

NORTH CAROLINA

# Vessel Operator's *Guide*



This Vessel Operator's Guide is produced by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission as a convenient reference to the requirements of North Carolina boating laws and regulations. This edition brings the Guide up to date through January 1, 2010. It cannot, of course, answer every conceivable question that may arise, but it provides answers to some of the more frequent inquiries.

The North Carolina Boating law applies to all public waters within the territorial limits of the State, to the marginal sea adjacent to the State and to the high seas when navigated as a part of a journey or ride to or from the shore of this State. This includes all streams, rivers, lakes and sounds within or bordering the State, but it does not include private ponds as defined in G.S. 113-129. Private ponds are generally small impoundments that lie wholly on the land of one owner and into which and from which fish cannot enter or escape.

Vessels operating on waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States are subject to Federal Boating laws as well as State laws.

For information regarding Federal boating requirements, such as visual distress signals and marine sanitation devices contact:

Fifth Coast Guard District  
Federal Building  
431 Crawford Street  
Portsmouth, Virginia 23705  
(757) 398-6390



**Stay current with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission on the web:**

**<http://www.ncwildlife.org>**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

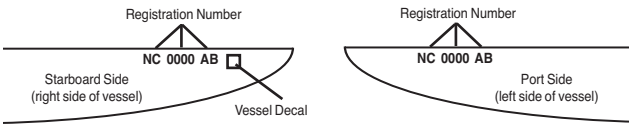
January 1, 2010

DISPLAY OF NUMBER AND DECAL . . . . .	4
Reciprocity . . . . .	4
BOATING SAFETY EDUCATION REQUIREMENT . . . . .	5
REQUIRED EQUIPMENT . . . . .	5
Classes of Vessels . . . . .	5
Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) . . . . .	6
Recreational Vessels . . . . .	6
Commercial Vessels . . . . .	6
Types of Personal Flotation Devices . . . . .	7
Fire Extinguishers . . . . .	8
Sound-producing Devices . . . . .	9
Flame Arrestors . . . . .	9
Ventilation . . . . .	9
Exhaust Mufflers . . . . .	9
INLAND LIGHTING RULES . . . . .	10
Navigation Lights . . . . .	10
Vessels Less Than 12 Meters (39.4 ft.) In Length . . . . .	11
Vessels 12 Meters but Less than 20 Meters (65.6 ft.) in Length. . . . .	11
Vessel at Anchor . . . . .	11
Exceptions: . . . . .	11
1. Row or Paddle Boat and Small Sailboats: . . . . .	11
2. Vessels of 10 Horsepower or Less: . . . . .	11
OPERATION OF VESSELS . . . . .	12
Definition of Underway . . . . .	12
Speed Limits . . . . .	12
Boating and Fishing Access Areas . . . . .	12
Reckless Operation . . . . .	12
Alcohol and Drugs . . . . .	12
Law Enforcement Vessels . . . . .	12
Boat Races and Regattas . . . . .	12
PERSONAL WATERCRAFT . . . . .	13
Minimum Age To Operate . . . . .	13
Personal Flotation Devices and Safety Equipment . . . . .	13
Towing Skiers . . . . .	14
Reckless Operation . . . . .	14
Other Operating Restrictions . . . . .	14
Renting Personal Watercraft . . . . .	14
WATER SKIING . . . . .	15
Water Skiing Signals . . . . .	15
Skin and Scuba Divers . . . . .	16
BOATING ACCIDENTS . . . . .	16
LITTERING . . . . .	17
UNIFORM WATERWAY MARKERS . . . . .	17
Navigational Aids . . . . .	18
Regulatory Markers . . . . .	18
RULES OF THE ROAD . . . . .	20
Meeting . . . . .	20
Crossing . . . . .	20
Restricted Maneuverability . . . . .	20
Passing . . . . .	20
Speed and Control . . . . .	21
Danger Areas . . . . .	21
Aircraft . . . . .	21
Lights . . . . .	21
Access Areas . . . . .	21
CARRYING PASSENGERS FOR HIRE . . . . .	22
LOCAL REGULATIONS . . . . .	22
Local Restrictions . . . . .	22
Colonial Waterbird Nesting Areas . . . . .	23

## DISPLAY OF NUMBER AND DECAL

### **Affixing Registration Numbers:**

1. If a NC registration number already exists and it matches the number on the registration card or temporary registration, you do not need to replace this number. You will only be replacing the decal (see below for decal placement instructions).
2. If your vessel does not have registration numbers already affixed, follow the below instructions for proper placement of the numbers:
  - a) The vessel registration numbers must be painted or permanently affixed on the forward half of each side of the vessel in the position where it may be easily seen and no other number may be displayed on either side of the bow. The validation decal must be displayed on the starboard bow.
  - b) The letters and numerals must be in block characters and at least three inches in height. They may be of any solid color as long as they contrast with the background of the vessel to provide good legibility.
  - c) The number must read from left to right as it appears on the certificate of number (registration card), and the letter groups must be separated from the numerals by hyphens or by equivalent spaces, as in the following example:



### **Affixing Vessel Decal:**

1. Decal must be displayed on the starboard bow (see diagram above) of the vessel for which it was issued to.
2. Remove old validation decal. Apply decal at temperature above 40 degrees Fahrenheit to vessel surface that is clean, dry, free of dust, grease, wax or other foreign matter.
3. Remove decal from lining paper by lifting at the corner and pulling up.
4. Affix decal to the starboard bow of the vessel within 6 inches of your North Carolina Registration Number. Place in position and press firmly to surface.

North Carolina G.S. 75A-5 (g)...“No person shall willfully remove a validation decal from any vessel during the continuance of its validity or alter, counterfeit, or otherwise tamper with validation decal attached to any vessel for the purpose of changing or obscuring the indicated date of expiration of the certificate of number of such vessel.”

## Reciprocity

A vessel legally numbered in North Carolina is considered to be in compliance with the numbering requirements of any state in which it is temporarily used. When a vessel, legally numbered in this state, is moved to a new state of principal use, its number will be valid for a period of at least 60 days.

A vessel which is lawfully numbered in another state and which is brought into and kept in North Carolina may be used on the waters of this state during the 90 day period immediately ensuing its introduction without any additional registration provided the certificate of number remains current during such period. Continued use of the vessel after this period is unlawful unless and until the vessel has been registered with the Wildlife Resources Commission. For more information on vessel registration and titling, contact the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission at **1-800-628-3773**.

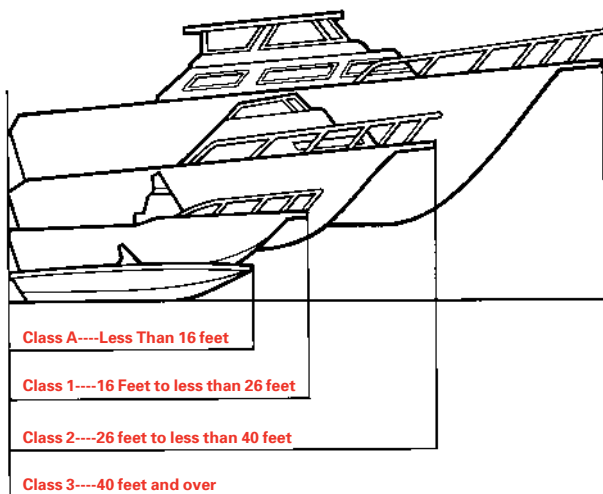
## BOATING SAFETY EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

On or after May 1, 2010 any person under the age of 26 must successfully complete a NASBLA approved boating education course before operating any vessel propelled by a motor of 10 horsepower or greater on public waters in North Carolina. Boating Safety Education courses are offered at no charge by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. Go to **[www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org)** or call (919) 707-0030 for more information. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadron and Internet providers also offer approved courses that can include a fee. It is important to note the course must be approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators to be accepted.

## REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

For the purpose of equipment requirements, vessels are divided into four classes, according to length. The length of a vessel is the distance from stem to stern measured over the deck, excluding sheer.

### Classes of Vessels



## Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)

Personal Flotation Devices are classified by “Type.” The number and “type” required on a vessel depends on the length of the vessel and whether the vessel is used for recreational or commercial purposes.

### RECREATIONAL VESSELS

1. All recreational vessels must have one Type I, II, or III PFD of a suitable size for each person aboard and each skier being towed.
  - Canoes and kayaks 16 feet in length and over are exempted from the requirements for carriage of the additional Type IV PFD.
  - Sailboards, racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes and racing kayaks are exempted from the requirements for carriage of any type PFD.
2. All recreational vessels sixteen (16) feet in length and over must have one Type I, II, or III PFD of suitable size for each person aboard and each skier being towed, and in addition, one throwable Type IV PFD.
3. No person may use a recreational vessel unless each child under 13 years old on board is wearing an appropriate PFD approved by the Coast Guard unless:
  - Each child not wearing such a PFD is below decks or in an enclosed cabin.
  - The vessel is not underway. (Vessels that are anchored or tied to shore are not underway.) This new law does not apply to commercial vessels.

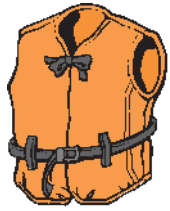
### COMMERCIAL VESSELS

1. Each commercial vessel not carrying passengers for hire less than forty (40) feet in length must have at least one Type I, II, or III PFD of a suitable size for each person on board.
2. Each commercial vessel forty (40) feet in length or longer not carrying passengers for hire must have at least one Type I PFD of a suitable size for each person on board.
3. Each commercial vessel twenty-six (26) feet in length or longer must have at least one ring life buoy on board.

## TYPES OF PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES

### Type I

A Type I PFD is an approved device designed to turn an unconscious person in the water from a face downward position to a vertical or slightly backward position, and to have more than 20 pounds of buoyancy.



### Type II

A Type II PFD is an approved device designed to turn an unconscious person in the water from a face downward position to a vertical or slightly backward position, and to have more than 15.5 pounds of buoyancy.

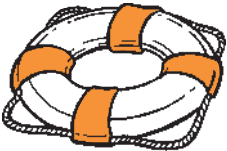
### Type III

A Type III PFD is an approved device designed to have more than 15.5 pounds of buoyancy. While the Type III PFD has the same buoyancy as the Type II PFD, it has less turning ability. It does, however, allow greater wearing comfort and is particularly useful when water skiing, sailing, hunting, or engaged in other water sports.



### Type IV

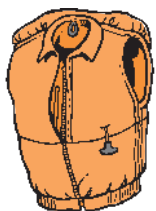
A Type IV PFD is an approved device designed to be thrown to a person in the water. It is not designed to be worn. It is designed to have at least 16.5 pounds of buoyancy. The most common Type IV PFD is a buoyant cushion. A ring buoy is also a Type IV PFD.



All Type I, II, and III PFDs must be U.S. Coast Guard approved, in good and serviceable condition, readily accessible, and of appropriate size for the wearer. Type IV PFDs must be U. S. Coast Guard approved, in good and serviceable condition, and immediately available.

### Type V

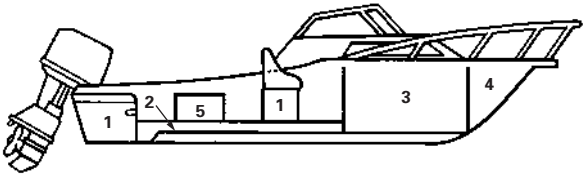
A Type V PFD must be Coast Guard approved. It is a restricted device that is acceptable only when the wearer is engaged in the activity for which the device is intended. Some restricted PFDs must be worn to be acceptable. Always check the label of a restricted PFD; the label will show the water sports for which the PFD is authorized and will list all other restrictions.



## Fire Extinguishers

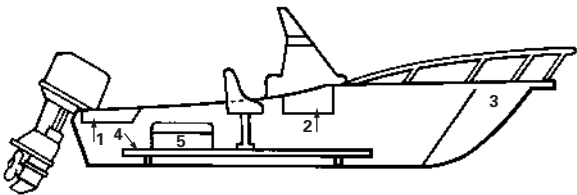
A vessel of Classes A and 1 (less than 26 feet) must carry at least one Coast Guard approved "B-1" type fire extinguisher unless (a) it has an approved built-in fire extinguishing system in the engine compartment, or (b) it is an outboard vessel of open construction and does not carry paying passengers.

For the purpose of determining if an outboard vessel is of closed construction, it is considered to be of closed construction if it has one or more of the following features:



1. Closed compartment under seats or elsewhere wherein portable fuel tanks may be stored.
2. Double bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation material.
3. Closed living spaces.
4. Closed stowage compartments in which combustible or flammable materials are stored.
5. Permanently mounted fuel tank.

The following construction features do not of themselves require that a fire extinguisher be carried:



1. Bait wells.
2. Glove or map compartments.
3. Buoyant flotation materials.
4. Open slatted flooring.
5. Ice chests.

**Class 2 vessels** must carry one type "B-II" or two type "B-1" extinguishers, unless equipped with an approved built-in extinguishing system, in which case one type "B-1" extinguisher will suffice.

**Class 3 vessels** must carry at least three "B-1" extinguishers or one type "B-1" and one type "B-II" extinguishers. If equipped with an approved built-in extinguishing system, two type "B-1" or one type "B-II" extinguishers will suffice.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHER REQUIREMENTS

Length Class	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*
Less than 16 ft. (Class A)	1 B-I	None
16 ft. to less than 26 ft. (Class 1)	1 B-I	None
26 ft. to less than 40 ft. (Class 2)	2 B-I or 1 B-II	1 B-I
40 ft. to less than 65 ft. (Class 3)	3 B-I or 1 B-II and 1 B-I	2 B-I or 1 B-II

*\*refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system*

## Sound-producing Devices

Sound-producing devices include horns or whistles and bells. Vessels less than 12 meters (39.4 feet) in length, while not required to have a horn or whistles and bells, shall be provided with some means of making an efficient sound signal.

A vessel that is 12 meters, but less than 20 meters (65.6 feet) must carry a horn or whistle that can be heard for one-half mile. It also must carry a bell that has a diameter of at least 200 mm (7.87 inches) across the mouth. Vessel operators may substitute mechanical or electronic sound signal appliance for required sound producing devices if such appliances have similar sound characteristics, provided that manual sounding of the required signals must be possible.

## Flame Arrestors

The carburetors on inboard gasoline engines must be equipped with Coast Guard approved backfire flame arrestors or an arrangement of the carburetor or engine air induction system that will disperse any flames caused by engine backfire. The flames must be dispersed to the atmosphere outside the vessel in such a manner that the flames will not endanger the vessel, persons on board, or nearby vessels and structures. All attachments shall be of metallic construction with flame tight connections and firmly secured to withstand vibration, shock, and engine backfire.

## Ventilation

Inboard vessels using gasoline or fuel with a flash point of less than 110 degrees Fahrenheit and outboard vessels which have enclosed bilges or fuel tank compartments or other compartments into which explosive or flammable gases may flow and be trapped must have each engine and fuel tank compartment equipped with two or more cowled ventilators arranged and ducted for efficiently evacuating such vapors. The ventilation requirement is in addition to, and not in lieu of, the fire extinguisher requirements.

## Exhaust Mufflers

Vessel engines with open-air exhausts and the capacity to operate at more than 4000 RPM must have effective muffling equipment installed on each exhaust manifold stack. Licensed commercial fishing vessels are exempt.

# INLAND LIGHTING RULES

## NAVIGATION LIGHTS

Vessels operating at night are required to display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise.

<p>Figure 1</p>	<p>Figure 2</p>		
<p>Figure 3</p>	<p>Figure 4</p>		
<p>Figure 5</p> <p>Combined Tricolor Light</p>	<p>Figure 6</p> <p>Vertical Red and Green Lights</p>		
<p>Figure 7</p>			
<p><b>Location of Lights on Vessel</b></p>	<p><b>Visible Range</b></p> <p>Less than 12m.      12m. but less than 20m. (in miles)</p>		<p><b>Degrees of Arc Lights</b></p>
<p> Masthead</p> <p> All-round</p> <p> Side lights</p> <p> Stern light</p>	<p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>	<p>225°</p> <p>360°</p> <p>112.5° each color</p> <p>135°</p>

### ***Vessels Less Than 12 Meters (39.4 ft.) In Length***

Vessels or sailboats using power: the lighting arrangement in figure 1, 2 or 3 may be used.

Sailboats using sail alone: the lighting arrangements in figure 4, 5 or 6 may be used.

The white masthead light must be at least 1 meter (3.3 ft.) higher than the colored sidelights.

### ***Vessels 12 Meters but Less than 20 Meters (65.6 ft.) in Length.***

Vessels or sailboats using power: the lighting arrangement in figure 1 or 2 may be used. The lighting arrangement in figure 3 may be used if the vessel was constructed before December 24, 1980.

Sailboats using sail alone: the lighting arrangements in figure 4, 5 or 6 may be used.

The white masthead light must be at least 2.5 meters (8.2 ft.) higher than the colored sidelights.

### ***Vessel at Anchor***

A vessel less than 50 meters (165 ft.) in length should display an all-round white light visible for two miles exhibited where it can best be seen. However, vessels less than 7 meters (23 ft.) in length are not required to display anchor lights unless anchored in or near a narrow channel, fairway or anchorage or where other vessels normally navigate.

## **EXCEPTIONS:**

### ***1. Row or Paddle Boat and Small Sailboats:***

A vessel under oars, and sailboats less than 7 meters (23 feet) in length may display those lights prescribed for a sailing vessel, but if they do not, they shall have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern shining a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision.

### ***2. Vessels of 10 Horsepower or Less:***

On waters of the State not subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, vessels propelled by machinery of 10 horsepower or less, in lieu of the foregoing requirements, may carry from one-half hour after sunset to one-half before sunrise a white light in the stern or have on board a hand flashlight in good working condition which shall be ready at hand and shall be temporarily displayed in sufficient time to prevent collision. On waters of the State that are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, this exception, though permissible under State law, is not sanctioned by any Federal law or regulation.

## OPERATION OF VESSELS

### Definition of Underway

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

### Speed Limits

Although local conditions may warrant the imposition of definite limitations on the speed of vessels, the only general speed limitation is that which is implied in safe vessel operation under the existing circumstances. Speed which is excessive under the circumstances, and which endangers persons or property, is one form of reckless operation, which is prohibited by the State boating law.

### Boating and Fishing Access Areas

Vessels entering, leaving or passing within 50 yards of a state-owned or controlled boating and fishing access area must do so at “no-wake” speed.

### Reckless Operation

No person shall operate any motorboat or vessel, or manipulate any water skis, surfboard, or similar device in a reckless or negligent manner so as to endanger the life, limb or property of any person.

### Alcohol and Drugs

No person shall operate any motorboat or vessel, or manipulate any water skis, surfboard, or similar device while under the influence of an impairing substance, nor operate any motor vessel after consuming alcohol sufficient to cause a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 or greater.

### Law Enforcement Vessels

Vessels operated on the waters of this State shall slow to a no-wake speed when passing within 100 feet of a law enforcement vessel that is displaying a flashing blue light unless the vessel is in a narrow channel. Vessels operated on the waters of this State in a narrow channel shall slow to a no-wake speed when passing within 50 feet of a law enforcement vessel that is displaying a flashing blue light.

### Boat Races and Regattas

Regattas, tournaments and other marine exhibitions may be held on navigable waters of the State when approved in advance by the United States Coast Guard. Application must be made to the Coast Guard District Commander at least 30 days prior to the proposed event.

## PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

Personal Watercraft (PWC) are defined by law as “A small vessel which uses an outboard motor or propeller-driven motor, or an inboard motor powering a water jet pump, as its primary source of motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on, or being towed behind the vessel, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.” PWCs are commonly known by their manufacturer names such as “Jet Skis” and “Wave Runners.”

It is unlawful to operate a personal watercraft (PWC) on the waters of this State between sunset and sunrise.

### Minimum Age To Operate

No person under 14 years of age may operate a personal watercraft (PWC). A person at least 14 years of age but less than 16 years of age may operate a PWC if:

1. The person is accompanied by a person at least 18 years of age who occupies the PWC; or
2. The person possesses ID proof of age and a boating safety certification or card indicating satisfactory completion of a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved boating safety education course.

A person at least 14 years old but less than 16 years old, can operate a PWC if: they are riding with a person who is at least 18 who occupies the PWC and is in compliance with G.S. 75A-16.2; or the youth has first successfully completed a NASBLA approved boating education course (proof of age and safety course completion must be carried by the youth during operation of the PWC.)

ID and boating safety certification must be produced upon request of an officer. It is unlawful for the owner of a PWC or for a person who has temporary or permanent responsibility for a person under 16 to allow that person to operate a PWC except as provided in 1 and 2 above.

### Personal Flotation Devices and Safety Equipment

PWCs are subject to the same safety equipment requirements as other vessels. In addition to those requirements:

1. No person shall operate or allow operation of a PWC unless each person riding or being towed is wearing a type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device approved by the US Coast Guard. (Inflatable PFDs do not satisfy this requirement).
2. If the PWC is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type cut-off switch, it must be attached to the person operating.

## Towing Skiers

No person shall operate a PWC towing another person on water skis or other devices unless the PWC has on board, in addition to the operator, an observer who shall monitor the person(s) being towed, or the PWC is equipped with a rear-view mirror; and the total number of persons operating, observing, and being towed does not exceed the number of passengers identified by the manufacturer as the maximum safe load for the vessel.

## Reckless Operation

Personal Watercraft must be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner. Maneuvers that endanger life, limb, or property shall constitute reckless operation of a vessel and include:

1. Unreasonably or unnecessarily weaving through congested vessel traffic.
2. Jumping the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of such other vessel or when visibility around such other vessel is obstructed.
3. Intentionally approaching another vessel in order to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid collision.
4. Operating contrary to the "rules of the road" or following too closely to another vessel, including a PWC. "Following too closely," is defined by law as proceeding in the same direction of another vessel and operating at a speed in excess of 10mph when approaching within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another vessel that is underway unless that vessel is operating in a narrow channel, in which case a PWC may operate at the speed and flow of other vessel traffic. A narrow channel is defined as a segment of the waters of the State that is 300 feet or less in width.

## Other Operating Restrictions

No person shall operate a personal watercraft on the waters of this State at greater than no-wake speed within 100 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, a dock, pier, swim float, marked swimming area, swimmers, surfers, persons engaged angling, or any manually operated propelled vessel (except within 50 feet in a narrow channel).

## Renting Personal Watercraft

Each PWC that is rented to the public is required to have liability insurance in the amount of \$300,000.

## WATER SKIING

The boating law contains several provisions relating to the towing of persons on water skis, surfboards and other similar devices, and the manipulation of such devices by the persons being towed. It prohibits the operation or manipulation of such devices:

1. In a reckless or dangerous manner;
2. While under the influence of an impairing substance;
3. Where the direction or location of the device may be manipulated or controlled from the vessel so as to cause the person being towed to collide with any object or person;
4. Between one hour after sunset and one hour before sunrise;
5. At any other time, unless:
  - (a) the vessel is equipped with a rear vision mirror, or
  - (b) there is an observer in the vessel in addition to the operator, or
  - (c) the person being towed wears a life preserver.

Prohibitions 4 and 5 do not apply to professional skiing exhibitions or authorized regattas.

### Water Skiing Signals



**FASTER**



**SLOWER**



**SPEED O.K.**



**RIGHT TURN**



**LEFT TURN**



**BACK TO  
DROP-OFF AREA**



**CUT MOTOR**



**STOP**



**SKIER O.K. AFTER FALL**



**PICK ME UP or  
FALLEN SKIER—WATCH OUT**

## Skin and Scuba Divers

Persons engaged in, or assisting, skin or scuba diving in waters open to boating must display the diver's flag at the place of diving. They may not display the flag when not engaged in diving or at any location where it will unreasonably obstruct navigation. Vessels may not approach closer than 50 feet to any structure which a diver's flag is displayed, except when it is located so as to constitute an unreasonable obstruction to navigation.



## BOATING ACCIDENTS

The law imposes certain specific duties on the operator of any vessel, whether it is numbered or unnumbered, which is involved in a collision, accident or any other casualty:

1. Operator is required to stop and render such assistance to other persons affected by the accident as may be practical and necessary in order to save them or minimize any danger resulting from the accident.
2. Operator is required to give their name, address and the number of their vessel (if it is numbered), in writing, to any person injured and to the owner of any property damaged in the collision or accident.
3. Operator is required to make immediate notification to the Wildlife Resources Commission, by the quickest means available, when an accident occurs that involves a vessel or its equipment resulting in a death or disappearance of a person from a vessel. The notification should consist of:
  - a) The date, time and exact location of the occurrence;
  - b) The name of each person who died or disappeared;
  - c) The number and name of the vessel; and
  - d) The names and addresses of the owner and operator.When the operator of a vessel cannot give the notice required above, each person on board the vessel shall notify the Wildlife Resources Commission or determine that the notice has been given.

4. Operator will be required to make a written report of the accident on a form provided by the Wildlife Resources Commission if the accident results in any one or more of the following:
- a) Loss of life;
  - b) A person is injured and requires medical treatment beyond first aid;
  - c) Actual physical damage to property (including vessels) in excess of \$2,000.00;
  - d) A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury.

Reports in death, disappearance and injury cases must be submitted within 48 hours; reports in other cases are required within 10 days. When the operator of a vessel cannot submit the accident report, the owner shall submit the report.

The purpose of the accident report is to provide statistical information as to the causes, frequency and location of serious boating accidents, and in transmittal of information as required by GS. 75A-11 of the North Carolina Boating Safety Act which further provides that the required accident reports "shall not be admissible as evidence."

## **LITTERING**

It is a misdemeanor to place, throw, deposit or discharge into the inland public waters of this State any litter, raw sewage, bottles, cans, papers, or other liquid or solid materials which render the waters unsightly, noxious, or otherwise unwholesome so as to be detrimental to the public health or welfare or to the enjoyment and safety of the water for recreational purposes.

## **UNIFORM WATERWAY MARKERS**

The Uniform Waterway Marking System (United States Aids to Navigation) has been adopted for use on the public waters of North Carolina.

The system is designed to facilitate water traffic by the use of standardized signs and markers in the same way that motor traffic is regulated on the nation's highways. It is incumbent on all boaters to familiarize themselves with the system and the meaning of the various signs and markers.

## Navigational Aids

**ALL-RED BUOY** indicates vessels should pass between it and its companion, an all-green buoy. Keep red buoy on starboard (right) side when proceeding up stream or when entering a channel from the main body of water. Red buoys are used opposite, or in plain sight of, an all-green buoy to mark the edge of a well-defined channel. Numbers, when used, will be white and even. May have conical top. Also, called a nun buoy.



**ALL-GREEN BUOY** indicates vessels should pass between it and its companion, an all-red buoy. Keep green buoy on port (left) side when proceeding upstream, or when entering a channel from the main body of water.

## Regulatory Markers

**DIAMOND SHAPE WITH CROSS** means ***Boats Keep Out.***



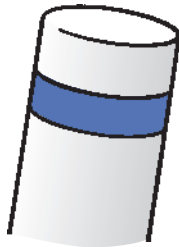
**DIAMOND SHAPE** warns of Danger. Wording appearing in diamond includes ROCK, DAM, SNAG, DREDGE, WING-DAM, FERRY CABLE, MARINE CONSTRUCTION, WRECK, etc.

**CIRCLE** means area controlled "as indicated". Wording that may appear in circle includes SLOW-NO WAKE, NO SKI, NO SWIM, NO SCUBA, NO PROP BOATS, SKI ONLY, FISHING ONLY, SKIN DIVING ONLY, etc.



**RECTANGLE** gives names, distances, arrows indicating directions, availability of gas, oil, groceries, marine repairs, etc.

**MOORING BUOY** has no navigational or regulatory significance. Blue band is half way between top and water line. Used as an anchoring aid. May bear ownership identification. Lighting is normally optional, but lighting may be required depending upon location in waterway.



**DIVER'S FLAG** indicates presence of a diver. To be flown from vessel or float. Flag has been adopted by Under Water Society of America. Boaters are warned to keep away from flag area to avoid submerged divers. The diver's flag is not a part of the Uniform Waterway Marking System (United States Aids to Navigation) but should be used by divers and recognized by boaters.

## RULES OF THE ROAD

Safe navigation is very largely a matter of boating courtesy, or the observation of the "golden rule" in marine traffic. Certain navigational "rules of the road" should be understood and adhered to by those who share the use of our public waters. Observance of the "rules of the road" is required by North Carolina law, and failure to observe them is imprudent and could constitute reckless and negligent operation.

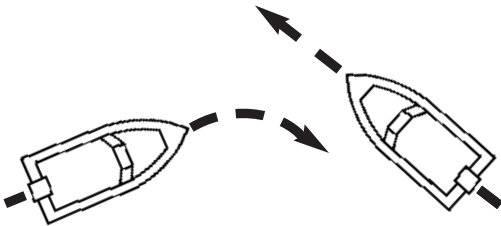
### Meeting

When two vessels approach each other from opposite directions "heads on", each must alter course to the right to avoid collision. If the two vessels are far enough to the left of each other so that no change in direction is needed for safe passage, both will maintain their course and speed to pass clear.



### Crossing

When two vessels approach each other at an angle, the one on the right has the right-of-way and the other must stay clear.



### Restricted Maneuverability

Sailboats not under power and vessels propelled by oars or paddles have the right-of-way over motorboats except in an overtaking situation where the vessel being overtaken always has the right-of-way. Small pleasure craft must yield to large commercial vessels in narrow channels.

### Passing

When one vessel overtakes another going in the same direction, the craft being overtaken must maintain course and speed, and the passing vessel must keep a sufficient distance to avoid collision or endangering the other craft from its wake.

## Speed and Control

All vessels must be operated at reasonable speeds for given situations and must be under the complete control of the operator at all times.

## Danger Areas

Vessels passing close to swimming areas, moored vessels, or vessels engaged in fishing, servicing buoys or markings, or similar activities, must reduce their speed so as to prevent their wash or wake from causing damage or danger to swimmers or other occupants of the area or other vessels.

## Aircraft

Vessels must not intentionally obstruct or interfere with the take off or landing of aircraft, and must stay clear of taxiing aircraft at all times.

## Lights

Operators of vessels must comply with the requirements for the type and use of lights when underway from sunset to sunrise.

## Access Areas

The Wildlife Resources Commission currently maintains over 200 access areas where boaters may launch and retrieve their vessels free of charge. For a list of these locations visit [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) or write:

**Division of Engineering Services  
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission  
1720 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1720**



## CARRYING PASSENGERS FOR HIRE

A captain's license is required if carrying passengers for hire on navigable waters. Before carrying passengers for hire, contact the Coast Guard Marine Sector North Carolina at Fort Macon, 252-247-4501, for information and regulations.

## LOCAL REGULATIONS

### Local Restrictions

Some counties have more restrictive local laws or ordinances pertaining to vessel operation. Information regarding these restrictions may be obtained from local governments, sheriffs departments, or marine commissions (Lake Norman, 704-564-6333. Lake Wylie and Mountain Island, 704-348-2736.)

In some cases the Wildlife Resources Commission is authorized to make uniform safety rules and regulations applicable to all public waters of the State. Special regulations may be approved for local bodies of water at the request of local authorities concerned. Before the Wildlife Resources Commission can adopt a local water safety rule (no wake zone), the local unit of government with territorial jurisdiction must address the proposal in open session of one of their advertised meetings. A resolution must pass supporting the rule and recommending that the Wildlife Resources Commission adopt the proposal. Once adopted, the "No Wake Zone" must be marked by the local government sponsor, or their designee, in accordance with the Uniform Waterway Marking System (United States Aids to Navigation) before Wildlife Enforcement Officers can enforce the rule.

Local water safety rules are published in the North Carolina Register and in the North Carolina Administrative Code. The substance of the general statewide regulations is included in this Vessel Operator's Guide.

Official copies of local regulations applying to specific waters may be obtained on request from the Wildlife Resources Commission.

FOR INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER  
FOR FREE BOATING COURSES,  
VISIT **[www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org)** OR CALL  
THE BOATING EDUCATION HOTLINE  
TOLL FREE **1-800-336-BOAT**.

## Colonial Waterbird Nesting Areas

Coastal islands and beach areas posted as Colonial Waterbird Nesting Areas are being managed to protect nesting populations of pelicans, terns, gulls, herons, and egrets. Special regulations apply. Access is prohibited on these areas from April 1 to August 31, except by special permit. Dogs may not be allowed on these areas during this time period. Access on these areas from September 1 to March 30 will be allowed as authorized by the landowner.

**Report Violations—call toll free 1-800-662-7137**

# COLONIAL WATERBIRD NESTING AREA

---

**DR. JAMES F. PARNELL**  
**COLONIAL WATERBIRD SANCTUARY SYSTEM**

---

**ENTRY PROHIBITED**  
**APRIL 1 – AUGUST 31**



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission  
Raleigh, NC  
Report Violations—Call Toll Free—1-800-662-7137

*The Wildlife Resources Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer and all wildlife programs are administered for the benefit of all North Carolina citizens without prejudice towards age, sex, race, religion, or national origin. Violations of this pledge may be reported to the, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, Equal Employment Officer, Personnel Office, 1703 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1703. Telephone (919) 707-0101.*

*50,000 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$6,256.00 or 0.125 per copy.*

**N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission  
1709 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1709**