

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.



Collision Regulations

The Collision Regulations, in addition to other provisions, require operators to travel at a safe speed, maintain a constant lookout and use every available means (including radar and radio, if applicable) to determine if there is a risk of a collision. These regulations also specify right-of-way.

Canada Shipping Act

The *Canada Shipping Act* is a framework of rules and regulations. It incorporates the requirements of some international conventions that dictate all vessel conduct. One such provision is the requirement to render assistance to those in danger, insofar as the operator can do so without serious danger to their pleasure craft or guests.

Boating Restriction Regulations

The Boating Restriction Regulations include items like speed limits both posted and unposted (such as shoreline speed zones), designated waters where boats are prohibited and waters where certain activities are restricted, among others.

The regulations also outline age-horsepower restrictions. These restrictions prohibit those less than 16 years of age from operating craft above specified horsepower limits. If an operator is accompanied and directly supervised in the

pleasure craft by someone 16 years of age or older, the age-horsepower restrictions do not apply. These restrictions also prohibit those less than 16 years of age from operating personal watercraft regardless of whether they are accompanied or not.

Age-horsepower restrictions*

How this applies to operators of pleasure craft fitted with a motor and used for recreational purposes	Power restrictions
Less than 12 years of age and not directly supervised**	Can operate a pleasure craft with no more than 10 hp (7.5 kW)
Between 12, and under, 16 years of age and not directly supervised**	Can operate a pleasure craft with no more than 40 hp (30 kW)
Less than 16 years of age	Not allowed to operate a PWC***
16 years of age or older	No power restrictions

* These requirements apply in all areas outside the Northwest Territories and Nunavut at this time.

** Directly supervised means accompanied and directly supervised in the boat by someone 16 years of age or older.

*** Personal watercraft

These restrictions are made under the Boating Restriction Regulations and are not affected nor superseded by the Competency of Operators of Pleasure Craft Regulations. The Boating Restriction Regulations and Competency of Operators of Pleasure Craft Regulations are entirely separate regulations and their respective requirements are complementary.

Charts and Nautical Publications Regulations

The Charts and Nautical Publications Regulations require vessels to carry the latest edition of the largest scale chart (when available), documents and publications for each area you are navigating, and to keep these documents up-to-date.

Vessels less than 100 gross tons do not have to carry these charts, documents and publications on board if the operator has sufficient knowledge of the following information, such that safe and efficient navigation in the area where the vessel is to be navigated is not compromised:

- The location and character of charted
 - Shipping routes
 - Lights, buoys and marks
 - Navigational hazards
- The prevailing navigational conditions, taking into account such factors as tides, currents, ice and weather patterns



Navigation Safety Regulations

The Navigation Safety Regulations require certain pleasure craft to carry a magnetic compass and, if more than 20 nautical miles (37 km) from shore, a compass-bearing device. The compass must be fitted and adjusted in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.

Pleasure craft less than 8 m (26'3") in length that are operating within sight of navigational marks*, as well as all vessels using oars, are exempt from this requirement.

* A navigation mark refers to any reference used to successfully determine relative position in relation to route or destination.

Criminal Code of Canada

Behaviours that are offences under the Criminal Code of Canada include:

- Operating a vessel dangerously
- Operating a vessel while impaired
- Towing waterskiers without a spotter
- Failing to stop at the scene of an accident
- Operating an unseaworthy vessel



Competency of Operators Pleasure Craft Regulations

If you operate a pleasure craft with a motor for recreational purposes, the Competency of Operators Pleasure Craft Regulations require you to carry proof of competency at all times. Proof of competency can take one of three forms:

1. Proof of having successfully completed a boating safety course in Canada prior to April 1, 1999
2. A Pleasure Craft Operator Card issued following the successful completion of an accredited test
3. A completed rental boat safety checklist (for power-driven rental vessels)

The operator card is good for life. Operators of pleasure craft get their card when they receive a mark of at least 75 per cent on the test. You can take the test without first completing a course, but it is not recommended. Further, this guide is not a study guide for the test, it is an overview of the basics.

A list of course providers that offer boating safety courses and tests is available at www.boatingsafety.gc.ca.

Certificates for boating safety courses completed before April 1, 1999 are recognized. If you have taken a course prior to these regulations, that course certificate or card will be accepted as proof of competency and must be carried on board your boat.

Other regulations

Various other regulations prohibit the dumping of pollutants into Canadian waters. Oil, oil-wastes, garbage and hazardous chemicals are prohibited in all Canadian waters. In certain areas, discharging sewage is an offence. For specific “no-dump” sites visit www.boatingsafety.gc.ca or contact a Transport Canada Centre.

Operator competency requirements*

How this applies to operators** of pleasure craft fitted with a motor and used for recreational purposes	Date at which proof of competency required on board
All operators born after April 1, 1983	Since September 15, 1999
All operators of craft less than 4 m (13'1") in length, including personal watercraft	Since September 15, 2002
All operators	September 15, 2009

* These requirements apply in areas outside the Northwest Territories and Nunavut at this time.

** Applies to non-residents operating their pleasure craft in Canadian waters after 45 consecutive days. Operator card or equivalent issued to a non-resident by their state or country will be considered as proof of competency.



- Operating a power-driven pleasure craft without the required Pleasure Craft Operator Card - \$250
- Insufficient number of approved, appropriately sized flotation devices - \$200 for each absent device

* Not including administrative charges. For a complete list of boating-related offences under the Contraventions Regulations and their associated fines visit www.boatingsafety.gc.ca.

Boating law enforcement

Most on-water enforcement authorities have a zero tolerance policy regarding missing safety equipment on a boat. Under the Contraventions Regulations (now in the provinces of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia) authorities can ticket offenders on the spot for offences such as disobeying speed limits or careless operation of a vessel, instead of requiring them to appear in court.

Remember, everyone on board your pleasure craft must have, and should be wearing, a Canadian-approved, appropriately sized flotation device (either

a lifejacket or personal flotation device) that is in good condition. This contravention could cost you over \$200 for each violation!

Fines* for common boating offences:

- Operating a vessel in a careless manner - \$250
- Speeding - \$100
- Underage operation of a personal watercraft - \$100