

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
State-Specific Boating Requirements

SL 1. Law Enforcement Authority

Every peace officer of the state, city, county, harbor district, or other political subdivision of California is authorized to enforce California Boating Law. These officers can stop and board any vessel on which a peace officer has probable cause to believe that a violation of California law, regulations, or local ordinance exists. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) also has enforcement authority on all federally controlled waters. Peace officers may order the operator of an unsafe vessel to shore. If an unsafe condition is found that cannot be corrected on the spot and where, in the judgment of the officer, continued operation would be especially hazardous, a vessel may be ordered to the nearest safe moorage.

A vessel approaching, overtaking, being approached or being overtaken by a moving law enforcement vessel with a siren or illuminated blue light, or a vessel approaching a stationary law enforcement vessel displaying an illuminated blue light, must: (1) immediately slow to steerage speed, (2) alter its course, within its ability, so as not to inhibit or interfere with the operation of the law enforcement vessel, and (3) proceed, unless otherwise directed by the operator of the law enforcement vessel, at the reduced speed until past the area in which the law enforcement vessel is operating.

False Search and Rescue Calls

Anyone who knowingly makes a false report of an emergency to a state or local agency is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be punished by imprisonment in a county jail for a period of not more than one year, a fine not exceeding \$1,000, or by both imprisonment and fine. An emergency includes any condition that results in, or could result in, the response of a public official in an authorized emergency vehicle, which includes an aircraft or vessel.

It is a felony for a person to report, or cause a report to be made, to any state or local government agency that an emergency exists, and who knows or should know that the response to the report is likely to cause death or great bodily injury and someone sustains such injury or death as a result of the false report.

SL 2. Age Restrictions

In the State of California, it is unlawful for anyone under 16 years old to operate a motorboat greater than 15 horsepower, except for a sailboat that does not exceed 30 feet long or a dinghy used directly between a moored boat and the shore, or between two moored boats. Those aged 12-15 may operate motorboats greater than 15 horsepower or sailboats over 30 feet if supervised on board by a person at least 18 years old. A violation of these provisions results in an infraction.

SL 3. Boater Safety Education Requirements

The California Department of Boating and Waterways recommends that boat operators take a boating safety course, although it is not required at this time. In addition, new boaters should take a course that teaches boat handling and operation. Boaters should also be aware that state boating safety laws are updated annually, and they must stay informed of changes to state boating safety requirements. In addition, the California Department of Boating and Waterways is authorized to develop a voluntary Personal Watercraft (PWC) Education Course.

SL 4. Vessel Registration

California law requires that most vessels maintain current registration. This includes vessels that are moored, whether or not they are used. All vessels must be registered and numbered. The following are exempt from this requirement:

1. Boats propelled manually.
2. Boats eight feet or under, if propelled only by sail.
3. Certain vessels owned by public agencies.
4. USCG-documented vessels.
5. Foreign vessels temporarily using California waters.
6. Ship's lifeboats, if used only for lifesaving purposes.
7. Vessels having valid out-of-state registration and not remaining in California more than 90 consecutive days.
8. Sailboards.

Under California law, registration stickers and bow numbers must be displayed according to the following instructions:

- The bow number must be painted on or permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the boat.
- The numbers must be plain, vertical block characters at least 3 inches in height and read from left to right. They must contrast with the background color of the hull and be distinctly visible and legible. Spaces or hyphens, equal to the width of a letter, must separate the letter and numeral groupings.
- The bow number consists of the prefix letters CA, four numerals, and two suffix letters, as in the following example: CA 1234 AA or CA-1234-AA.

Registration decals must be displayed 3 inches aft of the bow number on each side of the boat. Certificates of number expire on December 31 of every odd-numbered year. Only current decals may be displayed.

For vessels built after 1971, a Hull Identification Number (HIN) is required if the vessel must be registered. The HIN must contain at least 12 characters and be configured in accordance with federal regulations.

SL 5. Maximum Loading and Horsepower

The State of California does not have any maximum loading and horsepower requirements that are in addition to federal regulations. To review federal regulations, refer to the section on Capacity Plates included in Chapter 1 of this course.

The following information was approved by NASBLA and is included in Chapter 1 of the Boater101 Course:

It is required for all mono-hull boats under 20 feet built on or after November 1, 1972 to have a capacity plate approved by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). In addition some manufacturers voluntarily install capacity plates on boats larger than 20 feet. This plate must be visible from the operator's station. The capacity plate lists a safe motor size, the maximum number of persons to be carried onboard and the total weight the boat can carry including persons, motor and gear. When operating your boat be sure to adhere to the restrictions listed on the capacity plate. Not only is it dangerous to overpower or overload a small boat since they can swamp or capsize more easily, but it is also illegal. In addition, overloaded boats will be more difficult to control. In many states, there are fines and penalties for exceeding capacity recommendations, including carrying more than the maximum number of people.

For vessels that are not equipped with a capacity plate, the following formula can be used to calculate the number of persons (averaging 150 lbs each) the vessel can carry safely in good weather:

$$\text{Number of people} = \text{vessel length (feet)} \times \text{vessel width (feet)} \div 15$$

SL 6. Equipment and Lighting Requirements

Recreational vessels must carry specified safety equipment, which may vary according to type of propulsion, type of construction, area and time of use, and number of people aboard. Unless otherwise noted, all required equipment that is USCG-approved must be kept in good, serviceable condition, readily accessible, and of the proper type and/or size. Recreational vessels may carry extra equipment that is not USCG-approved, provided that the minimum requirements for approved equipment are met. For equipment purposes, sailboats, canoes, rowboats, and inflatable rafts equipped with motors are considered to be "motorboats." Requirements vary considerably for commercial vessels and vessels engaged in racing. The required equipment may include, but is not limited to, personal flotation devices (PFDs), navigation lights, sound producing devices, visual distress signals, fire extinguishers, backfire flame arrestors, muffling devices, and ventilation systems.

Sailboats and Manually Propelled Vessels:

Personal Flotation Devices: Vessels under 16 feet long, and all canoes and kayaks regardless of length, must carry one Type I, II, III or V USCG-approved PFD for each person aboard. They must be readily accessible and of a suitable size for the intended wearer. Vessels 16 feet and over, except canoes and kayaks, must have one Type I, II, III, or V USCG-approved wearable device for each person aboard, plus at least one Type IV throwable device. The throwable device must be stored so as to be immediately available. Wearable devices must be of a suitable size for the intended wearer.

Navigation Lights: All vessels must display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise and during times of limited visibility. In inland and international waters, sailing vessels under sail alone must exhibit navigation lights. The tricolored lantern and the all-round green and red lights should never be used simultaneously.

A sailing vessel under 23 feet is required, if practical, to exhibit those lights prescribed, or have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light, which must be displayed in enough time to prevent a collision. A vessel under oars may display those lights prescribed for sailing vessels or have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern displaying a white light, which must be exhibited in enough time to prevent a collision.

Sound Signaling Devices: A vessel under 39 feet 4 inches (12 meters) need not carry a whistle or bell, but must be able to provide some other means of making an efficient sound signal.

Visual Distress Signals (Coastal Waters Only): Boats under 16 feet long, manually propelled craft of any size, sailboats under 26 feet—(of completely open construction and not equipped with propulsion machinery), and boats competing in an organized marine parade, regatta, race, or similar event are only required to carry aboard devices suitable for night use when in operation between sunset and sunrise.

Motorboats Less Than 16 Feet in Length:

Personal Flotation Device: One Type I, II, III or V USCG-approved PFD must be carried for each person on board, readily accessible and of a suitable size for the intended wearer.

Fire Extinguisher: One Type B-I USCG-approved fire extinguisher must be carried when no fixed fire extinguishing system is installed in machinery spaces. Extinguishers are not required for outboard motorboats under 26 feet and of open construction. No portable extinguishers are needed, if an approved, fixed fire extinguishing system is installed in machinery spaces.

Backfire Flame Arrestor: A USCG-approved backfire flame arrestor is required for inboard gasoline motors not exposed to the atmosphere above the gunwale level.

Muffling System: To reduce noise, motorboat engines must be equipped with factory-installed mufflers, exhaust water manifolds or other effective muffling system. Unmodified outboards usually meet legal requirements.

Ventilation Systems: All vessels built after 1980 must be equipped with powered ventilation systems.

Sound Signaling Devices: A vessel under 39 feet 4 inches (12 meters) must be capable of making an efficient sound signal, but need not carry a whistle or bell.

Visual Distress Signals (Coastal Waters Only): Boats under 16 feet (if of completely open construction and not equipped with propulsion machinery), and boats competing in an organized marine parade, regatta, race, or similar event must only have aboard devices suitable for night use between sunset and sunrise.

Navigation Lights: Navigation lights must be kept in serviceable condition and displayed between sunset and sunrise and at times of restricted visibility. For motorboats operating during these times, see "Running Lights" below.

Motorboats 16 Feet to Less Than 26 Feet:

Personal Flotation Devices: One Type I, II, III, or V USCG-approved wearable PFD must be available for each person aboard, readily accessible and of a suitable size for the intended wearer. In addition, the vessel must carry an approved Type IV throwable device, which should be immediately available.

Fire Extinguisher: One Type B-I USCG-approved fire extinguisher must be on board when no fixed, fire-extinguishing system is installed in machinery spaces. Extinguishers are not needed on outboard motorboats under 26 feet long and of open construction. No portable extinguishers are needed if an approved fixed fire extinguishing system is installed in machinery spaces.

Backfire Flame Arrestor: A USCG-approved backfire flame arrestor is required for inboard gasoline motors not exposed to the atmosphere above the gunwale level.

Muffling System: An effective muffling system is required for the exhaust of each internal combustion engine. Unmodified outboards usually meet legal requirements.

Ventilation Systems: All vessels built after 1980 must be equipped with powered ventilation systems.

Sound Signaling Devices: A vessel under 39 feet 4 inches (12 meters) must be able to provide a means of making an efficient sound signal, but need not carry a whistle or bell.

Visual Distress Signals (Coastal Waters Only): All boats 16 feet or longer must carry devices aboard at all times. Boaters must carry either (a) devices suitable for day use and devices suitable for night use, or (b) devices that can be used for both day and night use.

Navigation Lights: Navigation lights must be kept in serviceable condition and displayed between sunset and sunrise and at times of restricted visibility. For motorboats operating during these times, see "Running Lights."

Motorboats 26 Feet to Less Than 40 Feet:

Personal Flotation Devices: One Type I, II, III or V USCG-approved wearable personal flotation device must be on board for each person aboard, readily accessible and of a suitable size for the intended wearer. In addition, the vessel must carry an approved Type IV throwable device, which should be immediately available.

Fire Extinguisher: Two Type B-I or one Type B-II USCG-approved fire extinguisher must be carried when no fixed fire extinguishing system is installed in machinery spaces.

Backfire Flame Arrestor: A USCG-approved backfire flame arrestor is required for inboard gasoline motors not exposed to the atmosphere above the gunwale level.

Muffling System: An effective muffling system is required for the exhaust of each internal combustion engine. Unmodified outboards usually meet legal requirements.

Ventilation Systems: All vessels built after 1980 must be equipped with powered ventilation systems.

Sound Signaling Devices: A vessel under 39 feet 4 inches (12 meters) must be capable of making an efficient sound signal, but need not carry a whistle or bell.

Visual Distress Signals (Coastal Waters Only): All boats 16 feet or longer must carry devices aboard at all times. Boaters must carry either (a) devices suitable for day use and devices suitable for night use, or (b) devices that can be used for both day and night use.

Navigation Lights: Navigation lights must be kept in serviceable condition and displayed between sunset and sunrise and at times of restricted visibility. For motorboats operating during these times, see "Running Lights."

Motorboats 40 Feet to 65 Feet in Length:

Personal Flotation Devices: One Type I, II, III or V USCG-approved wearable PFD must be on board for each person, readily accessible and of a suitable size for the intended wearer. In addition, the vessel must have an approved Type IV throwable device that should be immediately available.

Fire Extinguisher: Three B-I or one B-I and one B-II Type USCG-approved fire extinguishers must be carried when no fixed fire extinguishing system is installed in machinery spaces. With a fixed system in the machinery space, two Type B-I or one Type B-II extinguisher must be on board.

Backfire Flame Arrestor: A USCG-approved backfire flame arrestor is required for inboard gasoline motors not exposed to the atmosphere above the gunwale level.

Muffling System: An effective muffling system is required for the exhaust of each internal combustion engine. Unmodified outboards usually meet legal requirements.

Ventilation Systems: All vessels built after 1980 must be equipped with powered ventilation systems.

Sound Signaling Devices: Vessels 39 feet 4 inches (12 meters) or longer must carry a whistle and a bell.

Visual Distress Signals (Coastal Waters Only): All boats 16 feet or longer must carry devices aboard at all times. Boaters must carry either (a) devices suitable for day use and devices suitable for night, or (b) devices that can be used for both day and night use.

Navigation Lights: Navigation lights must be kept in serviceable condition and displayed between sunset and sunrise and at times of restricted visibility. For motorboats operating during these times, see "Running Lights."

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

The minimum requirements are:

Except canoes and kayaks, all boats 16 feet or longer: One wearable life jacket (Type I, II, III, or V) for each person on board and one throwable (Type IV) PFD in each boat.

Canoes and kayaks of any length and all other boats under 16 feet long must have one I, II, III, or V PFD for each person on board.

Under California law, it is an infraction, punishable by a fine of up to \$250, to operate a vessel that is 26 feet or under unless every child on board who is 11 years old or younger is wearing a Type I, II, III or V USCG-approved PFD (life jacket). The law does not apply to:

- the operator of a sailboat on which every child under 12 is restrained by a harness tethered to the sailboat, OR
- the operator of a vessel on which every child under 12 is in an enclosed cabin.

Personal Watercraft Users and Water Skiers

Every person on board a PWC and water skiers must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket. Exceptions: a person aboard a PWC or being towed behind a vessel on water skis, if that person is a performer in a professional exhibition, or preparing to participate in an official regatta, marine parade, tournament or exhibition. In lieu of wearing a Type I, II, III, or V USCG-approved PFD, any person engaged in slalom skiing on a marked course, or any person engaged in barefoot, jump, or trick water skiing may elect to wear a wetsuit designed for the activity and labeled by the manufacturer as a water ski wetsuit. A USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket must be carried in the tow vessel for each skier electing to wear a wetsuit.

Inflatable PFDs - The USCG approved inflatable PFDs in 1996. Only certain brands are USCG-approved, so check the label. While activation upon impact is not a required feature, inflatables must be equipped, at a minimum, with both manual (pull) and oral inflation systems. They are only approved for people 16 years and older, and must be wearable, not a throwable-type PFD. Inflatables are not recommended for non-swimmers and are not intended for use while water-skiing or on PWCs.

In addition, all boats, powered or non-powered, must carry at least one wearable USCG-approved PFD for every person on board. PFDs bearing Coast Guard approval are identified by Types I, II, III, IV, or V. Coast Guard approval is shown by a stencil marking or tag on the PFD. This tag or marking shows the name and address of the manufacturer and the USCG approval number. It also shows the amount of flotation in the device and the PFD Type (I, II, III, IV, V). Failure to have the adequate number of approved devices on board is a violation of state and federal law.

California Boating Law requires that all Type I, II, and III PFDs must be readily accessible and all Type IV (throwable) PFDs must be immediately available. All PFDs must be kept in serviceable condition. If the PFD is torn, damaged, rotted, punctured or otherwise unserviceable, it no longer meets legal requirements and should be replaced.

Anyone being towed on skis or other such devices is considered a "person on board." If the skier is not wearing an approved device, there must be one available in the boat. Except for some Type V PFDs, and the requirements for every child under 12 years of age, California Boating Law does not require those on board to wear life jackets while underway. However, it is highly recommended that everyone, especially non-swimmers, wear life jackets while on board a vessel. All wearable life jackets must be of suitable size.

Non-approved devices such as ski belts may be carried aboard as excess equipment only. Buoyant cushions should never be worn on the back when in use. For further details concerning the types and designs of PFDs, send for the free pamphlet titled "Safe Boating Hints For Personal Flotation Devices" from the California Department of Boating and Waterways.

Persons using any underwater maneuvering device are exempt from wearing a PFD. An underwater maneuvering device is any towed or self-powered apparatus designed for underwater use that a person can pilot through diving, turning and surfacing maneuvers.

SL 7. Marine Sanitation Devices

The law forbids dumping sewage, treated or untreated, or any waste derived from sewage, into the lakes, reservoirs, or fresh water impoundments of California.

Federal regulations and equipment standards established jointly by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the USCG govern the use of marine sanitation devices (MSDs). For a pamphlet on the federal MSD regulations, including a list of those coastal harbors whose waters have been declared as "no-discharge" areas, write to the Department of Boating and Waterways.

State law provides that it is a misdemeanor to disconnect, bypass, or operate an MSD so as to discharge sewage into California waters, unless expressly authorized or permitted by law. In no-discharge areas:

- No person is allowed to disconnect, bypass, or operate an MSD so as to potentially discharge sewage, and
- No person is allowed to occupy or operate a vessel in which an MSD is installed, unless the MSD is properly secured.

A first violation is an infraction and any subsequent violation is a misdemeanor. State and local peace officers may enforce state law relating to MSDs and may inspect vessels if there is reasonable cause to suspect noncompliance with those laws.

All U.S. vessels 40 feet or more in length and equipped with a galley and berthing must, in addition, carry a Waste Management Plan, if the vessel operates beyond 3 miles from shore. The Waste Management Plan must be in writing, must designate the person who is in charge of carrying out the plan, and must describe procedures for collecting processing, storing and properly disposing of garbage in keeping with the prohibitions described above.

Federal law now requires all boats 26 feet or more in length, when operating in waters under federal jurisdiction, to display an informational placard on the subject of the federal marine pollution prevention laws.

Vessel Sewage

A state or local peace officer who reasonably suspects that a vessel is discharging sewage in an area where discharge is prohibited may board that vessel if the owner or operator is aboard for the purpose of inspecting the marine sanitation device for proper operation and placing a dye tablet in the holding tank.

SL 8. Muffling Devices

An effective muffling system is required for the exhaust of each internal combustion engine. Unmodified outboards usually meet legal requirements.

Effective January 1, 2005, a motorboat operated on the inland waters of California or within one mile of the California Coastline must be muffled or otherwise prevented from exceeding the following noise levels:

- 88 dB(A) for engines manufactured on or after January 1, 1993.
- 90 dB(A) for engines manufactured before January 1, 1993.
- 75 dB(A) measured as specified in the Shoreline Sound Level Measurement Procedure.

Authorities generally agree that unbaffled exhaust pipes (stacks) and most water-injected pipes do not meet any of the above noise level requirements.

SL 9. Boating Accidents

Boat operators involved in an accident must: (1) provide their name, address and vessel registration number to other involved parties; (2) provide assistance to any injured persons and (3) in case of a death or disappearance, report the accident without delay to the nearest law enforcement officials and the Department of Boating and Waterways.

Boat operators or owners must also make a written report of a boating accident to the Department of Boating and Waterways when:

- A person dies, disappears under circumstances that indicate death or injury, or is injured and requires medical treatment beyond first aid.
- Total damage to all vessels involved and other property is more than \$500 or there is complete loss of a vessel.

This report must be made within 48 hours of the accident in cases involving a disappearance, death that occurs within 24 hours of the accident, or injury that requires medical treatment beyond first aid. In all other incidents in which a written accident report is required, the report must be made within 10 days of the accident.

An accident report form is contained in this document and may be used for such reports.

Forms are available through most sheriff's and harbor master's offices and many police departments. They may also be obtained by writing to the California Department of Boating and Waterways, 2000 Evergreen Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95815-3888, by calling 1-888-326-2822 or by visiting the state web site at www.dbw.ca.gov. Failure to comply with the above requirements is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment up to six months or both.

SL 10. Vessel Speed Restrictions

Speed is limited by law for certain conditions and areas. The maximum speed for motorboats within 100 feet of a bather (but not a water skier) and within 200 feet of a bathing beach, swimming float, diving platform or life line, passenger landing being used, or landing where boats are tied up is five miles per hour.

A safe speed should be maintained at all times so that: a) action can be taken to avoid collision, and b) the boat can stop within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

In restricted visibility, motorboats should have the engines ready for immediate maneuvering. An operator should be prepared to stop the vessel within the space of half the distance of forward visibility.

SL 11. Mooring to Markers or Buoys

Tying up to or hanging on to any navigation buoy (except a mooring buoy) or beacon is prohibited. It is also unlawful to tamper with, move, displace, damage or destroy any navigational aid.

SL 12. Reckless and Careless Operation

Vessels, water skis, aquaplanes, or similar devices must not be operated in a reckless or negligent manner that might endanger the life, limb, or property of any person. Examples of prohibited operation include, but are not limited to:

1. Riding on the bow, gunwale, or transom of a vessel underway, propelled by machinery, if the rider is not protected by railing or other reasonable deterrent from falling overboard; or riding in a dangerous position or manner. These provisions do not apply to a vessel's crew in the act of anchoring, mooring or making fast to a dock or another vessel, or in the necessary management of a sail.

2. Maneuvering towed skiers or devices so as to pass the towline over another vessel or its skier.

3. Navigating a vessel, skis, or other devices between a towing vessel and its tow or tows.

4. Operating under the influence of intoxicants or narcotics.

Other actions, such as speeding in confined or restricted areas, "buzzing" or "wetting down" others, or skiing at prohibited times or in restricted areas can also be considered reckless or negligent operation.

"Hit and run"--Anyone involved in a boating accident that results in injury, death or disappearance, and who is convicted of leaving the scene without providing adequate information to others involved or to a peace officer at the scene and/or rendering reasonable assistance to an injured person, is liable for a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to one year, or both.

SL 13. Interference with Navigation

Nothing in the rules of the road will exonerate a vessel operator from the consequences of failing to comply with the inland rules of the road, or from neglecting any precaution, which may be required by the ordinary practice of seamen, or by the special circumstances of the case.

In construing and complying with the inland rules of the road, due regard must be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels involved, which may make a departure from the rules of the road necessary to avoid immediate danger.

SL 14. Boating Under the Influence

Alcohol is a factor in many fatal motorboat accidents in California. (See the Department of Boating and Waterways Annual Safety Report at <http://www.dbw.ca.gov>.) Please do not drink and operate a boat! State law specifies that:

1. It is unlawful for a person to operate a motorized vessel, water skis or similar device while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs, or if addicted to any drug.
2. It is unlawful for a person 21 years of age or older to operate a motorized vessel, water skis or similar device if he or she has 0.08% or more, by weight, of alcohol in his or her blood. A level of at least 0.05% but less than 0.08% may be used with other evidence in determining whether the person was under the influence of alcohol. No person under 21 years of age may operate a vessel, water skis or similar device who has 0.01% or more, by weight, of alcohol in their blood.
3. A person who has been arrested for operating a mechanically propelled vessel "under the influence" may be asked to submit to a chemical test to determine blood alcohol content. Refusal may result in increased penalties upon conviction. A person convicted of intoxicated boat operation could receive up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail.
4. If a person is convicted of operating a vessel while intoxicated, the California Department of Motor Vehicles may suspend or revoke that person's vehicle driver's license. Depending upon the number and type of vehicle and/or vessel violations accumulated, this suspension or revocation could be for up to 5 years, and could also result in fines of up to \$1,000.

SL 15. Mandatory Violator Education

A person convicted of a moving violation in the Harbors and Navigation Code, the Federal Rules of the Road and regulations adopted by the Department of Boating and Waterways while operating a vessel, must complete and pass a boating safety course approved by the Department of Boating and Waterways.

Proof of completion and passage of the course must be submitted to the court within seven months of the time of the conviction.

SL 16. PWC Regulations

Every person on board a PWC must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.

Exceptions include a person aboard a PWC or being towed behind a vessel on water skis if that person is a performer in a professional exhibition or preparing to participate in an official regatta, marine parade, tournament or exhibition. In lieu of wearing a Type I, II, III, or V USCG-approved PFD, a person engaged in slalom skiing on a marked course, or any person engaged in barefoot, jump, or trick water skiing may elect to wear a wetsuit designed for the activity and labeled by the manufacturer as a water ski wetsuit. A USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket must be carried in the tow vessel for each skier electing to wear a wetsuit. California law prohibits PWC operators from undertaking unsafe or reckless practices, including jumping another vessel's wake within 100 feet of that vessel, operating at a rate of speed and proximity to another vessel so that the other operator is required to swerve to avoid collision, and "spraying down" a person or other vessel in the water.

The law also requires that a PWC operator be equipped with a lanyard switch attached to his or her person. On a PWC equipped with a self-circling device, the disabling of such device is prohibited, as is nighttime operation (from sunset to sunrise), even if the PWC is equipped with proper navigational lights.

Persons engaged in professional exhibitions, regattas, races, parades and other similar activities are exempted from these provisions. A violation of any of these provisions is an infraction.

SL 17. Water Ski Regulations

Effective January 1, 2001, California law provides that any person being towed behind a vessel must wear a Type I, II, III or V USCG-approved life jacket. Exceptions: The law does not apply to performers engaged in professional exhibitions, official regattas, marine parades, or tournaments. A person engaged in slalom skiing on a marked course, or barefoot, jump or trick water skiing, may instead wear a wetsuit designed for the activity and labeled by the manufacturer as a water ski wetsuit. However, for each skier who elects to wear a wetsuit, a Type I, II, III, or V life jacket still must be carried on board. Note: Inflatable PFDs are not approved for use while water skiing.

When using a boat to tow a person on water skis or an aquaplane, there must be in the boat, in addition to the operator, one other person who can observe the person being towed. The observer must be at least 12 years of age.

The towing of water-skiers from sunset to sunrise is prohibited in California. Local laws may also restrict skiing at certain times during the day and in certain areas.

Water skis and aquaplanes must not be operated so as to endanger the safety of persons or property. Passing the towline over another vessel or skier is prohibited. Towing a skier or navigating between a vessel and its tow is prohibited. Towing a skier does not give the operator of the vessel any special privileges. The rules of the road must be observed. It is mandatory for the operator of a vessel involved in towing a skier to display, or cause to be displayed, a red or orange water-ski flag, to indicate:

- A downed skier
- A skier in the water preparing to ski
- A ski line extended from the vessel
- A ski in the water in the vicinity of the vessel

The flag must be no less than 12 inches on each side and be in the shape of a square or rectangle. The display of the ski flag does not in itself restrict the use of the water, but when operating in the area, boaters should exercise caution.

For more information on water-skiing, send for the free pamphlet titled "Safety Hints for Water-Skiing" from the Department of Boating and Waterways.

As noted in the "Age Restrictions" section, it is illegal for a person under age 16 to operate, or for any person to allow a person under 16 to operate, a motorboat of more than 15 horsepower. Exception: A person 12-15 years old may operate a motorboat if there is someone on board supervising who is at least 18.

SL 18. Divers-down Flag

A red flag with a white diagonal running from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner (from masthead to lower outside corner) and known as the "Divers Flag" shall when displayed on the water, indicate the presence of a person engaged in diving in the water in the immediate area.

Recognition of this flag by regulation will not be construed as conferring any rights or privileges on its users, and its presence in a water area will not be construed in itself as restricting the use of the water area so marked.

Operators of vessels must, however, exercise precaution commensurate with conditions indicated.

This flag may be displayed only when diving is in progress, and its display in a water area when no diving is in progress is that area constitutes a violation of the regulation and of Section 659 of the Harbors and Navigation Code.

Nothing in this section will require the carriage of a divers flag for any purpose.

SL 19. Liveries (Rental Agencies)

The owner of a boat livery must keep a record of the name and address of the person or persons hiring any boat or vessel subject to this code, the registered identification number of such vessel, the departure date and time, and the expected time of return. The record must be preserved for at least six months.

It is unlawful for the owner of a boat livery, his agent or employees to permit a vessel to be delivered to a renter unless it has been provided, either by the owner or renter, with the equipment required pursuant to the applicable laws and regulations.

SL 20. Other State-Specific Regulations

California Boating Law provides that local ordinances may be adopted in municipalities throughout the state as needed to address special circumstances and waterbodies.

SL 21. Environmental Awareness

Pollutants and Regulators:

The following list is provided as a general summary of agencies that regulate pollution from boating. Contact agencies for specific requirements and penalties. Pollution discharges may result in civil or criminal penalties.

Petroleum / Hazardous Waste Spills

U.S. Coast Guard

California Department of Fish and Game

Boating Law Enforcement Agencies

Hazardous Wastes

California Department of Toxic Substances Control

County Department of Environmental Health, Waste Management, etc.

Marine Debris (garbage and plastics)

Boating Law Enforcement Agencies

U.S. Coast Guard

Boat Sewage

Boating Law Enforcement Agencies

Hull Paints (with copper or TBT)

California Department of Pesticide Regulation

County Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures

Non Point Source Pollution (broad range of pollutants)

Regional Water Quality Control Board

California Coastal Commission

Local governments

Aquatic Nuisance Species

Every boater should do his or her part in the prevention of aquatic nuisance species (ANS). ANS are non-native aquatic species such as plants, fish and animals that are invading California's waters and nearly impossible to eliminate once established. These species can increase dramatically under the right conditions and consequently displace native species, clog waterways and impact navigation. Examples of ANS that can be accidentally transported by boaters are *Egeria densa*, water hyacinth and zebra mussels. California also used to have a problem with *Caulerpa taxifolia*, an invasive alga. These species often attach to boat hulls or get caught in propellers and intakes. All boaters should keep up to date on any invasive species and how to prevent their spread. The following practices are examples of ways that you can be an environmentally safe boater and help prevent the spread of ANS:

- Inspect your boat before you leave any body of water and remove any aquatic plants or animals.
- Before moving your boat from one body of water to another, flush raw-water cooling systems and clean sea strainers.
- Empty any bait buckets. Remove all plant fragments from bait wells, fishing gear, trailers, dive gear or props and dispose of them properly in a garbage receptacle on land.
- Drain all water from your motor, bilge and live wells.
- Be sure to wash your boat before launching it in a new body of water.
- Any new infestations of ANS should be reported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Additional Information

For more information on California boating law refer to the California Department of Boats and Waterways at www.dbw.ca.gov; and see the California Code of Regulations Title 14 – Natural Resources, Div. 4 – Department of Boating and Waterways, and the California Harbors and Navigation Code, Health and Safety Code, Fish and Game Code, Penal Code, Education Code, and Vehicle Code.