Boating laws and regulations are enacted primarily to protect today’s boater. Stay abreast of new rules and regulations; they may change yearly.

**Enforcement**

Several law enforcement agencies enforce Connecticut’s state statutes and regulations and federal navigational laws. The United States Coast Guard patrols federal waters and enforces federal laws. Municipal police officers, state conservation police officers, town marine officers, lake patrolmen and POST-certified harbormasters are empowered to enforce state boating regulations. In their jurisdiction, enforcement officers have authority to stop and board boats to check for compliance with federal or state law or to search without warrant, upon probable cause that other laws have been violated.

Law enforcement vessels engaged in enforcement activities may display a flashing blue light or audible signal. No flashing lights, except flashing yellow lights on high speed ferries, submarines and air cushion vessels and alternating flashing, yellow and red lights on vessels used for public safety activities, may be displayed by vessels other than law enforcement vessels. No sirens shall be used on vessels other than law enforcement vessels, except that any vessel may be equipped with a theft alarm if it is designed so that it cannot be used as an ordinary warning signal.

If approached by a law enforcement or fire rescue vessel using its lights and audible signal, a vessel operator is required to (1) immediately slow to a speed just sufficient to maintain steerage only; (2) alter course within its ability to not inhibit or interfere with the law enforcement or fire rescue vessel; and (3) unless otherwise directed by an officer onboard such vessels, proceed at a reduced speed until beyond the area of operation of the law enforcement or fire rescue vessel. If someone willfully or negligently obstructs or retards a law enforcement or fire rescue vessel answering an emergency call or pursuing a fleeing law violator, the offender shall be fined up to $200 or imprisoned for up to seven days, or both.

If a vessel operator passes within 200 feet of a stationary law enforcement vessel using its lights and audible signal or a fire rescue vessel using its lights, the vessel operator is required to slow the operator’s vessel to Slow-No-Wake speed until it is more than 200 feet away from the law enforcement or fire rescue vessel. If someone fails to slow as required, the offender shall be subject to a fine of between $50 to $200.
Definitions of Terms

The following definitions will prove useful in understanding the rules and regulations related to boating.

Regulated Navigational Area. Water area within a defined boundary for which regulations for vessels navigating within the area have been established under 33 CFR Part 165.

Restricted Visibility. Conditions in which visibility is restricted by fog, mist, falling snow, heavy rainstorms, sandstorms or any other similar causes.

Safety Zone. A water area, shore area, or water and shore area to which, for safety or environmental purposes, access is limited to authorized persons, vehicles or vessels. The Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection is authorized to create temporary safety zones for a period not to exceed 72 consecutive hours, unless an emergency warrants otherwise.

Security Zone. An area of land, water, or land and water, which is designated under 33 CFR Part 165 by the United States Coast Guard for such time as is necessary to prevent injury or damage to the area or to secure the observance of the rights and obligations of the United States.

Slow-No-Wake. A vessel shall not produce more than a minimum wake and shall not attain speeds greater than six miles per hour over the ground unless a higher minimum speed is necessary to maintain steerageway when traveling with a strong current. In no case shall the wake produced by the vessel be such that it creates a danger or injury to persons, or will damage vessels or structures of any kind.

State and Federal Waters

• Federal Waters. Navigable waters of the United States, as defined by 33 CFR 2.36(a), within the territorial limits of the state.
• State Waters. All waters within the territorial limits of the state except federal waters.
• Waters of state. All waters, including federal waters, within the territorial limits of the state.
• Underway. When a vessel is not moored, anchored, made fast to the shore, or aground.

Restricted Safety and Security Zones

No person shall operate, allow the operation of a vessel, or anchor any vessel on the waters of the state within a safety or security zone or a regulated navigational area.

Restricted Operating Distances and Speed Areas

No person shall operate a vessel or cause a waterskier to pass within one hundred feet of a flag, buoy or other device, marking the location of an underwater swimmer or diver.

No person shall operate a motorboat, excluding a personal watercraft, 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.

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.

When within 100 feet of buoys marking a restricted swimming area or boat access area, vessels shall be operated at Slow-No-Wake.

Speed Regulations

When no limits are posted, operate the boat so it will not endanger others. The boat must be able to stop safely within the clear distance ahead. When passing near marinas, fishing areas, swimming areas, a vessel at anchor, or similar places, reduce speed. Operators are responsible for damage caused by their wakes.

In Connecticut, speed is limited by law for certain conditions and areas. Comply with posted regulatory signs and the regulations printed within this chapter.

Every vessel must, under crowded conditions or in reduced visibility, go at a moderate speed with careful regard for existing circumstances and conditions. Actions such as speeding in confined or restricted areas or skiing at prohibited times or in restricted areas can also be construed as reckless or negligent operation.

Reckless Operation

Reckless operation is the failure to exercise the degree of care necessary to prevent endangering another person or their property.

Age Restrictions

No person under the age of 16 may operate a vessel that is engaged in recreational towing activity, such as water skiing or tubing.

A child under the age of 16 may be permitted to operate a vessel, other than a personal watercraft, without obtaining a SBC or CPWO, if the youth is under the direct supervision of a person at least age 18 who has had a boating certificate for at least two years.

A child under the age of 12 who has obtained a SBC or CPWO may not operate a vessel with greater than 10 horsepower, unless the youth is accompanied on board by a person at least age 18 who holds a SBC or CPWO.

Owners who knowingly permit an underage child to operate their vessel without a SBC or CPWO when one is
Hazardous Conditions

Enforcement officers can terminate a voyage and require the operator to return to the nearest mooring if they discover a hazardous condition. The operator must then correct this condition before proceeding on his way.

Mooring to Buoys

The only buoys you are permitted to moor to are mooring buoys. Mooring to a navigation buoy or other aid to navigation or regulatory marker is illegal.

Overloading

Never overload your boat with passengers or cargo beyond its safe carrying capacity. Capacity labels are required on all vessels less than 20 feet manufactured after 1972, and are affixed by the manufacturer. Connecticut law forbids altering, defacing or removing the plate.

Riding on Decks or Gunwales

While underway in a vessel under power, do not ride on the bow, gunwale, transom, or in any position which is obviously dangerous. Riding on or hanging over the bow can interfere with stability and may restrict the operator’s visibility. No operator of a vessel under power shall allow any person to be on a decked-over bow of such vessel while underway unless the bow of the vessel is equipped with a handrail that encompasses the bow, and all persons on the bow are inward of such handrail. On vessels under power with open bows not decked-over, no operator shall allow any person to sit or stand on the gunwale at the bow of the vessel while underway. These provisions shall not apply to persons in or on the bow of vessels engaged in anchoring, mooring, or docking activities, and when the vessel is proceeding at a dead slow speed.

Diving and Underwater Operations

In Connecticut, anyone involved in underwater swimming or diving is required to display a clearly visible red flag with a white diagonal stripe. The flag must be two-sided, not less than 13 inches high and 15 inches long. The white diagonal stripe must be reflectorized if the flag is to be used at night. It is extremely dangerous and a violation of the law for a diver to surface or swim more than 50 feet from this flag. No more than four divers may use the same diver flag, unless it is displayed from a boat, in which case the number of divers must be limited to the legal capacity of the boat.

The blue/white ALPHA flag is also used to show underwater operations from a vessel in federal waters. It may be used in addition to the state’s diver down flag. It is illegal to snorkel or SCUBA dive from a state boat launch. Boaters must not come within 100 feet of the dive flag.

Waterskiing, Parasailing and Wing-In-Ground (WIG) Vessels

As of October 1, 2015, all persons operating a vessel engaged in a recreational towing activity, including the towing water skiers or inflatable devices must satisfy the following requirements:

1. The operator must age 16 or older,
2. The operator must possess a valid boating certificate issued by either Connecticut, or a state that Connecticut has a reciprocal agreement with, or an accepted U.S. Coast Guard License,
3. Those persons who obtain one of the above certificates after October 1, 2015, must also possess a “Safe Water Skiing Endorsement”.
4. Those persons who obtained one of the above required certificates or licenses prior to October 1, 2015, are not required to possess the Safe Water Skiing Endorsement.
5. Persons that take a Safe Boating Course that results...
persons of any age, as a result of the education portion of the course, be eligible to receive the Connecticut Safe Water Skiing Endorsement.

Persons who obtain one of the above described certificates from a State that has a reciprocal agreement with Connecticut or a U.S. Coast Guard License, after October 1, 2015, will be able to obtain the required Safe Water Skiing Endorsement through an online Safe Water Skiing Course. The link to the course is www.ct.gov/deep/waterskiendorsement.

The online Safe Water Skiing Course will provide the education portion free of charge. If a student wishes to take the examination, which would result in being eligible to receive the Connecticut Safe Water Skiing Endorsement, a fee may be imposed.

Water skiing includes the towing of any person behind a vessel under power, such as waterskiing, tubing, wakeboarding, wakesurfing, etc.

In Connecticut, waterskiers are required by law to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (life jacket) while engaged in waterskiing, except for those skiers who are engaged in barefoot waterskiing and are wearing a specifically designed “barefoot wetsuit” and those skiers who are engaged in trick waterskiing and are wearing standard double trick skis at least eight inches wide and not over 46 inches long, and being towed at not more than 20 mph using a tow rope longer than 50 feet long.

A life jacket must be made readily available aboard the tow vessel for each skier electing not to wear one under the above exceptions, in addition to those life jackets normally required to be aboard. Ski belts and inflatable life jackets are not permitted.

The operator of the boat is required to have a responsible observer at least 12 years of age facing the skier to assist the operator and monitor the progress of the waterskier. The waterskier, the observer, and the boat operator shall use hand signals for communication. The maximum length of a towline measured from the tow post to the waterskier’s tow handle is 100 feet. No elastic component may be part of the towline. Except when the vessel is engaged in towing a waterskier and at least one person onboard the vessel is using it for training purposes, the rigid metal tow pole, often used for barefoot skiing, may either be removed from the boat or must be dismantled or folded and placed inside of the gunwale and parallel to the center line of the boat.

The operator of the vessel and the waterskier are responsible for operating in a manner which does not harm or strike another person or vessel. Waterskiing is forbidden between 30 minutes after sunset until sunrise or when visibility is restricted to less than 100 yards.

Boats and Personal Watercraft (PWCs) are subject to different near-shore slow-no-wake restrictions; except for the purpose of allowing a water skier to take off or land, boats may not exceed Slow-No-Wake within 100 feet of shore and PWCs may not exceed Slow-No-Wake within 200 feet of shore. This means that, depending on the type of vessel that is being operated, a waterbody (or portion of waterbody) may simply be too narrow to legally waterski or go fast.

Towing of a person or persons on an inner tube without handholds is prohibited.

Kite-skiing and parasailing are prohibited anywhere waterskiing is prohibited or subject to special regulations. Kite-skiers and parasailers shall not fly over or under obstructions such as utility lines and bridges; nor shall they fly over dams, locks, docks, launching ramps, swim areas, marinas or congested areas.

All waterski jumps and slalom courses require a permit. Contact the Boating Division or visit our website for information.

Self-propelled waterskis and surfboards, and remote control devices which tow waterskiers, are prohibited in Connecticut.

A wing-in-ground (WIG) effect vessel must be approved by the DEEP before operating recreationally and by the U.S. Coast Guard before operating for commercial or for research purposes.

Marine Event Permits

On state waters; all marine parades, regattas, races, tournaments, fireworks over water, exhibitions, or other activities requiring exclusive use of a portion of a water body, use of a state boat launch, or modification or suspension of any laws or regulations require a permit issued by the DEEP. Applications must be received by the DEEP Boating Division at least 45 days prior to the event.

For details visit the DEEP website www.ct.gov/deep/boating and select “Laws / Requirements / Permits”.


Marker (Buoy or Beacon) Permits

All markers (buoys or beacons) other than a diver’s flag require a permit from the DEEP. This includes markers placed for swim areas, speed zones, navigation, information, and water ski courses or jumps.

Visit the DEEP website at www.ct.gov/deep/boating and select “Laws / Requirements / Permits” for more details.
ABANDONED BOATS
IS YOUR BOAT MISSING? HAS YOUR BOAT BEEN DISPLACED IN A STORM?

1. Notify the police, and
2. Check the Abandoned Boat website (www.ct.gov/deep.abandonedboats) in case it has been found and posted as abandoned.

Under the new law a boat is abandoned when it is:
• Free floating and unattended for more than 24 hours;
• Left on property without permission for more than 24 hours;
• Left at a mooring without payment;
• Left at a commercial facility for over a year without full payment or;
• Improperly registered and left on the waters of the state.

If you are dealing with an abandoned boat:
· Submit a Notice of Abandoned Vessel to the Commissioner along with a $20 processing fee
· Wait 45 days
· If the owner does not collect the boat in 45 days, you will be issued a Notice of Assumed Ownership. You can then do what you wish with the boat.

Complete instructions, rules, and necessary forms are available online at www.ct.gov/deep/abandonedboats.

CLAIMING AN ABANDONED BOAT
The abandoned boat process is a closed process. Only the legal owner of an abandoned boat can “claim” an abandoned boat from the table listed on the abandoned boat website.

FINES FOR ABANDONING A BOAT
The fine for abandoning a boat is $440.00, and under the abandoned boat law the last registered owner can be held liable for all costs associated with processing the abandoned boat.

To help avoid possible fines, cancel your registration in writing within 15 days of selling or destroying your registered boat. It’s the law! Send a cancellation note under your signature to the DMV Marine Vessel Section, 60 State Street, Wethersfield, CT 06161.

Personal Watercraft Restrictions
Personal Watercraft are subject to the following operation restrictions (for age restrictions, see page 22):

TUBING SAFETY TIPS
Tubing is a great water sport. Please remember that riders do not have the directional control that water skiers have. Take these special precautions to ensure fun.
• Riders are required to wear a USCG approved life jacket.
• By law you must have an observer at least 12 years old to watch for tuber safety.
• Make sure the vessel operator, observer and tubers are alert and sober.
• Follow manufacturer’s recommendations—regarding capacity in terms of passenger weight, number of riders, age limit and maximum towing speeds.
• Securely fasten the line—use a heavy duty line designed for towing tubes; check condition regularly.
• Know the area ahead of time—maintain a safe distance between the tube and other boats, piers and floating platforms.
• Learn how to balance weight—properly position tubers based on the tube’s characteristics; some ride better with weight back, some need tubers to ride belly down.
• Turn off the engine and count to 10 before allowing a person into the water—the propeller continues to spin after the engine is shut off.
• Make sure the tuber and the observer understand and communicate hand signals; always listen to the tuber; use the spotter—the boat operator should not be watching the tuber.
• Use caution when making turns—tube speed increases during a turn and riders can fall off or be thrown; never have the tuber on the inside of a turn; plan ahead of the turn to make sure tube will have room to safely pass other boats or docks.
• Slow the boat speed when needed—when crossing wakes to avoid back injuries; when pulling more than one tube (and be extra vigilant) to prevent tube collisions.
• Approach with caution on the operator side of the boat into the wind or current—then turn the engine off; keep engine off for re-boarding.
• Never back up to a person or allow them to use the propeller to re-board.
• Securely stow all gear and tube—at the end of the day before throttling up; never have the observer coil the line for tube if the boat is in gear and the tube is still in the water or has any chance of flying out of the boat.
• Vessel operator should ensure that all participants are not entangled in the tow line prior to accelerating.

For additional safe waterskiing information and our online waterskiing course, visit www.ct.gov/deep/waterskiendorsement
• No person shall operate a personal watercraft between sunset and sunrise or during periods of reduced visibility.
• No passenger shall ride in front of the operator on a personal watercraft.
• No passenger shall ride upon a personal watercraft unless the passenger is able to securely hold onto the person in front of them or to the handholds on the personal watercraft, and is able to keep both feet on the deck of the personal watercraft so as to maintain balance while the personal watercraft is in operation.
• All persons aboard a personal watercraft shall wear a United States Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device, and no operator of a personal watercraft shall allow any person to be aboard who is not wearing such a device. Inflatable life jackets are not allowed.
• No person shall operate a personal watercraft at a speed in excess of Slow-No-Wake within 200 feet of shore or of a dock, pier, float or anchored or moored vessel, unless said personal watercraft is approaching such float, dock or shore for the purpose of enabling a person engaged in waterskiing to take off or land.
• No person shall operate a personal watercraft towing a water-skier without satisfying the Safe Waterskiing Endorsement requirements (See page 10) and no person shall waterski while being towed by a personal watercraft unless: (1) a capacity label affixed by the manufacturer indicates a carrying capacity of at least three persons: the operator, the observer and the skier; (2) minimum overall length of 119 inches, minimum overall width of 46 inches, minimum horizontal seat length of 39 inches [at least 13 inches additional seat length per person for greater than three person capacity]; (3) handholds at or near the rear of the seat suitable for use by a rearward-facing observer; and (4) an observer age 12 or older facing the skier at all times. The boat operator, observer and waterskier must obey all waterski rules.
• No person operating a personal watercraft shall cross or jump the wake of another vessel, when within 100 feet of the vessel creating such wake, in such a manner that the hull of the personal watercraft jumping the wake completely leaves the water.
• A “shut-off lanyard,” if so equipped, must be attached to the operator, his clothing, or his personal flotation device in a manner which will shut off the engine in the event the operator is ejected from the personal watercraft while underway.

Boating Under the Influence (BUI)
No person may operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
A person shall be considered to be under the influence of intoxicating liquor if the ratio of alcohol in the blood is eighthundredths (.08) of one percent or more of alcohol, by weight, or if the person is under 21 years of age, the level is .02.
The penalty for a first violation may be: a fine between $500 and $1,000; one year suspension of boating privileges, six months (at least 48 hours of which cannot be suspended or reduced) in jail or suspended plus probation requiring 100 hours community service.
The penalty for a second violation within 10 years may be: a fine between $1,000 and $4,000; three years suspension of boating privileges, two years (at least 120 days of which cannot be suspended or reduced) in jail and probation requiring 100 hours community service.
The penalty for a third violation and subsequent violations within 10 years may be: a fine between $2,000 and $8,000, suspension of boating privileges for life, three years (at least one year of which cannot be suspended or reduced) in jail and probation requiring 100 hours of community service.
The penalty for refusal to submit to a chemical test are more substantial than failing the test.

Boating Accidents and Reporting
All operators of vessels involved in an accident must remain at the scene and assist any other vessel or person involved, if possible, without endangering their own vessel or the people aboard. The operator must also give his/her name, address and vessel identification number to the other
**Boating Regulations**

**Drink Counting Method**

**Blood Alcohol Content In A One Hour Period**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 oz</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 oz Beer</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 oz Wine</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REMEMBER:** The liver removes the equivalent of one ounce of 80 proof alcohol per hour. One ounce of 80 proof alcohol, 12 ounces of beer, or 6 ounces of table wine all have the same effect on the body. As a professional bartender, you MUST know your state’s Blood Alcohol Content laws! All states have set their BAC to .08% as federally mandated.

**DISCLAIMER:** Counting drinks is an accepted method of determining a customer’s BAC level. The server of alcohol MUST make a judgement based on counting drinks, as well as observing the customer’s behavior and appearance. The above chart will not be accurate if a customer has consumed alcohol prior to your serving them, or if the alcohol is not measured accurately. Professional Bartending Schools of America has developed the above chart as a guideline to help in determining the customers BAC level. The server of alcoholic beverages assumes all liability for their decisions in the serving alcoholic. Professional Bartending Schools of America accepts no liability for any server’s decision based on use of the above chart.

**Boat Disposal**

If you are the registered owner and have documentation to show this, then you can simply dispose of the boat. CGS Sec. 15-147 requires that you notify the DMV within 15 days of transfer, destruction, theft, loss or abandonment.

Below are some organizations that accept donated boats. You are encouraged to look online for additional organizations:

- **Boats with Causes:** 1-888-228-7320

- **Teddy Bear Cops:** 1-877-327-1229

- **Boat Angel:** 1-800-227-2643
  [www.boatangel.org](http://www.boatangel.org)

- **Boats4Causes:** 1-888-444-2392
  [www.boats4causes.org](http://www.boats4causes.org)

- **BOATs for Veterans:** 1-800-409-3274
  [www.donate-your-boat.org](http://www.donate-your-boat.org)

- **American Lung Association:** 1-800-LUNGUSA

If you wish to dispose of your vessel at your local transfer station, contact them first to see if they accept vessels. Some require that the vessels be cut into pieces and have all liquids removed. Please properly dispose of all liquids.

If you encounter an abandoned boat, see the guidance on the DEEP - Boating Division website [www.ct.gov/deep/abandonedboats](http://www.ct.gov/deep/abandonedboats).

**New Rules for Jet Packs and Flyboards**


- You must be 16 years of age or older to operate a JAV.
- You must have a valid Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation to operate a JAV.
- Anyone who can turn the JAV on or off, or who can influence the thrust, speed or direction of the JAV is considered to be an operator of the JAV. Under these rules it is possible for a JAV to have more than one operator.
- You are not allowed to use a JAV in a Slow-No-Wake area or within 200 feet of any dock, shore, pier or fixed structure or within 100 feet of any vessel except to transit the area: NO TRICKS ALLOWED!