

WHAT IS A VESSEL?

By law a vessel is every description of a watercraft or structure other than a seaplane, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation or habitation on the water.

WHAT IS A MOTORBOAT?

A motorboat for the purpose of this brochure is any boat with an internal combustion motor more than 10 horsepower that does not classify as a Personal Watercraft (PWC). A sailboat is a motorboat while it is using its motor for propulsion but is a sailboat when not under power of a motor.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL WATERCRAFT?

A personal watercraft (PWC) is a small vessel which uses an outboard or propeller-driven motor, or an inboard motor powering a water jet pump, as its primary source of motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on, or being towed behind the vessel, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel. Manufacturer brand names include Jet Skis, Sea-Doos, and Wave Runners.

WHO CAN OPERATE A PWC OR A MOTORBOAT?

- No person under 14 years of age can operate a PWC on the waters of this state.
- A person under the age of 12 may operate a motorboat only under the direct supervision of an adult, who possesses a safe boating certificate or was born before January 1, 1988, who can immediately take control of the boat.
- A person of at least 12 years of age can operate a motorboat, and a person of at least 14 years of age can operate a PWC **IF**:
 1. The operator is accompanied by a person, who possesses a safe boating certificate and is at least 18 years of age who physically occupies the vessel; **OR**
 2. The operator possesses on his or her person while operating the vessel, photo identification showing proof of age and a boater safety certification card issued by the Wildlife Resources Commission or proof of other satisfactory completion of a boating safety education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA); and produces the certification card upon request of an officer of the Wildlife

Resources Commission or local law enforcement agency.

- **Any person born after January 1, 1988, is required to have a boating safety course to operate a motorboat or a PWC.**

Operation

- Every vessel operating between the hours of sunset and sunrise shall burn bow and/or stern lights as required by law.
- No person shall operate any motorboat or vessel while underway on the waters of this state:
 1. While under the influence of an impairing substance; **OR**
 2. After consumed sufficient alcohol with a concentration of .08 or more.
- No person shall operate a vessel at greater than no wake speed within 50 yards (150 feet) of any boat launching area, dock, pier, marina, boat storage structure on the waters of **Lake Norman**.
- No person shall operate a vessel at greater than no wake speed while within a marked mooring area established in North Carolina.
- Inland Navigation rules apply which require a proper lookout by sight and hearing at all times, and that vessels operate at a safe speed.
- Right of way rules generally speaking are that in crossing situations, the boat on the right has the right of way. Exceptions: Sail boats not under power have right of way except when passing. Any boat overtaking any other shall keep out of the way of the boat being overtaken.

OPERATION OF A PWC

- No person shall operate a PWC on the waters of this state at any time between sunset and sunrise.
- No person shall operate a PWC on the waters of this state, nor shall the owner of a PWC knowingly allow another person to operate that PWC on the waters of this state, **UNLESS**:
 - Each person riding on or being towed behind such vessel is wearing a type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (PFD) approved by the US Coast Guard. Inflatable PFD's do not satisfy this requirement.
 - If the PWC is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cut off switch, the lanyard must be securely attached to the person, clothing, or PFD of the operator at all times while the PWC is being operated in such

a manner to turn off the engine if the operator dismounts while the watercraft is in operation.

- The total number of persons operating, observing, and being towed does not exceed the number of passengers identified by the manufacturer as the maximum safe load for the vessel.
- PWC's must at all times be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner. Maneuvers that endanger life, limb, or property shall constitute reckless operation of a vessel. These maneuvers include:
 - Unreasonably or unnecessarily weaving through congested vessel traffic;
 - Jumping the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of such vessel or when visibility around such vessel is obstructed;
 - Intentionally approaching another vessel in order to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid collision;
 - Operating contrary to the "rules of the road" or following too closely to another vessel, including another PWC. "Following too closely" means proceeding in the same direction and operating at a speed in excess of 10 miles per hour when approaching within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another vessel that is underway unless that vessel is operating in a narrow channel, in which case a PWC may operate at the speed and flow of other vessel traffic. A narrow channel is defined as a segment of the waters of the State that is 300 feet or less in width.
- No person shall operate a personal watercraft on the waters of this State at greater than no-wake speed within 100 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, a dock, pier, swim float, marked swimming area, swimmers, surfers, persons engaged in angling, or any manually operated propelled vessel, unless the personal watercraft is operating in a narrow channel. No person shall operate a personal watercraft in a narrow channel at greater than no-wake speed within 50 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, a dock, Pier, swim float, marked swimming area, swimmers, surfers, persons engaged in angling, or any manually operated propelled vessel.

Mandatory Registration for Documented Vessels

Effective October 1, 2013 a documented vessel must be registered in North Carolina if the vessel has been in waters of this state for more than 90 consecutive days.

Water Skiing and Towed Accessories

- No person shall operate any **vessel**; manipulate water skis, surfboard, or similar device on the waters of this state in a reckless or negligent manner so as to endanger life, limb, or property.
- No person shall operate a vessel on the waters of this state towing a person(s) on water skis, surfboard, or similar device between one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.
- No person shall operate a vessel towing any person(s) on water skis, surfboard, or similar device unless there is **in** such a vessel a person, in **addition** to the operator, in a position to observe the person(s) being towed, unless the vessel is equipped with a suitable marine type rear view mirror.
- Every person being towed for recreation must have on an approved Personal Flotation Device suitable for that type activity or a suit designed for that type of activity either of which is able to withstand an impact of 50 miles per hour.

Equipment

Every vessel operating on the waters of this state shall have the following:

- A certificate of numbers on board and in full force and effect.
- Registration numbers displayed on both sides of the vessel, on the front portion of the bow, in three-inch solid block letters of contrasting color to the hull with the validation sticker following the registration and spaced as follows: NC 1234 AB or NC-1234-AB.
- The proper type and size personal flotation device (PFD) for each person onboard in good condition and readily accessible.
- **All children under the age of 13 aboard a vessel that is underway, must wear an approved PFD, unless below deck or in an enclosed cabin.**
- A USCG approved type IV PFD throwable cushion or ring buoy for boats over 16 feet in length.
- The following lights for night operation: Red to port, green to starboard, 360 degree white all around light, or 135 degree stern light and 225 degree masthead light. Sailboats under sail alone shall exhibit the combined lantern (red to port, green to starboard) and 135 degree stern light, but no 225 degree masthead light.
- Gas powered boats with closed construction require fire extinguishers (size and number vary according to length of boat), ventilation systems, and flame arrestors.
- Whistle or sound producing device.

Boating While Impaired

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department recommends that every boat have a sober designated operator. Boating While Impaired is one of the most serious offences on the lake. If you are caught operating a vessel while impaired, you will be arrested, and removed from the lake. Your boat is subject to being towed at your expense, you will face the financial burden of attorney fees, court costs and fines as well as possible incarceration.

What to Do in Case Of A Boating Accident

Any operator of a vessel involved in a collision or accident shall render assistance to affected persons as long as he/she can without endangering his own vessel, crew or passengers.

All boating accidents or collisions which result in death, personal injury or property damage of more than \$2000 must be reported to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission at (800) 662-7137. When prompted, select option 1. This number is also used to report wildlife violations.

How to Obtain Help on The Water

Call 911 on your cell phone or use your VHF-FM Radio to request help on Channel 16.

For towing or gas delivery call a marine tow service:

BoatUS Towing	(800) 888-4869
TowBoatUS Lake Norman	(704) 200-1930
TowBoatUS Lake Wylie	(803) 681-0911
Sea Tow Lake Norman	(704) 895-8699

BOATING SAFETY CLASSES

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department would like to encourage boaters of all ages to take a NASBLA approved boating safety education class as mentioned above.

The classes are offered in this area by:

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	(919) 707-0030
U.S. Coastguard Auxiliary	(704) 663-3333
U.S. Power Squadron	(865) 406-1679
Lighthouse Marine Service, Inc.	(704) 361-2991

STEELE CREEK DIVISION UNIT

Patrolling Lake Wylie

Lt. W. Holmes	(704)336-7800
Office located at Lake Wylie	(704)588-1798
Officers S. Joye, F. Reitano, & S. Kabbash	

NORTH DIVISION UNIT

Patrolling Lake Norman and Mountain Island Lake	
Sgt. Ross	(704) 432-3801
North Division Office	(704) 432-3801
Officers D. Turner, K. Cox, J. Whitley, D. Kennerly	
Email address lakesenforcement@cmpd.org	

Boating in Mecklenburg County

WHAT EVERY BOATER SHOULD KNOW BEFORE LAUNCHING THEIR VESSEL!



**CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Lake Wylie ~ Mountain Island ~ Lake Norman

www.cmpd.org

In an effort to make the lakes safer, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Lakes Enforcement Units have developed this brochure to inform you of important laws governing boater safety and operation on the lakes of Mecklenburg County.

Emergencies DIAL 911