

• Failure to submit to a breath test or having a breath alcohol concentration of 0.02 or higher requires the operator to perform 50 hours of community service before operating a boat again.

• Violators also must attend and pass an approved boating safety course.

AIRBOATS-NEW!

• Airboats used in Florida must have an automotive style muffler, underwater exhaust, or other muffling device to adequately muffle engine exhaust.

• Airboats also must display an orange flag at least 10" x 12" and minimum of 10 feet above the bottom of the boat, so it is visible from all directions.

REWARD!

If you suspect a resource violation or have information of an impaired boat operator, report it to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Reward Program by calling us toll-free at **1-888-404-FWCC (3922)**. The telephones are answered 24-hours a day, seven-days-a-week. You may remain anonymous and will not be

required to testify in court. If your information results in an arrest, you will be eligible for a reward usually ranging from \$50 to \$1,000, based on the severity of the case. It is important to report violations as soon as possible and provide as much detail as you can about the physical descriptions of the violator(s), vehicle, vessel, license tag number, etc. Examples of frequently reported violations include boating under the influence, illegal hunting, killing or capturing a protected species and fishing by illegal methods.

To report a suspected violation, call toll-free, 1-888-404-FWCC (3922). You may also call the nearest regional office on local numbers. Cellular phone customers throughout most of the state can make a free call by dialing *FWC or #FWC depending on service carrier.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To obtain more detailed information on the topics covered in this brochure, contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (see back of brochure).

To obtain listings of Boating Safety Education Course providers, check out our Web site at **MyFWC.com** or call 1-800-336-BOAT (2628).

Purchases of fishing and hunting licenses enhance fish and wildlife conservation and your overall boating experience. Visit **MyFWC.com** or call either 1-888-FISH-FLORIDA or 1-888-HUNT-FLORIDA to purchase your license.



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 Division of Law Enforcement
 Boating and Waterways Section
 620 South Meridian Street
 Tallahassee, FL 32399
 (850) 488-5600 • Web site: **MyFWC.com**
February 2007

Florida's Recreational Boating Requirements

February 2007

	Personal Watercraft (PWC)	CLASS A less than 16 ft.	CLASS 1 16 ft. to less than 26 ft.	CLASS 2 26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	CLASS 3 40 ft. to less than 65 ft.
Boating Safety Education I.D. Card (anyone 21 or younger, operating 10 h.p. or more)	1.				
Life Jackets: Type I, II, III, or V (one per person)	2.	3.	3.		
Throwable Preserver: Type IV (ring or cushion)					
Type B-1 Fire Extinguisher		4.	4.	5.	6.
Engine Cutoff Switch Lanyard (must be worn)					
Sound Producing Device (bell, horn or whistle)					
Daytime Visual Distress Signals					
Nighttime Visual Distress Signals		7.			
Navigation Lights	8.				

1. Must be at least 14 years of age to operate.
2. Non-inflatable life jackets must be worn while operating, riding on, or being towed behind a personal watercraft.
3. Any person under six years of age must wear a life jacket while aboard any vessel less than 26 feet in length that is underway.
4. Fire extinguishers are not required on an outboard motorboat less than 26 feet in length and not carrying passengers for hire if the construction of the boat will not permit entrapment of explosive or flammable gasses or vapors and if fuel tanks are not permanently installed.
5. At least two Type B-1 or one Type B-2 extinguisher(s).
6. At least three Type B-1 or one Type B-2 plus one Type B-1 extinguisher(s).
7. Vessels less than 16 feet in length, operated between sunset and sunrise (on coastal waters), must carry at least three visual distress signals approved for nighttime use.
8. PWCs can be operated one-half hour before sunrise until one-half hour after sunset, but during the time period before sunrise and the period after sunset navigation lights must be displayed.

It is also recommended that you equip a vessel with a VHF radio, cellular phone, extra clothing, food and water, a sufficient amount of anchor line, a de-watering device such as a bilge pump in the event of flooding and an oar/paddle.

In the event of an emergency dial: 1-888-404-FWCC (3922) or #FWC or *FWC on your cell phone

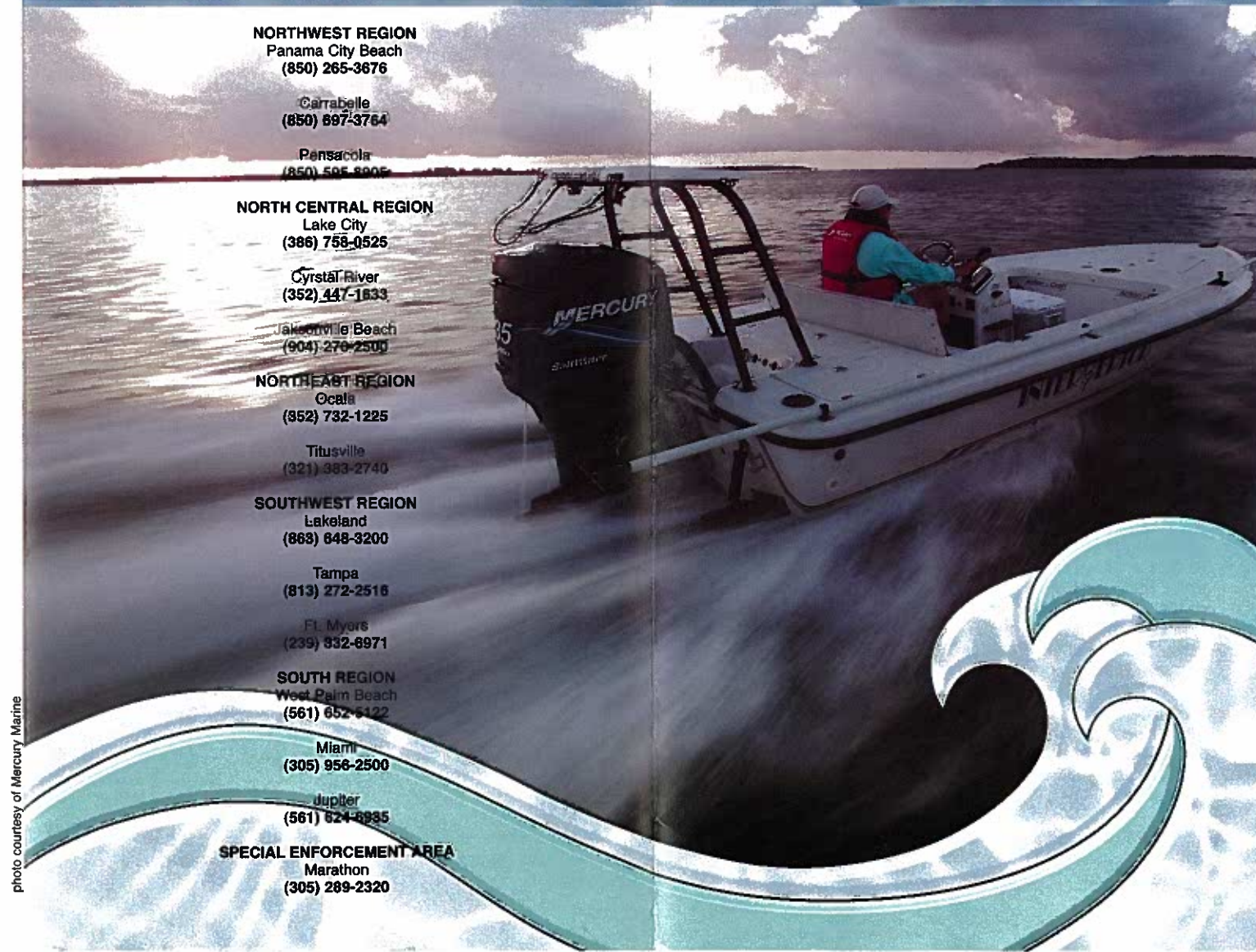


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NORTHWEST REGION
 Panama City Beach
 (850) 265-3676

Carrabelle
 (850) 897-3764

Pensacola
 (850) 505-8905

NORTH CENTRAL REGION
 Lake City
 (386) 758-0525

Crystal River
 (352) 447-1833

Jacksonville Beach
 (904) 276-2500

NORTHEAST REGION
 Ocala
 (352) 732-1225

Titusville
 (321) 983-2740

SOUTHWEST REGION
 Lakeland
 (888) 648-3200

Tampa
 (813) 272-2518

FL Myers
 (239) 832-8971

SOUTH REGION
 West Palm Beach
 (561) 652-4122

Miami
 (305) 956-2500

Jupiter
 (561) 624-8895

SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT AREA
 Marathon
 (305) 289-2320

LIFE JACKETS

All recreational vessels must carry on board at least one wearable-type life jacket for each person on your vessel or anyone being towed on water skis, tubes, etc. Also, all vessels 16 feet or greater (except canoes and kayaks) must carry one Type IV throwable preserver (i.e., ring or cushion). All life jackets, otherwise known as personal flotation devices or PFDs, must be the proper size for the intended wearer, be in good condition and be readily accessible and United States Coast Guard (USCG)-approved.

- Water skiers must wear a PFD while being pulled on skis, aquaplanes or similar devices.
- Personal watercraft operators and all passengers must wear a PFD at all times.
- Children under six years of age must wear a PFD of proper size while on board a vessel under 26 feet in length while underway. "Underway" means any time except when the vessel is anchored, moored, docked or aground.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

All recreational vessels must carry approved fire extinguishers of the type, number and size specified by the USCG requirements. Vessels less than 26 feet in length, propelled by outboard motors, of open construction which will not permit the entrapment of explosive or flammable vapors and not carrying passengers for hire are exempt.

- All fire extinguishers must be approved for marine use by either the USCG or Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., be in good condition, fully charged and be readily accessible.
- Fire extinguishers should be inspected frequently.

SOUND PRODUCING DEVICES

All vessels are required to carry a "sound producing device" such as a whistle or a horn. The device must be capable of making the sound signals prescribed in the Navigation Rules. This means it must be capable of producing a constant blast of at least six seconds and be audible for at least one-half mile.

- Most good-quality referee-type whistles will meet the sound producing device requirement for vessels less than 65 feet in length.
- Vessels 65 feet in length or more also must carry a bell.

VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS

Visual distress signal requirements apply to all vessels operating on the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico or coastal waters such as bays, sounds, harbors, rivers and inlets to a point where the distance between shorelines is two miles wide or less.

- Vessels less than 16 feet in length, operated between sunset and sunrise, must carry a minimum of three visual distress signals approved for nighttime use.
- Vessels 16 feet or greater in length must carry a minimum of three visual distress signals approved for daytime use and three approved for nighttime use. A total of three combination daytime/nighttime visual distress signals may be substituted for this requirement.

VESSEL LIGHTING

It is unlawful to operate any vessel without displaying the proper navigation lights between the period from sunset to sunrise and during other periods of restricted visibility such as

fog or heavy rain. White navigation lights are required to be visible at a distance of two miles. The red and green navigation lights must be visible at a minimum of one mile. Vessels at anchor must display an all-round white light.

VESSEL REGISTRATION

There are several things you need to know about registration requirements before you put your boat in the water.

- All vessels operating with any type of mechanical propulsion (including both gas and electric motors) must be registered through your local Tax Collector's Office.
- When you buy a vessel, you have 30 days from the date of purchase to have the registration numbers and decal properly displayed. Until your boat is registered and numbered, or until the registration is changed to reflect a new owner, you must carry your bill of sale on board.
- You must display a new vessel registration decal each year. The decal and registration certificate are renewed annually. Your current registration certificate must be carried on board when the vessel is in operation.
- Vessel numbers should be affixed to the forward half of the vessel above the waterline. They are to be bold block letters and numbers at least 3 inches in height, reading from left to right in a color that contrasts with the hull color. The registration decal must be placed on the port (left) side of the vessel within six inches of, either before or after, the numbers and letters.

BOATING ACCIDENT REPORTING

The operator of a vessel involved in a boating accident where there is personal injury beyond immediate first aid, death, disappearance of any person under circumstances which indicate death or injury or if there is damage to the vessel(s) and/or personal property of at least \$2000, must immediately and by the quickest means available give notice of the accident to one of the following: the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the sheriff of the county in which the accident occurred or the police chief of the municipality in which the accident occurred, if applicable.

- It is unlawful for any person operating a vessel involved in a boating accident to leave the scene without rendering aid to the involved persons (so far as possible without serious damage to his vessel, crew, passengers and guests) and without reporting the accident to the proper authority.

VESSEL SPEED RESTRICTIONS

Vessel speeds are regulated in specific geographic areas throughout the state for a variety of reasons. Some speed zones were placed due to high vessel traffic generating safety concerns, while others help to ensure the safety of swimmers, people launching or retrieving their vessels at boat ramps or manatees. Take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the restricted areas where you are boating.

- Idle Speed or No Wake: The slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steerage and headway; the vessel should not produce a wake at this speed.
- Slow Speed or Minimum Wake: The speed at which a vessel is completely settled in the water; the vessel wake must not be excessive nor create a hazard to other vessels.
- Maximum MPH Speed Zone: A controlled area within which a vessel must not exceed the posted speed limit.

WATER SKI REGULATIONS

Many of the water bodies within Florida are ideal for skiing activity. Before you tow someone on skis, tubes or other aquaplaning devices, you need to know the following skiing regulations.

- The operator of a vessel towing someone on skis, a tube or another aquaplaning device must either have a second person on board to act as an observer and who is attendant to the actions of the skier or have and use a wide-angled rear-view mirror. This requirement ensures that the operator can pay attention to the operation of the vessel and other vessel traffic nearby without being distracted by the skier.
- No one may ski or aquaplane between the hours of one-half hour past sunset to one-half hour before sunrise.
- No one may ski or use another aquaplaning device unless they are wearing a USCG-approved non-inflatable Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device.
- No one may ski or use another aquaplaning device while impaired by alcohol or other drugs.
- The operator of a vessel towing a skier may not pull the skier close enough to a fixed object or another vessel that there may be a risk of collision.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT REGULATIONS

Personal watercraft continue to become more popular on our waterways. The operator and all passengers of a personal watercraft need to be aware of several requirements specific to this type of vessel.

- Each person operating or riding on a personal watercraft must wear a USCG-approved non-inflatable Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (PFD).
- The operator of a personal watercraft must attach the engine cutoff switch lanyard (if so equipped by the manufacturer) to his/her person, clothing or PFD.
- Personal watercraft may be operated between the hours of one-half hour before sunrise until one-half hour after sunset. All vessels shall exhibit the proper navigation lights as prescribed by the Navigation Rules from sunset to sunrise.
- Maneuvering a personal watercraft by weaving through congested vessel traffic, jumping the wake of another vessel unreasonably close or when visibility around the vessel is obstructed or swerving at the last possible moment to avoid a collision (as in spraying another person or vessel or playing "chicken") is classified as reckless operation of a vessel (a first-degree misdemeanor).
- A person must be at least 14 years of age to operate a personal watercraft in Florida.
- A person must be at least 18 years of age to rent a personal watercraft in Florida.
- It is unlawful for a person to knowingly allow a person under 14 years of age to operate a personal watercraft (a second-degree misdemeanor).

BOATING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Anyone 21 YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER who operates a vessel powered by 10 horsepower or more must pass an approved boater safety education course and have in his/her possession photographic identification and a boating safety education I.D. card issued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. A person is exempt from this requirement if there is a person on board who is not affected by this law, is at least 18 years old, and is attendant to and

responsible for the safe operation of the vessel.

- Anyone who is convicted of a criminal boating violation, any boating infraction arising from involvement in a reportable boating accident or two non-criminal boating safety violations within a 12-month period must attend and successfully complete an approved boating safety course and file proof of completion of the course to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The violator's privilege to operate a vessel in the state will be suspended until proof of course completion is filed.

DIVERS-DOWN FLAG

Diving and snorkeling are popular activities in both inland and coastal areas throughout the state. The following regulations apply whenever someone is diving or using some other type of underwater breathing apparatus (such as a snorkel).

- A divers-down flag used on a vessel is required to be displayed whenever divers or snorkelers are in the water. The flag must be at least 20 inches by 24 inches and displayed at a high point where it can be observed from 360 degrees around the vessel. A divers-down flag towed on a float must be at least 12 inches by 12 inches. The flag must have a wire or other stiffener to hold it open.
- When the divers or snorkelers exit the water, the divers-down flag must be taken down.
- All vessels must make reasonable effort to stay at least 100 feet away from a divers-down flag within a river, inlet or channel. In open waters, vessels must make reasonable effort to stay 300 feet away from a divers-down flag. Within those prescribed distances, a vessel may operate but must be at idle speed. Failure to drop to idle speed is a first-degree misdemeanor.

BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Florida's laws against boating while impaired by alcohol or other drugs are as strict as those for driving a vehicle while impaired. Boating while impaired is not socially acceptable anymore, and enforcement officers are continuously receiving updated training to help them apprehend those who choose to put themselves, their passengers and other boaters at risk.

- It is a violation of Florida law to operate a vessel while impaired by alcohol or other drugs. A vessel operator suspected of boating under the influence must submit to sobriety tests and a chemical test to determine his/her blood or breath alcohol content.
- In Florida, a vessel operator is presumed to be under the influence if his/her blood or breath alcohol concentration is at or above 0.08.
- Other than being used as evidence in trial, the refusal of a vessel operator to submit to a chemical test for impairment will result in the assessment of a \$500 civil penalty and the suspension of the privilege to operate a vessel until the penalty is paid. A second or subsequent refusal is a crime.

ZERO TOLERANCE LAW

Florida law also takes a strong stand against under-age drinking while operating a vessel. Commonly referred to as the ".02 law," those boaters under 21 years-of-age who are found with a measurable breath alcohol level are subject to receiving a citation with minimum mandatory sentencing.

- No one under 21 years-of-age may operate a vessel while having a breath alcohol concentration of 0.02 or higher.