



Common sense and maximizing your personal safety

Recreational boating is supposed to be fun, so why do roughly 150 people die every year in boating accidents? That's not even counting the cases involving serious personal injury!

Tragically, almost all boating deaths and injuries are preventable. Most boating accidents are the result of a series of smaller things going wrong. A simple consideration such as wearing your lifejacket at all times

could save your life. Use common sense when you are out on the water. Things can change in a split second.

Common sense is managing your own safety. Going on an extended canoe trip? Coastal sailing away from major traffic routes? Be prepared.

- Take a boating safety course. You would not take ballet lessons to learn how to skydive, and

operating a pleasure craft is not the same as driving a car. Before you go boating, there is a minimum you need to know.

- Wear the gear and buckle up. Rock climbers and mountaineers buckle up their safety harnesses. Boaters buckle up their flotation devices.
- Look over your shoulder before turning. *Not* looking can lead to a collision. If you are lucky, all you will wind up with is an expensive repair.
- Have paddles, flares and enough flotation devices on board your pleasure craft. Should anything happen, at least you will have the right equipment to help yourself and your guests.
- Don't cruise with booze.
- Keep clear of swimmers, divers and other vessels.
- Navigate your boat on the correct side of the buoy. See page 62 for some common buoys.

If you are involved in a serious boating incident you are 5½ times less likely to drown if you are wearing a flotation device.



Don't cruise with booze

It is no coincidence that drinking too much and taking to the water leads to dangerous situations. When you drink and boat you are not just a danger to yourself. Operators are responsible for the safety of their guests and should consider other users of the waterway. They must always be prepared and alert.

Besides the possible legal consequences, mixing alcohol and boating is far more dangerous than you may realize. Fatigue, sun, wind and the motion of the boat dull your senses. Alcohol intensifies these effects, leaving you with poorer fine motor skills (for example, hand-eye coordination) and impaired judgement.

Drinking and driving (whether on land or water) is illegal and punishable under the Criminal Code. Convictions for a first offence can result in heavy punishment: penalties are no less than \$600, prohibition from operating a vessel could be up to three years and imprisonment could be for life!

Provinces and territories have their own rules to determine when alcohol can be consumed or how it can be transported aboard a vessel. Contact your local authorities for more information.

Whose responsibility is safe boating?

Safety is a shared responsibility by the users of the waterways and the agencies that govern them.

Boaters are responsible for operating their vessels safely. This means learning the rules for recreational boating and following them. Those who do not comply with the law could be subject to penalties or fines.

Transport Canada sets minimum requirements for pleasure craft and non-pleasure craft. One of its programs in particular, the Office of Boating Safety (OBS), helps educate boaters about these requirements with the help of tools like this guide.

Safety organizations like the Canadian Safe Boating Council, Canadian Red Cross and others mandated with water safety deliver prevention-based programs to reduce risks and environmental impacts of boating.

The RCMP, provincial police forces, conservation officers and other authorized agencies enforce the rules of the waterways. Through inspection, they verify all necessary safety equipment is on board the boat, operators have their Pleasure Craft Operator Card as required and small vessels are not operated in an unsafe manner.

A Search and Rescue infrastructure is in place in case a vessel is in a distress situation, overdue or

missing. Experienced and well-trained personnel from the Canadian Coast Guard, Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and other organizations are ready to respond.



The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, a federally incorporated non-profit volunteer organization, assists the Canadian Coast Guard in Search and Rescue operations and Transport Canada in boating safety activities. Members receive extensive training in search and rescue and boating safety, and their vessels display a special pennant. Visit www.ccg-a-gcac.org for more information on the Auxiliary.



Canadian Coast Guard Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) centres provide Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) and a Maritime Mobile Safety Service. VTS provides traffic and waterway information to vessels via radio communication.

When vessels are close to a VTS area, operators can learn the intended movements of larger vessels by passively monitoring the appropriate VTS sector frequency.

MCTS centres also provide a safety service by monitoring international distress and calling frequencies to detect distress situations and communications needs. This includes continuously broadcasting Notices to Shipping and weather and ice reports on marine frequencies (that are published along with the VTS sector frequencies in the Canadian Coast Guard publication titled Radio Aids to Marine Navigation).



The Canadian Coast Guard's Maritime Services-Aids to Navigation keep waterways safe and accessible by providing aids to navigation and advice to those wishing to set up private aids to navigation. This benefits recreational boaters, fishers and commercial vessel operators alike, while ensuring the public's right to navigate.

Take a boating safety course

Knowing and following the rules of the road is basic boating safety. Knowing how to spot danger and how to react are just as important. Taking a course can give you the tools to help yourself, as well as others, if faced with a dangerous situation on the water.

You will learn basic boating safety such as laws and regulations that apply to pleasure craft, preparing for a trip, how to share waterways and what to do in an emergency.

You could be detained, fined or worse — you or someone you love could end up in serious danger if you are not prepared for an emergency. Passing a test and getting your Pleasure Craft Operator Card may be mandatory but it is not enough; take a safe boating course. For a list of course providers visit www.boatingsafety.gc.ca.

Relevant laws that apply to pleasure craft

In the meantime, all recreational boaters should be very familiar with the provisions set out in the following acts, regulations and code.

Small Vessel Regulations

The Small Vessel Regulations outline the minimum mandatory safety equipment that must be aboard your boat, safety precautions to follow before and while boating and construction standards for building pleasure craft. To be capable of saving your life, and to satisfy the regulations, your pleasure craft's required safety equipment must be in good working order.

As the owner or person entrusted by the owner, you are violating the Small Vessel Regulations if you operate a pleasure craft that does not have all the required equipment on board, or if it is not in good working order. The same applies if you loan it.

They also prohibit careless operation of a vessel. This means no one is allowed to operate a small vessel without due care and attention or reasonable consideration for other people.

If you are operating a pleasure craft that is licensed, registered or titled in a country outside Canada, you must comply with the safety equipment requirements of the country in which the vessel is registered or licensed. Foreign visitors operating a Canadian licensed or registered vessel must comply with Canadian regulations.