

Safety Equipment



As a boat operator your fun on the water depends on your behavior. It is your responsibility to have the safety equipment required by law, to keep it on board in good condition, and know how to properly use it. **YOU ARE IN COMMAND!**

Connecticut Life Jacket and Personal Flotation Device (PFD) Laws

More than 90% of the drowning related boating fatalities may have been avoided by wearing a life jacket.

- There must be a wearable life jacket on board for each person aboard every vessel.
- Each life jacket must be readily accessible.
- Each life jacket must fit the intended wearer.
- If the vessel is required to have a Type IV “throwable” PFD (see page 30), it must be immediately available.

Life jackets must:

- Be U.S. Coast Guard approved.
- Have a legible label.
- Be of the correct size and fit for the wearer. A life jacket should fit comfortably snug and never cover your face or ride up past your ears.
 - Be in serviceable condition (all straps and buckles must be in good condition and able to perform their jobs; all seams and material must be intact).
 - Be worn by children under 13 years old on any vessel that is underway unless the child is below deck or in an enclosed cabin.
 - Be worn by anyone operating or riding on a PWC.

- Be worn by anyone being pulled behind a boat (such as tubing or skiing).
- Be worn by anyone in a manually propelled vessel from October 1 through May 31 (must be Type I, II, V or V-hybrid), except as noted on page 30.

Remember:

- Ski belts are not legal life jackets.
- Inflatable life jackets may not be used by persons engaged in high-speed water sports (such as riding PWCs or waterskiing) and may not be used by persons weighing under 90 lbs. or under 16 years of age.
 - All vessels 16 feet and over, except kayaks and canoes, must also carry a Type IV throwable device in addition to the required number of wearable life jackets.

Special Rules for Wearing Life Jackets in Manually Propelled Racing Vessels

Persons operating Racing Shells, Racing Canoes, Racing Kayaks and Rowing Sculls and involved in competitive racing are not required to wear or carry life jackets if accompanied at all times by an escort vessel. The escort vessel may escort up to three racing vessels and must be able to see all escorted vessels at all times and without the assistance of artificial devices other than eyeglasses. The requirement for an escort vessel may be waived during an organized race event where a Marine Event

Permit has been approved by the Commissioner and other steps have been taken for the safety of the participants.

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CONNECTICUT AND U.S. COAST GUARD MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS				
Equipment	Class A Less than 16 feet (less than 4.9 m)	Class 1 16 feet to less than 26 feet (4.9 to less than 7.9m)	Class 2 26 to less than 40 feet (7.9 to 12.2m)	Class 3 40 to less than 65 feet (12.2 to less than 19.8m)
Backfire Flame Arrestor	The device must be suitably attached to the air intake with a flametight connection and is required to be Coast Guard Approved or comply with SAEJ-1928 or UL1111 standards and marked accordingly.			
Ventilation Boats built before Aug. 1, 1980	At least two ventilator ducts, fitted with cowls or their equivalent, for the purpose of properly and effectively ventilating the bilges of every closed engine and fuel tank compartment of boats constructed or decked over after April 25, 1940, using gasoline as fuel.			
Ventilation Boats built on or after Aug. 1, 1980	At least two ventilator ducts for the purpose of efficiently ventilating every closed compartment that contains a gasoline engine and every closed compartment containing a gasoline tank, except those having permanently installed tanks which vent outside the boat and which contain no unprotected electrical devices. Also, engine compartments containing a gasoline engine having a cranking motor must be open to the atmosphere or contain power operated exhaust blowers which can be controlled from the instrument panel.			
Personal Flotation Devices	One approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person on board or being towed on waterskis, etc. Check label if using Type V.	One approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person on board or being towed on waterskis, etc.; and, in addition, one throwable Type IV device. (Type IV not required for canoes and kayaks.) Check label if using Type V.		
Sound-Producing Devices – Whistle See page 32	Must have some means of making an efficient sound signal.	Must have some means of making an efficient sound signal.	Must have some means of making an efficient sound signal.	Must have a whistle audible for at least one-half mile, and a bell.
Visual Distress Signals Required on coastal waters only	Must carry approved visual distress signals for nighttime use when operating at night.	Must carry visual distress signals approved for both daytime use and nighttime use.		
Fire Extinguishers (Must say Coast Guard Approved)	At least one B-1 type approved hand portable fire extinguisher. Not required on outboard motorboats less than 26 feet (7.9 meters) in length and not carrying passengers for hire if the construction of such motorboat will not permit the entrapment of explosive or flammable gases or vapors and if fuel tanks are not permanently installed.	At least two B-1 type approved portable fire extinguishers; OR at least one B-II type approved portable fire extinguisher.	At least three B-1 type approved portable fire extinguishers; OR at least one B-1 type plus one B-II type approved portable fire extinguisher.	
NOTE: When a fixed fire extinguishing system is installed in the machinery space(s), it will replace one B-1 type portable extinguisher.				

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Visual Distress Signals (VDS)

Visual distress signals are to be used to summon assistance when in distress.

In the State of Connecticut VDS are not required except when boating on Long Island Sound (LIS) and on Fishers Island Sound (FIS).

The following vessels only need to carry VDS on LIS and FIS between sunset and sunrise:

- Recreational vessels under 16 feet;
- Open sailboats less than 26 feet that are not equipped with propulsion machinery; and
- Manually propelled vessels.

All other vessels need to carry three daytime and three nighttime VDS (or the equivalent) at all times while on FIS and LIS.

- Visual distress signals must be U.S. Coast Guard approved, in serviceable condition and stowed to be readily accessible.
- U.S. Coast Guard approved pyrotechnic visual distress signals and associated devices include:
 - Pyrotechnic red flares, hand-held or aerial.
 - Pyrotechnic orange smoke, hand-held or floating (day use only).
 - Launchers for aerial red meteors or parachute flares.
- If VDS are required there must be a minimum of three daytime and three nighttime signals, or three combination day/night signals. Pyrotechnic devices will have an expiration date that must not have passed.
- Non-pyrotechnic visual distress signaling devices include:
 - Orange distress flags.
 - Electric distress signals.
- Other VDS, such as those listed below, are useful and easy to carry and are recognized as distress signals, but do not count toward the requirement to carry approved VDS on LIS and FIS.
 - Signaling mirror.
 - Water dye.
- No person, operator or owner in a vessel shall display or

allow the display of a visual distress signal except when assistance is needed because of immediate or potential danger to the vessel or to persons aboard.

Expired Flare Disposal

- For information about the disposal of marine flares, contact the Education Section of the Boating Division 860-447-4371
- Take advantage of our “Flare Days”. Learn the proper way to shoot off flares. Watch your local newspapers for site locations and times.

Fire Extinguishers

- Fires involving burning wood, fabrics and paper (Type A) can be put out with water.
- Most boat fires consist of burning flammable liquids such as oil or gasoline (Type B). Check the table at the beginning of this section to determine how many Type B-1 fire extinguishers you must have on your boat. Electrical fires can be put out with a Type C extinguisher.
- Check frequently to be sure that fire extinguishers are properly mounted where they can be easily reached. Check pressure gauges for proper pressure. Shake dry chemical units to be sure the chemical has not solidified and become useless. Replace any questionable extinguishers.

Backfire Flame Arrestors

Internal combustion engines may backfire. To safeguard against fire, all inboard motorboats with carburetion must have a backfire flame arrestor system on each carburetor. Know where they are and keep them clean.

Ventilation

Regulations require ventilation of all enclosed engine and fuel tank compartments on gasoline-powered boats. Intake ducting must extend midway to the bilge or at least below the carburetor air intake level. Exhaust ducting must extend from the lower bilge to cowls in the open air. Manufacturers install exhaust blowers in engine compartments so that gasoline fumes can be removed before the engines are started. If your boat is installed with an exhaust blower, it is recommended that you turn it on for at least four minutes before starting the engine.

Whistle (Horn) and Bell

- Navigation rules (part of Federal Law) require all vessels (including manually propelled vessels) to have audible signaling devices. (See table on page 30.)
- Every vessel of 12 meters (39.36 ft.) or less in length must have some means of making an efficient sound signal.

NOTE: Exceeding noise levels is a serious problem. Marine Police will be targeting areas, especially on the Connecticut River, to check for compliance. Exceeding noise levels will result in a fine of \$220. Failing to submit to an on-site noise level test will result in a fine of \$435. Subsequent failures to submit will result in a fine of \$535.

- Every vessel of at least 12 meters (39.36 ft.) in length but less than 20 meters (65.6 ft.) in length must have a whistle capable of being heard for at least one-half mile, and a bell.

Mufflers (Noise Levels)

No one shall operate a motorboat on the waters of this state unless the boat is equipped with a muffler or muffler system allowing it to be operated in compliance with state law. Noise levels range from 90dB(A) for older engines to 88dB(A) for engines made after January 1, 1993. Any marine police who believes a motorboat is being operated in excess of the established noise levels may request the operator to submit the motorboat to an on-site noise level test. No person shall sell a motorboat which does not operate in compliance with the established noise levels. Boaters should contact the Boating Division if they are selling a vessel used only in marine races.

No one shall operate a motorboat on the waters of this state that is equipped with a muffler or muffler system cutout, bypass or similar device that prevents the motorboat from operating in compliance with state noise levels and without authorization from the Commissioner.

Trailing Your Boat

The DMV has laws relative to boat trailers. Each trailer having a gross weight of 3,000 pounds or more shall, when operated on any public highway, be equipped with a braking system operating on all wheels. For trailers having a gross weight of greater than 8,000 pounds, the brakes shall be capable of being controlled or operated from the driver's seat of the towing vehicle.

Courtesy

Boating at high speeds is dangerous in restricted or congested areas. Each skipper is responsible for spotting and avoiding swimmers and slow-moving vessels. This is also important when picking up or dropping off water skiers.

NOTE: Connecticut law limits the width of vehicles and trailers that travel on Connecticut's highways and bridges to 8½ feet. Vehicles or loads wider than this require an oversize vehicle permit. Oversize vehicle permits are available through the Department of Transportation.



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