

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## State Specific Education Requirements Course Supplement



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State boating regulations and laws may differ from federal regulations taught in most boating courses. This supplement should answer any questions you may have regarding state laws. Any other questions or comments should be directed to your boating instructor or the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Boating Division (860) 434-8638. The final exam for your course will include 10 questions prepared by the Boating Division and refer to Connecticut laws and regulations. Annual updates reflecting changes in Boating laws can be found in the *Connecticut Boater's Guide*. This publication is available at most Town Clerks' offices and DEP or Motor Vehicle offices throughout the state.

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## **SAFE BOATING CERTIFICATE (SBC)**

Any resident of the state or person owning real property or a boat required to be registered or numbered in the state must obtain a *Safe Boating Certificate* (SBC) or *Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation* (CPWO) before operating any vessel required to be registered or numbered. Owner/operators of documented vessels or out-of-state registered vessels (not personal watercraft) may use Connecticut waters for no more than 60 days in a calendar year without obtaining a SBC or CPWO.

To obtain a SBC an individual must successfully complete an approved boating course, pass a written examination that is proctored, submit an application to the DEP accompanied by a fee of \$25.00 **OR** successfully pass an equivalency exam (\$25.00 fee) administered by the DEP. Any holder of a SBC or CPWO must have that certificate in their possession whenever operating a vessel. The SBC will allow the boater to operate any recreational vessel **except** a personal watercraft (PWC).

A SBC may be issued to any applicant regardless of age. Any boater less than 12 years old who possesses a SBC or CPWO may operate a boat up to 10 HP alone. To operate a boat over 10 HP, the child operator must be accompanied by an adult (18+ years of age) who also possesses a SBC or CPWO.

The minimum age to operate a PWC alone is 16. This is for all CPWO issued after March 9, 2004.

The SBC or CPWO is valid for the life of the person to whom it is issued. Anyone holding a **current** Master, Mate or Pilot license issued by the US Coast Guard may operate a recreational vessel (not a personal watercraft) without a SBC. They must carry a copy of their current license onboard.

## **AGE EXCEPTIONS**

A child under 16 may operate a vessel (not PWC) without a SBC or CPWO when under the direct supervision of a person 18 or older that has had a certificate for at least 2 years. It is illegal for a vessel owner to allow a child under 16, who needs a certificate, to operate a vessel or PWC.

## **CERTIFICATE OF PERSONAL WATERCRAFT OPERATION (CPWO)**

A *Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation* will allow an individual to operate any recreational vessel **including** personal watercraft (jetski style vessel). To obtain a CPWO an applicant must meet all requirements for a SBC and complete an approved course in personal watercraft (PWC) instruction, then make application with a \$25.00 fee.

**NO PERSON (UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES) SHALL OPERATE A PWC WITHOUT HAVING IN HIS OR HER POSSESSION A CERTIFICATE OF PERSONAL WATERCRAFT OPERATION.**

## **LIMITED DURATIONAL CERTIFICATE**

Any individual that qualifies for a SBC or CPWO may bring a completed application, \$25 fee, and supporting documents to any DEP processing office and receive a Limited Durational Certificate. This certificate may be used instantly until your official certificate arrives in the mail.

## **DUPLICATE CERTIFICATES**

Should your SBC or CPWO become lost, stolen or destroyed you may obtain a duplicate for a fee of \$10. Forms are available through the DEP.

## **BOATING COURSES**

The Commissioner of the Dept. of Environmental Protection must approve all boating courses that lead to certification in Connecticut. To obtain this approval, your course must be taught by a qualified instructor for a period of no less than 8 hours. No home-study, internet, or mail order courses are approved in Connecticut. Some courses are approved as combination boating and PWC courses and lead to a CPWO. If you have any questions call DEP Marine Headquarters at (860) 434-8638. In an effort to assure quality boating education throughout the state, we randomly select student's names to complete a survey. Should you encounter a course that you feel was inappropriate or an instructor that did not deliver a quality education, please contact the DEP at the above phone number or mail your comments to DEP Marine HQ, PO Box 280, Old Lyme, CT 06371 ATTN: Education Dept.

## **VESSEL REGISTRATION**

Connecticut law requires all vessels with motors, regardless of size, and sailboats powered by sail alone 19.5 feet or longer, to be registered and numbered.

Vessels registered and numbered in other states or documented by the US Coast Guard and wanting to use Connecticut waters for more than 60 days in a calendar year, must obtain a certificate of decal. They must display the current validation stickers on both sides of the vessel but do not have to display any CT registration numbers.

All vessel registrations are handled by the Dept. of Motor Vehicles and expire on April 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Connecticut vessel numbers stay with the vessel as long as it is registered in Connecticut. The Certificate of Number (registration certificate) must be on-board the vessel at all times. Vessel numbering is in compliance with federal law with your Connecticut validation stickers being placed 2" to the right of the assigned vessel numbers on both sides. No other numbers and only current validation stickers may be displayed. Any change of address must be reported in writing within 15 days.

## **PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFD)**

In addition to federal laws regarding PFDs Connecticut requires any person on water-skis, tubes being towed, or on a PWC to be wearing a USCG approved PFD (inflatables excluded).

**All manually propelled vessels** - From October 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> - any persons onboard **must** wear an approved wearable PFD.

Children – Any child under the age of 13 **must** wear a USCG approved wearable PFD whenever onboard a recreational boat that is underway except when the child is in an enclosed cabin or below decks. (NOTE: Inflatable PFDs are not approved for children under the age of 16.)

## **MUFFLER & NOISE LEVELS**

Every motorboat **must** be equipped with an effective muffling device. Some muffler cutout devices may be approved by the Commissioner of the DEP. Connecticut noise levels are as follows:

### STATIC TEST:

Engines manufactured before Jan. 1, 1993 – 90 dBA

Engines manufactured on or after January 1, 1993 - 88 dBA

### OPERATION TEST:

No person should operate or let anyone else operate a vessel that exceeds a noise level of 75 dBA

A law enforcement officer may direct a suspected offender through one of the tests to determine noise levels. Fines for refusing the test are substantial.

No person shall sell a boat that does not operate in compliance with the established noise levels.

## **WHISTLE (HORN) AND BELL**

Federal Law requires all vessels to carry a noise-producing device.

**As of October 1, 2008 Connecticut has adopted federal law by reference with regards to safety equipment. Refer to federal regulations for the**

most recent sound producing device requirements.

## **SPEED REGULATIONS**

No person shall operate a motorboat at a speed in excess of 'slow no-wake' when within 100 feet (PWC, within 200 feet) of shore, piers, floats, and anchored or moored vessels. An exception is made for vessels that are taking off or landing water skiers.

In Connecticut, many bodies of water have speed restrictions. These can be found posted on the water or in the *Connecticut Boaters Guide*. When within 100 feet of buoys marking a restricted swimming area or boat access area, vessels shall not operate at a speed in excess of Slow No-Wake.

Under crowded conditions or in reduced visibility, every vessel must go at a moderate speed with a careful regard for existing circumstances and conditions. Actions such as speeding in confined or restricted areas, "buzzing" or "wetting down" others or skiing at prohibited times or in restricted areas, can be construed as reckless or negligent operation.

## **DIVING AND UNDERWATER OPERATIONS**

In Connecticut, divers and underwater swimmers must display the "Diver-Down" flag. No person shall operate a vessel or allow a person on skis to pass within 100 feet of this flag. If the flag is on a float or tube, it may accommodate up to four divers. If the flag is being flown from a boat, it is limited to the legal capacity of the boat.

## **OPERATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE**

No person may operate a boat when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. An operator must be free from physical and mental disabilities that might interfere with the control of the boat. Water-skiing under the influence is also illegal.

A person shall be considered under the influence of intoxicating liquor if the ratio of alcohol in the blood is .08 per cent or more. If you are under the age of 21 it is .02 per cent.

## **ACCIDENT REPORTING**

All operators of vessels involved in an accident must remain at the scene and assist any other vessel or person involved in the accident if it is possible to do so without endangering their own vessel or the people aboard. The operator must also provide his or her name, address, and vessel identification to the other operator or owners of the damaged property.

The operator of a boat involved in a boating accident that results in any of the circumstances noted below shall immediately notify the nearest Law Enforcement agency. Within 48 hours after the accident, the operator must submit to the Department of Environmental Protection a "State Boating Accident Report":

- The death of any person, from whatever the cause.
- The disappearance of any person on board.
- The injury of any person sufficient to require medical attention.

Any accident in which the total damages to all property affected is more than \$500.00 must be reported by the operator within 5 days after the accident on the "State Boating Accident Report" form.

## **WATER SKIING**

Water skiers are required to wear a PFD (not an inflatable) when on skis. Water skiing is a minimum three-person sport, the operator, the skier and an observer at least 12 years old to monitor the actions of the skier. Rear view mirrors **may not** be used in place of an observer. The skier and observer must communicate using appropriate hand signals.

Water skiing is prohibited from ½ hour after sunset to sunrise and whenever visibility is restricted to less than 100 yards with a boat. (PWC, see below)

Towing a person on an inner tube without hand-holds is prohibited, as are self-propelled water skis or surfboards, and remote control devices that pull water skiers.

## **FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY**

Every vessel overtaking another vessel shall keep out of the way of the overtaken vessel. Any person

operating a vessel shall not follow another vessel more closely than is reasonable and prudent and shall have regard for prevailing circumstances and conditions so as not to create a risk of collision.

### **PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (PWC)**

All persons aboard a PWC must wear a Coast Guard approved PFD (not an inflatable).

No person shall operate a PWC between sunset and sunrise.

No person operating a PWC may jump the wake of another vessel in such a manner that the watercraft completely leaves the water when within 100 feet of the vessel creating the wake.

No passenger is permitted to ride in front of the PWC operator.

Any passenger on a PWC must be able to plant their feet firmly on the floor deck of the vessel.

Water skiing from a PWC is legal from sunrise to sunset only.

No person shall operate a PWC at a speed in excess of 'Slow No-Wake' within 200 feet of shore or within 200 feet of any dock, pier, float, or anchored or moored vessel. An exception is made for PWC that are taking off or landing water skiers.

No person shall operate a PWC equipped with a "kill switch" unless the device is attached via a lanyard to the operator in such a manner that it will shut off the machine should the operator become ejected.

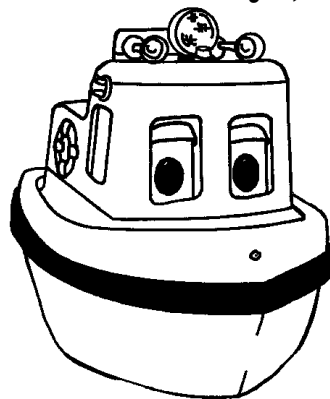
No person shall tow a water skier or tuber from a PWC unless the PWC has:

- a capacity label affixed by the manufacturer indicating a carrying capacity of at least three persons (check the *Connecticut Boater's Guide* for exact measurements),
- handholds at or near the rear of the seat suitable for use by a rearward facing observer, and
- an observer at least 12 years of age facing the skier at all times. The operator, skier and observer must obey all other water-ski rules.

### **ENFORCEMENT VESSELS**

Upon approaching a law enforcement vessel using flashing blue lights and an audible signal or a fire rescue vessel using flashing red and yellow lights and an audible signal, a person operating a vessel shall immediately slow to steerage speed only. For such stationary vessels, boat operators must go at Slow No-Wake speed until past 200 feet.

**Rudder says,**



**"Always wear your life jacket  
when you're on a boat!"**