

Waterskiing Safety Supplement

The following information must be included, after October 1, 2015, in any class that will result in a student being eligible to obtain a Connecticut Boating Certificate or a Connecticut Safe Waterskiing Endorsement.

- This waterskiing information pertains to anyone who is being towed behind a powered vessel, including inflatables devices that do not have directional control.

General Topics of Course Coverage (Course will address)

- 1) Connecticut specific law on towing (age, line length, observer, endorsements, etc.)
- 2) Responsibilities and requirements of the vessel operator
- 3) Responsibilities and requirements of the person being towed
- 4) Recognized safety practices for towing (lookout, towing in areas clear of obstruction, engine shut off, etc..)

The following information outlines the key course content criteria:

Connecticut's definitions:

Water-skiing: includes aquaplaning, towing of any person behind a vessel under power and similar forms of activity.

Operate: to navigate or otherwise use a vessel.

Operator: person responsible for navigating or otherwise using the vessel.

Observer: a person present on the vessel who assists the operator and monitors the progress of the waterskier. The observer must be at least 12 years old and face the waterskier while underway.

Connecticut Law- Emily's Law: In order to operate a vessel that is towing a waterskier or other towed device, the operator must:

1. Be age 16 and older, **and**
2. Possess a valid Safe Boating certificate or Certificate of Personal Watercraft from Connecticut, a valid boating certificate from a reciprocal state with Connecticut or a Coast Guard License, **and**
3. Possess a Connecticut Safe Waterskiing Endorsement if they obtained their boating certificate on or after October 1, 2015.

Course materials must include the following laws and best practices:

Operator Responsibilities

- 1. Vessel owners may not allow someone to operate a vessel while towing a waterskier unless the person is legally authorized to do so.**
- 2. The observer must be age 12 and older to monitor a person being towed.**
- 3. The waterskiing vessel must have a vessel capacity that will safely provide space for all participants including the persons being towed.**
- 4. No one may waterski between ½ hour after sunset until sunrise or when visibility is restricted to less than 100 yards while on a power vessel and between sunset and sunrise on a PWC.**
- 5. No person shall operate a motorboat at a speed in excess of Slow-No-Wake within 100 feet of shore, or a dock, pier, float or anchored or moored vessel, unless taking off or landing a waterskier.**
- 6. No person shall operate a Personal Watercraft at a speed in excess of Slow-No-Wake within 200 feet of shore, or a dock, pier, float or anchored or moored vessel, unless taking off or landing a waterskier.**
- 7. The person being towed or wake surfing behind the boat must wear a life jacket, designed for active water sports, and be in serviceable condition. Inflatable life jackets may not be worn by waterskiers.**
- 8. Operators need to tow with a tow line that is 100' or shorter in length.**
9. Hand signals should be reviewed by the operator, observer and person being towed before starting the activity. (Course should demonstrate hand signals).
10. Boating and alcohol don't mix. All persons engaged in waterskiing activities should refrain from consuming alcohol.
11. Operators need to understand that riders on inflatable devices do not have much control and the liability associated with not keeping the person being towed safe.
12. Skiers need to use tow line that is in good condition, rated for the weight that is being towed and does not have any knots or frays.
13. Tow rope connections should always be inspected prior to towing and should only be attached to approved attachment points. When using a towing tower/post, always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
14. Operators need to keep the person being towed at least two rope lengths away from obstructions.
15. Operators need to keep a good lookout for other vessels and to take early actions to stay clear of other boats and obstacles.
16. Those skiing need to follow the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels for the device being towed (proper use, inflation, etc.).
17. Operators need to ensure that the person being towed and all other passengers are not entangled in the tow line before takeoff.
18. Operators need to ensure that those riding on a device refrain from taking risky actions while riding and understand that unintended contact can occur with multiple riders resulting in injury.
19. Operators need to ensure that the tow line is taut before accelerating to prevent injury from a jerking motion.
20. Operators should wait for a signal from the person being towed that they are ready to take off before accelerating.
21. The operator needs to check that the takeoff path is clear before accelerating the vessel. The towing vessel does not have any special privileges when towing a person.

22. The operator needs to recognize that the vessel will need more room to clear hazards when turning because the person being towed will swing out and away from the boat in the opposite direction the vessel is turning. (Boat turns left, person swings out on the right side.)
23. Before making any turns or zig-zag maneuvers the operator must look to ensure there are no boats or hazards in the intended path and that the operator is not turning into the path of the person being towed.
24. Operators should understand that it is not recommended to tow multiple inflatable devices or an inflatable and a water skier/wakeboarder at the same time.
25. Operators should not exceed 20 mph when towing an inflatable device.
26. The operator needs to watch for and stay clear of areas where swimmers are in the water.
27. When crossing wakes, operators should slow the vessel, so that the people in the boat and/or being towed are not bounced around excessively.
28. Before making a sharp turn, the operator should communicate with on board passengers, including the observer, and ensure the passengers are safely seated and holding on securely.
29. Regardless of engine type, the operator should shut off engine when the person being towed is entering the water from the vessel, switching riding devices, or re-boarding from the water.
30. When returning to a fallen waterskier, the operator must keep the waterskier in sight at all times, approach the waterskier on the operator side of the boat keeping wind and current in mind and keep the vessel far enough away so that it does not strike the person in the water.
31. The operator should never back the boat toward the people in the water and always maneuver the vessel in a manner that keeps the propeller as far away from them as possible.
32. Operators need to ensure that equipment is on board and stored before accelerating to leave after skiing activity is over (accidents have occurred as observer is pulling in towed devices and tow rope when done).

Observer responsibilities

1. The observer must be at least 12 years of age, facing the skier to assist the operator and monitor the progress of the waterskier.
2. Hand signals should be reviewed by the operator, observer and person being towed before starting the activity.
3. The observer must relay to the operator the status of the person being towed such as a skier fell in water, any hand signal communications and of any other dangers that may arise.
4. The observer must respond to the skiers' signals and inform the operator.
5. If the skier falls, you must inform the operator and keep an eye on the skier in the water.
6. Boating and alcohol don't mix. All persons engaged in waterskiing activities should refrain from consuming alcohol.
7. The observer should refrain from activities that distract their ability to observe effectively.

Waterskier responsibilities

1. Hand signals should be reviewed by the operator, observer and person being towed before starting the activity.
2. The person being towed or wake surfing behind the boat must wear a life jacket, designed for active water sports, and be in serviceable condition. Inflatable life jackets may not be worn by waterskiers.
3. Waterskiers should tell the observer to stop if a concern for danger is developing.
4. Persons riding on a device should refrain from taking risky actions or horseplay while riding and understand that unintended contact can occur with multiple riders resulting in injury.
5. Those skiing need to follow the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels for the device being towed (proper use, inflation, etc.).