place on the trailer. Watch for signs of a worn cable and replace if worn. Make sure winch ratchet click-stop is engaged to prevent handle from spinning in reverse.
3. Rinse trailer with fresh water following saltwater immersion.
4. Make sure boat is dewatered before getting on the road.

Be courteous. The less time you spend on the ramp or at the dock the more other boaters will appreciate it.

THEFT PREVENTION

Nationwide, boat theft has become big business. To help prevent theft, follow these tips:

1. Take loose gear and valuables with you when you leave the boat.
2. Secure a portable outboard motor to the boat with a lock.
3. Lock all hatches and storage compartments. Use hasps that have concealed screws (dead bolts provide better security where usable).
4. Secure the trailer to the tow vehicle with a chain and lock. Immobilize the trailer by removing a trailer wheel and/or blocking up frame.
5. Mark and record property. Record all serial numbers; copy your registration certificate and store in a safe place. Use a video camera to record the boat, trailer, and equipment.
6. Be alert to strangers in the area of your boat.
7. Install an audible alarm.
8. Make sure the boat registration is current!

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

To help ensure a quality boating experience for you and for others in the future, please follow these guidelines while you're on the water:

- Never discharge oily bilge water, chemicals, trash, fishing line, or other human generated waste into the water.
- Know how much the fuel tanks can hold, and don't overfill them.
- Use oil absorbent pads to catch fuel drips, then dispose of properly on shore.
- Reduce the amount of packaging and plastic taken aboard.
- Keep a sturdy garbage container on board and use it. Pick up any litter that falls overboard. Establish a rule that no trash, no matter how small, gets thrown overboard.
- Use on-shore restrooms before departure.
- Keep untreated raw sewage out of coastal and inland waters.
- Don't keep more fish that you can use within the next 3-6 months.
- Consider using sinkers made of materials other than lead. Small lead sinkers are ingested by shore birds and sea birds, killing them.
- Encounters with marine mammals are always an exciting experience.

However, federal law protects many marine mammal species. Boaters should stay at least 300 feet away from marine mammals, and more if your presence makes the animals change their behavior. Time spent viewing individuals or a particular group of animals should be kept to less than 30 minutes. Never try to pursue animals, restrict their path, or encircle them. Always leave them a clear escape route. If a marine mammal approaches, put the engine in neutral and let the animal pass. If an animal displays erratic behavior or appears disturbed, cautiously leave the area. Never handle young animals, and refrain from offering animals food items.

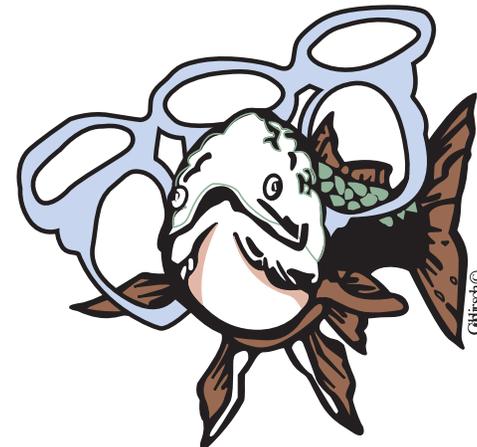
- Many of our shoreline areas are very sensitive habitats. Please practice "leave no trace" techniques when on land.
- Avoid getting too close to bird rookeries. Any change in a bird's behavior means you're too close.
- Alaska has many special protected areas. Whenever boating in a new area, contact local resource management agencies or land owners to obtain additional guidelines.
- Keep the boat bottom clean and engine tuned for optional performance and reduced emissions.
- Do heavy boat cleaning and maintenance well out of the water. Regularly scrub decks with fresh water and a brush to reduce the need for heavy cleaners.

- Recycle used zincs.
- Don't idle your engine(s) unnecessarily.
- Aquatic nuisance species (ANS) are non-indigenous species that invade local water bodies and can threaten native species, ecological stability, traditional human activities, and even human health. Examples include zebra mussels, hydrilla, whirling disease, spiny water fleas, round gobies, and water hyacinth. Though not yet a problem in Alaska, ANS have become a significant problem in other states. When boating in the "lower 48", Alaskans can help reduce the spread of ANS by following these simple steps:

Clean and dry boats and equipment before transporting. Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals from the hull.

Eliminate water from boats and equipment, including bilge areas, before transporting.

Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.

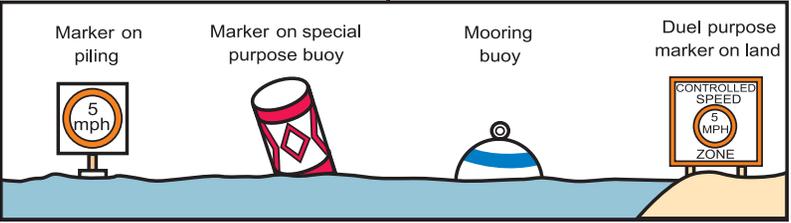


AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Aids to navigation (information markers, regulatory markers, and channel markers) are traffic signs for our waterways. Placed by the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of Alaska, they help boaters locate their position, navigate a safe course, and steer clear of hazards or specially designated areas such as swim beaches and no-wake zones. It is a criminal offense to damage or interfere with aids to navigation. Other than mooring buoys, never tie up to a buoy, day beacons, or light structures. If you should collide with or damage an aid to navigation, report it immediately to the U.S. Coast Guard or local law enforcement. In Alaska, both the U.S. Coast Guard and the State use the same marking system. Examples follow:

Information Markers, Regulatory Markers and Mooring Buoys

<p>BOATS KEEP OUT Explanations may be placed outside the crossed diamond shape such as dam, rapids, swim area</p> 	<p>DANGER The nature of the danger may be indicated by words inside the diamond shape, such as shoal, reef, wreck, dam</p> 
<p>CONTROLLED AREA Type of control is indicated within the circle such as 5 mph, no anchoring</p> 	<p>INFORMATION For displaying official information such as directions, distances, location</p> 



Marker on piling: 5 mph

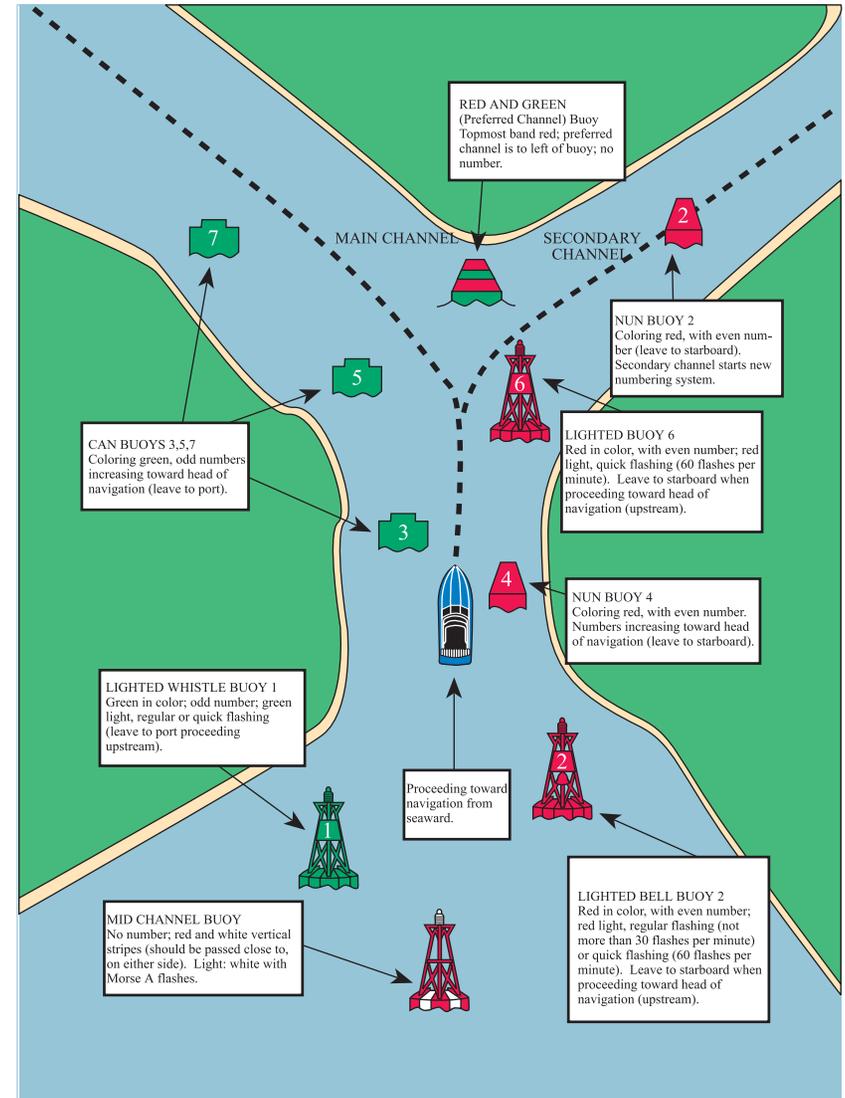
Marker on special purpose buoy

Mooring buoy

Dual purpose marker on land: CONTROLLED SPEED 5 MPH ZONE

Channel Markers

An easy way to remember your position, relative to channel markers is “red, right returning.” Red channel markers should be on your right (starboard) side when proceeding north, upstream, or “returning” from open water to the harbor or dock.



NAVIGATION RULES – STEERING AND SAILING

The Navigation Rules, 1-19, Part A, are federal laws that help boaters stay clear of each other. Nationally, more than two-thirds of all boating accidents are caused by violations of the Rules. The Rules fall into two categories: Inland, and International. The International Rules apply on all the U.S. navigable waters within Alaska. In applying the Rules, please note that:

1. The ordinary practice of seamanship requires precaution under all conditions and circumstances over strict adherence to the Rules or any other practice.
2. Though strict adherence to the Rules may not always be prudent, the Rules are very precise in stating that nothing exonerates any vessel from the consequences of neglect. Neglect, among other things, could be improper speed (Rule 6) or ignoring your responsibilities under the Rules.

3. Although certain vessels in certain situations should keep out of the way of other vessels, the Navigation Rules do NOT confer upon any vessel the “right of way”. The rules assign tasks, NOT entitlements.

Following is a summary of some of the rules encountered most often. Copies of the complete Navigation Rules may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954, (202) 512-1800 or it can be downloaded via link on the state boating safety program website, at: www.alaskaboatingsafety.org.

Responsibility (Rule 2)

(a) None of the Rules shall excuse anyone from the consequences of any neglect to comply with these Rules or of the neglect of any precaution required by the ordinary practice of seamen, or by the special circumstances of the case.

(b) In using these Rules, be aware of all dangers of navigation and collision, and any special circumstances, including the limits of the boats involved, which may require you to depart from these Rules, to avoid immediate danger.

General Definitions [Selected] (Rule 3)

Vessel - means every description of watercraft, including non-displacement craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on the water.

Power-driven vessel - means any vessel propelled by machinery.

Sailing vessel - means any vessel under sail except if under mechanical power.

Vessel engaged in fishing - means any vessel fishing with nets, lines, trawls, or other fishing apparatus that restrict maneuverability, but does NOT include a vessel fishing with trolling lines or other fishing apparatus that does not restrict maneuverability.

Vessel not under command - means a vessel, which through some exceptional circumstance, is unable to maneuver as required by the Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.

Vessel restricted in ability to maneuver - means a vessel which from the nature of its work is restricted in the ability to maneuver as required by the Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.

Vessel constrained in draft - means a power-driven vessel that, because of its draft in relation to the available depth of the water, is severely restricted in the ability to deviate from the course it is on.

Underway - means a vessel is not at anchor, made fast to the shore, or aground.

Restricted visibility - means any condition in which visibility is restricted by fog, mist, falling snow, heavy rain, sand, or other similar causes.

Proper Look Out (Rule 5)

At all times, keep a proper look-out with eyes, ears, and all useful means available, so as to be fully aware of the situation and the risk of collision.

Safe Speed (Rule 6)

At all times, travel at a safe speed so you can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within an appropriate distance.

Risk of Collision (Rule 7)

(a) Use all available means appropriate to the situation to determine if risk of collision exists. If there is any doubt, such risk shall be deemed to exist.

(b) Risk of collision exists if the compass bearing of an approaching boat does not appreciably change.

(c) Don't assume other boaters know or follow the Navigation Rules.

(d) If risk of collision exists, vessels become either the “stand-on” or “give-way” vessel.

Action to Avoid Collision (Rule 8)

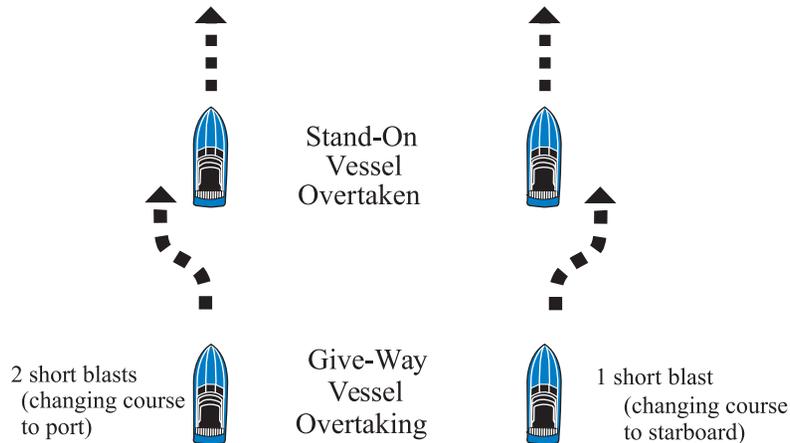
- (a) Any action taken to avoid collision shall, if conditions permit, be positive, early, and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship.
- (b) Any change of course or speed to avoid collision shall, if conditions permit, be large enough to be obvious to another boat. Avoid a series of small changes in course or speed.
- (c) When taking avoiding action, pass the other boat at a safe distance.
- (d) If necessary to avoid collision or to allow more time to assess the situation, you must slow down or stop.

Narrow Channels (Rule 9)

- (a) When traveling along a narrow channel, keep as near to the edge of the channel as is safe and practical, which lies on your starboard side.
- (b) A vessel less than 20 meters long or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel that can safely navigate only within a narrow channel.
- (c) Do not cross a narrow channel if doing so would impede the passage of a vessel that must stay in that channel to safely navigate.

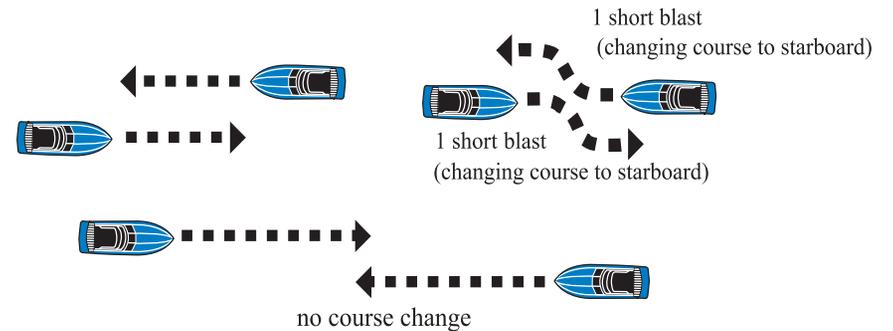
Overtaking (Rule 13)

The vessel overtaking shall give way to the vessel being overtaken. Be prepared to use a sound signal to indicate your intentions.



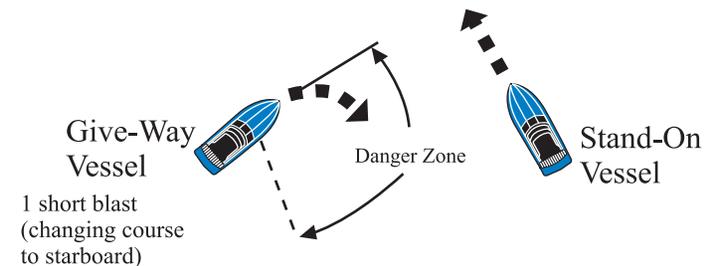
Head-On Situation (Rule 14)

- (a) When two power-driven vessels traveling in opposite or nearly opposite directions are in risk of collision, they are in a head-on situation. Each shall turn to starboard, so that they will pass port-to-port (just like cars on a road).
- (b) A head-on situation exists when a power-driven vessel sees another power-driven vessel's bow dead ahead or nearly so.
- (c) If there is any doubt as to whether a head-on situation exists between two power-driven vessels, assume that it does exist and be prepared to signal your intentions.



Crossing Situation (Rule 15)

With two power-driven vessels crossing and in risk of collision, the vessel which has the other to starboard shall give way and shall, if conditions allow, cross astern of the other vessel.



Action by Give-way Vessel (Rule 16)

Every give-way vessel shall take early and large action to keep well clear of the other vessel.

Action by Stand-on Vessel (Rule 17)

(a) When one vessel must give way, the other shall keep its course and speed, unless it appears that the give-way vessel is not taking required early and large action. At this moment, the stand-on vessel may take action to avoid collision.

(b) If the stand-on vessel approaches so close that collision cannot be avoided by the action of the give-way vessel alone, the stand-on vessel shall do all it can to avoid collision.

Responsibilities Between Vessels (Rule 18)

Except where rules 9, 10 (compliance with official traffic separation schemes), and 13 otherwise require, the higher-listed vessel should give way to the lower ones:

- (a) Power-driven vessel
- (b) Sailing vessel
- (c) Vessel engaged in fishing
- (d) Vessel restricted in ability to maneuver
- (e) Vessel not under command

Note: The determination that a vessel is “restricted in its ability to maneuver” is made by the vessel’s master. If that determination is made, the vessel shall also display the Lights and Shapes prescribed in Rule 27, accordingly.

Conduct of Vessels in Restricted Visibility (Rule 19)

(a) When vessels are not in sight of each other when operating in or near an area with restricted visibility, every vessel shall proceed at a safe speed adapted to the prevailing circumstances and conditions of restricted visibility. A power driven vessel must have its engines ready for immediate maneuver.

(b) Every vessel shall have due regard to the prevailing circumstances and conditions of restricted visibility when complying with this Part.

(c) A vessel that detects by radar alone the presence of another vessel shall determine if a close-quarters situation is developing and/or risk of collision exists. If so, she shall take avoiding action in ample time, provided that when such action consists of an alteration of course, so far as possible the following shall be avoided:

(i) an alteration of course to port for a vessel forward of the beam, other than for a vessel being overtaken.

(ii) an alteration of course towards a vessel abeam or abaft the beam.

(d) Except where it has been determined that a risk of collision does not exist, every vessel that hears apparently forward of her beam, the fog signal of another vessel, shall reduce her speed to the minimum at which she can be kept on her course. She shall, if necessary, take all her way off and in any event navigate with extreme caution until danger of collision is over.

Rendering Assistance

Under federal law, the master or person in charge of a vessel is obligated to provide assistance that can be safely provided to any individual in danger at sea. The master or person in charge is subject to a fine and or imprisonment for failure to do so.

COMMUNICATIONS

Marine VHF Radio

Experienced boaters know that a marine VHF radio is one of the best tools available to them. Primarily used to access weather reports and talk to other boaters, they can also be a very effective distress signal (see **EMERGENCY RADIO PROCEDURES**).

On small boats without electrical systems, handheld models are a popular choice. On boats with 12-volt electrical systems, handheld radios can also serve as a backup in case of a main power failure. A boat’s electrical system is often “shorted out” when taking on water. Boaters should be proficient with their radio equipment and practice emergency communications so that procedures become second nature.

Cellular Telephones

Cellular telephones can be a great tool for boaters, but they have limitations:

- Coverage is sometimes limited in certain areas.
- In an emergency, the conversation cannot be monitored by other boaters; you are speaking to just one person.
- The caller's location cannot be determined using radio direction finders.
- 911 calls from marine locations may be misdirected to police or fire departments delaying rescue response.
- The caller cannot always be contacted from rescue boats and aircraft.

Cell phones are an excellent supplement to, but not a replacement for a marine radio. If you do use a cell phone as a your primary means of communication, Take the following precautions before leaving the dock:

- Make sure the battery is fully charged, and consider bringing a fully charged spare.
- Keep the cell phone in a waterproof bag that floats.
- Have the U.S. Coast Guard and other appropriate water rescue phone numbers with you. make them highly visible. Consider taping the numbers to the phone.

(See **EMERGENCY CELLULAR PHONE PROCEDURES**).

HOMELAND SECURITY

Since the events of September 11, 2001, boaters have a new and important role in helping to keep our nation's waterways safe and secure. Please consider the following:

Keep your distance from all military vessels, cruise-liners, and commercial ships.

Never approach within 100-yards of any U.S. naval vessel. If you must operate within this 100-yard zone in order to be in accordance with the navigation rules, you **MUST** first contact the naval vessel or its escort on marine VHF channel 16. Slow to minimum speed if within 500 yards of these vessels, and proceed as directed by the Commanding Officer of the naval or escort vessel. Violators of the Naval Vessel Protection Zone can face up to six years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, not to mention a quick and severe response. Approaching certain other commercial vessels may also result in an immediate boarding.

Observe and avoid all security zones and other restricted areas.

Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise-line, or petroleum facilities. Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges.

Keep your own boat secure from theft. Never leave your boat accessible to others. Always secure and lock your boat when not on board, and always take the keys to the boat with you. When storing your boat, make sure it is secure and its engine is disabled. If it is on a trailer, make the trailer as immovable as possible.

Keep a look out for anything that appears to be out of the ordinary.

Depending on the circumstances, activities that could be considered suspicious include:

1. Persons renting or attempting to procure or "borrow" watercraft or offering cash on the spot for a vessel.
2. Persons asking suspicious questions concerning your vessel (examples, How do you start the engines? How do I turn it on? How much weight does it hold, etc?).
3. Persons loitering around or photographing or creating diagrams of such things as the underside of bridges, established security zones, oil refineries or transfer facilities, military bases, military or government vessels and the waterfront areas near those facilities or vessels.
4. Venders attempting to sell/deliver merchandise or drop off packages in waterfront areas.
5. Persons who are throwing or retrieving unusual objects in or out of the water.

If you encounter a situation that makes you feel suspicious, report it immediately to local law enforcement, the U.S Coast Guard, or port security. Do not approach or challenge suspects.

Show your support for your U.S Coast Guard and State officers.

Make sure you have all required equipment. Properly display your boat registration. Wear your life jacket as a badge of support. By actively demonstrating your commitment to boating safety, you help reduce the demand on limited law enforcement and rescue resources and support their homeland security efforts.

POWERBOATING TIPS

Approximately 80% of all reported boating accidents involve operator controllable factors. Ultimately, the boat operator is responsible for the safety of everyone on the boat. This includes controlling boat speed, obeying regulatory markers, controlling noise, never operating in a reckless, careless, or negligent manner, and staying vigilant (keep looking around; there's always something you missed). Here are some other tips to make your boating experience safer and more enjoyable:

General

- Don't run at full throttle. Keep just enough speed to keep the hull "on step." This is called "cruising speed." It is easier on the engine, and greatly improves fuel economy.
 - Obey the Navigation Rules and comply with aids to navigation.
 - Proceed slowly in shallow water and watch water depth carefully.
 - Maintain a clear, unobstructed forward view at all times. Constantly scan the water back and forth for hazards. Avoid tunnel vision. Crab pot lines, deadheads, and rocks just below the surface are often difficult to spot. Most boating collisions are caused by inattention.
 - Stay within your comfort range and the capabilities of your boat.
 - Always carry effective means of communication.
 - Become proficient with tying basic boater's knots; including the bowline, figure eight, cleat hitch, and anchor bend.
 - Always fasten the emergency engine cut-off cable to you when operating an open skiff alone, or when operating a personal watercraft.
 - Never begin a trip with conditions at the limit of your experience.
- Always leave a comfort margin in case conditions get worse.
- Respect small boat instability. More than half of capsizings and falls overboard occur during calm conditions. Just standing up to net a fish or leaning over the gunwale too far can cause a fall, or cause the boat to rock. If something falls out of the boat, move the boat to the object instead of reaching for it. Do not stand while operating unless the boat is rigged for that type of operation.
 - Use extreme caution when operating near or around towboats or barges. Don't get between the boat and a barge. Towlines are not always visible.
 - Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is becoming a serious problem on our nation's waters. Exposure to improperly vented or malfunctioning cabin

heating systems, and exposure to exhaust gasses around generators and engine exhaust ports are the main culprits. CO binds to red blood cells 240 times more aggressively than oxygen, displacing oxygen and causing metabolic asphyxiation. High exposures to CO result in seizures, coma, and death. CO poisoning can happen very quickly, sometimes with just a few breaths. Because CO is colorless, odorless, and non-irritating, there is often little warning. Everyone on board should keep well clear of engine exhaust ports when engines and generators are running. CO concentrations can be especially high under and near swim platforms. If there is a need to be around swim platforms or near exhaust ports, first shut the engines down. If someone feels dizzy or loses consciousness in those areas, consider the possibility of CO poisoning.

Handling Rough Water

- Avoid rough water--wait until conditions improve, as they always do.
- Waves over the stern cause one-third of all boat sinkings. Be very careful with weight distribution, and avoid sudden stops or backing down into following seas.
- If you get caught in rough weather, proceed to the nearest protected area and pull ashore if possible. Run into the wind, and "tack" back and forth at about a 45-degree angle to the waves. Travel distance will be doubled, so make sure you have adequate fuel.
- Wind and waves are often worse in the middle of an inlet, when rounding a point, and at the mouth of a bay where wind current and seas collide.
- If you lose propulsion, use oars or paddles to keep the bow into the waves. Or use a "sea anchor" tied to the bow. A plastic bucket with a hole in the bottom will work as an emergency sea anchor.



River Boating

Whether by jet boat, airboat, inboard or outboard, powerboating on Alaska's interior rivers is both an exhilarating recreational activity and important means of transportation. River boating puts us in special places that would otherwise be out of reach. However, exercising good judgment, and applying the right mix of skill, ability, and caution are never more important than when powerboating rivers. Following are some important points to consider:

- Match the boat design to the intended use. There are a lot of options out there! Research options, work with your boat dealer and, if possible, test drive boats under similar conditions before purchase.
- River hazards include sweepers, log jams, sand and gravel bars, submerged objects, animals, wind, sunlight and other restricted visibility problems, and other boaters.
- Knowledge of the river is key. Always research new areas. Learn from the locals!
- No matter what else happens, keep in mind the current will ALWAYS be there!
- Do a careful pre-departure check.
- Make sure you have suitable communication devices for the area. For example, cell phones are appropriate in some areas, but in remote places a VHF radio for contacting pilots may be a better choice.
- When launching, always warm up your engine well before pushing away from the bank. Launch in respect to the current. Never push a boat into current without knowing if the engine will start. Then, make sure you are in-line with the current before running up the engine RPM.
- When beaching, try to find places where the boat can be placed facing the current. Otherwise, look for a slow channel or calm backwater pool. ALWAYS secure your boat to the shore.
- If new to river boating, practice your skills in very safe areas first. River boaters should be skilled in turning with and against current, launching, landing and beaching, anchoring, basic troubleshooting and repairs, and reading the water.
- Reading the water is the key to enjoyable river boating. This is a skill that takes time to develop. Generally, it is best to keep in the deeper water that is usually close to the outside edge/cut bank, while still allowing room for a boat coming from the other direction.

Courtesy

- Watch your wake, particularly when operating near docks, floating homes, moorages, and ramps. You are responsible for your wake.
- Be alert for bank anglers, swimmers, water skiers, slow moving boats, and personal watercraft.
- Avoid operating continuously in the same area.
- Avoid spraying people with jet spray or water-ski wake.
- Give fishermen a wide berth. They often have lines out.
- Keep clear of commercial traffic, especially barges under tow.
- Non-powered boats have priority over powerboats.
- If you are a river boater, please be considerate of other boaters, scout each river before running, and learn the bank/river fishing spots.
- Stay at least 100 feet away from a boat towing a water skier.

Anchoring and Mooring

- To anchor a boat, first select the appropriate type and size of anchor, and the appropriate diameter and length of rode (anchor line and chain). Consider the size of your boat, the bottom type, the water conditions, and the depth of the water (from the bow to the bottom). The length of the rode should be 5 to 10 times longer than the depth of the water, depending on the weather conditions, the current, and the size of the boat. Don't forget to account for tidal fluctuation!
- Prepare the anchor and rode in advance, and firmly attach the anchor line to a secure point at the bow. Never anchor from the stern! Anchoring a small boat from the stern has caused many to swamp, capsize and sink.
- Bring the bow into the wind or current. When in areas with no current, put the engine in neutral, and wait for the boat to stop moving forward.
- Lower (do not throw) the anchor over the bow.
- Back up slowly to straighten the anchor line and "set" the anchor.
- Pull the engine's lower unit out of the water to prevent wrapping the anchor line around it.
- Never leave a boat on its own anchor unattended. Tides, current, wind, and wave conditions may change, and can cause an anchor to foul or drag. Maintain an anchor watch.
- Anchoring a boat is not without risk. If the boat is small, instead consider taking the boat up the beach (beyond the high water line) and securing it rather than anchoring. Other options to anchoring include using designated mooring buoys, or setting up a "running line" (with a safety line) to the shore.

PADDLING TIPS

Participation in paddle sports is growing, but so is the number of accidents. In Alaska, paddling fatalities account for between 25% and 60% of all boating deaths each year. Nationally, statistics show that 75% of the paddlers that died in boating accidents were not wearing a PFD. As many as 20% were alcohol related. Surprisingly, operator inexperience accounts for only 1 in 4 paddling fatalities; about 30% of paddling fatalities involve paddlers that had more than 100 hours of experience.

Paddling a kayak, canoe, raft, or drift boat on Alaska's cold water takes specific skills, equipment, and good physical conditioning. All paddlers should take courses and read books and guides specific to their sport. Look for courses that are offered by instructors certified by the American Canoe Association and/or Alaska paddling organizations. The following are additional tips for safe paddling:

General

1. All Alaskan paddlers should be strong swimmers and be in good physical condition.
2. Wear proper PFDs in good condition that are recommended by the manufacturer's label for your specific activity (even when scouting). Choose a style that has superior buoyancy, thermal protection, and a snug fit, without impeding mobility either in or out of the water.
3. Solo paddling is significantly more dangerous than paddling with a partner. Three people or two boats are the recommended minimum. Avoid boating alone!
4. Dress appropriately to avoid exposure. Be prepared to get wet. Hypothermia is always a danger.
5. Paddlers should practice emergency skills and be proficient with handling emergencies (especially re-boarding).
6. Purchase the best quality equipment you can afford, and make sure everyone has a proper size paddle. Carefully inspect the boat and equipment before each trip.
7. Capsizing is a leading cause of paddle boating fatalities. Use caution when loading and unloading. Distribute weight properly, Keep loads low and all items well secured. Never overload a paddleboat. Canoes should have at least six inches of freeboard.
8. Always file a float plan, and stick to it.

9. Use sunscreen and brimmed hat, even on cloudy days. Alaska's summer sun is strong, and the reflection from the water magnifies it.

10. Bring water in a non-breakable container, and food, personal medications, and extra clothing in a waterproof container that is then attached to the boat. Consider other equipment such as a waterproof watch, eyeglasses strap, bailer or sponge, insect repellent, first aid kit, kneeling pads, and plenty of signaling devices. Remember all items will be at risk for getting wet. Package them appropriately, and leave unnecessary items behind.

River Paddling

1. Learn the international scale of difficulty for swift water. Before a trip, carefully review maps and determine the current and anticipated water levels, and evacuation routes. Match your skill and experience to the difficulty of the river.
2. Always scout swift water from the shore first. Alaska's rivers each have unique personalities, and these personalities can change quickly with even small changes in water levels. Other swift water hazards include waterfalls, rocks, strainers or sweepers, and challenging rapids. If in doubt about hazards, walk around them.
3. Learn and be proficient in first aid, and basic swift water rescue techniques.
4. Special clothing such as a helmet, and a paddling jacket, wet suit, or dry suit is highly recommended when paddling in cold, or swift water. Sturdy, non-slip footwear such as old tennis shoes (not sandals), and a PFD should always be worn while scouting. Carry throw-bags and other appropriate rescue gear.
5. Be alert on rivers also used by powerboaters. LISTEN carefully, stay out of the middle channel around bends, and be prepared to handle boat wakes. Be considerate of bank anglers and other river users.
6. Learn and practice the universal river signals. Make sure other party members know them too.
7. If in a group, assign the most experienced paddlers to a lead boat in front of the group and a sweep boat at the rear. All other boaters should stay in between. If you lose sight of the boat behind you, pull over and wait.
8. Keep the boat under control. You should be able to stop or reach shore at any time.

Coastal Kayaking

1. Coastal paddlers should be strong swimmers, in good physical condition.
2. Obtain and maintain a high level of skill in re-boarding a capsized boat.
3. Sea kayaks are sometimes difficult to see under certain conditions, and don't appear on radar. Under conditions of limited visibility, rough water, or strong backlighting from the sun, it helps to stay in a tight group, and wave paddles if necessary to attract the attention of approaching boats. Strive for high visibility when around powerboats. Wear bright clothing that can be seen easily by other boaters at a distance.
4. Avoid powerboat traffic lanes.
5. Travel in groups. In the event of a capsize, self-rescue is difficult if you are alone. Groups of boats are also more easily seen than are single boats.
6. When on the beach, move your boat well above the high tide line and tie it securely. Many a paddler has returned to their boat only to discover it floated away on a high tide or was swamped by a boat wake breaking on the beach.
7. Never try to outrun a bad weather forecast.
8. Keep a lookout for large boat wakes, and wave rebound off the shoreline rocks and coastal cliff faces.
9. Keep close to the shore and cross open water where the distance is the shortest.
10. Avoid paddling in strong winds or heavy chop.
11. Coastal paddlers should always have a means of communication such as a hand-held marine VHF-FM radio. Besides use in emergencies, the radio can be used day-to-day to update float plans.
12. Carry a sleeping bag and a spare set of clothes in a waterproof bag, some spare food, and plenty of visual distress signals, **EVEN ON DAY TRIPS**.
13. Use a paddle leash and paddle float.



PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

Personal watercraft (PWC) are considered boats and operators have the same responsibilities as other boaters. However, there are some important differences. Personal watercraft handle differently than conventional powerboats. The jet drive and short overall length makes the boat extremely responsive to even a small movement of the handlebars. PWC are steered by directing the water jet while powering forward. Therefore, unlike a motorcycle, ATV or snow machine throttle, releasing the PWC's throttle **AFFECTS YOUR ABILITY TO STEER**. Inexperienced operators attempting to avoid a collision by powering down will find them-selves steering directly toward the very thing they are trying to avoid!

PWC operators frequently end up being tossed into the water. The wrist lanyard, connected to a shut off switch, activates if the rider falls off the boat, preventing the boat from continuing on its journey. The wrist lanyard should **ALWAYS** be worn. Operators must have the skill to re-board the boat in deep water. Even the best method of deep water boarding, from the rear of the boat, can be difficult in rough water and/or if the operator is tired. The weight of the rider and the stability of the model of PWC can also affect the ease of re-boarding.



Most PWC accidents are caused by collisions. It is common for operators to develop "tunnel vision", while missing the hazards to the sides. Constantly scanning the water back and forth will help prevent this. **Always look all around and behind you before turning.**

PWC fatalities often involve traumatic injury. For that reason, inflatable PFDs are not recommended for PWC, because the person may be unable to activate the inflation mechanism if injured.

New owners should take both basic boating safety and PWC classes. Read the owner's manual carefully. It provides important information specific to the model such as load capacity, and the main and reserve fuel systems. New operators should also practice their skills with an experienced operator. Many PWC accidents involve operators who did not own the boat. **NEVER** loan your PWC to an inexperienced person.

Other Operating Guidelines for PWC:

1. Slow to 10 mph when you are approaching within 100 feet of another motorboat or sailboat underway.
2. Slow to no-wake, maximum 5 mph when within 100 feet of anchored vessels or non-motorized crafts.
3. Operate at slow no-wake, maximum 5 mph when within 200 feet of a shoreline.
4. Operate at slow no-wake, maximum 5 mph when within 200 feet of a swimmer, shoreline angler, diving flag, dock, launch ramp, moorage, or swim float.
5. Wear the right gear. Start with synthetic long underwear, neoprene boots, neoprene or water-ski gloves, safety helmet, goggles, a dry suit or a 2-3 mil wet suit, and a snug fitting U.S. Coast Guard approved non-inflatable PFD.
6. The engine shut-off lanyard (if equipped) should be attached to the person operating the boat.
7. Do not use alcohol before or during operation.
8. Avoid wake jumping and operating near other boats and big ships.
9. Do not operate a personal watercraft within 200 feet behind a water-skier.
11. Avoid operating too close to residential and congested areas.
12. Avoid operating in the same area for extended periods.
13. Never loan your personal watercraft to an inexperienced operator.
14. PWC are not equipped with lights are not intended to be used after dark.

Personal watercraft operation is restricted or prohibited on some waterways. For more information check local regulations.

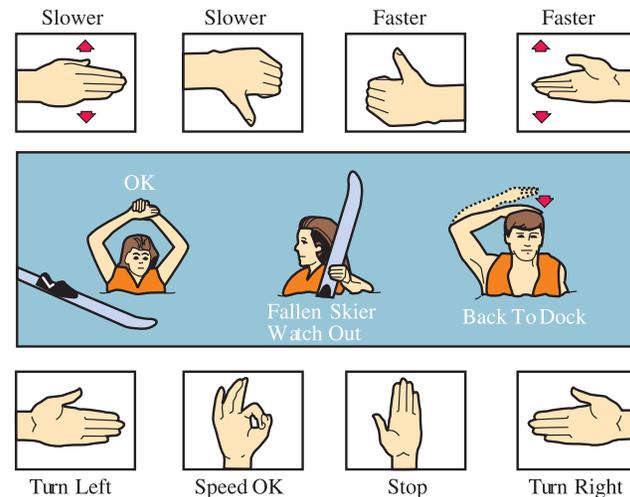
For more information on operating personal watercraft, contact the Alaska State Office of Boating Safety.

WATER SKIING

To make water skiing safer and more enjoyable, boat operators and skiers should observe the following:

- Ski only between sunrise and sunset.
- There must be another person (12 years of age or older) aboard as a lookout, or a rear view mirror installed on the boat.
- The operator and/or skier must not operate:

- In a manner endangering the safety of persons or property.
- Under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs.
- Wear your PFD. Choose a non-inflatable model. Inflatable PFDs are not appropriate for water skiing. Alaska law requires either a Type I, II, or III PFD be worn by skiers under 13 years old.
- Always keep an eye on the water ahead.
- If you fall, hold up a ski or an arm to signal driver you're OK.
- When landing, come in parallel to the shore at low speed.
- Falls are inevitable. In fact, it's a very practical way to stop. Simply sit down in the water, or if you're going to fall sideways, curl up into a ball before you hit. Always throw the tow bar well clear to avoid becoming tangled in the rope.
- Do not ski in shallow water or near swimmers.
- Do not wrap the rope around any part of your body.
- Do not ski at night.
- Do not yell "hit it" until the rope is taut and you're ready.
- Maintain at least 100 feet between you and other boats.
- Water ski hand signals:



DIVING

Alaska law recognizes that a red flag with a white diagonal stripe (commonly called the “diver’s flag”) indicates a person is engaged in diving in the immediate area. Displaying the “diver’s flag” is not required by law and does not in itself restrict the use of the water. However, when operating in an area where this flag is displayed, boaters must stay at least 100 feet away from the flag unless they are operating at no-wake speed. International Navigation Rules also require a blue and white “Alpha” flag be displayed on boats engaged in diving operations. The flag and equivalent lights and shapes are further described in the Federal Navigation Rules.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Nationwide, hunters and anglers account for one in every three boating fatalities. According to the National Rifle Association, many more hunters die by drowning than by accidental gunshot. Records show the average sportsman who dies on the water is a 30-50 year old male, in an open motorboat (16 feet in length or less), on relatively calm water, and on a clear sunny day. Most who died were NOT WEARING A PFD, and died by immersion hypothermia related drowning. In particular, consider the following:

In the last 10 years, 45% of all boating fatalities were caused by capsizing. Many were due to overloading or improperly balanced loads.

- Be especially careful when loading.
- Never exceed the boat’s capacity plate.
- Secure items to keep them from shifting. In choppy water, keep the weight low and centerline.
- It’s often a better idea to make more than one trip.

During the same 10-year period, falls overboard accounted for 27% of all boating fatalities. These always seem to happen **when they are least expected**, and most often occur while standing or reaching.

- Avoid standing or moving about when casting or shooting.
- Shoot or cast from a well balanced or seated position.
- Use caution when reaching for objects such as decoys, dogs, etc.
- Many new styles of life jackets are available that are comfortable and don’t restrict movement. Sportsmen should always wear PFDs when in a boat, and when hunting and fishing waterways on foot. Put a few extra visual distress signals and other survival items in your pockets.

In 75% of all boating fatalities, the victim had not taken a boating safety course. Consider yourself a boater and take a boating course.

Other Tips:

- Carry required and recommended safety equipment (see [PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST](#)).
- Know your boat—get very familiar with the boat and its handling characteristics and limitations before your trip.
- Assess your own personal limitations of knowledge and skill.
- Keep alert for changes in weather/water conditions and keep a close eye on external factors that can **impair** alertness such as hypothermia and fatigue.
- Avoid alcohol when boating. Sensible sportsmen already know alcohol and guns don’t mix!
- Tidal changes, sudden slips, and unexpected deep holes have dumped many a hunter or angler in the water. Keep your PFD on when near the water.
- File a float plan and stick to it!



(Caution: These procedures may not apply in all situations.)

SURVIVING COLD WATER

Effects of Cold Water Immersion

Nearly all water in Alaska is considered “cold.” Cold water immersion, if sudden, can cause disorientation, unconsciousness, a heart attack, hyperventilation, or a gasp reflex, all of which can lead to drowning. Cold water also causes hypothermia.

Hypothermia is the lowering of the body core temperature. After just a few minutes in cold water, self-rescue becomes difficult. Your extremities are quickly numbed. Your hands will have trouble holding a PFD, rescue line, floating object, or overturned boat. If cooling is not stopped, unconsciousness will follow. Most boating fatalities in Alaska are due to hypothermia related drowning.

Being prepared for boating in Alaska means always wearing a PFD!

Prevention

Of course, the best way to prevent immersion hypothermia is to stay out of the water in the first place. Capsizing and falls overboard without PFDs are the first and second leading causes of boating fatalities in Alaska. Overloading, poorly secured or shifting loads, improper handling in rough water, and loss of power or steerage are the main causes of capsizing. Falls overboard are most often caused by slipping or loss of balance while standing. Both happen quickly and when you least expect it.

Be Prepared

Being prepared for a sudden cold water immersion means always wearing a PFD. Trying to put your PFD on after you find yourself in the water is very difficult. If you need to be rescued, you must be seen! Reflective tape and a flashing light, secured high on your PFD, will make you more visible. A whistle can also help draw the attention of passing boats or rescue personnel. If your PFD has pockets, carry signals and other survival items.

Knowledge and practice of emergency procedures and survival techniques will give you confidence. Being prepared, maintaining a positive attitude, and remaining calm in a boating emergency can be the difference between life and death.

Survival Techniques

Cold water survival techniques take into account the following:

- Your body cools 25 times faster in cold water than in cold air.
- Heat loss is increased through movement.
- High heat loss areas include the head, neck, sides of the chest, underarms, and groin.

If you suddenly do find yourself overboard, you will never appreciate your PFD more than at this moment. Try not to panic. Your entire effort during the first minute of immersion should be focused on keeping from drowning. Do whatever you can to keep your head above water. Control breathing. If it is not on already, put on a PFD. Grab on to the boat or floating objects. Don't waste time removing boots, shoes or clothing. Air trapped in clothing and footwear can provide a surprising amount of buoyancy and thermal protection. After the first minute or two, your next priority is to **get out of the water**. If the boat capsized, try to right it and get back in. If you can't right it, climb on top of it or another floating object, getting as much of your body out of the water as you can. Even if the air is colder than the water, it is better to be out of the water. If this is not possible, at least stay with the boat. It is far easier for other boaters or searchers to see a boat than a person in the water. Do a head count, and prepare to signal rescuers.

If you can't get out of the water, you will have to make a decision to either get into the “HELP” or “huddle” positions and be ready to signal rescuers, or to swim.

“HELP” and “Huddle”

The “Heat Escape Lessening Position” (HELP) is only possible when wearing a personal flotation device. Hold the inner side of your arms tightly against the sides of your chest, press your thighs together, cross your feet and raise your knees to your chest and keep as still as you can. PFDs with flotation high on the body are best for this technique. PFDs with evenly distributed flotation may cause some instability. If that happens, lower your legs a little but keep them together.



HELP

Small groups should form a tight “huddle” so bodies work together to protect high heat loss areas. Small children and injured or unconscious persons can be placed in the center of the huddle, to be supported by the group.



Huddle Position

Swimming

Swimming in cold water will not keep you warm and will significantly reduce your survival time. You may “feel” warmer, but you actually lose over 30% more heat swimming than by remaining still. Safety always looks closer than it is. Swimming is only an option if you are very close to safety and are absolutely sure of making it. Wearing a PFD in this situation can make the difference between life and death. If you must swim, use survival swimming techniques:

- Keep your head and neck up and out of the water.
- Stay on your back.
- Keep your upper arms close to your chest, using only your forearms.
- Keep legs bent, use a flipper kick if necessary.
- Stay calm and conserve your energy.
- Use floating objects to help you.
- Swim slowly and calmly to safety.
- If in swiftwater, position yourself upstream of your boat. Get into a “sitting” position. Face downstream, feet first. Use arms and legs to fend off rocks. Be prepared to scramble head first over the top of sweepers to avoid being caught beneath them.

Person Overboard

If someone falls overboard:

1. Swing the stern of the boat away from the person to reduce propeller danger.
2. Throw a lifesaving device or other floating object to the victim immediately, even if the person is a swimmer. Be careful not to hit the person. A Type IV life ring is best because it is designed for this purpose, but do not wait to get a life ring if another item is closer at hand. Speed is most important.
3. Keep the person in view. Have a passenger act as a lookout. At night, direct the best possible light on the victim. Do not lose sight of the victim.

4. Approach the person from downwind or downstream. The maneuver to use in approaching a person depends upon the existing conditions (water temperature, water conditions, victim’s physical capabilities, whether you are alone, availability of other ready assistance, and boat maneuvering room).

5. Reach for the person with an oar or paddle. If the person is too far away, throw them a Type IV life ring with a floating line, and tow the person to you. Do not go in the water unless it is a last resort and you are wearing a PFD.

6. Assist the person in boarding the boat. It is often difficult to climb into a boat from the water, and the individual who is hurt or cold may not be capable of getting on board without help. In small boats, the weight of a person suspended from the side can be enough to tip the boat and cause it to take in water. The best procedure for getting back in a small boat is over the stern or bow, depending on the boat’s construction. Common sense dictates that the propeller be stopped when pulling a victim in over the stern.

7. Treat for hypothermia.



Hypothermia Treatment

A person who has been in the water for even a few minutes will likely be suffering from hypothermia. The main concerns in treating immersion hypothermia are preventing further heat loss and obtaining medical help quickly. Treat to your level of medical training. If the victim is severely hypothermic, great care should be taken to ensure that the victim avoids physical exertion, trauma, and going quickly from a horizontal to vertical position during rescue. Handle the victim gently. Jarring the victim might adversely affect the victim’s heart rhythm. Give nothing by mouth if the victim is not alert. Do not give the victim alcohol.

A victim found unconscious floating face down, in or under cold water may be a victim of cold water near-drowning. Blue skin coloration, no detectable breathing, no apparent heartbeat, and dilated pupils are typical signs. This does not necessarily mean the victim is dead. Providing immediate basic life support to your level of training and obtaining medical help at once may save an individual in this situation.

All Alaskan boaters should maintain current CPR and first aid certification.

FIRE

The key to putting out a fire is eliminating any of the fire's "ingredients:" fuel, oxygen, and heat. Often the easiest to remove is oxygen, by using a fire extinguisher. If a fire breaks out:

1. Keep a shipboard fire downwind; turn the boat so the flames and smoke blow away from the craft rather than over it.
2. Alert passengers. Direct them to gather survival gear and prepare to go into the water if necessary.
3. Cut off oxygen to the area of the fire.
4. Use the **P.A.S.S.** system to extinguish the fire. **PULL** the pin. **AIM** the extinguisher nozzle at the source of the fire (beneath the flames). **SQUEEZE** the handle and **SWEEP** back and forth. Remember that a Type B-I extinguisher empties in less than 10 seconds.
5. Save some of the charge for a reflash or, better yet, carry a spare extinguisher.
6. Transmit MAYDAY on your radio if necessary.
7. As a last resort, abandon ship. Stay together and use cold water survival techniques.

TAKING ON WATER

1. Direct passengers to don PFDs, gather survival gear, and prepare to go into the water if necessary.
2. Re-distribute weight.
3. Secure doors and hatches.
4. Pump and bail. Start bilge pump, and get manual de-watering devices in use.
5. Locate leak source and take measures to stop or reduce leak.



6. Only shut off engines if the leak is from a cooling system.
7. If hull is breached and you have an inboard engine, shut off engine, close sea cock, disconnect water intake hose, restart engine, and use hose to act as a bilge pump.
8. Transmit "MAYDAY" on your radio if necessary.
9. As a last resort, abandon ship but stay with boat if it is floating. Stay together and use cold water survival techniques.

RUNNING AGROUND

Running aground is most often caused by inattention, usually at speed. Besides causing expensive damage to your boat and engine, striking underwater objects or the bottom causes passengers to be suddenly propelled forward, often causing serious injury and/or a plunge into the water. Carefully study charts or maps of the area before your trip to identify shallow areas, rocks and other hazards. Be aware of the tide cycle or changes in river volume. While underway, operators must maintain a close watch. Scan the water back and forth. In shallow water, proceed slowly and use a depth finder or observer. If you do run aground, always ensure the safety of passengers first. Then, assess the situation, check for hull damage, and stabilize the boat if it is firmly grounded. Secure fuel tanks and vents. Prepare to signal for help. If the boat is not firmly grounded, consider lightening the load and rocking the boat back and forth to free it, if safe. Another method is to use an anchor or sea anchor to pull your boat into deeper water.



MECHANICAL BREAKDOWN

Mechanical breakdown is the most common boating problem. If you encounter problems on the water, consult your engine owner's manual and try some of the following before calling for help:

Problem: *Engine hard to start or turns over but won't start*

- Check if safety shut-off cable disconnected from ignition switch or engine.
- Check fuel.
- Check if fuel tank vent is closed.
- Check if fuel is getting through lines, check lines and connections for kinks, pinches, obstructions, poor connections.
- Check fuel filters for contamination (water or other agents).
- Check spark plugs for clues.

Problem: *Engine stops suddenly*

- Check if safety shut-off cable disconnected from engine or ignition, or ignition key turned off.
- Check fuel and oil levels.
- Check if fuel tank vent is closed.
- Check fuel line connection to engine.
- Check for engine overheating.

Problem: *Engine overheats*

- Shut down immediately until problem solved.
- Check oil levels.
- Check water intakes/cooling system components for fouling/obstructions/leaks.
- Check water pump operation.
- Check engine trim to make sure water intake is below the water line.

Problem: *Engine doesn't turn over, or starter does not engage but solenoid clicks*

- Check battery switch in on position.
- Check gear shift in neutral position.
- Check battery terminals, cables, connections clean and secure.
- Check ALL ignition system fuses, including under engine cowling (outboards).
- Check solenoid.
- Check connections at starter motor.

SHORE SURVIVAL

Our boats provide us access to the beautiful and remote corners of our state. However bad weather, mechanical breakdown, running aground, or a boat lost to the tide, can all result in an unexpected stay on the beach. In extreme cases, the chain of events can degrade into a survival situation. Should you find yourself in this predicament, follow the "seven steps to survival."

In order of priority, they are:

1. **Recognition:** that an emergency exists, and that if you fail to adopt the proper ATTITUDE and act appropriately you could die. The WILL TO LIVE has a profound influence on the outcome of the situation. Your challenge now is to be found as quickly as possible, in the best condition possible.
2. **Inventory:** all the factors (including your physical and emotional condition, environment, and all your equipment) working for and against you. Did you carry your survival items in your clothing?
3. **Shelter:** In Alaska, humans need shelter to survive. The goal in shelter building is to prevent heat loss, so keep them small, tight, and warm. Remember your clothing is your first "shelter layer."
4. **Signals:** YOU MUST BE LOCATED TO BE RESCUED! Visual signals should CONTRAST with the background. Straight lines and geometric shapes are uncommon in nature, and are most easily spotted from the air. Stationary signals should generally be in groups of three, and be large in scale.
5. **Water:** A person can live only a few days without water.
6. **Food:** A person can live without food for a long time. However, our physical state affects our mental state. Food helps keep energy level and morale up. However, if you don't have water, don't eat.
7. **Play:** Includes any activity that you enjoy, that builds and maintains a positive attitude. Does your shelter need a hot tub? Have you begun in your mind to write your million-dollar story yet? Preparing gourmet meals from "scratch" has a whole new meaning in a survival setting.

EMERGENCIES

DISTRESS SIGNALS (RULE 37)

The Navigation Rules (International) apply to all boats on all Alaska waters. Rules 32 - 37, (found in Part D) apply to signals, including distress signals. The signals illustrated below indicate that a boat is in distress and requires assistance. However, other methods may be used. Remember that with all visual signals, contrast is the key. If flares or other pyrotechnic devices are used, please keep in mind that it doesn't do any good to shoot off flares if there is no one to see them. Use them judiciously!



EMERGENCY CELLULAR PHONE PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency, use the following procedure:

1. First give your phone number to the person you are calling, in case you are disconnected.
2. Give your name and boat description.
3. Give your position/location.
4. Explain the nature of your problem.
5. Give the number of people on board.
6. REPEAT your cell phone number before ending your call.
7. Keep as calm as possible, and speak slowly and clearly so you can be understood.

EMERGENCY RADIO PROCEDURES

There are three types of emergency radio messages:

SECURITY - to notify others of bad weather or other hazards (pronounced se-cure-et-tay).

PAN-PAN - used when calling station has an urgent message for mariners (pronounced pon-pon).

MAYDAY - when a boater is experiencing an immediate threat to life.

In An Emergency:

1. Make sure radio equipment is **on** and **CHANNEL 16 selected**.
2. Decide which of the three messages to use. Then **SAY IT CLEARLY THREE TIMES** (such as MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, then...)
3. **Say**
"This is the vessel _____" or _____ (your name)
"My position is _____" (give latitude/longitude if possible)
"The nature of my emergency is _____"
"I have _____ persons on board"
4. **Listen!** If there is no response within 10 seconds, repeat your broadcast until you are answered. Try different emergency channels if necessary. Continue until acknowledged.

ACTIVATE YOUR EPIRB IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO MAKE CONTACT.

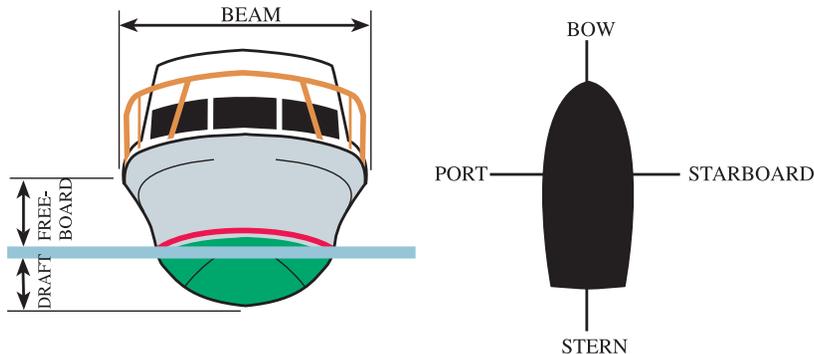
If you get a response, be prepared to give the following information:

Fill in these items* in advance.

- Vessel description*
length _____ hull color _____ house color _____
trim _____ mast(s) _____ registration number _____
construction type _____
- On-scene weather
wind speed _____ direction _____
sea height _____ swell direction _____
visibility (miles) _____ ceiling (feet) _____
- Emergency and survival equipment onboard* _____
- Radio frequencies available* _____
- Operator's name and phone* _____
- Owner's name and phone * _____
- Home port* _____
- What type/degree of assistance is needed _____

BOATING TERMS

AMIDSHIPS	Center of boat with reference to its length and/or sometimes its width.
AFT	Toward the stern of a boat.
BEAM	The boat's maximum width.
BILGE	Lower internal part of a boat's hull.
BOAT	Every description of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on the water, but does not include aircraft equipped to land on water, boathouses, floating homes, air mattresses, beach and water toys, or single innertubes.
BOW	Forward part of a boat.
BULKHEAD	A vertical partition separating compartments.
DAYBEACON	A fixed navigation aid structure in shallow waters upon which is placed one or more daymarks.
DAYMARK	A signboard attached to a daybeacon to convey information.
DRAFT	The depth of water a boat draws.
FATHOM	Six feet.
FORE	To or at the front.
FREEBOARD	Height of boat's side, measured from waterline to deck or gunwale.
GUNWALE	Top, outer edge of boat's hull.
HELM	The wheel or tiller controlling the rudder.
HULL	Body of a boat.
MOTORBOAT	Any boat propelled by machinery, including any sail boat under sail and power.
PORT	Side of boat to the left when facing forward.
STARBOARD	Side of boat to the right when facing forward.
STERN	Back end of a boat.
TRANSOM	Flat planking across the stern of a boat.
TRIM	Fore and aft balance of a boat.
UNDERWAY	Boat in motion. Technically, a boat is underway when not moored, at anchor, or aground.



CONTACTS

EMERGENCIES:

Alaska State Troopers	(907) 428-7200
U.S. Coast Guard Search & Rescue	1-800-478-5555 (or *CG)

BOATING EDUCATION:

Alaska Marine Safety Education Assn.	(907) 747-3287
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary	1-800-478-6381

OTHER:

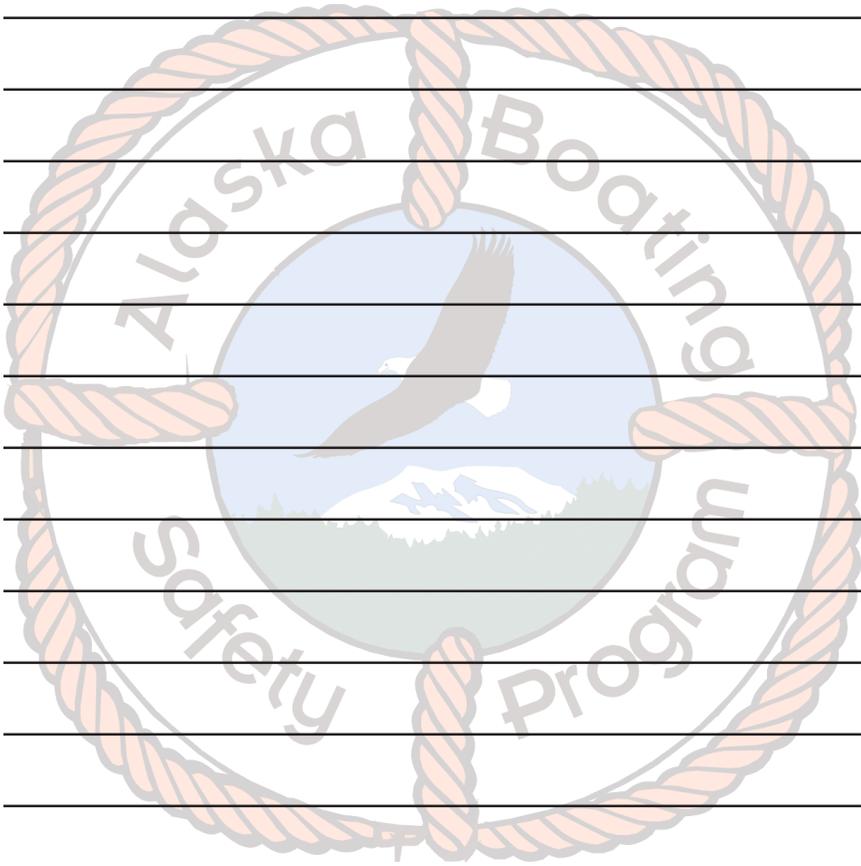
Alaska Weatherline	1-800-472-0391
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PORTS & HARBORS (907 Area Code):

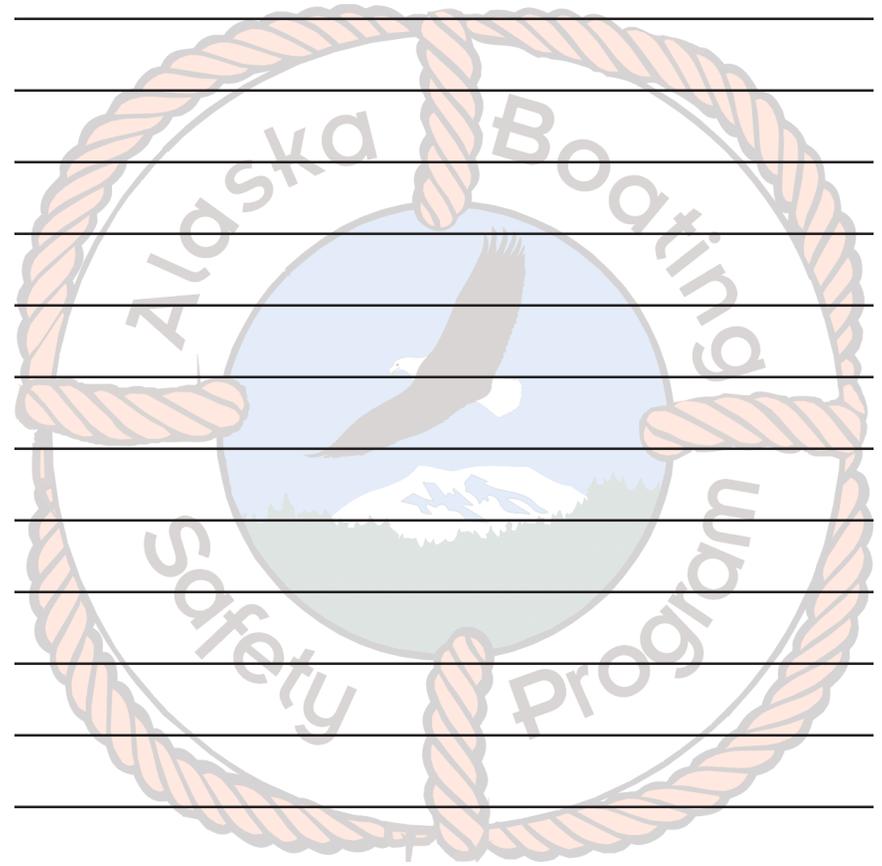
Anchorage	343-6200
Bristol Bay	246-6168
Cordova	424-6400
Dillingham	842-1069*
Haines	766-2448
Homer	235-3160
Juneau	586-5255
Kenai	283-7535
Ketchikan	228-5632
Kodiak	486-8080
Petersburg	772-4688
Sand Point	383-2696
Seldovia	234-7886
Seward	224-3138
Sitka	747-3439
Skagway	983-2628
Valdez	835-4981
Whittier	472-2330
Wrangell	874-3736

* Seasonal number

NOTES



NOTES





State of Alaska
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Office of Boating Safety
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1370
Anchorage, AK 99501-3561