

Safety Equipment

All PWC's (Personal Water Craft) must carry the following items:

- Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) for each person aboard. (Type III vests, the most popular among PWC enthusiasts, are not designed to turn unconscious wearers face up, but allow greater freedom than Types I or II)
- Fully charged portable B-1 type fire extinguisher
- Efficient sound-producing device (whistle or horn) for signaling or warning
- Throw or tow rope
- Bailing bucket

In addition, the following items are strongly recommended to carry or wear aboard the craft:

- PWC owner's manual
- Boating safety course certificate
- Local chart
- Small waterproof first-aid kit
- Emergency repair supplies—basic tools, spare lanyard, strong tape, spare spark plugs, oil, spray lubricant and cleaner
- Visual distress signal (flare, brightly colored cloth or flag, signaling mirror)
- Plastic one gallon fuel can
- Telescoping oar
- Anchor
- Sunscreen with UV protection
- Wet suit for water below 70 degrees F—Neoprene pants for warmer water
- Helmet (required for racing)—A high percentage of injuries are head injuries
- Sunglasses or goggles
- Non-skid shoes or boots (for example, neoprene wet-booties)
- Gloves
- Waterproof watch

Trailer Safety

Inspect your trailer carefully before each use. Check:

- Tires for wear and inflation
- Hitch and safety chain for signs of wear or stress
- Braking system to make sure you can stop with a load
- Electrical system for improper connections, corroded terminals, damaged wires, burned out bulbs, etc.
- Wheel bearings are properly packed with a good bearing grease
- Lug nuts and main nuts are tight
- Stops, rollers and bunks for wear or cracks
- Coupler and ball are compatible in size and are properly secured. Check for wear or stress
- Both bow and stern of your PWC are secured to the trailer. Use extra tie-downs in case one should fail
- Emergency supplies; carry basic tools, spare bulbs, bearings, grease, mounted tire and highway flares

Drive carefully. Give other drivers plenty of warning for any maneuvers. Allow for the extra length of the car and trailer when turning and passing. Allow extra time for stopping.

Pull off the road periodically to check the rig. Examine the tires and wheel bearings for signs of overheating, check the lights and test the tie-downs.

Before Leaving Home

- Study your owner's manual to learn all you can about your PWC.
- Inspect your craft and make necessary repairs, checking:
 - That steering controls are operating properly
 - For hull damage
 - That the throttle works freely and returns to idle position when released
 - Hoses, hose connections and clamps
 - Battery and cable connections
 - For fuel and oil leaks
 - For adequate fuel and oil levels—the jump pump cover and inlet grate for looseness
 - That engine cover latches are secure

Check that all safety equipment is aboard and in proper working order.

File a float plan with a close neighbor or friend. Instruct them to alert local Search and Rescue agency if you do not arrive home when expected.

Before Leaving Shore

At the launch ramp:

- It helps to have someone in the car, and someone at the water.
- Prepare your PWC as much as possible before taking your turn in line. Remove the craft cover. Remove the seat for a few minutes to allow gas fumes to vent. Undo the stern (not bow) tie-downs. Unplug the trailer lights. Make sure the PWC drain plugs are in place. Visually inspect your PWC from bow to stern.
- Be courteous. Wait your turn at the ramp. Don't rush, but don't linger longer than necessary.
- Make sure the way is clear before launching. Look for other craft, debris, etc.
- Be prepared to ride clear of the launch area immediately and to secure the PWC out of the way of others.
- Never leave the trailer unattended on the ramp with only the parking brake set.

In the Water:

- Make sure you and your riders are wearing the proper gear, including PFDs. Most PWC operators who drown are not wearing a PFD.
- Attach the kill switch safety lanyard to your PFD or wrist. If you fall off, the PWC will come to a stop.
- Before starting the engine, check that the throttle control and handlebars are operating smoothly, and that the steering nozzle turns properly in both directions.
- The engine should be started in at least three feet of water to avoid stirring up the ground or damaging the jet pump. Run your engine for several seconds to get the water out.
- Maintain idle speed for at least 100 yards from shore and until you're in a clear area.

Practice before taking off:

- Make sure that you and your riders are familiar with the PWC. If you or a rider are operating a particular craft for the first time, practice in an area that is clear of other craft and obstacles before venturing off into deeper water.
- Start slowly. The engine will run at idle if there is no pressure on the throttle, and the craft will normally move forward at several miles per hour. To increase speed, gently squeeze the throttle.
- Turn in different directions, and at different speeds. Practice shifting your weight as you turn, as when riding a bicycle. PWC models vary in how they respond to rider position.
- Practice coming to a stop at a low speed to see how the craft behaves. Notice that without power you can't steer. In addition, notice that the craft does not come to an immediate stop. PWC (like other boats) have no brakes - when you turn off the engine, the distance the craft travels before coming to a complete stop depends on hull design, the original speed, water conditions and total craft weight, including everyone and everything aboard.

Rules of the Water

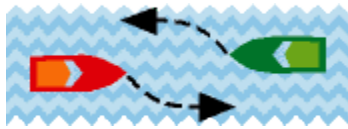
You are required to know and obey the boating Rules of the Water (also known as Navigation Rules). The rules can be quite complex, and a boating safety course is highly recommended (if not required). The following are a few simple guidelines for common encounters with other craft.



Non-powered craft (including sailboats under sail), commercial and fishing vessels have the right of way.



When crossing paths with another craft (with the exception of those mentioned above), the boat on the right has the right of way. If necessary, slow down to let the boat on your right continue its course, then pass behind it.



When meeting another craft head on, stay to the right so that the other boat passes to your left.



When passing another craft, the boat being overtaken has the right of way. You may pass on either side, but stay well clear of the other boat.

Cruising Safely and Considerately

Be Safe

- Know the load limits for your PWC. Never carry more weight or riders than specified in your manual. (A skier counts as a rider.)
- Never allow a person who does not meet licensing requirements to operate your PWC.
- Study the local navigation chart beforehand. Know the location of hazards such as rocks, buoys, sandbars and submerged objects, such as pilings.
- If possible, travel with another PWC. Maintain a safe distance while moving.
- If possible, stay within sight of the shore.
- Obey local regulations. Stay clear of areas designated "off-limits" to PWC. Obey posted speed limits.
- When traveling, follow the markers. Red and green buoys or daymarks are used to mark navigable channels. If you are returning from the ocean to a port, red markers with even numbers should be on your right; green markers with odd numbers should be on your left. Remember the slogan "Red – Right – Returning."
- Approach objects, such as a dock or a boat, at an angle, not head on. The momentum of a PWC continues even after the engine is turned off. An angle approach can help prevent a collision if the craft does not come to a complete stop in time.
- To avoid obstacles, keep your power on and turn. The water jet powers and steers the PWC; if you don't have power, you can't steer. Never follow directly behind another PWC. If leading a group of PWCs, keep a careful lookout. Avoid sudden turns that may cross the direction of travel of those following you.
- Don't jump the wake of a passing boat. You could misjudge its speed and hit it. In addition, you might not see traffic on the other side of the boat.
- Never operate a PWC at night. PWC have no running lights, which are required for craft traveling at night. A three-member team is required when pulling a water skier—the driver, observer and skier. Learn the communication signals between skier and craft (below). Turn off the power when assisting a skier back onto your PWC.



Be Alert

- Stay constantly alert for other craft, swimmers, divers, water skiers and people fishing. Keep clear.
- Be on the lookout for adverse weather conditions—darkening skies, rain, fog, increasing winds. Reduce speed and head toward shore at the first sign of change.
- Keep an eye on your fuel gauge. Leave enough fuel to return home.
- Be aware of the time. Leave enough time to return home before dark.
- A day on the water can take a toll on the body. Know the symptoms of boater's fatigue and hypothermia. Head to shore at the first sign of physical impairment.
 - Boater's fatigue: Staring straight ahead, loss of awareness, slowed reaction time.
 - Hypothermia: Shivering, bluish lips or fingernails, confusion or dizziness, poor coordination, impaired vision, weak pulse.

Be Considerate

- Stay clear of marinas or port entrances, anchorages or areas of heavy boat traffic.
- Don't stay in one location for long periods of time. Continuous noise is a common complaint about PWC.
- Don't operate your PWC early in the morning or late in the evening.
- Don't operate in swimming or fishing areas.
- Don't create wakes near other individuals or boats, or near the shore where they can cause damage to beaches and property. You are responsible for any damage caused by your wake.
- Don't spray people on the shore.
- Respect the environment. Don't spill fuel or oil. Don't litter.
- Respect the wildlife. Stay clear of marine animals and conservation areas.

Returning to Shore

- Slow down and maintain idle speed, beginning at least 100 yards from the breakwater, dock or shore.
- If landing at a dock, approach at an angle, not head on.
- If landing ashore, shut off the engine in water at least three feet deep. Be prepared to get off and maneuver the PWC to land. Do not run your craft aground or you may damage the jet pump.

Emergency Situations

A capsized PWC may take on water, but it is designed not to sink.

- If you fall from a moving craft, hit the water rear end first, with legs together and arms over the head. The safety lanyard, attached to your wrist or life vest, should kill the engine. A running engine can damage the craft and cause injury to you. (If you become separated from the craft and the engine is still running, pull the lanyard off immediately.)
- Exercise caution when righting a craft to avoid injury. Roll the craft over in a clockwise direction to prevent water from the exhaust system from entering the engine.
- In the event of a serious emergency, or if you are injured, stay with the PWC until help arrives. Use your whistle, visual distress signal and/or mirror to attract attention.
- If you carry a handheld combination GPS/VHF unit, you will be able to call for help and provide your exact location.

Security

A few simple precautions can help protect your PWC from theft.

- Never leave the keys in the ignition.
- Never leave your PWC unattended at docks or on beaches.
- If in a group on shore, chain your PWC to others. (Chaining PWC to others in the water can scratch the hulls.)
- Permanently affix your hull identification number (HIN) in a secret, unexposed location. Record the number and keep it in a safe place. It may help to identify your PWC if it is stolen.

If on a trailer:

- Lock your PWC to the trailer
- Add a hitch lock so the trailer can't be easily towed away.
- Remove a trailer wheel and store it in the trunk of your car.

Drugs and Alcohol

Oftentimes boating-related deaths involve the use of alcohol or drugs. Normal behavior can be affected by exposure to fresh air, ultraviolet light, glare, motion and noise: adding alcohol or drugs can result in an extremely explosive situation.

Alcohol and drugs affect the body in areas that are critical to the safe operation of a watercraft. Effects include:

- Decreased balance
- Decreased coordination
- Decreased reaction time
- Decreased judgment; loss of inhibitions
- Decreased vision; fuzzy or double vision; reduced peripheral vision

A BUI (boating under the influence) conviction can result in a fine, imprisonment or both. In addition, some states will revoke your driver's license if you are apprehended for boating while intoxicated.

Play it safe. Never operate or ride on a watercraft while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.