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# BOATING SAFETY REGULATIONS

## General

### **Sec. 15-121-A9. Requirements when waterskiing.**

(a) A water-skier, his observer, and the boat operator shall use the following hand signals for communications:

Faster: thumb pointing upward

Slower: thumb pointing downward

Speed O.K.: Arm upraised with thumb and finger forming circle

Right Turn: Arm outstretched, pointing right

Left Turn: Arm outstretched, pointing left

Return to Drop-Off Area: pat on the head with an open hand

Cut Motor: Finger drawn across throat

Stop: Hand drawn across throat

Skier O.K. After Fall: Hands clenched overhead

Pick Me Up or "Watch Out Fallen Skier!": One ski extended vertically out of the water

(b) No person shall operate a vessel towing a water-skier without an observer present on the vessel who shall assist the operator and monitor the progress of the water-skier. The observer shall be designated by the operator of the vessel and shall be at least twelve years of age.

(c) No person shall stand or sit either on the bow or gunwales of a vessel which is towing a water-skier except in an emergency.

(d) Each water-skier shall wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device, and no vessel operator shall tow a water-skier who is not wearing such a device. Notwithstanding the foregoing, no person shall use an inflatable personal flotation device to meet the PFD requirements of this section.

(1) This subsection shall not apply to skiers engaged in barefoot waterskiing who wear a barefoot wetsuit designed specifically for such activity.

(2) This subsection shall not apply to skiers engaged in trick waterskiing whose movements would be restricted or impeded by the bulk of a personal flotation device. For purposes of this subsection, a trick water-skier means a water-skier whose equipment and activities have all of the following characteristics:

(A) Type of skis: for standard double trick skis, length of no more than 46 inches and width of at least 8 inches, with no keels on bottom; for single trick ski boards, length of no more than 56 inches and width of at least 22 inches, with no keel on bottom;

(B) speed of tow no more than 20 miles per hour; and

(C) tow rope no longer than 50 feet.

(3) The operator of a vessel towing a trick water-skier or barefoot water-skier shall make a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device readily available aboard the tow vessel for each such skier who elects not to wear such a device while skiing.

(e) No person shall operate a vessel towing a person or persons on an inner tube unless such inner tube is fitted with permanent handholds or with a covering with permanent handholds.

(f) No person shall operate a vessel towing a water-skier from one half hour after sunset until sunrise or when weather conditions restrict normal visibility to less than one hundred yards.

(g) (1) Kite-skiing or parasailing will be permitted on all waters where unlimited waterskiing activity is permitted. Both are prohibited on waters where waterskiing is prohibited or subject to special regulation.

(2) Nothing in the above shall be interpreted as allowing kite-skiing or parasailing on any water when boating pressure by other users makes these activities imprudent because of risks involved.

(3) Kite-skiers and parasailers shall not fly over or under overhead obstructions such as power and telephone lines, bridges; nor shall they fly over dams, locks, docks, launching ramps, swim areas, marinas or congested areas.

(h) Except as authorized through a marine event permit issued by the commissioner, no person shall operate a vessel towing a water-skier with a tow line greater than one hundred feet in length, measured from the vessel tow-post to the water-skier's tow handle, and no part of any such tow line shall include an elastic component, such as a bungee cord, rubber band or similar material which readily extends the length of the tow line.

(i) No person shall operate a vessel with a rigid metal tow pole, commonly used in barefoot skiing, with the pole at a right angle to the tow vessel, unless the vessel is engaged in towing a water-skier from the tow pole or from the stern and at least one person on board the vessel is using the tow pole for training. When the vessel is not engaged in towing a water-skier or no one on board the vessel is using the tow pole for training, the tow pole may remain on the vessel, provided the operator of such vessel ensures that it is dismantled or folded so that it is inside of the gunwale and parallel to the centerline of the vessel.

[December 28, 1967 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 1172); May 31, 1974 (SOSFN: 1716); January 25, 1983 (SOSFN: 2916); August 25, 1987 (SOSFN: 3590); June 23, 1988 (SOSFN: 3716); April 23, 1993 (SOSFN: 4395); September 8, 1998 (SOSFN: 5026); January 3, 2007 (SOSFN: 5746)]

**Sec. 15-121-A10. Self-propelled water-skis or surf boards prohibited. Operation of wing-in-ground effect vessels restricted.**

(a) No person shall operate a self-propelled water-ski or surf board on the waters of the state. For the purpose of this regulation, a self-propelled water-ski or surf board is a vessel propelled by machinery, which:

(1) Has a width not greater than twenty-four inches, or

(2) Is capable of carrying at least one individual who while operating the vessel, has no means of steerage other than by shifting his or her body weight.

(b) No person shall operate any device on the waters of the state, which tows a waterskier who controls the direction and speed of the motorized towing device using remote control lines.

(c) No person shall operate a wing-in-ground effect vessel on or over waters of this state unless approval is granted by the Commissioner for recreational operation or from the United States Coast Guard, Captain of the Port for research and development or commercial operations. For the purposes of this subsection a “wing-in-ground effect vessel” is a vessel that is capable of operating completely above the surface of the water on a dynamic cushion created by aerodynamic lift due to the ground effect between the vessel and the water surface.

[December 28, 1967 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 1173); May 31, 1974 (SOSFN: 1716); August 25, 1987 (SOSFN: 3590); March 9, 2004 (SOSFN: 5496)]

**Sec. 15-121-A13. Personal flotation devices for manually propelled racing vessels.**

(a) Racing shell, rowing scull, racing canoe, or racing kayak as used in this section means a manually propelled vessel that is recognized by national and international associations for use in competitive racing and one in which all occupants row, scull, or paddle with the exception of the coxswain, if one is provided, and is not designed to carry and does not carry any equipment not used solely for competitive racing.

(b) No person on board a racing shell, rowing scull, racing canoe, or racing kayak shall be required to carry any PFD on board, provided any such vessel shall be accompanied at all times by an escort vessel. Each escort vessel shall accompany no more than three vessels at a time and shall keep the escorted vessels in sight at all times, without the use of artificial devices other than eyeglasses. The requirement to use an escort vessel shall not apply to any organized race event when race organizers have taken steps to provide for the safety of such participants, provided the organizer of such event shall give a written explanation of participant safety provisions to the commissioner at least thirty days in advance of the event, and the commissioner approves such provisions in writing before the event.

[January 13, 1981 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 2676); January 25, 1983 (SOSFN: 2916); September 8, 1998 (SOSFN: 5026)]

**Sec. 15-121-A14. Rules for safe operation**

(a) No operator of a vessel under power shall allow any person to be on a decked-over bow of such vessel while underway unless the bow of the vessel is equipped with a handrail that encompasses the bow, and all persons on the bow are inward of such handrail. On vessels under power with open bows not decked over, no operator shall allow any person to sit or stand on the gunwale at the bow of such vessel while underway. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to persons in or on the bow of vessels engaged in anchoring, mooring, or docking activities and proceeding at dead slow speed.

(b) No operator of a vessel under power shall allow any person in or on the bow of such vessel to hang any portion of the body beyond the handrail or outside the vessel over the top of the gunwale while underway, except when proceeding at dead slow speed.

[August 25, 1987 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 3590)]

**Sec. 15-121-A15. Personal watercraft safety restrictions.**

(a) The use of personal watercraft, as defined in section 15-140j of the Connecticut General Statutes, shall be subject to the following operation restrictions:

(1) All persons aboard personal watercraft shall wear a United States Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device and no operator of a personal watercraft shall allow any person who is not wearing a PFD to be aboard such personal watercraft. No person aboard a personal watercraft shall use an inflatable personal flotation device to meet the PFD requirements of this section.

(2) No person shall operate a personal watercraft, or be on board or towed by personal watercraft operated by another, between sunset and sunrise.

(3) No person shall operate a personal watercraft towing a water-skier and no person shall water-ski while being towed by a personal watercraft, except under the following conditions:

(A) The personal watercraft towing a water-skier shall have:

(i) A capacity label permanently affixed by its manufacturer on the personal watercraft indicating that the vessel is designed for and capable of carrying at least two persons in addition to the operator;

(ii) a minimum length overall of 119 inches, a minimum width overall of 46 inches and a minimum horizontal seat surface length of 39 inches for three person capacity. For personal watercraft with greater than a three person capacity noted on the capacity label affixed to the personal watercraft by its manufacturer, for each additional person the minimum horizontal seat length must be increased by at least 13 inches; and

(iii) handholds at or near the rear of the seat suitable for use by a rearward-facing observer to conveniently hold on to with two hands.

(B) whenever a skier is being towed, there shall be an observer, who is at least twelve years old, other than the operator, onboard the personal watercraft towing such water-skier, who shall face the skier at all times;

(C) the number of persons on board the personal watercraft towing a water-skier added together with the number of water-skiers being towed shall not exceed the "persons" carrying capacity, as indicated on the capacity label permanently affixed to the personal watercraft by its manufacturer; and

(D) the operator of a personal watercraft towing a water-skier and the skier being towed shall, in addition to the requirements of this section, comply with all provisions of section 15-134 of the Connecticut General Statutes and section 15-121-A9 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

(4) No person shall operate a personal watercraft at a speed in excess of Slow - No - Wake within two hundred feet of shore, or of a dock, pier, float or anchored or moored vessel, unless said personal watercraft is approaching such float, dock or shore for the purpose of enabling a person engaged in waterskiing to take off or land.

(5) No person operating a personal watercraft shall cross or jump the wake of another vessel, when within one hundred feet of the vessel creating such wake, in such a manner that the hull of the personal watercraft jumping the wake completely leaves the water.

(6) No person less than sixteen years of age, who has not been issued a certificate of personal watercraft operation on or before March 9, 2004, shall operate a personal watercraft without the onboard supervision of a person who is at least eighteen years of age and in possession of a certificate of personal watercraft operation.

(7) No person shall operate a personal watercraft equipped by its manufacturer with a device for shutting off the engine, known as a "shut-off lanyard", unless such device is attached via a lanyard to the operator, his clothing, or his personal flotation device in a manner which will shut off the engine in the event the operator is ejected from the personal watercraft while underway.

(b) Any operator of a vessel less than sixteen feet in length designed so that the operator and passengers ride on the outside surface of the vessel as opposed to riding inside the vessel, and in which the operator and passenger may in the normal course of use fall overboard, and which has an internal combustion engine powering a propeller as its primary source of motor propulsion shall be subject to the restrictions in subsection (a) of this section. Any such operator shall in addition have his vessel equipped with a device for shutting off the engine, known as a "shut-off lanyard", which device shall be attached via a lanyard to the operator, his clothing or his personal flotation device in a manner which will shut off the engine in the event the operator is ejected from the vessel while underway.

[November 5, 1991 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 4202); May 19, 1994 (SOSFN: 4573); September 8, 1998 (SOSFN: 5026); March 9, 2004 (SOSFN: 5496); January 3, 2007 (SOSFN: 5746)]

**Sec. 15-121-A16. Posting methods for regulations and local ordinances**

In the case of any regulation or municipal ordinance respecting the operation of vessels adopted pursuant to Section 15-136 of the General Statutes, which regulation or ordinance has not been published and distributed in pamphlet form on or before the first day of April in accordance with the provisions of Section 15-138 of the General Statutes, the adopting authority shall post each affected water body with signs as follows:

(a) Signs shall be posted in a manner and at locations such that the signs are likely to come to the attention of boaters. For a regulation or ordinance affecting a lake or pond, signs concerning such regulation or ordinance shall be posted at every location where public access by boat to such lake or pond is available. For a regulation or ordinance affecting a river or tidal water, a sign or signs concerning such regulation or ordinance shall be posted at every location where public access by boat to such river or tidal water is available when such location is within five miles of the affected water body or portion thereof.

(b) Each sign shall be no smaller than eleven inches in width and fifteen inches in height.

(c) Each sign shall be made of plastic or other waterproof material.

(d) At the top of each sign shall be the words, “notice: new boating regulation” or “notice: new boating ordinance”, as appropriate, in letters at least one inch in height. The word “notice” shall be on a separate top line. All other letters and numerals on the sign shall be at least three eighths inch in height. The sign shall include the actual text of the regulation or ordinance or a summary of such regulation or ordinance, as well as the words, “posted in accordance with Section 15-138 of the Connecticut General Statutes”, which words shall be printed at the bottom of each sign.

[April 23, 1993 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 4395)]

**Sec. 15-121-A17. Personal flotation devices for manually propelled vessels.**

During the period from October first through May thirty-first all persons aboard a manually propelled vessel shall wear a Type I, II, III, V or V Hybrid United States Coast Guard approved personal flotation device of appropriate size and in serviceable condition. Except as provided in subsection (b) of section 15-121-A13 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, no operator, owner or user of said manually propelled vessel shall allow any person to be aboard who is not wearing such a device.

[May 19, 1994 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 4573); January 3, 2007 (SOSFN: 5746)]

**Sec. 15-121-A18. Public Safety Light.**

Vessels engaged in government sanctioned public safety activities, and commercial vessels performing similar functions, may display an alternately flashing red and yellow light signal. This identification light signal must be located so that it does not interfere with the visibility of the vessel's navigation lights. This identification light signal may be used only as an identification signal and conveys no special privilege to the vessel. Public safety activities include but are not limited to patrolling marine events or regattas; traffic control; salvage; firefighting; medical assistance; assisting disabled vessels; and search and rescue. The public safety light is not a towing light. The light fixture shall be a standard police type beacon, with clear, weatherproof lens over a pair of rotating lights; one red and the other yellow. The lights shall rotate between 70 and 100 revolutions per minute.

[March 9, 2004 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 5496)]

**Sec. 15-121-A19. Marine Safety and Security Zones**

(a) As used in this section:

(1) "Safety zone" means a water area, shore area, or water and shore area to which, for safety or environmental purposes, access is limited to authorized persons, vehicles, or vessels. It may be stationary and described by fixed limits or it may be described as a zone around a vessel in motion; temporary zones may be established by the commissioner, permanent zones, by the United States Coast Guard under 33CFR 165, et seq.;

(2) "Security zone" means an area of land, water, or land and water which is so designated under 33 CFR 165, et seq. by the Captain of the Port or District Commander of the United States Coast Guard for such time as is necessary to prevent damage or injury to any vessel or waterfront facility, to safeguard ports, harbors, territories, or waters of the state; and

(3) "Regulated navigation area" means a water area within a defined boundary under 33 CFR 165, et seq., for which regulations for vessels navigating within the area have been established under 33 CFR 165, et seq.

(b) The commissioner may, when necessary for the safety of the public or protection of the environment, establish temporary marine safety zones on the waters of this state for the purposes of restricting vessel traffic.

(c) As described in this section, a temporary marine safety zone shall not exist for longer than seventy-two (72) consecutive hours. Only in the event of an environmental disaster, marine disaster or public safety emergency shall the commissioner have the authority to extend the zone beyond seventy-two (72) hours.

(d) No person shall operate, allow the operation of a vessel or anchor any vessel on the waters of the state within a zone established under subsection (b) of this section or within a marine safety or security zone or a regulated navigational area established by the United States Coast Guard under 33 CFR 165, et seq., as amended from time to time.

(e) This section shall not apply to vessels used exclusively by municipal, state or federal agencies, or security vessels authorized by the United States Coast Guard Captain of the Port, Long Island Sound.

[June 23, 2004 (Secretary of State File Number (SOSFN): 5520); April 29, 2005 (SOSFN: 5592)]