

The N.C. General Assembly enacted a law that requires boaters under age 26 to pass a boater safety course to operate a vessel. The law goes into effect May 1, 2010. The law, with certain exemptions, applies to anyone younger than 26 years old who is operating a vessel powered by a 10-horsepower or greater motor on public waterways. Violation is an infraction, subject to a citation and court appearance.

Those under age 26 need to present certification (normally a certification card) to a law enforcement officer upon request showing that they have successfully completed a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved boating safety course. Those who have taken other NASBLA-approved courses and no longer have certification cards or proof of compliance will need to contact the organization that provided the original course for a new card. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission will be enforcing this law and will be looking for certification cards that state that the holder has successfully completed a NASBLA-approved boating safety education course and looking for the NASBLA logo on the card.

Those who are exempt from the requirement include: (a) those who have taken boater safety courses recognized by NASBLA in other states — with a certification card or proof of compliance or have a valid or expired license to operate a vessel by the U.S. Coast Guard, (b) those who possess a temporary operators' certificate on a new boat or who are under direct supervision of a person certified who is 18 years or older, (c) those who are not residents of the State and are passing through for 90 days or less, and (d) those who possess a vessel lease agreement, are registered as a commercial fisherman or are temporarily operating the vessel due to an illness or impairment of the operator.

Those found in violation of the law in court will be considered guilty of an infraction and will be ordered to pay court costs but no fine.