CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS
Division of Boating and Waterways

ALCOHOL

Alcohol and the Law

- It is against the law to operate a boat or water ski with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent or more.
- If an operator's blood alcohol level reaches or exceeds .08%, he or she is considered under the influence of alcohol and can be arrested and charged with boating under the influence and go to jail.

Safety Tips

- Bring your life jacket, but leave the alcohol at home. The side effects of alcohol – impaired judgment, reduced balance, poor coordination – can be magnified by the boating environment.
- Designating a driver is not enough on vessels. The concept works well in cars, but drunken passengers on boats can easily fall overboard, swim near the propeller or cause loading problems by leaning over the side or standing up in small vessels, causing vessels to capsize. Everyone who drinks alcohol on board is at risk. If you do drink, wear a life jacket.

BOATING SAFETY COURSE

- Are you an experienced boater? You are. But what about other boaters? Last year in California, 98% of boat operators involved in fatal accidents did not take a boating safety course.
- Operator inexperience, unsafe speed and inattention are the leading causes of boating accidents. Take a boating safety course. You'll learn the rules of the road and how to deal with emergencies. You may even receive a discount on your insurance premiums.
- Taking a boating safety course covers what you can do in case you're in a head-on, crossing or narrow channel situation. For example:
    - When approaching another vessel head on, steer to the right.
    - When two power-driven vessels approach each other in a crossing situation, the vessel on the right has the right of way. Power driven vessels give way to manually propelled vessels or boats under sail.
    - Stay to the right of narrow channels.

CARBON MONOXIDE

- "Teak surfing" or being dragged behind a boat is illegal and can be deadly! Those being dragged can inhale the colorless, odorless, tasteless and DEADLY gas called Carbon Monoxide. Avoid the death zones!!
- Swimming near or under the back deck or swim platform while the motor is running is dangerous. You can inhale Carbon Monoxide. Avoid these death zones! And remember that "teak surfing" is illegal.
- Did you know that all boats need to display a Carbon Monoxide safety sticker on their boat? You can obtain the sticker from the California Division of Boating and Waterways.

CLEAN AND GREEN TIPS

1. **Prevent oily discharge from the bilge.**
   Keep your engine well tuned to prevent fuel and oil leaks. Place an oil absorbent pad or pillow under your engine where drips may occur and in your bilge. Check the pads often and dispose of them as hazardous waste at a marina or nearby collection center.

2. **Spill-proof your oil changes.**
   For oil changes, use an oil change pump to transfer oil to a spill proof container. Wrap a plastic bag or absorbent pad around the oil filter to prevent oil from spilling into the bilge.

3. **Spill-proof your fueling practices.**
   Prevent fuel spills by filling fuel tanks slowly and carefully and by using absorbent pads or rags to catch drips and spills. Don't "top off" or overflow your fuel tank and leave 5% empty to allow fuel to expand as it warms.

4. **Do not add soap.**
   Never use soap to disperse fuel and oil spills. It increases harm to the environment, and it is illegal.

5. **Minimize boat cleaning and maintenance in the water.**
   If possible, save maintenance projects for the boatyard. When performing work on the water minimize your impact by containing waste using tarps and vacuum sanders, and collect all drips and debris for proper disposal.

6. **Reduce toxic discharges from bottom paints.**
   Minimize the discharge of heavy metals that come from soft-sloughing antifouling paints by using a hard, less toxic, or nontoxic antifouling paint. Use only non-abrasive underwater hull cleaning techniques to prevent excessive paint discharge. Remember, dry storage and reduces the need for anti-fouling paints and saves money.

7. **Dispose of hazardous waste properly.**
   Dispose of paints, batteries, antifreeze, cleaning products, oil, oil filters and other hazardous wastes at a hazardous waste collection facility or event. Call 1-800-CLEAN-UP for a location near you. Recycle paints, batteries, oil, oil filters and antifreeze.

8. **Plan A-head! Manage sewage wastes properly.**
   Never discharge sewage within 3 miles of shore. Use harbor pump-out stations and shore-side facilities. If you don't have an installed toilet, use a port-a-potty and empty it at harbor dump station or bathroom.

9. **Stow it, do not throw it!**
   Keep your trash on board. Never throw cigarette butts, fishing line, or any other garbage into the ocean. Take advantage of shore-side facilities to recycle plastic, glass, metal, and paper.

10. **Reduce gray-water discharges**
    Use a phosphate-free soap to minimize the impacts of greywater on the marine environment. Also minimize discharge by doing dishes and showers on shore whenever possible.

HOLIDAY BOAT PARADES

General safety hazards for ALL boat operations:

- Illegal charters
- Overloaded or unsafe electrical systems due to Christmas lights
- Too many passengers affect stability of vessel - ensure compliance with maximum capacity
- Recreational boats cannot charge passengers to board their vessels - illegal, resulting in fines
- 05 knot speed limit strictly enforced during all boat parades

HOW TO BOAT ON HOLIDAY WEEKENDS

- Nearly 14% of all accidents each year occur during the three summer holiday weekends of Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day.
- Waterways are crowded, people are boating in groups or with many people aboard their vessels. Distractions are numerous.
- Because of this, designate a person aboard the vessel to help you act as a lookout.
- You may have people aboard your vessel who don't normally boat. Familiarize them with the location of the safety equipment and how to be safe aboard you boat. (Keep hands inside near dock, carbon monoxide, propeller safety, etc.) Everyone wear a life jacket.

LIFE JACKETS

Statistics

- Did you know that 9 out of 10 drownings could have been prevented if only the person had been wearing their life jacket?
- Life jackets INCREASE THE CHANCES OF SURVIVAL in the event of a sudden, unexpected capsizing or fall overboard.
- Know how to swim?? This doesn't matter. Knowing how to swim doesn't drown-proof you. Statistics show that many boating fatalities involved boaters not wearing life jackets, getting knocked unconscious and going under. A life jacket will help keep you float until help arrives.

Today's Life Jackets are Comfortable

- Good news for boaters. New stylish, lightweight and sometimes unnoticeable **inflatable** life jackets are now available. Some of them don't even interfere with tan lines. The best feature…it may save your life in case of an accident.
- Are you wondering what inflatable life jackets are? These modern life jackets are much more comfortable, lightweight and stylish than the bulky orange style most boaters know. They may resemble a pair of suspenders or a belt pack. Many inflate automatically when immersed in water. Some of them don't even interfere with tan lines!!
- Other life jacket styles are available for almost any boating activity:
    - *For fishing:* Vest-style life jackets come with features such as pockets and clips to replace the fishing vest and keep the angler safe.
    - *For personal watercraft and water sports:* Inherently buoyant lighter-weight life jackets are rugged, with multiple buckles and clasps to keep them secure after impact with the water.

- *For hunting and cold weather:* Full coats and suits are available in camouflage colors for waterfowl hunting and for those who boat when air and water temperatures are cool.
- *For paddling:* Special life jackets are designed with large openings for arms to allow ease of movement.
- *For children:* Virtually all styles are available sized especially for children – some with cartoon characters, straps for pulling children from the water and high-visibility schemes.
- *For pets:* Life jackets are even available for our four-legged friends.

How to Choose the Right Life Jacket

Looking for a life jacket? Today's jackets come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and materials. No matter which life jacket you choose, be sure it's right for YOU, your planned activities, and the water conditions you expect to encounter.

Try It On

- Check the manufacturer's ratings for your size and weight.
- Make sure the jacket is properly zipped or buckled.
- Raise your arms straight up over your head while wearing your life jacket and ask a friend to grasp the tops of the arm openings, gently pulling up.
- If there is excess room above the openings and the jacket rides up over your chin, it does NOT fit properly. Pull on the buckles. If there is still excess room, try on a smaller life jacket. A **snug** fit in these areas signals a properly fitting.

Fit Facts

- It is extremely important that you choose a properly fitting life jacket.
- Jackets that are too big will cause the flotation device to push up around your face, which could be dangerous.
- Jackets that are too small will not be able to keep your body afloat.

Important Reminders

- Make sure your life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard-approved.
- Double check that your jacket is appropriate for your favorite boating activities.
- Take the time to ensure a proper fit.
- Life jackets meant for adults **do not** work for children. If you are boating with children, make sure they are wearing properly fitted, child-sized life jackets.
- On recreational vessels underway, children under 13 years old must wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket unless they are below decks or in an enclosed cabin.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (popularly known as "jet skis")

- The majority of personal watercraft (PWC) related accidents occur when someone other than the registered owner is operating the vessel. Make sure that people borrowing your vessel know how to operate it!
- First time boaters are more likely to operate a PWC as they find it less intimidating than a larger craft, but in reality, the high maneuverability and the off-throttle steering issues can make safe operation challenging. Make sure they are also familiar with the rules of the road. California law states you must wear a life jacket when riding a PWC.
- Young children aboard a PWC are not a good idea. Riding in front, they often grab the controls, causing accidents. Riding in back, they can fall off if not holding on tightly.
- Remember that it is illegal to wake jump within 100 feet of another vessel, do donuts, or play chicken, or spray down other vessels.
- When riding with friends on other PWC, keep a safe distance from them, and also a safe following distance, behind them. Because these are jet-propelled craft, you will not be able to turn if you let off the throttle.

REQUIRED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

- Make sure that your boat is ready for the boating season. California boating laws require recreational boats to have certain equipment on board. Find out if you're ready by getting vessel safety check. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or the U.S. Power Squadrons offer complimentary ones.

TOWING ACCIDENTS

Most towing accidents involve inner tubes or wakeboards rather than traditional water skiing which have declined in popularity. Many accidents are caused by the following unsafe activities:

- Operators looking over their shoulders, watching skiers instead of relying on the observers, resulting in collisions with other vessels or shoreline.
- Coming too close to the shoreline and causing the tuber to be thrown onto shore during a turn. (Tubers have no control over their direction of travel unlike skiers and wake boarders)
- Towing tubes in donuts to give riders a more exciting ride, but instead running over the ski line and pulling tube into the propeller.

- Not keeping the proper distance from drifting vessels in the process of retrieving skiers and striking the fallen skier or running over the ski line causing it to break and snap back into vessel.
- Improperly approaching skier when retrieving them and striking them
- Not turning the engine off and letting it idle when skiers are entering or exiting the vessel. The prop can still be turning at idle and several accidents have happened when someone fell against the gear shift and accidentally moved it into gear, causing propeller injuries.
- Wake boarders attempting maneuvers beyond skill level.

Life Jackets

Of the boating fatalities that occurred in 2009, 67 percent of the victims drowned. Of that group, 84 percent were not wearing a life jacket. Don't become a statistic, wear a life jacket. Life jackets are the proven number one way to save a life in the event of a sudden, unexpected capsizing or fall overboard. Wear a life jacket. Please use this page as a resource for life jacket information.

Life Jackets and the Law

For a boat less than 16 feet long, or a canoe or a kayak of any length, you are required to:

- Everyone on board a personal watercraft (popularly known as "jet skis") and anyone being towed behind a vessel must wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- A Coast Guard-approved life jacket must be carried for each person on board. If stored, these life jackets must be readily available (easy to get to), and you must show passengers the location of life jackets and other safety equipment.
- Anyone using an underwater maneuvering device is exempt from wearing a life jacket. An underwater maneuvering device is any towed or self-powered device designed for underwater use that a person can pilot through diving, turning and surfacing moves.

For a boat 16 feet or longer, you must carry for each passenger:

- The same requirements as above and one immediately accessible (easy-to-reach) Type IV device designed for throwing – such as a ring, cushion or horseshoe buoy for each boat.

What type of life jacket should you wear?

Unlike the traditional orange horse collar of yesteryears, today's life jackets are technologically advanced, making them more convenient, less restrictive - and sometimes - even unnoticeable to the boater who is wearing one. An additional advantage to boaters is that life jackets are now custom designed for their specific water activities, i.e. fishing, cruising, water-skiing, etc. Click here for information on what kind of life jacket you should wear.

How to Choose the Right Life Jacket

Looking for a life jacket? Today's jackets come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and materials. No matter which life jacket you choose, be sure it's right for YOU, your planned activities, and the water conditions you expect to encounter.

Try It On

- Check the manufacturer's ratings for your size and weight.
- Make sure the jacket is properly zipped or buckled.
- Raise your arms straight up over your head while wearing your life jacket and ask a friend to grasp the tops of the arm openings, gently pulling up.
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Fit Facts

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- Jackets that are too big will cause the flotation device to push up around your face, which could be dangerous.
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Important Reminders

- Make sure your life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard-approved.
- Double check that your jacket is appropriate for your favorite boating activities.
- Take the time to ensure a proper fit.
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- On recreational vessels underway, children under 13 years old must wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket unless they are below decks or in an enclosed cabin.

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EMERGENCY AND ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

Radio Procedures/Marine Emergency Distress

A.

If you are in distress
(i.e., threatened by grave and imminent danger) or
observe another vessel in distress, transmit the International Distress Call on Channel 16: "MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY — THIS IS
."

State the call sign of the vessel in distress—or the name of your boat if no call sign has been assigned—and repeat it three times. SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLE A R LY.

If you are aboard the vessel in trouble, state:

1. WHO you are (your vessel's call letters and name).
2. WHERE you are (give your vessel's position in latitude/longitude or true bearing and distance in nautical miles from a widely known geographical point). Remember that local names known only in the immediate vicinity are confusing.
3. WHAT the problem is aboard your boat.
4. Type of assistance needed.
5. Number of people aboard and condition of any injured.
6. Present seaworthiness of your vessel.
7. Description of your vessel (length, type, cabin, masts, power, color of hull, superstructure and trim).
8. Your listening frequency and schedule.

If you observe another vessel in distress, give:

1. Your position and, if possible, the bearing and distance of the vessel in difficult y.
2. Nature of distress.
3. Description of vessel in distress (see item 7 above).
4. Your intentions, course, speed, etc.
5. Your radio call sign, name of your vessel, listening frequency and schedule.

NOTE: The international sign for an aircraft that wants to direct a surface craft to a vessel in distress is:

Circling the surface craft, opening and closing the throttle or changing propeller pitch (noticeable by change in sound) while crossing ahead of the surface craft, and proceeding in the direction of the vessel in distress. If you receive such a signal, you should follow the aircraft. If you cannot do so, try to inform the aircraft by any available means. If your assistance is no longer needed, the aircraft will cross your wake, opening and closing the throttle or changing the propeller pitch. If you are radio-equipped, you should attempt to communicate with the aircraft on Channel 16 when the aircraft makes the above signals or makes any obvious attempt to attract your attention. In the event you cannot communicate by radio, be alert for a message block dropped from the aircraft.

B. If you need information or assistance from the Coast Guard (other than in a distress), call COAST GUARD on Channel 16 (The Distress and Calling Frequency). In this situation, you will normally be shifted to a common working frequency (21, 22 or 23) allowing the DISTRESS frequency to remain open.

Radio Checks:

Do not use Channel 16 to call the Coast Guard merely for a radio check. Such use is prohibited by the Federal Communications Commission.

C. After the emergency is over, notify the Coast Guard promptly.

Accident Reporting

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

Boat operators or owners must also make a written report of a boating accident to DBW within 48 hours when:

- A person dies within 24 hours of the accident, disappears, 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.

In all other incidents requiring a written accident report, the report must be made within 10 days of the accident.

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.

False Search and Rescue Calls

Any individual who reports to a state or local agency that an emergency exists, knowing that the report is false, is guilty of a misdemeanor and can be found liable for the expense of the emergency response. An emergency includes any condition that results in, or could result in, the response of a public official in an authorized emergency vehicle, vessel or aircraft.
It is a felony
for any individual to report or cause any report to be made to any state or local government agency that an emergency exists if he or she knows or should know that the response to the report is likely to cause death or great bodily injury and such injury or death is sustained by any person as a result of the false report.

Cone of Protection from Lightning - Faraday's Cage

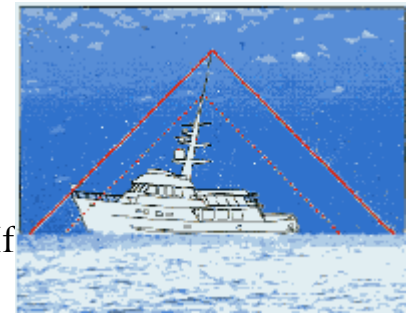
Even though the odds are in your favor that your boat may never be hit by lightning, if it happens it can have devastating effects. Don't take a chance, **protect yourself**. If you are in a small boat and close to shore when a thunderstorm approaches, get in and off the water immediately. Better yet, don't go out if thunderstorms are predicted. But what if you are miles offshore and a storm pops up? Hopefully, you have prepared in advance.

The voltages involved in lightning are so high that even materials that would normally be considered non-conductive become conductors, including the human body. The voltages are so massive that if they start to travel through a boat's structure - say through its mast - then meet with high resistance (for instance, the hull skin) the current discharge, in its attempt to reach ground, may simply blow a hole in the non-conductive barrier. The safety conscious Captain should make sure that his vessel is properly protected. Reference should be made in detail to the standards for lightning protection as set forth by the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) and the job should be performed by a licensed marine electrician.

In theory, a lightning protection system is used to create what is know as a "Faraday's cage," so called after the late nineteenth-century scientist Michael Faraday. The principle of a Faraday's cage is to provide a surrounding, well-grounded, metal structure, in which all of parts are bonded together and carry the same electrical potential. Such a "cage" attracts and carries any lightning strike to ground much like lightning rods on buildings.

In other words, you need to provide an unobstructed way for the lightning to dissipate its energy to ground (the water surrounding you). Faraday himself risked his own life to prove this theory. The additional benefit of a lightning protection system is that it tends to bleed off any charge build-up in the general vicinity, possibly averting a lightning strike in the first place.

So how does a lightning protection system work? In a boat, the "cage" is formed by bonding together, with heavy conductors, the vessel's mast and all other major metal masses. A marine electrician must tie in the engines, stoves, air conditioning compressors, railings, arches etc. with a low resistance wire which would ultimately provide a conductive path to ground (the water) usually via the engine and propeller shaft, keel bolts, or better yet, a separate external ground plate at least 1 square foot in dimension. It is important that you ensure that your crew fall within the protection of the "cage," something not always feasible when the vessel is not built of steel or aluminum. On fiberglass or wooden boats it is advantageous to have a mast or other conductive metal protrusion extending well above the vessel, creating what is known as a "cone" or zone of protection.



It is generally accepted that this cone of protection extends 45 degrees, all around, from the tip of the metal protrusion. This means that if the aluminum mast of the average sailing vessel is properly bonded to the vessel's other major metal masses and is given a direct, low-resistance conductive path to ground, the entire boat should fall within the protected zone. If the vessel has a wooden or composite mast, a marine electrician can achieve the same effect by installing a 6 to 12 inch metal spike at the top and running a heavy conductor down the mast and as directly as possible to ground, usually through the engine and propeller shaft. Again, refer to the ABYC standards and have a professional marine electrician install your lightning protection. This is not a do-it-yourself project.

But I Don't Want To Be In Charge!

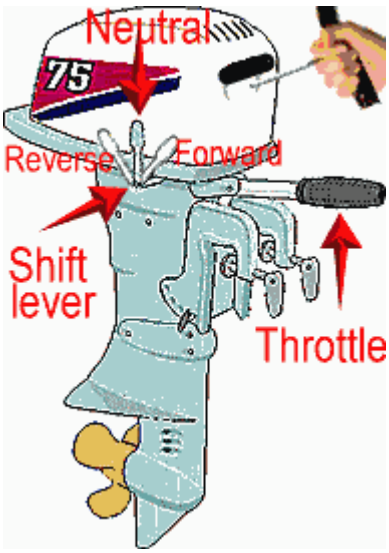
As a friend of mine once said, the only thing better than owning a nice boat is having a good friend who owns one. None of the headaches, none of the problems, none of the responsibility but all the fun when asked out to enjoy the water. But what happens when your friend, the owner and skipper, is suddenly injured, becomes ill, our worse yet, falls overboard? You were just along for the ride, you don't know anything about the boat, about what to do or how to do it - but... suddenly YOU are in charge. Suddenly, YOU need to know how to run the boat, YOU need to know how to use the emergency equipment, YOU need to know what to do in each situation that requires action. Don't wait until YOU are suddenly in charge, learn the basics before just "going along for the ride".

Learn Boating Basics

Even if you don't own a boat, if you ever go out in one as a passenger, you should know the basics of boating. Even if you're just going for a ride, if the skipper doesn't give the passengers an orientation, ask where the emergency equipment is located. Ask the location of the Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs), the fire extinguisher(s), emergency signaling devices and other safety gear. Practice throwing PFDs or a line to a pretend person overboard, practice anchoring the boat and getting aboard from the water. Ask about the operation of the boat, how do you start it, how do you stop it and how to use the radio (if equipped). Better yet, even if you don't own a boat, take a Basic Boating Safety Course. The more time you take to educate yourself the more likely you will be a hero rather than a hindrance, should an emergency arise.

Learn How to Start Manual or Pull Start Outboards

1. Make sure the shift lever is in the neutral position. This is usually straight up.
2. If the engine is cold, pull out the choke before attempting to start. If the motor is warm, don't use the choke unless the engine does not start after a few pulls.
3. On the throttle control arm, turn the hand grip until the arrow aligns with the start position.
4. Pull the starter rope slowly until you get resistance from the starter gear, then pull forcefully. Repeat if needed.
5. When the engine starts, if you used the choke push it in slowly until the engine runs smoothly.
6. Turn the throttle control arm until the arrow lines up with the run or shift mark.



Warning: Do not stand in the boat to pull the starter rope. If the motor is in gear or the starter just spins, you could loose balance and fall overboard.

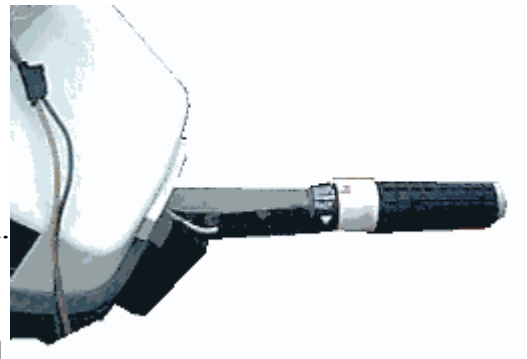
Learn How to Start an Electric Start Engine

1. Squeeze the release lock on the shift/throttle control lever, and make sure it is in the neutral position, usually straight up.
2. If the engine is cold, move the warm-up lever to the start position.
3. You may find a choke switch or the choke may operate by pushing the key in which activates an automatic choke.
4. Hold the key in or use the choke switch and turn to the start position. Release the key or turn off choke switch as soon as the engine starts.
5. Gradually move the warm-up lever to the run position.

6. If the engine is warm, use the same procedure with the exception of using the choke, unless the motor fails to start after a few tries.

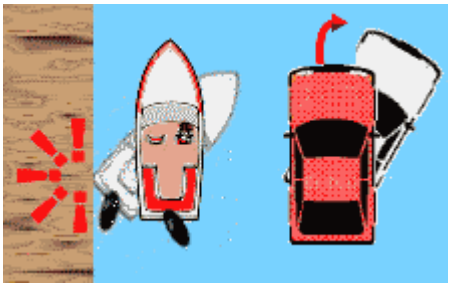
Learn How to Shift and Steer

Manual or Pull-Start



1. The throttle arm also acts as a tiller to turn the engine which gives you direction.
2. Look out for traffic and find out the direction you want to go. Move the throttle arm/tiller in the opposite direction. This pushes the stern of the boat in the direction of the tiller which in turn makes the bow go in the opposite direction.
3. Turn the throttle arm until the arrow lines up with the run/shift position.
4. Move the shift lever to forward (or reverse) and turn the throttle handle slowly until a comfortable speed is reached.

Electric Start



1. Squeeze the release lock on the shift/throttle control lever. Push the lever slowly forward to go forward and pull slowly back to go in reverse. The further forward or back you push the lever the faster the boat will move.
2. Steering with a wheel is much like a car in that you turn the wheel (helm) in the direction you want to go. Be careful however, because unlike a car, a boat steers from the stern (back) rather than the front as a car does.

Warning: Go slowly in reverse to prevent water from spilling in over the transom.

Learn How to Stop

Boats don't have brakes. They do, however, settle quickly and slow down when power is lowered and the engine put in neutral.

Don't aim the boat at a person in the water or at a dock. If you misjudge the speed of the boat you could cause more damage.

As the boat slows you will loose steering control. Aim the boat where you want to stop before you shift to neutral or shut of the engine. Shift to neutral before you think you should, most novices overshoot their mark. You can always shift back to forward briefly if you fall short of your mark.

Killing manual or pull-start engines

Shift to neutral, turn the throttle handle grip to the stop position and push the button (usually red) labeled stop which kills the engine.

Killing electric start engines

Shift to neutral, turn the key to the left until the engine dies - just like in your car.

Learn Crew Overboard Procedures

Be Calm - You may be the only source of rescue for the person in the water.

Immediately shut down the engine unless you can see that the person in the water is well clear of the boat and will not be hit by the props. Locate the person in the water and keep an eye on them. If they are close enough, throw a PFD or anything that floats in their direction.

If you must, restart the engine and move slowly toward the person from downwind (the wind in your face). You don't want to drift into the person when you stop the engine. When close enough, throw a PFD or anything that floats and stop the engine.

Once the person in the water has something to help them float, tie one end of a line to the boat and throw the other end of the line to the person in the water. Once the person grabs the line, pull them slowly to the boat.

Try to get a PFD on the person or tie the line under their arms and tie up short to the boat so they can rest. If you can not easily lift the person into the boat it is best not to struggle; call and wait for help. Continuing to try to pull the person into the boat could result in you going overboard.

Lower the anchor to keep from drifting and wait for help.

Learn How To Signal For Help

Certain signals are recognized internationally as distress signals. A few easy to use are:

1. Raising and lowering your outstretched arms.
2. Use a mirror to reflect the sun's rays. On a sunny day the reflection can be seen for miles.
3. Signal SOS (··· --- ···) with a flashlight, whistle or horn.
4. Light or fire off a distress flare. Be sure to read the directions on the flare and light or fire downwind and over the side of the boat. It is best to do this when in sight of land or another boat. A flare is not all that obvious on a bright, sunny day.
5. Yell. Your voice will carry a long distance over water.
6. If equipped, use the VHF radio to place a call on channel 16.

But I Don't Want To Be In Charge! (Continued)

The last article focused on suddenly finding yourself in charge of a small outboard vessel, but what if the owner/skipper is suddenly injured, becomes ill or falls overboard on an inboard boat or, worse yet, a large inboard twin engine. Once again, you were just along for the ride, you don't know anything about the boat, about what to do or how to do it - but...suddenly YOU are in charge. Suddenly, YOU need to know how to run the boat, YOU need to know how to use the emergency equipment, YOU need to know what to do in each situation that requires action. Don't wait until YOU are suddenly in charge, learn the basics before just "going along for the ride".

Learn Boating Basics

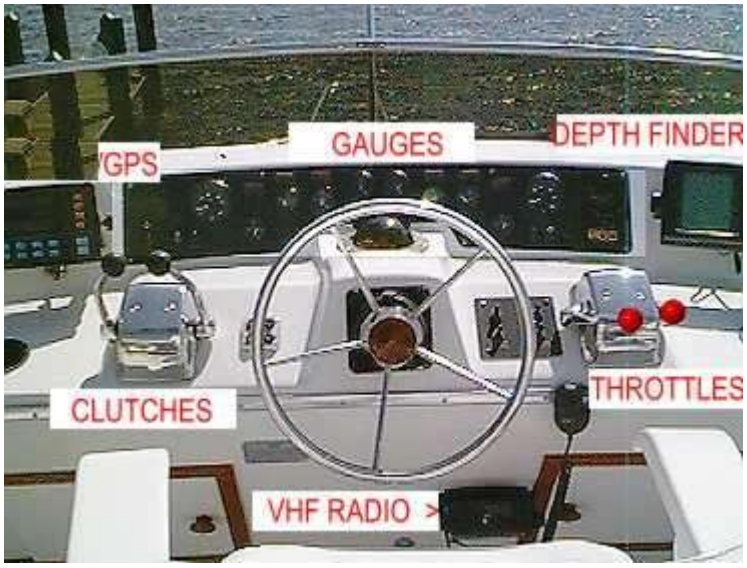
The basics are the same no matter what size the boat you find yourself on; you need to know the location of the Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs), the fire extinguisher(s), emergency signaling devices and other safety gear. You also need to know how to operate the VHF radio and how to lower the anchor. These two items may be your lifeline to safety.

Again, it is a good idea to take a Basic Boating Safety Course even if you don't own a boat. The more time you take to educate yourself the more likely you will be a hero rather than a hindrance, should an emergency arise.

Pay Attention To The Basics

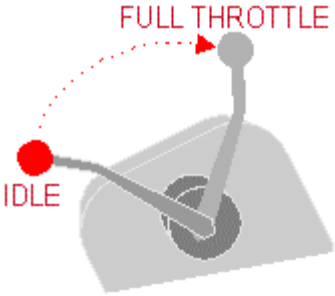
Rather than just sit there in the "co-pilot" seat looking at the sky and the water, look around, ask questions, watch what the owner/skipper does. This article is not intended to make a novice an experienced boat handler but we hope to at least get the inexperienced person to some level of comfort with what he/she sees around them.

Note the typical cockpit layout below. You have electronic equipment such as a VHF radio, Depth Finder, and GPS. You also have the controls and sensors for operating the boat such as the clutches (which shift gears), the throttles (which control the speed of the engines) and the various gauges which you should monitor as you do in your car.

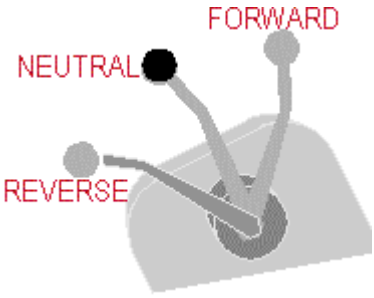


This layout is for a typical twin engine vessel. A single engine will have only one clutch and one throttle. Pay particular attention to the RED knobs on the throttles. They are so marked to make sure that you don't forget which you are handling. You wouldn't want to be in a close quarters situation and think you were shifting from reverse to forward while accidentally pushing the throttle forward instead of the clutch. Hint: When operating clutches on a vessel with the above configuration put both hands on them and don't let go. This will keep you from accidently grabbing the throtles.

Lesson One: How Do Clutches and Throttles Work



The throttles on a boat act like the accelerator on your car with one exception; *You shouldn't operate them with your feet.* The throttles, usually marked with RED knobs, are at idle when they are pulled all the way back toward you. As you move them forward, the fuel supply to the engine(s) is increased and, assuming you are in gear, you move faster.



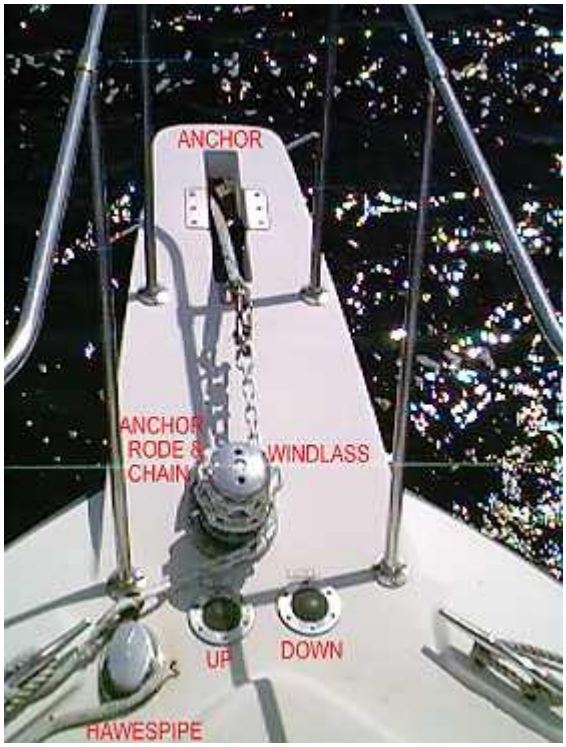
The clutches, with the black knobs, act like your gear shift. When the lever is standing straight up in the middle you are in neutral. When you push the lever forward you are engaging the forward gear and when you pull the lever back you are engaging the reverse gear.

Important: Never change gears without first pulling the throttles to idle speed (neutral)!

Lesson Two: How Does An Anchor Windlass Work

The vessel on which you find yourself suddenly in charge may or may not have an anchor windlass (assists in raising and lowering the anchor by electric motor). If it does not, then the anchoring is fairly straightforward as outlined here. However, if you find yourself on a vessel with an anchor windlass the steps are the same, just the release and retrieval of the anchor are different.

The picture below is a typical small boat (38') electric anchor windlass. The first step in operating such a system is to make sure that you have power to the windlass.



Normally, when underway the main breaker to the windlass will be turned on but there is usually a switch in the cockpit which disables the power temporarily. This is so that you don't accidentally step on the up and down switches on the deck while underway or while handling lines on the bow. Make sure that the cockpit switch is on.

Notice that the anchor rode (chain/line that attaches the anchor to the boat) is cleated off on the port side to secure the anchor up and that the remainder of the rode leads through the "hawspipe" (to the left of the "UP" switch) into the anchor locker.

The first step to lowering the anchor is to remove the cap from the hawespipe. As a rule of thumb, you want to put out anchor rode which is 7 to 10 times the water depth. Pull enough anchor rode out of the locker and lay it out neatly up and down the deck.

Next, uncleat the anchor rode on the port cleat which was holding the anchor securely and recleat the rode at the maximum amount of scope you expect to let out. Make sure the boat is completely stopped and, once the rode is cleated, you simply step on the down button and the windlass will lower the anchor. Make sure that you keep your hands and feet clear so you don't get tangled in the anchor rode and get pulled off the vessel.

Lesson Three: How Does A VHF Radio Work

The vessel's VHF radio is fairly simple to operate and if the owner/skipper was operating legally, it should already be tuned to channel 16 which is the hailing and distress frequency. For more information on VHF radio procedures look at Marine Radio Procedures in the Nautical Know How Tips Archive. In order to call for assistance, hold down the "transmit" button on the side of the microphone and speak directly into the mike. Once you have delivered your message, release the button and wait for a response.

Let's explore two different scenarios in which you might find yourself. Whether you are in a single engine or twin engine boat really doesn't matter. As was mentioned above, we aren't going to make you boathandlers, just emergency situation solvers.

Situation One

You have just left the marina and are heading out for a day of coastal cruising. The owner is operating the boat through the well marked channel and has explained to you that it is important to keep within the channel which has sufficient depth to safely operate. He/she has shown you how to read the depth finder and you find that the channel has a consistent depth of 8 feet.

Suddenly the owner, who doesn't look so good all of a sudden, collapses and falls out of the chair behind the wheel. What should you do?

Your first reaction should be to try and get the owner, now victim, to acknowledge his or her situation. Ask if they are okay. Even if they are unconscious and not breathing, there is nothing you can do until you have control of the boat.

You should first take off all power and shift to neutral. While the boat coasts to a stop try to steer toward the edge of the channel. Assuming you are not in immediate danger of drifting out of the channel or running into another vessel, check the condition of the victim again.

Let's assume they have simply fainted and are still breathing and have a pulse. Attempt to contact the marina that you just left via VHF radio and advise them of the situation. Explain that you are not experienced and that you need immediate assistance. Give them your location by noting the latitude and longitude on your GPS or simply note the channel marker number that you might be closest to.

Depending on your comfort level in actually operating the vessel, you should either consider anchoring, tending to the victim and waiting for help or putting the vessel in forward and turning the vessel to return to the marina. If you chose the latter, do so under control. You don't necessarily need to go at full idle but don't overdo the speed. Remember, boats don't have brakes and you can only stop them by running into something, running aground, coasting to a stop in neutral, or shifting to reverse at full idle.

Situation Two

You are offshore, within sight of land, and headed for a favorite fishing spot that the owner has programmed into the GPS. In this case the owner is a he and he tells you to take the wheel while he goes to relieve himself. No problem, anyone can steer a boat- so you settle in as commanded.

The water is not too rough but an occasional wave that is considerably bigger than the rest comes along and tosses the boat slightly. Suddenly you hear a scream and a splash and look aft to find that the owner was thrown overboard off the stern by that last unexpected wave. What should you do?

You should first pull the throttles to idle and simultaneously shift the clutches to neutral. Immediately throw the Type IV throwable device in the direction of the victim in the water. Try to keep focused on the individual in the water. Don't lose sight of him.

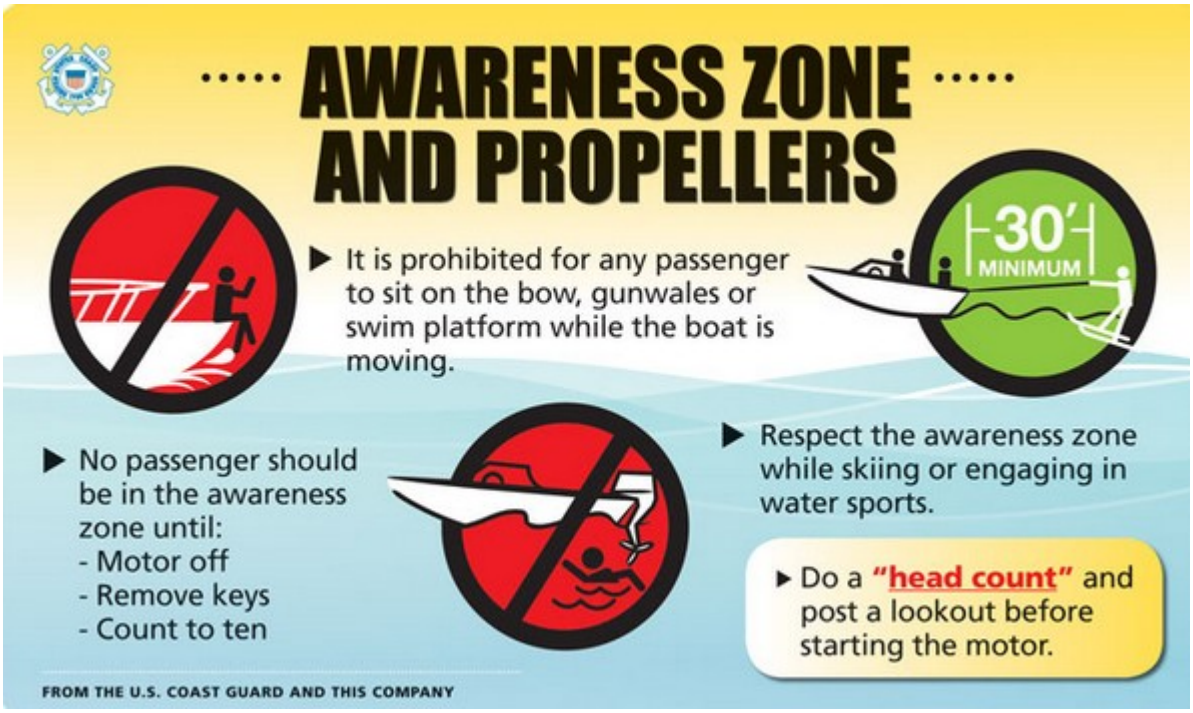
Once you have something that floats in the water in the vicinity of the victim it is time to attempt the rescue. After making sure the victim is clear of the props, shift the clutch(s) into forward and at idle speed make a U-turn and head back toward the victim in the water.

Make sure to turn the bow toward a person in the water, swinging the stern (and props) away from them. Since he is conscious and can swim, don't get too close. Approach from downwind so that he floats down to you, not the boat floating down on the victim.

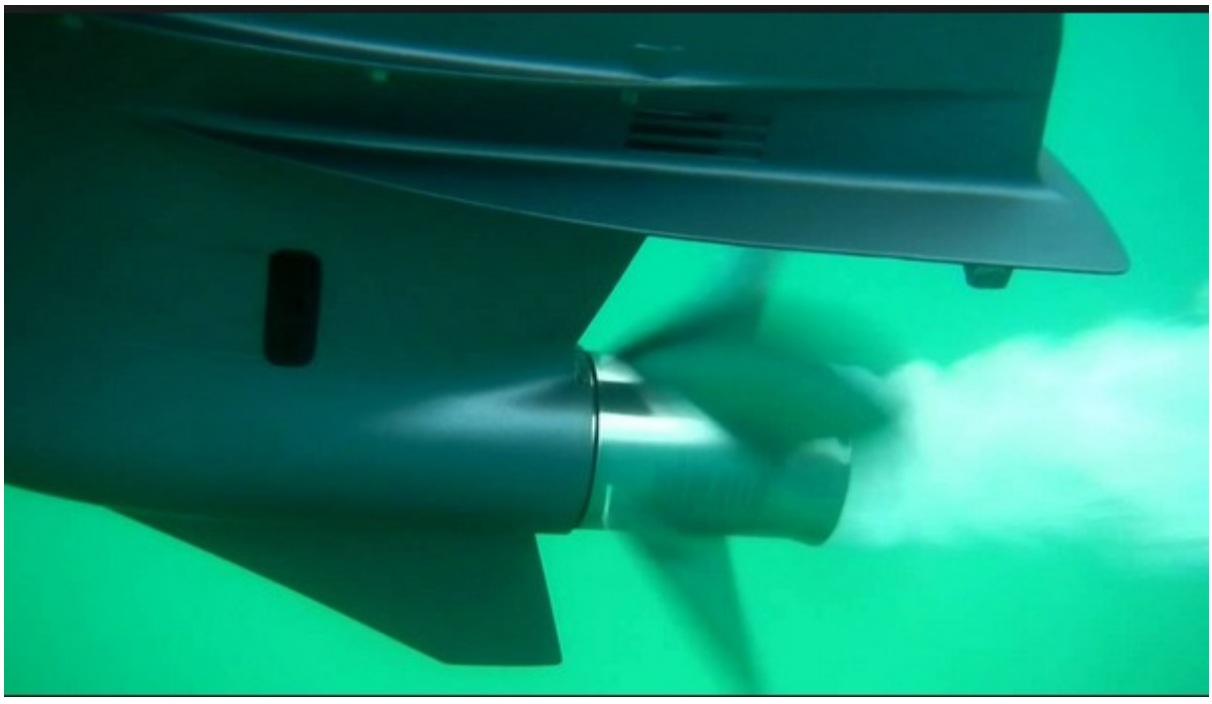
Be sure to shift to neutral well before approaching the victim and coast to a stop short of him. From here, try to throw a line and a PFD to the victim in the water. Once you have him attached to the boat, DO NOT use the clutches.

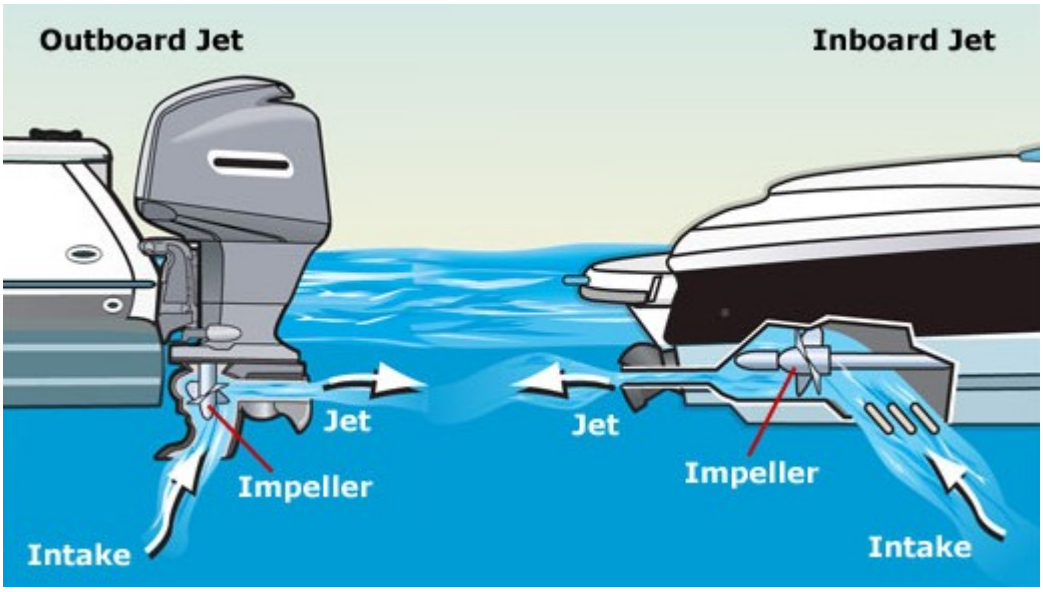
Conclusion

The two scenarios above were dangerous but obviously could have been much worse. For instance, what if the person in the first scenario wasn't breathing and didn't have a pulse and what if you didn't notice the person in the second scenario go overboard? What would you do then? Give it some thought, it could happen.


AWARENESS ZONE AND PROPELLERS
30'
MINIMUM
▶ It is prohibited for any passenger to sit on the bow, gunwales or swim platform while the boat is moving.
▶ No passenger should be in the awareness zone until:
- Motor off
- Remove keys
- Count to ten
▶ Respect the awareness zone while skiing or engaging in water sports.
▶ Do a "head count" and post a lookout before starting the motor.
FROM THE U.S. COAST GUARD AND THIS COMPANY

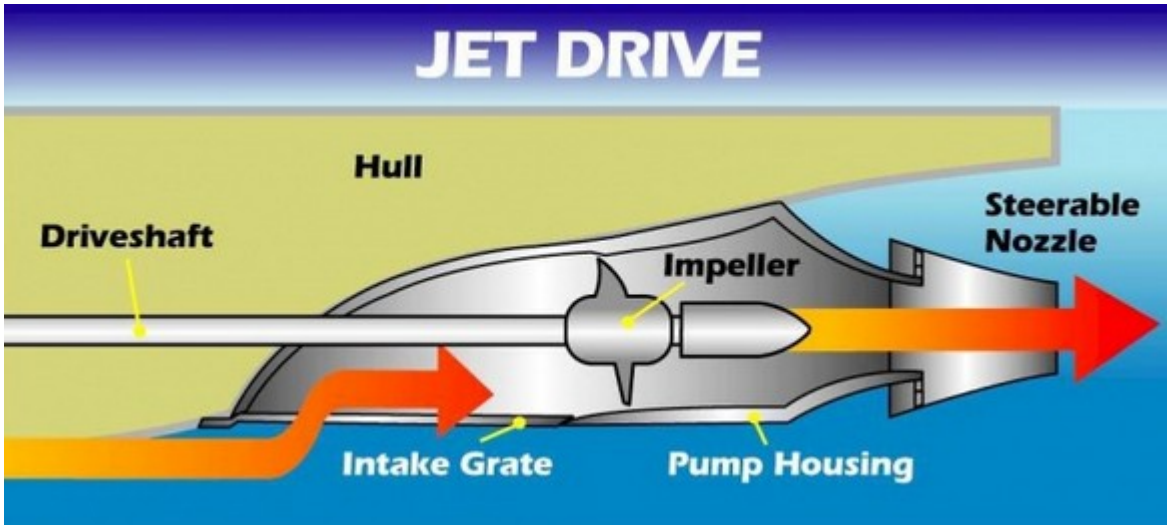

WARNING
ROTATING PROPELLER(S) MAY CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH!
DO NOT APPROACH OR USE LADDER WHEN ENGINE IS RUNNING.





Notice the two high velocity water jets exiting out the back of this jet boat.
It is very unpleasant to be hit by these jets. Stay away from this area.

Notice the impeller is recessed inside the watercraft.
A very strong jet of water exits out the back of the watercraft.



Be especially aware and careful of the water jet out the back of watercraft.

Tread Lightly!'s Tips for Responsible Motorized Boating

Ride Right! Below are some quick tips on boating responsibly in the great outdoors.

TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

Travel responsibly on designated waterways and launch your watercraft in designated areas.

- Travel only in areas open to your type of boat.
- Carry a Coast Guard approved life vest (PFD) for each person on board.
- Always operate your boat at a safe speed.
- Always have a designated lookout to keep an eye out for other boaters, objects and swimmers.
- Never jump a wake. If crossing a wake, cross at low speeds and keep a close lookout for skiers and towables.
- Comply with all signs and respect barriers. This includes speed limits, no-wake zones and underwater obstructions, etc.
- Make every effort to always go boating with a partner.
- Make certain your trailer is in proper working order and that your lights work and your boat is secure on the trailer before you travel to your destination.
- When trailering your boat, balance your load including items stowed inside your boat.
- Don't mix boating with alcohol or drugs.

RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

Respect the rights of others, including anglers, swimmers, skiers, boaters, divers and others so they can enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed.

- Show consideration to all recreationists on and around the waters.
- Be courteous to other boaters while in boat ramp areas. Launch and retrieve your boat as quickly as possible.
- Keep the noise down, especially around shore.
- If crossing private property, be sure to ask permission from the landowner(s).

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Educate yourself prior to a trip by learning rules and regulations, planning for your trip, taking recreation skills classes and knowing how to operate your equipment safely.

- Obtain charts of your destination and determine which areas are open to your type of boat.
- Make a realistic plan and stick to it.
- Always tell someone of your travel plans and file a float plan.
- Contact the land manager for area restrictions, closures and permit requirements.
- Check the weather forecast for your destination. Plan clothing, equipment and supplies accordingly.
- Make sure you have enough fuel and oil for the entire trip.
- Make sure your owner's manual and registration are on board in waterproof containers.
- Always carry a Coast Guard approved working fire extinguisher and warning flares.
- Prepare for the unexpected by packing necessary emergency items.
- Carry a Global Positioning System (GPS)and know how to use it.
- Know distress signals and warning symbols. Know your limitations. Apply sunscreen, drink lots of water and watch your energy level.
- Take a boater education course to learn more about navigating waterways and safe and enjoyable boating.
- Make sure your boat is mechanically up to the task. Be prepared with tools, supplies and a spill kit.

AVOID SENSITIVE AREAS

Avoid sensitive areas and operating your watercraft in shallow waters or near shorelines at high speeds.

- Always launch at a designated boat ramp. Backing a vehicle on a riverbank or lakeshore can damage the area and leads to erosion.
- Always travel slowly in shallow waters and avoid boating in water less than 2½ feet deep. High speeds near shorelines lead to large wakes which cause shoreline erosion.

- Sensitive areas to avoid include seasonal nesting or breeding areas.
- Do not disturb historical, archeological or paleontological sites.
- Avoid “spooking” wildlife you encounter and keep your distance.
- Motorized and mechanized vehicles are not allowed in designated Wilderness Areas.

DO YOUR PART

Do your part by modeling appropriate behavior, leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of fuel, oil and waste, avoiding the spread of invasive species, and restoring degraded areas.

- Pack out what you pack in.
- Carry a trash bag and pick up litter left by others.
- When fueling your boat take every precaution not to spill fuel into the water.
- Be prepared. Carry a spill kit which includes absorbent pads, socks and booms.
- Use a fuel collar or bib when fueling to catch drips and overflow and prevent backsplash.
- Observe proper sanitary waste disposal or pack your waste out.
- Before and after a trip, wash your gear, watercraft and support vehicle to reduce the spread of invasive species. Remove all plant material from watercraft, motor, trailer and other gear and dispose on dry land in a garbage container. Drain livewells, bilge water and transom wells at the boat launch prior to leaving.

Getting Help on the Water

From the U.S. Coast Guard Boating Education Branch

On the water, minor problems can rapidly develop into a situation beyond your control. For this reason, let someone know even when you are experiencing relatively minor difficulties, before your situation turns into an emergency.

The Coast Guard serves as Search and Rescue (SAR) coordinator for all maritime emergencies and is the appropriate point of contact whenever you are concerned for your safety.

If you are in distress (distress is defined as a situation where you or your boat are threatened by grave or imminent danger requiring assistance), the Coast Guard will take immediate steps to help you. Normally, Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary rescue boats and/or aircraft will be sent, but assistance from any available source will be arranged to expedite your rescue.

How To Signal For Help

If you are in distress use "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY" on the radio. If your situation is not a distress, simply call "Coast Guard." Channel 16 VHF/FM and 2182khz HF/SSB are dedicated distress and calling frequencies we monitor at all times. Citizen's Band (CB) is not dependable and is not monitored at most Coast Guard stations. If you do not have a radio, attempt to signal a fellow boater who can assist or call the Coast Guard for you. In a distress situation, use flares or any other distress signaling device to catch the attention of another boater.

What To Tell The Coast Guard

While arranging help, we will ask for the following:

1. Your location or position.
2. Exact nature of the problem (special problems).
3. Number of people on board.
4. Your boat name, registration and description.
5. Safety equipment on board.

When It's Not A Distress

The Coast Guard's primary search and rescue role is to assist boaters in distress. If you are not in distress and alternate sources of assistance are available, we will normally coordinate the effort to assist you. If you have a friend, marina, or commercial firm that you want contacted, we will attempt to do so. You may also contact them directly on Channel 16 VHF/FM or through the marine operator.

If this effort is unsuccessful, we will make a Marine Assistance Request Broadcast (MARB) on your behalf. This announces that you need help, gives your location, and invites others to come to your aid.

If you do not accept services offered in response to the first MARB, we will:

- Provide information on other commercial firms, if available, so you may contact them directly, or
- If you request, make a second MARB to see if any other help is available.

Who Will Answer Your Call When You're Not In Distress

A Commercial firm may offer help. In order not to interfere with commercial enterprise (you will have to pay for these services), we normally do not provide direct on-scene assistance if a commercial firm is available to help you safely in a reasonable time. If you agree to the assistance of a commercial firm and then refuse this service when it arrives, you still may be legally obligated to pay a fee.

- If the Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary arrives to assist you and you require a tow, they normally will tow you to the nearest location where you can either arrange for repairs or a tow back to your home port.
- In addition to Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary and commercial firms, others that may be available to assist you include a fellow boater, local fire or police department, or another public agency. Keep in mind that a Good Samaritan, although well-meaning, may not have the equipment or skills needed to help you safely and effectively.

When To Call Back

Keep in contact with the Coast Guard at regular intervals. Call us when help arrives. If someone offers help but cannot get to you within a reasonable time, usually not to exceed one hour, contact the Coast Guard to arrange other assistance. We also need to know if conditions change sufficiently to cause alarm. For example:

- A medical emergency develops.
- A storm approaches.
- You begin to take on water.
- Your last reported position changes.

Tips On Non-Distress Assistance

Unless you are familiar with the person(s) offering you help, clearly understand the type and quality of the assistance offered before accepting help or entering into a contract. Consider the following before accepting any assistance:

- Large physical stresses can occur in towing and salvage operations, risking damage to one or both boats, and personal injury.

- Does the provider have the proper equipment to handle your problem safely?
- Does the provider have the proper insurance to protect you and your vessel if he/she should cause damage or injury?
- Can the crew handle the situation safely, given the conditions and the nature of the problem?
- If a fee is being asked, does the operator have a Coast Guard license? All operators must have a license if they charge for towing services.

Who needs a radio?

Although recreational vessels less than 20m (65.6 feet) in length are not required to have VHF radios, before you purchase anything else, make sure you have a VHF marine radio. If you plan to travel more than a few miles offshore, you should strongly consider purchasing an HF or single side band radiotelephone or mobile satellite telephone, an emergency position indicating radio beacon, or EPIRB, and a second VHF radio or cellular telephone as well.

Mobile satellite telephones are becoming more common and more inexpensive. The mobile satellite will provide easier and clearer communications than the HF radiotelephone, but the HF radiotelephone will receive high seas marine weather warnings. Your radio is part of your life insurance policy.

Do I need a radio license?

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 permits recreational boaters to have and use a VHF marine radio, EPIRB, and marine radar without having an FCC ship station license. Boaters traveling on international voyages, having an HF single sideband radiotelephone or marine satellite terminal, or required to carry a marine radio under any other regulation must still carry an FCC ship station license.

Those not exempted by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 must still have an FCC ship station license. A ship station license application is made on FCC Form 605, available from local FCC Field Offices, by writing to the FCC, P.O. Box 1050, Gettysburg PA 17326, or by calling the FCC Forms Distribution Center at (202)418-3676 or the toll-free number (800) 418-FORM. Forms can also be obtained from most marine electronics dealers.

Radios can be used immediately upon license application. The license is not transferable if a boat is sold or if the installed radio equipment is moved from one boat to another.

If you wish to purchase a portable radio for use on more than one boat, only one license is necessary. When completing an FCC Application for Ship Station License (form 506), check "Portable" in block 10, "Type of License".

Do I need a permit to operate a radio?

The FCC Restricted Radiotelephone Operator Permit is required for boaters having an HF radiotelephone, for boaters having a VHF transceiver and traveling in foreign waters, or where fitting of a marine radio is required by law (e.g. on boats 20m long or larger). There is a fee for this lifetime permit, but no tests are required in applying for this license. An application is made on FCC Form 753, available from local FCC Field Offices or by writing to the FCC, P.O. Box 1050, Gettysburg PA 17326.

If I have a radio do I have to listen to all that noise?

Even though you may not be required to carry a VHF radio, if you do (and you should) you must maintain a watch on channel 16 (156.800 MHz) whenever the radio is operating and not being used to communicate. You may alternatively maintain a watch on VHF channel 9 (156.450 MHz), the boater calling channel. Note however that urgent marine information broadcasts, such as storm warnings, are announced on channel 9 only in First CG District waters (northern New Jersey, New York and New England).

Recently a charter boat whose radio was not tuned to the proper channel missed a severe storm warning. By the time the captain learned of the storm, it was too late to return to shore. The ship sank and a couple of persons died. A yacht in trouble off the west coast of Mexico, and far from help, saw a passenger ship. What should have been a quick rescue almost turned to disaster when the passenger ship (improperly) had its radio off. The yacht was able to attract the ship's attention, however, and was rescued. Misunderstanding of passing intentions by approaching vessels and near collisions have repeatedly been averted by working radios tuned to the proper channel.

The International Telecommunications Union established three VHF marine radio channels recognized worldwide for safety purposes:

- Channel 16 (156.800 MHz) - Distress, safety and calling
- Channel 13 (156.650 MHz) - Intership navigation (bridge-to-bridge)
- Channel 70 (156.525 MHz) - Digital Selective Calling

There are so many channels, how do I know which to use?

Let me start by talking about the major channels that recreational boaters should be familiar with. The Federal Communications Commission has established VHF-FM channel 9 as a supplementary calling channel for noncommercial vessels (recreational boaters). A ship or shore unit wishing to call a boater would do so on channel 9, and anyone (boaters included) wishing to call a commercial ship or shore activity would continue to do so on channel 16. Recreational boaters may continue to call the Coast Guard and any commercial facility on channel 16.

The purpose of the FCC regulation is to relieve congestion on VHF channel 16, the distress, safety and calling frequency. FCC regulations require boaters having VHF radios to maintain a watch on either VHF channel 9 or channel 16, whenever the radio is turned on and not communicating with another station.

Warning: The Coast Guard announces urgent marine information broadcasts and storm warnings on channel 9 in the First Coast Guard District only (waters off the coast of northern New Jersey, New York, and New England). For that reason, we strongly urge boaters to use channel 9 in these waters. Use of channel 9 in other waters is optional, and we recommend boaters keep tuned to and use channel 16 in those waters unless otherwise notified by the Coast Guard.

Channels 9 and 16 are used for "hailing" (calling another vessel) only. Once you have contacted a vessel you should move your conversation to a "working channel". That is, one designated as "non-commercial" such as channel 68.

Another channel you should be aware of is channel 22A. This channel is reserved for the U.S. Coast Guard to relay marine information broadcasts. You may on occasion hear on channel 16 an announcement by the USCG telling all boaters that they have information that may be of importance to you. They would request that anyone wanting to listen to the information switch to channel 22A to hear the information.

If you would like to view or print out the available channels, transmitting and receiving frequencies and description and use of the channel just go to the channel listing.

Okay, so I have a radio, how do I use it?

The standard procedure for a non-emergency call such as calling another vessel, marina, or restaurant to ask where to tie up for dinner, is as follows.

1. You should call the vessel, marina or restaurant on channel 9 or 16 in the following manner.
2. Name of station being called, spoken three times.
3. The words "THIS IS", spoken once.
4. Name of your vessel and call sign (if you have a station license) or boat registration number, spoken once.
5. The word "OVER".
6. Then you wait for the station being called to answer. Their answer should be in the same manner as your call.
7. Once answered you should suggest going to a working channel to carry on your conversation.
8. The word "OVER".
9. Wait for reply or confirmation from the station being called, switch to the working channel and repeat the process.

An example might be:

Calling Station: "Sailfish Marina, Sailfish Marina, Sailfish Marina, THIS IS the motor vessel Magical Lady, WAI4093, OVER" (WAI should be spoken Whiskey, Alpha, India, fow er, zero, nin er, tree) If you think this sounds cool and very official you can view and or print out the phonetic alphabet here.

Responding Station: "Magical Lady, Magical Lady, Magical Lady, THIS IS Sailfish Marina, WBC5678, OVER" (WBC should be spoken Whiskey, Bravo, Charlie, fife, six, seven, ait)

Calling Station: "Please switch and listen channel 68, OVER."

Responding Station: "Switching channel 68, OVER."

You would then switch to channel 68 and call Sailfish Marina using the same procedure and conduct your business. All conversations whether on a hailing channel or a working channel should be kept short and to the point.

What About in an Emergency situation like Mayday! Mayday! Mayday?

You may only have seconds to send a distress call. Here's what you do. Transmit, in

this order:

1. If you have an HF radiotelephone tuned to 2182 kHz, send the radiotelephone alarm signal if one is available. If you have a VHF marine radio, tune it to channel 16. Unless you know you are outside VHF range of shore and ships, call on channel 16 first.
2. Distress signal "MAYDAY", spoken three times.
3. The words "THIS IS", spoken once.
4. Name of vessel in distress (spoken three times) and call sign or boat registration number, spoken once.
5. Repeat "MAYDAY" and name of vessel, spoken once.
6. Give position of vessel by latitude or longitude or by bearing (true or magnetic, state which) and distance to a well-know landmark such as a navigational aid or small island, or in any terms which will assist a responding station in locating the vessel in distress. Include any information on vessel movement such as course, speed and destination.
7. Nature of distress (sinking, fire etc.).
8. Kind of assistance desired.
9. Number of persons onboard.
10. Any other information which might facilitate rescue, such as length or tonnage of vessel, number of persons needing medical attention, color hull, cabin, masks, etc.
11. The word "OVER"

Stay by the radio if possible. Even after the message has been received, the Coast Guard can find you more quickly if you can transmit a signal on which a rescue boat or aircraft can home in.

An example of a Mayday call:

MAYDAY-MAYDAY-MAYDAY
THIS IS BLUE DUCK-BLUE DUCK-BLUE DUCK WA1234
CAPE HENRY LIGHT BEARS 185 DEGREES MAGNETIC-DISTANCE 2 MILES
STRUCK SUBMERGED OBJECT
NEED PUMPS-MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND TOW
THREE ADULTS, TWO CHILDREN ONBOARD
ONE PERSON COMPOUND FRACTURE OF ARM
ESTIMATE CAN REMAIN AFLOAT TWO HOURS

BLUE DUCK IS THIRTY TWO FOOT CABIN CRUISER-WHITE HULL-BLUE DECK HOUSE
OVER

Repeat at intervals until an answer is received.

What do you do if you hear a distress call?

If you hear a distress message from a vessel and it is not answered, then you must answer. If you are reasonably sure that the distressed vessel is not in your vicinity, you should wait a short time for others to acknowledge.

What do you do if you are out of range of other vessels, and no one responds to your distress call?

Tune your HF radiotelephone to an HF channel guarded by the Coast Guard, and repeat your mayday call. Activate your EPIRB.

How do I know if there are Storm Warnings?

The Coast Guard announces storm warnings and other urgent marine information broadcasts on VHF channel 16 and 2182 kHz before making the broadcasts on VHF channel 22A and 2670 kHz respectively. *The Coast Guard announces urgent marine information broadcasts and storm warnings on channel 9 in the First Coast Guard District only (waters off the coast of northern New Jersey, New York, and New England).*

What about radio checks, how do I know my radio is working?

The Coast Guard First District (New England, south to northern New Jersey) is now answering radio checks on VHF maritime channel 16, operations permitting. Radio checks will not be answered when CG radio operators are handling distress communications.

The purpose of this policy change is to help reduce hoax MAYDAY calls. Radio checks with the Coast Guard are not permitted in any other location.

You should limit your radio checks to working channels.

What about MAYDAY Radio Checks and other Hoaxes?

A growing number of boaters unsuccessful in getting a radio check on VHF channel 16 are calling MAYDAY to get a response. Every hoax, including MAYDAY radio checks, is subject to prosecution as a Class D felony under Title 14, Section 85 of the U.S. Code, liable for a $5000 fine plus all costs the Coast Guard incurs as a result of the individual's action. Since hoaxes can lead to loss of life, the Coast Guard and Federal Communications Commission will work closely together, using, when necessary, FCC equipment capable of identifying the electronic signature of the offending radio.

Updates: Within the past few years channel 9 was also designated to be used as a hailing frequency in addition to channel 16 (which is both hailing and distress). However, in the First Coast Guard District only (waters off the coast of northern New Jersey, New York, and New England), the Coast Guard announces urgent marine information broadcasts and storm warnings on channel 9.

As of July 1, 2000, the Ninth Coast Guard District (Great Lakes Region) mandated that US recreational boaters use channel 9 only as a hailing frequency and they are not to hail on channel 16. This is due to the increase in radio traffic on channel 16. Emergencies, however, are still reported on channel 16.

http://www.boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/radio.htm

As A.R.E.S responders we never know exactly where we will be sent to help. We may well wind up being sent to help on a ship or boat on the water. It is good for A.R.E.S members to know about how to stay safe on and around water and vehicles that travel on water.