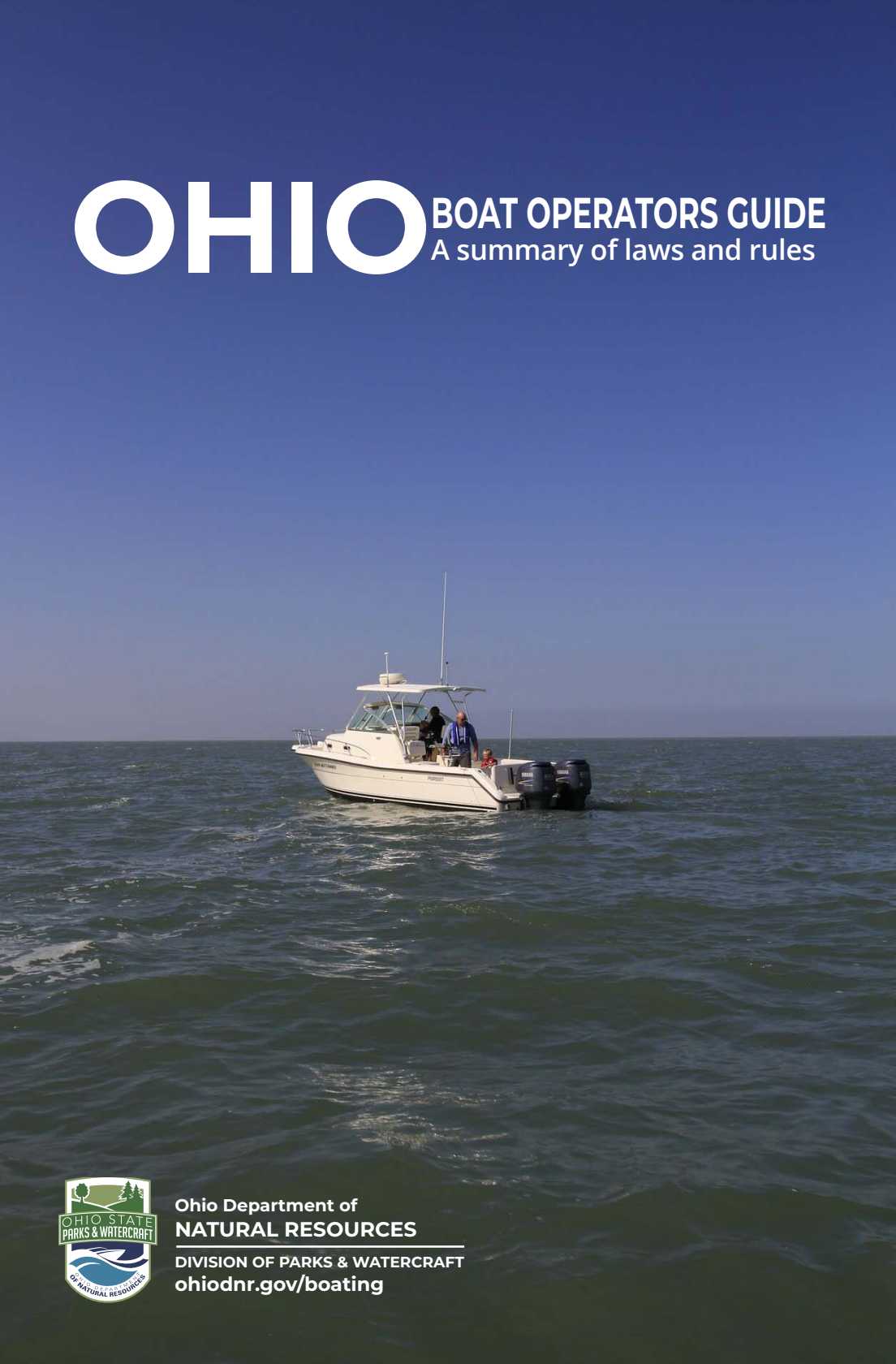
OHIO BOAT OPERATORS GUIDE

A summary of laws and rules



Ohio Department of
NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF PARKS & WATERCRAFT
ohiodnr.gov/boating

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Ohio

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Disclaimer:

Ohio and federal boating laws are presented in a summarized form. Ohio laws in their entirety can be found by consulting the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) or the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) [codes.ohio.gov].

These laws are subject to change.

Certain bodies of water in Ohio have local restrictions regarding type and size of watercraft or motor horsepower, restricted use areas, boat speed and times for use. Check with the local authorities for these additional restrictions.

It is the responsibility of the operator to be aware of the most current laws when using a boat. Please consult the website for the latest updates.

Revision Date 08/2022

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks & Watercraft
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Columbus, Ohio 43229

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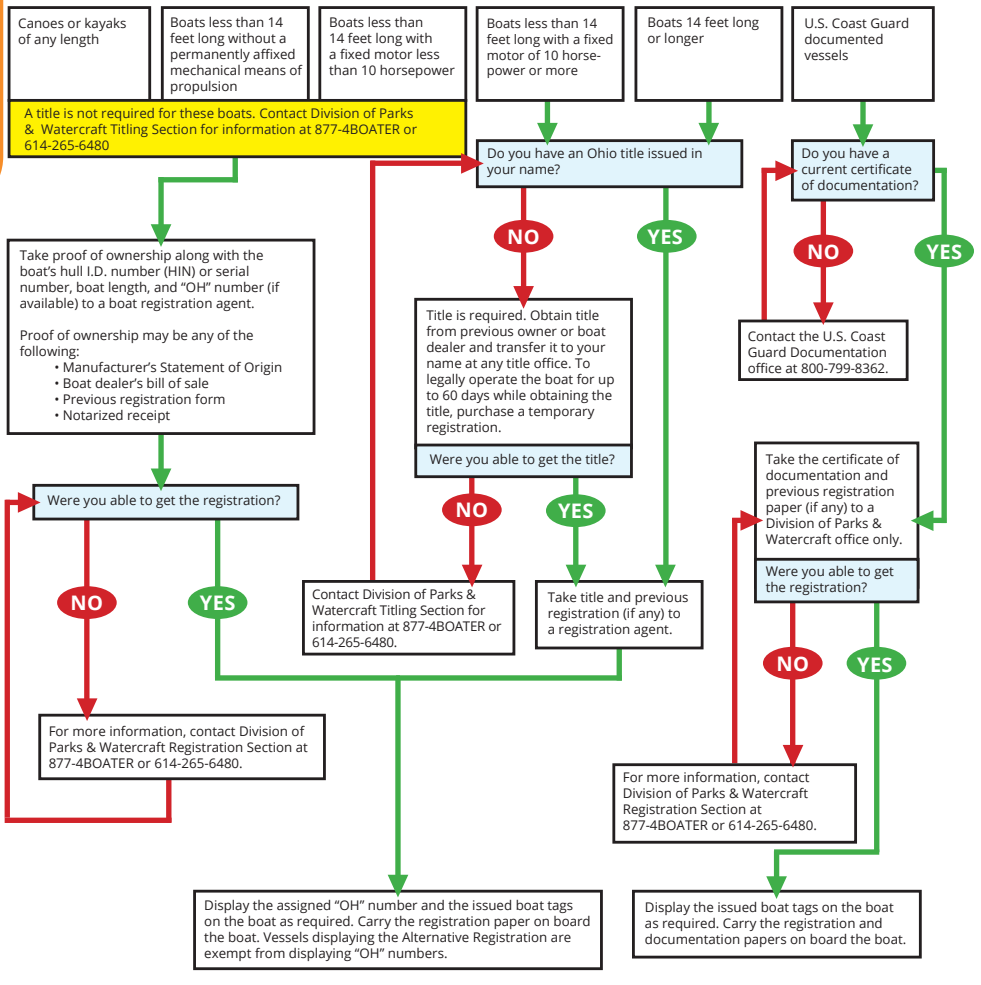
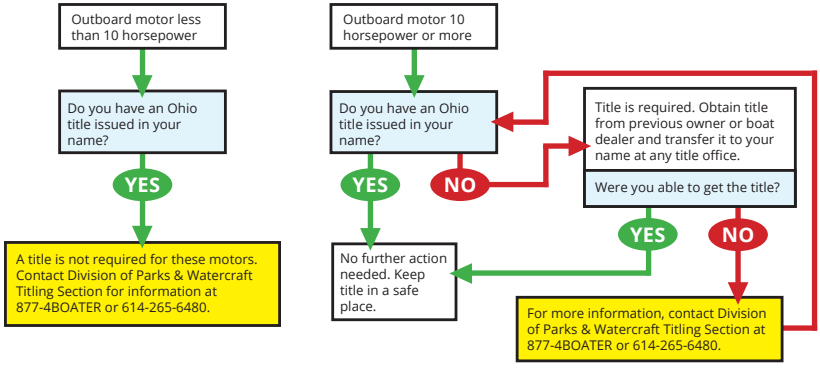
ohiodnr.gov/boating

Ohio Vessel Registration and Titling Flow Chart

Select only one box in the top row that best describes your boat. To find the steps required to title and/or register your boat, select one category that describes your boat and follow the chart until all steps have been completed.



Ohio Outboard Motor Titling Flow Chart



REGISTRATION AND TITLING REQUIREMENTS

Registration and Titling

Before boating, your boat must be properly titled, if required, and registered. A boat title is similar to an auto title. Both provide proof of ownership. Like an auto title, boat titles are obtained from any county title office. A boat requiring a title may not be registered until a title is issued in the new owner's name.

Sailboards, kiteboards, paddleboards and belly boats or float tubes are exempt from registration and titling laws.

Hull Identification Number (HIN) (ORC 1547.65)

The hull identification number (HIN) is the boat's serial number. It is a 12-character number, a minimum of 1/4-inch high, permanently attached to the upper right of the boat's transom or on the starboard (right) side within two feet of the stern (for boats without a transom). Pontoon boats have a visible HIN on the aft crossbeam within one foot of the starboard hull attachment.

Owners of homemade boats, watercraft without a HIN and watercraft lacking a 12-character HIN, must contact a Parks & Watercraft office. An appointment with a state natural resources officer may be necessary to inspect the boat and assign a HIN.

Caution must be exercised when buying a boat due to the number of stolen boats. One way to avoid problems is to match the HIN listed on the title to the one attached to the boat. Before purchasing the boat, inspect the HIN to be sure it has not been altered in any way.

Titling of Watercraft and Outboard Motors (ORC 1548.01, 1548.03, and 1548.06)

No person is permitted to sell, purchase or otherwise acquire any of the following without a certificate of title:

- Outboard motor of 10 horsepower or greater,
- Watercraft 14 feet or greater in length,
- Watercraft less than 14 feet in length with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or greater.

Watercraft exempt from this requirement:

- Vessels documented by the U.S. Coast Guard,
- Canoes and kayaks,
- Watercraft less than 14 feet in length without a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion,
- Watercraft less than 14 feet in length with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of less than 10 horsepower,
- Ship's lifeboat,
- Boats owned by government agencies,
- Motors less than 10 horsepower.

If a titled boat is sold by an individual (a casual sale), the seller must complete the transfer section on the back of the title in the presence of a notary public before presenting it to the buyer. The buyer must take the title to a title office to complete the transfer.

NOTE : Some watercraft listed above and on the previous page may have not needed a title when they were originally purchased. Prior to selling the watercraft, however, the owner must apply to a title office and obtain a title.

These include:

- *Watercraft or outboards acquired on or before October 9, 1963,*
- *Watercraft less than 14 feet long with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or greater and purchased on or before January 1, 2000.*

Numbering of Watercraft (ORC 1547.53)

Each watercraft operated on Ohio water shall be numbered by the state or in compliance with their own state numbering system and shall properly display the assigned number.

Watercraft exempt from Ohio numbering:

- Documented by the U.S. Coast Guard,
- Numbered by another state and used in this state for not more than 60 days,
- From a country other than the United States temporarily using Ohio water,
- Owned by the United States, a state or political subdivision,
- A ship's lifeboat ("lifeboat" is held aboard another vessel and used exclusively for emergency purposes),
- Exempted by the chief of the ODNR Division of Parks & Watercraft,
- Under a waiver issued for a race or special event,
- Canoes, rowboats and inflatable watercraft that are registered under section 1547.54 of the Ohio Revised Code (alternative registration) and that an owner chooses not to have numbered.

Registration of Watercraft (ORC 1547.531)

Numbering of watercraft and registering a watercraft are two separate functions. No person shall operate any watercraft without a valid registration. Evidence of registration is shown by displaying two square registration tags or a rectangular tag (alternative registration option only for hand-powered vessels) and carrying the valid registration certificate on board the vessel. Refer to the registration/titling flow chart at the beginning of this booklet for further details.

Before boating, the new owner of a used boat must take the previous registration form with the transfer section completed by the seller to any watercraft registration agent, even if the registration has not expired. However, if a watercraft requiring a title is transferred to a new owner, it may be operated for no more than 60 days provided the new owner carries aboard either of the following:

- A temporary watercraft registration from an authorized registration agent,
- A bill of sale from a watercraft dealer containing the required information.

The grace period of 60 days provides the new owner adequate time to complete the title transfer process. For boats not purchased from a dealer.

Fraudulent Watercraft Identification number and decal (ORC 1547.533)

Prohibits a person from operating a watercraft if displaying a registration number or decal that is fictious, counterfeit, or illegally made, or decal that belongs to another vessel.

Alternative Registration Option for Manually Propelled Vessels (ORC 1547.54)

An owner of a manually propelled canoe, rowboat (including racing shell or rowing scull) or inflatable watercraft may choose either option:

1. Have it numbered, pay a lesser registration fee and obtain square tags (traditional registration option).
2. Not have it numbered, pay a higher registration fee and obtain a rectangular tag (alternative registration option).

The rectangular alternative registration tag shall be securely affixed in one of the following manners:

- In the upper right corner of the transom,
- On a deck on the rear half of the vessel,
- On the outside below the port side gunnel, or
- On the inside of the vessel on the upper portion of the starboard side gunnel so that it is visible from the port side of the vessel.

Evidence of registration is shown by displaying the rectangular tag. Boaters with an alternative registration have 72 hours to produce the valid registration certificate.

NOTE: Do not use this alternative registration method if there is a possibility of ever using a motor or an affixed sail with the vessel. This registration is issued and renewed through any ODNR Division of Parks & Watercraft office.

Watercraft Exempt from Registration:

- Those exempt from numbering *EXCEPT* documented vessels,
- Those issued a commercial documentation and used exclusively for commercial purposes,
- Vessels meeting another state's registration system requirements which are used in Ohio for less than 60 days.

Proof of Documentation Required (ORC 1547.531)

Documentation is a federal registration system administered by the U.S. Coast Guard. Boats must be at least five net tons to be eligible, which is roughly 25 feet or more in length.

No person shall operate a documented vessel unless the certificate of documentation is valid and available for inspection. The vessel must display the official number, the vessel name and home port.

Documented vessels must be registered in Ohio and display two Ohio tags, but they are not assigned an Ohio number.

Watercraft Identification and Display of Tags and Number
(OAC 1501:47-1-07 and ORC 1547.57)

The number assigned for a traditional registration is displayed in three parts beginning with "OH" followed by four numbers and two letters.

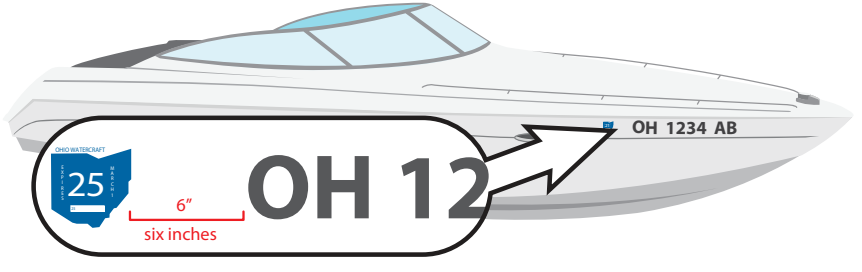
Identification shall:

- Be placed on each side of the forward half of the watercraft,
- Be read from left to right,
- Be in block characters of good proportion,
- Be a minimum of three inches in height,
- Be one color and contrast with the background or boat color,
- Be separated by a hyphen or equivalent space between the prefix and suffix,
- Be maintained to be clearly visible and legible.

OH 1234 AB *or* **OH-1234-AB**

Two registration tags are issued with each traditional boat registration. On numbered boats, the owner shall securely affix the tags on each side of the bow six inches toward the stern from the number.

The tags must be clearly visible in normal conditions and affixed prior to operation of the watercraft. Documented boats must display one tag on the port side and one on the starboard side.



No other numerals or letters may be displayed on the bow.

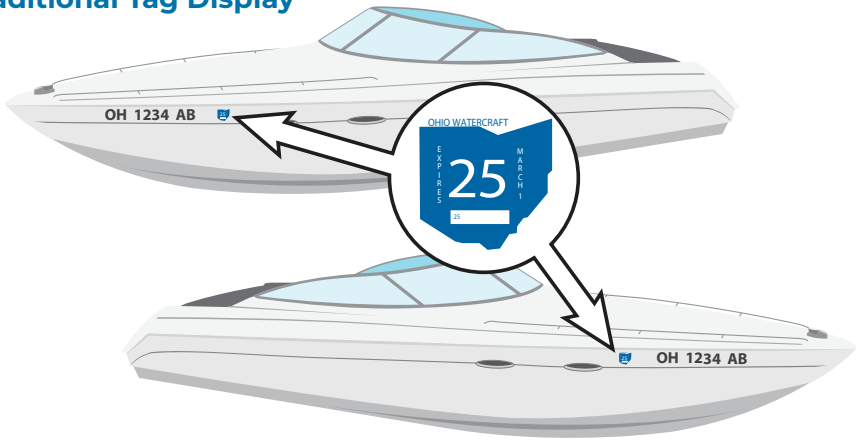
Traditional Tag

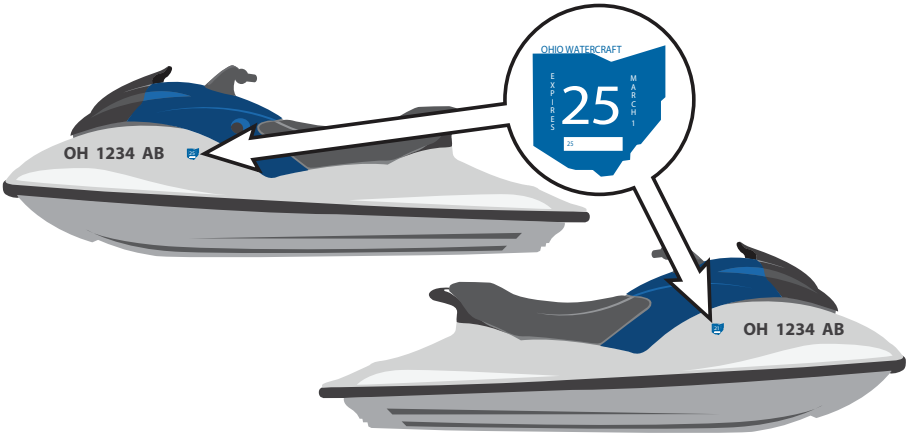
Alternative Tag

Expiration of Registration (ORC 1547.54)

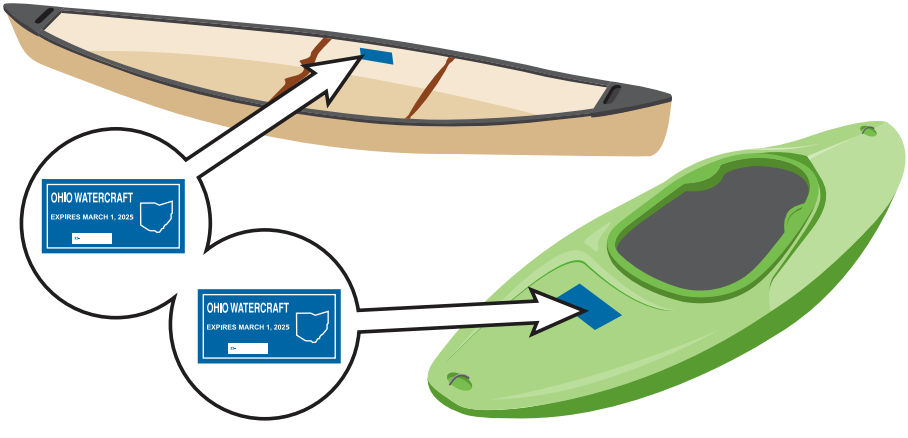
Registration certificates and tags, including alternative registrations, are valid for up to three years and expire on March 1 of the year indicated.

Traditional Tag Display





Alternative Tag Display



REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Duty of Vessel Owner to Provide Equipment (ORC 1547.38)

No person who lets vessels for hire, or the agent or employee thereof, shall rent, lease or otherwise permit the use of a vessel, unless the person provides the equipment required under sections of Chapter 1547 of the Ohio Revised Code and rules adopted under the Ohio Administrative Code.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) (ORC 1547.25)

Other than commercial vessels, no person shall operate or permit to be operated any watercraft:

- 16 feet or greater in length without one wearable PFD per person plus one throwable PFD,
- Less than 16 feet in length and canoes or kayaks of any length without one wearable PFD per person,
- A special use PFD may be carried in place of a wearable PFD provided the approval label indicates that the device is approved for the activity or that it can be a substitute for the other types of PFDs. The special use PFD must also be used in accordance with the requirements on the approval label and the requirements in its owner's manual.

No person shall operate or permit to be operated any commercial vessel:

- Less than 40 feet in length not carrying persons for hire without one wearable PFD per person,
- 40 feet in length or longer not carrying persons for hire without one wearable PFD per person,
- 26 feet in length or longer without at least one throwable ring life buoy in addition to other applicable PFD requirements.

Each PFD shall be:

- U.S. Coast Guard approved;
- In good and serviceable condition;
- An appropriate size for the wearer;
- Readily accessible to each person aboard the watercraft at all times.

Wearable

Throwable

Child PFD Requirements (ORC 1547.24)

No person shall operate or permit to be operated any vessel under 18 feet long with a child less than 10 years of age on board unless the child is wearing a PFD.

The PFD must be:
- U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable,
- In good and serviceable condition,
- Of appropriate size,
- Securely attached.

Be sure to check the U.S. Coast Guard approval label before purchasing a life jacket. Not all life jackets are suitable for all uses or all people. The label will tell you the weight and chest size limits, plus any age restrictions for that particular life jacket. It will also tell you what water activities the life jacket is designed for, such as water skiing or riding on a personal watercraft. Some life jackets are not designed for weak swimmers. Others must be worn to meet the requirements.

Inflatable PFDs

The intended use of inflatable PFDs is for many of the same activities as the inherently buoyant types of PFDs. The user must be aware of the differences and read the owner's manual.

Inflatable PFDs are:

- Not for water sports like water skiing or whitewater boating,
- Not for use with personal watercraft,
- Not for children younger than 16 years of age,
- High visibility when inflated,
- More comfortable than foam type,
- Not recommended for weak or non-swimmers,
- Not throwable (Type IV) devices,
- Made with oral, manual and automatic cartridge inflation devices.

PFDs Required for Skiers and Persons Being Towed (ORC 1547.18)

No person shall ride or attempt to ride upon water skis, surfboards, inflatable devices or similar devices being towed by a vessel without wearing a U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable PFD specifically designed for water skiing, in good and serviceable condition, and of appropriate size. No operator of a vessel shall tow any person who fails to comply with this law.

Barefoot Skiing (ORC 1547.18)

No person shall engage in barefoot skiing without wearing an adequate and effective U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable PFD specifically designed for water skiing, in good and serviceable condition and of appropriate size, or a wetsuit specifically designed for barefoot skiing. No boat operator shall tow any person who fails to comply with this law.

PFDs Required for Personal Watercraft (ORC 1547.41)

No person shall operate or permit the operation of a personal watercraft unless each person on the watercraft is wearing a wearable personal flotation device.

A person operating a personal watercraft that is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cutoff switch shall attach the lanyard to the person, the person's clothing or personal flotation device as appropriate for the specific watercraft.

A "personal watercraft" is defined as a vessel less than 16 feet in length, propelled by machinery and designed to be operated by an individual sitting, standing or kneeling on the vessel rather than by the individual sitting or standing inside the vessel.

Anchor Requirements (ORC 1547.26 and OAC 1501:47-1-11)

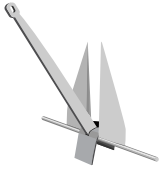
All watercraft shall carry an anchor and line of sufficient weight and length to anchor the watercraft securely. No person shall operate or permit to be operated any watercraft in violation of this section.

Vessels exempt from requirements to carry an anchor and line:

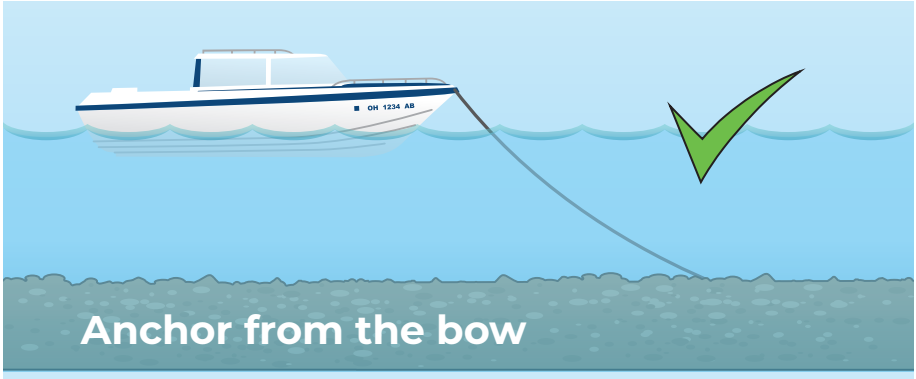
- Any vessel less than 14 feet in length,
- Any canoe or kayak,
- Any sailboat less than 21 feet in length.

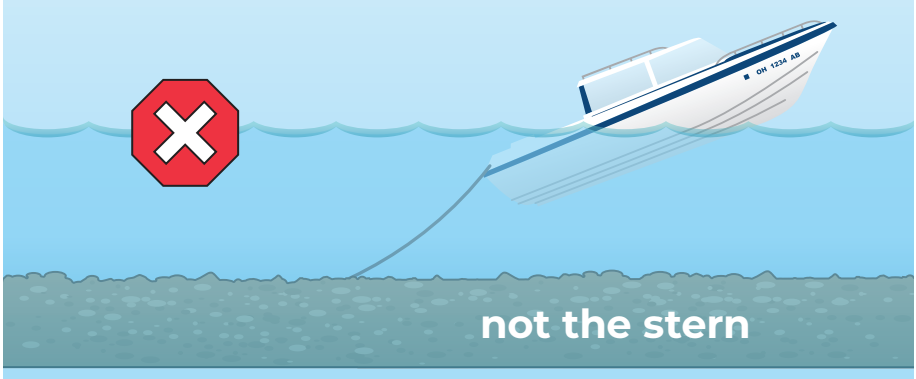
Mushroom Style Anchor

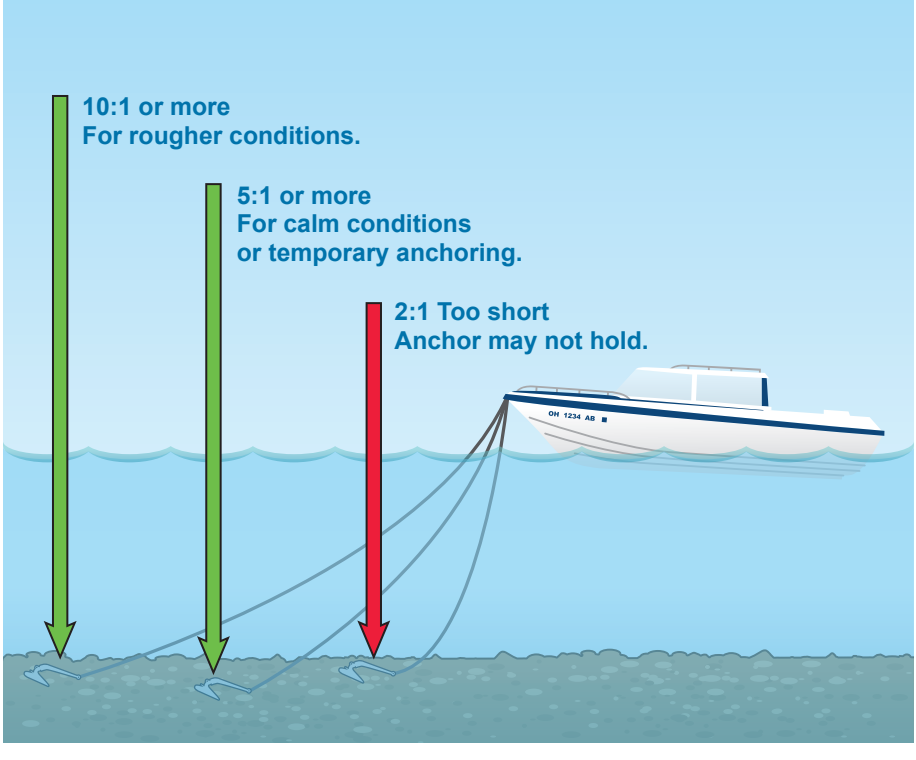
Plow Style Anchor



Fluke Style Anchor


OH 1234 AB
Anchor from the bow


OH 1234 AB
not the stern


10:1 or more
For rougher conditions.
5:1 or more
For calm conditions
or temporary anchoring.
2:1 Too short
Anchor may not hold.
OH 1234 AB

Fire Extinguishers (ORC 1547.27)

No person shall operate or permit to be operated any powercraft that does not meet the fire extinguisher requirement.

Powercraft exempted from this requirement are those:

- Propelled by electric motors,
- Less than 26 feet in length, powered by an outboard motor, of "open construction," which are not carrying passengers for hire.

Fire extinguishers on powercraft must:

- Meet or exceed U.S. Coast Guard standards,
- Be capable of extinguishing a gasoline fire,
- Be readily accessible,
- Be in such condition to be ready for immediate and effective use.

Carriage requirements are determined by boat length:

- Powerboats under 26 feet long must carry at least one B-1 fire extinguisher.
- Powerboats 26 feet long but less than 40 feet long must carry at least two B-1 fire extinguishers or the equivalent, such as a B-2 fire extinguisher.
- Powerboats 40 feet long but less than 65 feet long must carry at least three B-1 fire extinguishers or the equivalent, such as one B-1 and one B-2 fire extinguisher.

A U.S. Coast Guard approved fixed fire extinguisher system installed in the vessel's engine compartment is equal to one B-1 portable fire extinguisher.

Type	Foam (minimum gallons)	Carbon Dioxide (minimum pounds)	Dry Chemical (minimum pounds)	Halon (minimum pounds)
B-1	1.25	4	2	2.5
B-2	2.5	15	10	10

Distress Signals (ORC 1547.251)

When operating on federally controlled waters (Lake Erie or the immediately connecting bays, harbors and anchorage areas):

No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel:

- 16 feet or more in length or any vessel carrying six or fewer passengers for hire without carrying U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals for both day and night use,
- Between sunset and sunrise, unless carrying U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signals for night use.

Some states may consider pistol launchers for meteor pyrotechnics as firearms and restrict or prohibit their use. Check with authorities in the area where you plan to boat.

When operating on Ohio waters other than federally controlled waters (other than Lake Erie or the connecting bays, harbors and anchorage areas):

No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel:

- Without carrying a distress flag at least two square feet and international orange in color or a U.S. Coast Guard approved daytime distress signal.

The required distress signals shall be:

- U.S. Coast Guard approved,
- In good and serviceable condition,
- Readily accessible,
- Of the type and quantities required.

No person shall display any distress signal unless a vessel or a person is in distress and in need of help.

Note: Distress signaling devices must comply with ORC 1547.69 regarding firearm restrictions.

Exemptions to the Visual Distress Signal Requirements

Exemptions to the visual distress signal carriage requirement exist, however, on Lake Erie or the immediately connecting bays, harbors and anchorage areas, an exempted vessel must carry approved visual distress signals for night use between sunset and sunrise.

Exempted vessels during daylight hours only include:

- Vessels in an organized marine event or race,
- Manually propelled vessels,
- Sailboats less than 26 feet in length with completely open construction and without propulsion machinery.

Visual Distress Options		
Day Only	**Day and Night**	**Night Only**
(3) Hand-Held Orange Smoke	(3) Hand-Held Red Flares	(1) Electric Distress Signal
or	or	
(3) Floating Orange Smoke	(3) Parachute Red Flares	
or	or	
(1) Orange Flag	(3) Red Aerial Pyrotechnic Flares	

Backfire Flame Arrestor (ORC 1547.28)

Every gasoline engine installed in a vessel, except an outboard motor, shall be equipped with an acceptable device to control backfire flame.

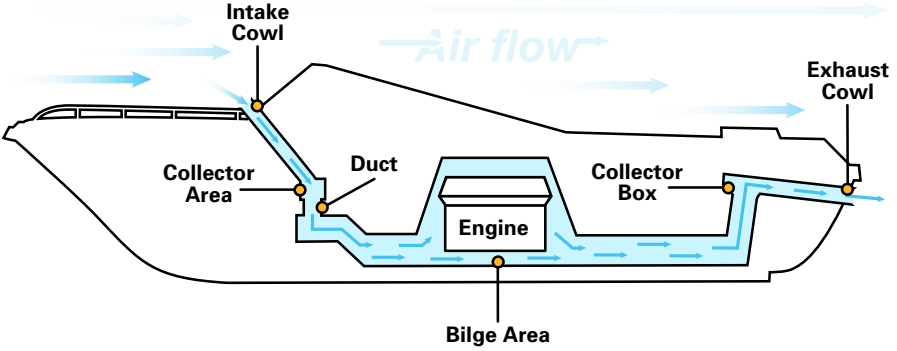
The device shall be:

- Securely attached to the air intake with a flame-tight connection,
- In proper working order,
- U.S. Coast Guard approved or comply with either SAE J1928 or UL1111,
- Marked to indicate the approval or compliance.

Ventilation Requirements (ORC 1547.29)

Powercraft using gasoline or other liquid fuel having a flashpoint of less than 110 degrees Fahrenheit shall be provided with ventilation as follows:

- At least two ventilators fitted with cowls or their equivalent for the purpose of properly and efficiently ventilating the bilges of every engine and fuel tank compartment in order to remove any inflammable or explosive gases,
- Any type of ventilating system approved for use by the U.S. Coast Guard,
- Ventilation is not required when the greater portion of the bilges of the engine and fuel tank compartment is open to the natural atmosphere.



Exhaust Muffler Required (ORC 1547.31)

Every powercraft shall be equipped with a muffler or muffler system that is in good working order, in constant operation and effectively installed to prevent excessive or unusual noise.

No person shall operate or give permission to operate a powercraft in a manner to exceed the following noise levels:

- 90 decibels on the “A” scale in a stationary sound level test prescribed by SAE J2005. (Measured from one meter with engine at low idle speed when at dock or tied to another boat.)
- 75 decibels on the “A” scale measured as specified by SAE J1970. (Measured from shoreline with boat in any level of operation.)

No person shall remove, alter or modify a muffler in a way that prevents compliance with this section. No person shall operate or allow to be operated a powercraft with an altered muffler or muffler cutout or in a manner that bypasses or reduces the effectiveness of any muffler system.

Equipment for Sound Signals (OAC 1501:47-2-33)

A vessel of 12 meters (39.4 feet) or more in length shall be provided with a power whistle or power horn and a bell.

A vessel less than 12 meters in length shall not be obliged to carry the sound devices described in the preceding paragraph. However, the vessel must be provided with a means of making an efficient sound signal.

A vessel that is propelled by human muscular effort, a sailing vessel and a power-driven vessel less than 16 feet in length, when using waters other than Lake Erie, the Ohio River or the Muskingum River, shall not be obliged to carry the sound devices stipulated above or produce the sound signals prescribed in the Ohio Administrative Code.

Navigation Lights (OAC 1501:47-2-21 through 1501:47-2-31)

All vessels are required to display running lights while underway or an anchor light if at anchor between sunset and sunrise. For power vessels, running lights include a green light displayed on the starboard side, a red light displayed on the port side and all-around white light(s) displaying 360 degrees. An anchor light is an all-around white light. Requirements vary by vessel size and type. Sailing vessels and hand-powered vessels have light display options.

Lighting requirements are covered in greater detail under the navigation rules section.

Discharge of Oil Prohibited and Oil Pollution Placard (OAC 1501:47-1-27)

All vessels are required to have the capacity to retain oily mixtures on board. A fixed or portable means to discharge oily waste to a reception facility is required. A bucket or bailer is suitable as a portable means of discharging oily waste on recreational vessels. No person may intentionally drain oil or oily waste from any source into the bilge of any vessel.

Immediately notify the U.S. Coast Guard if your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water. Call toll free 800-424-8802 to report spills. Violators are subject to substantial civil penalties and/or criminal sanctions including fines and imprisonment.

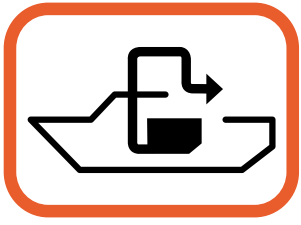
Vessels 26 feet or more must display a 5-inch by 8-inch placard near the engine or bilge pump controls. Oil pollution placards can be obtained from any Watercraft office.

Garbage Placard (OAC 1501:47-1-28)

It is illegal to dump plastics anywhere or to discharge garbage in the navigable waters of the United States, including the Great Lakes. Vessels 26 feet or longer must display in a prominent location a durable placard at least 4 by 9 inches in size with lettering at least 1/8-inch high, notifying the crew and passengers of the discharge restrictions. Garbage placards can be obtained from any Parks & Watercraft office.

Inland Navigation Rules (OAC 1501:47-1-29)

The operators of self-propelled vessels 12 meters (39.4 feet) or more in length must carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of the Inland Navigation Rules. Inland Navigation Rules can be obtained by visiting the U.S. Coast Guard website at navcen.uscg.gov.



Vessel Sanitary Systems (ORC 1547.33)

Except on Lake Erie, the Muskingum River and the Ohio River, no person shall launch, moor, dock, operate or permit to be operated any vessel with a sink, toilet or sanitary system capable of discharging urine, fecal matter, contents of a chemical commode, kitchen wastes, laundry wastes, slop sink drainage or other household wastes into the waters in this state. Such a sink, toilet or sanitary system shall be removed, sealed or made to drain into a tank or reservoir that can be carried or pumped ashore for disposal in an approved sewage treatment works.

Marine Sanitation Device (MSD) on Lake Erie, the Muskingum River and the Ohio River

All recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable MSD on board. Vessels 65 feet and under may use a U.S. Coast Guard certified Type I, II or III MSD. Coast Guard certified devices are so labeled except for some holding tanks, which are certified by definition under federal regulations.

Types I, II and III MSDs with “Y” valves that direct the waste overboard must be secured so that the valve cannot be opened for discharge into the water. This can be done by placing a lock or non-releasable seal on the “Y” valve or by taking the handle off the “Y” valve.

FEDERAL REGULATIONS

FCC Regulations

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires a Ship Station License for some vessels equipped with very high frequency (VHF) radios, Radio Detection and Ranging (RADAR), Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRBs) and some other telecommunications equipment. As of 1996, most recreational vessels no longer need the FCC license if operating domestically. "Domestically" means not traveling to foreign ports or transmitting to foreign stations, including Canada.

Vessels still required to carry an FCC Ship Station License:

- Power vessels over 20 meters (65.6 feet) in length,
- Vessels certified to carry more than six passengers for hire,
- Towboats and commercial fishing vessels,
- Other vessels required by federal law to carry a VHF radio, radar, etc.

The Ship Station License must be on board the vessel.

A license application (Form 605) can be obtained from any office of the FCC. There is a fee for the license. Call 800-418-FORM (3676) for an application and information.

Canadian Border Boat Landing Program

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) requires an inspection of small vessel operators and their passengers when entering into the United States from a foreign port, including Canada. Boaters who have landed upon Canadian soil are required to report to a designated United States port of entry for inspection or be in possession of proper documentation.

For more information on border crossing requirements between the United States and Canada, visit cbp.gov or call 877-227-5511.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection has offices in Ashtabula (440-964-2510), Cleveland (440-891-3800) and Toledo/Sandusky (419-732-4400).

U.S. Customs Service Boat Reporting
Customs Procedures for Boaters Traveling To/From Canada

United States citizens traveling to Canada by boat must contact the Canada Border Services Agency at 888-226-7277 for instructions on where to report for a Customs inspection. Currently, a photo ID and U.S. passport, or birth certificate, are required for each passenger on board the boat. For information on the NEXUS Alternative Inspection Program, go to cpb.gov or call 866-639-8726.

Be advised that border crossing requirements may change at any time. It is the responsibility of each boat operator and passenger to know and understand the requirements for crossing the international border between Canada and the United States.

All boats entering the United States from Canadian waters that have passengers who were on Canadian soil must report to U.S. Customs. This legal obligation may be met by telephone. People can call en route with a cellphone or immediately upon arrival to the United States. Have the following information ready when calling to avoid delays:

- Boat registration number and length (and Customs decal if over 30 feet; see below),
- Captain's name and date of birth,
- Total number of persons on board and value of all purchases in Canada,
- Name of the marina where you first arrived on the United States side.

Boats 30 feet or more in length must purchase an annual user fee decal from a U.S. Customs office prior to voyage to Canada. U.S. Customs Service has offices in Ashtabula (440-964-2510), Cleveland (440-891-3800) and Toledo/Sandusky (419-732-4400).

Waterway Homeland Security

Boaters' roles in keeping our waterways safe and secure include the following:

Keep your distance from all military, cruise line or commercial shipping. Slow to minimum speed within 500 yards and do not approach within 100 yards of any United States naval vessel, including any United States military or military supply vessel.

Violators of the Naval Vessel Protection Zone face up to six years in prison and a $250,000 fine, not to mention a quick and severe response. Approaching certain other commercial vessels may result in an immediate boarding.

Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise line or petroleum facilities. Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc. Violators will be perceived as a threat and will face a quick, determined and severe response.

Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in a channel. If you do, then expect to be boarded by law enforcement officers.

Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary. To report activities that seem suspicious, contact the National Response Center at 877-24WATCH. If there is an immediate danger to life or property, call 911, the U.S. Coast Guard or the port or marina security. Do not approach or challenge those acting in a suspicious manner.

Always secure and lock your boat when not on board. This includes while visiting marina restaurants, a friend's dock or other piers. Never leave your boat accessible to others. Always take the keys to the boat with you.

When storing your boat, make sure it is secure and its engine is disabled. If it is on a trailer, make the trailer as immovable as possible.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Aids to navigation serve much the same purpose as highway signs. Aids such as buoys, signs, lights and beacons are designed to assist boaters by marking hazards and safe channels, helping determine location, controlling traffic and protecting resources. A variety of colors, shapes, lights, numbers and symbols give each navigation aid distinct characteristics. On charted waters, these characteristics enable boaters to locate the aid on a nautical chart (a map of the waterway) and then determine their position.

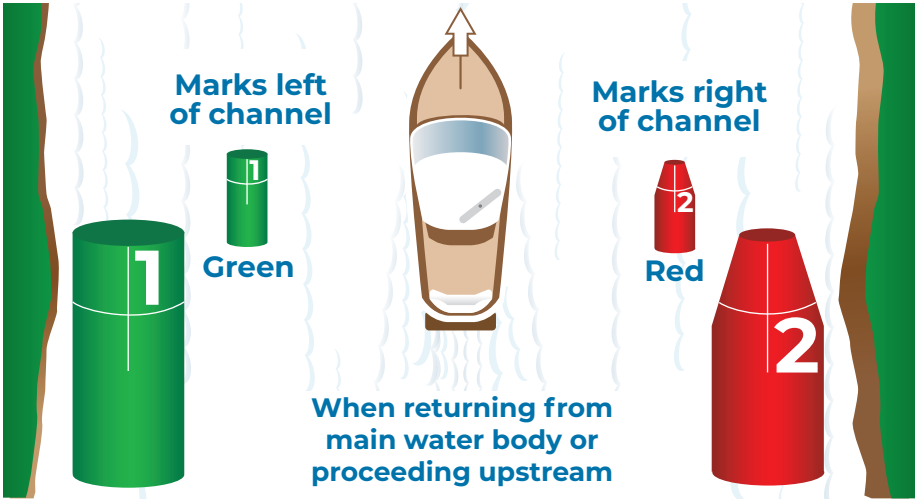
A boater can learn much about using navigation aids to operate safely. The following is only an introduction to some of the most common aids. Ohio operating laws require a boater to be familiar with and obey the buoys of the U.S. Aids to Navigation System.

U.S. AIDS TO NAVIGATION SYSTEM

The system was developed so boaters traveling to lakes in various states could become familiar with one standard system. Channel markers are red and green to match the Federal Lateral System. Regulatory markers are white with orange markings and may be on buoys or fixed signs.

Channel Markers

A harbor or marina entrance, or a dredged channel, may be marked to indicate the deeper, safer channel. When going upstream or into a harbor from open water, the right side of the channel is marked by red "nun" shaped buoys or day beacons with even numbers and the left side is marked by green "can" shaped buoys or day beacons with odd numbers. If a channel or harbor entrance is lighted, a red light will be on the right and a green light on the left as you enter the channel from open water. Mid-channel is marked by red and white vertically striped aids. Remember the phrase "Red Right Returning," and keep the red markers to your right when returning from open water or traveling upstream.



U.S. Coast Guard channel markers adopted for use on all state waters.

Regulatory Markers

Controlled Area

A circle is the most common symbol used on Ohio waterways and usually regulates operation in the area. The buoy or sign will indicate the nature of the controlled area such as No Wake, Idle Speed, Speed Limit, Ski Zone, Open Zone, Speed Zone, etc.

Information

A square is used on buoys or signs giving directions to facilities or other information about the area.

Boats Keep Out

A diamond shape with a cross means boats must keep out. A buoy or sign may show only the symbol or may also indicate Swim Area, Beach, Keep Out, No Boats, Closed Area, Dam, etc.

Danger

A diamond shape is used to mark a hazard to boaters. The buoy or sign may also indicate the nature of the hazard such as Rock, Stump, Shallow Area, Reef, Shoal, Dam, etc.

Not all hazards will be marked by a buoy or sign. Usually only hazards near high traffic areas are marked.

Mooring Buoy

A white buoy with a blue horizontal band indicates a mooring buoy. This is the only type of buoy to which a vessel may be legally tied. Mooring buoys can be private or rentals and permission may be needed.

Diver Down

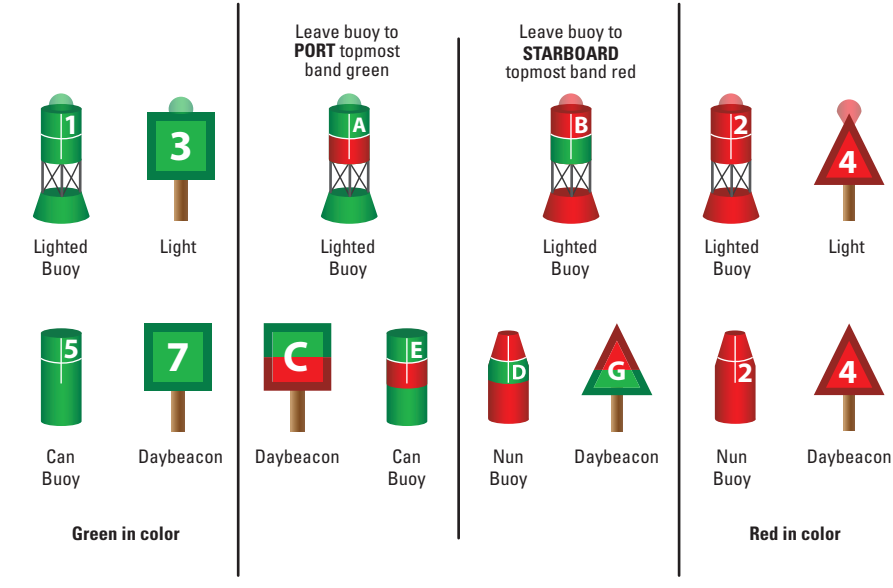
A red flag with a white diagonal stripe indicates that divers are in the area. Ohio law prohibits operating a vessel within 300 feet of a diver's flag unless tendering the dive operation.

A blue and white "alpha" flag is displayed by a vessel tendering a dive operation.

Diver Down

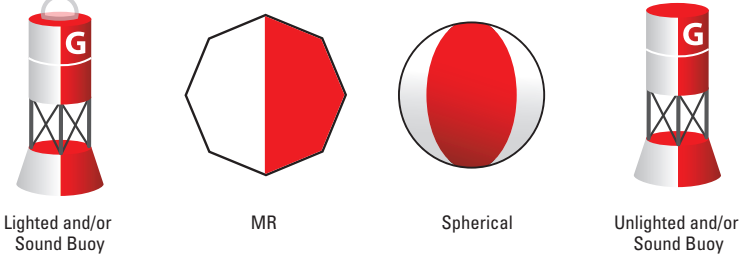
Alpha
(Tending Vessel)

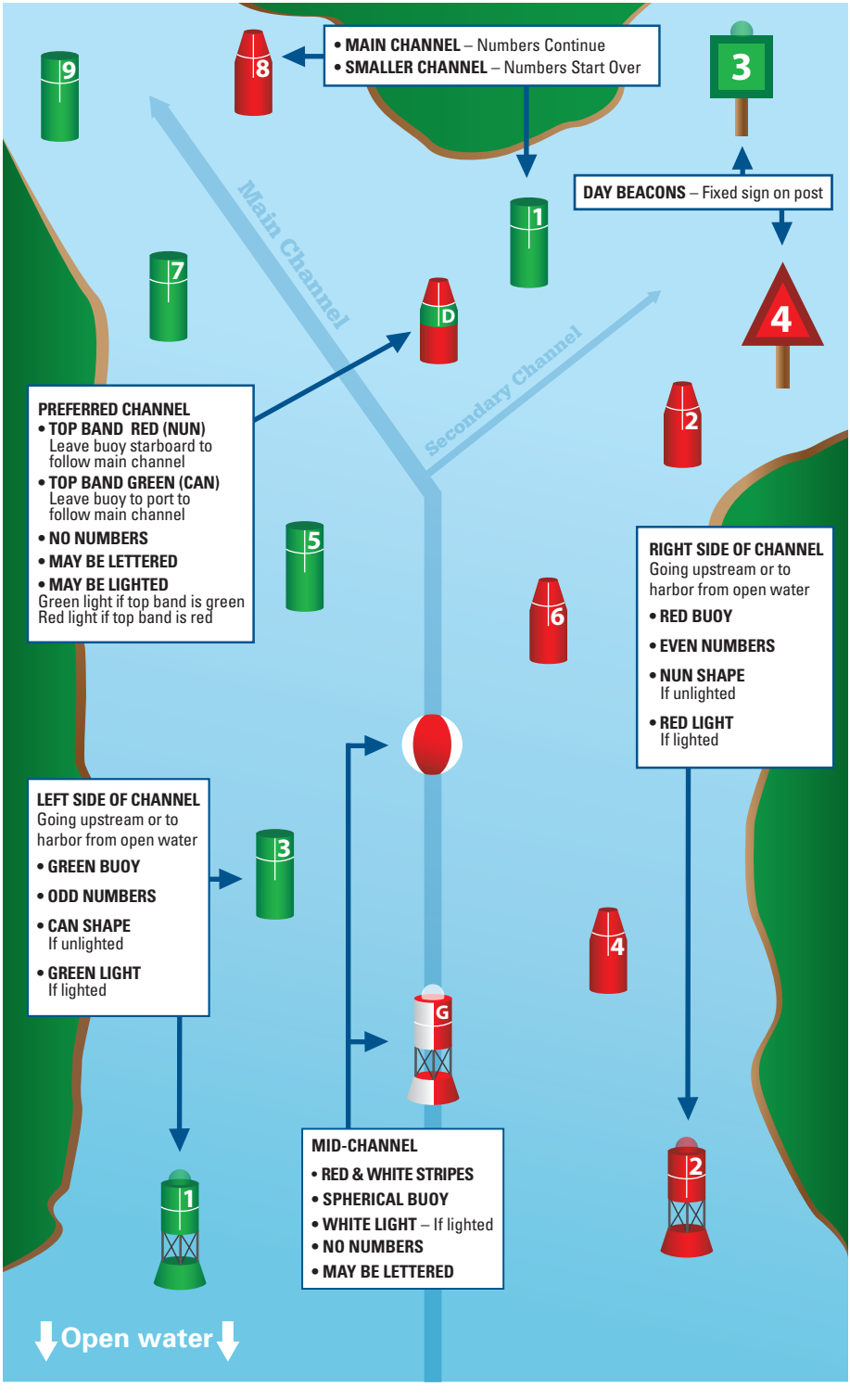
Federal Channel Markers



Mid-Channel or Safe Water

May be lettered, no numbers.




• MAIN CHANNEL – Numbers Continue
• SMALLER CHANNEL – Numbers Start Over
DAY BEACONS – Fixed sign on post
Main Channel
Secondary Channel
PREFERRED CHANNEL
• TOP BAND RED (NUN)
Leave buoy starboard to follow main channel
• TOP BAND GREEN (CAN)
Leave buoy to port to follow main channel
• NO NUMBERS
• MAY BE LETTERED
• MAY BE LIGHTED
Green light if top band is green
Red light if top band is red
RIGHT SIDE OF CHANNEL
Going upstream or to harbor from open water
• RED BUOY
• EVEN NUMBERS
• NUN SHAPE
If unlighted
• RED LIGHT
If lighted
LEFT SIDE OF CHANNEL
Going upstream or to harbor from open water
• GREEN BUOY
• ODD NUMBERS
• CAN SHAPE
If unlighted
• GREEN LIGHT
If lighted
MID-CHANNEL
• RED & WHITE STRIPES
• SPHERICAL BUOY
• WHITE LIGHT – If lighted
• NO NUMBERS
• MAY BE LETTERED
Open water

NAVIGATION RULES

The nautical rules are the traffic laws of the waterways and are legally binding for boat operators. These rules dictate the operator's course of action for avoiding collisions and include maneuvering, lighting and sound signal requirements. The rules are summarized below.

Responsibility (OAC 1501:47-2-02)

Nothing in these rules shall exonerate any vessel, operator, owner, master or crew from the consequences of:

- Neglect to comply with these rules,
- Neglect of any required precaution,
- Special circumstances of the case.

In complying with the rules, due regard shall be given to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limits of the vessels involved, which may make a departure from these rules necessary to avoid immediate danger.

Definitions (OAC 1501:47-2-03)

- "Vessel" includes every description of watercraft, including nondisplacement craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on the water.
- "Power-driven vessel" means any vessel propelled by machinery, fuel, rockets or similar device.
- "Sailing vessel" means any vessel under sail provided that all propelling machinery, if fitted, is not being used.
- "Vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver" means a vessel which, from the nature of its work, is restricted in its ability to maneuver and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.
- "Underway" means that a vessel is not at anchor, made fast to the shore or aground.
- "Vessel not under command" means a vessel which, through some exceptional circumstance, is unable to maneuver or to keep out of the way of another vessel.

Proper Look-out Required (OAC 1501:47-2-05)

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

Safe Speed (OAC 1501:47-2-06)

Every vessel shall proceed at a safe speed so that it can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

In determining a safe speed, the following factors shall be taken into account:

- Visibility,
- Traffic density,
- Maneuverability, including stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions,
- At night, the presence of background light,
- Wind, sea, current and proximity of hazards,
- Draft in relation to depth of water,
- Additional factors for vessels with radar.

Risk of Collision (OAC 1501:47-2-07)

Every vessel shall use all available means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine if risk of collision exists. If in doubt, such risk shall exist.

Action to Avoid Collision (OAC 1501:47-2-08)

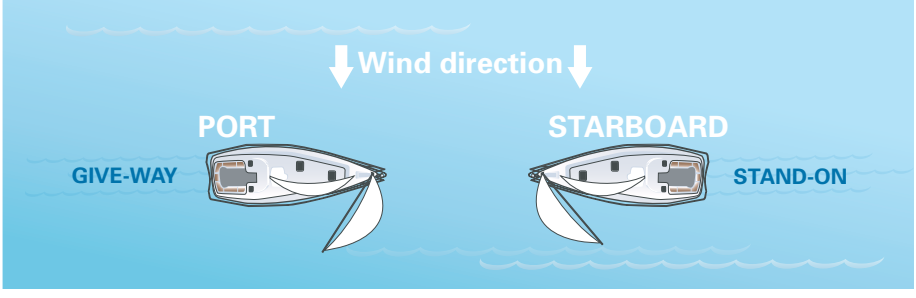
Any action taken to avoid collision shall be positive and made in ample time and with due regard to good seamanship. Any alteration of course or speed shall be substantial to be readily apparent to another vessel observing visually or by radar. Action taken shall result in passing at a safe distance. If necessary to avoid collision, a vessel shall slacken speed, stop or reverse.

Narrow Channels (OAC 1501:47-2-09)

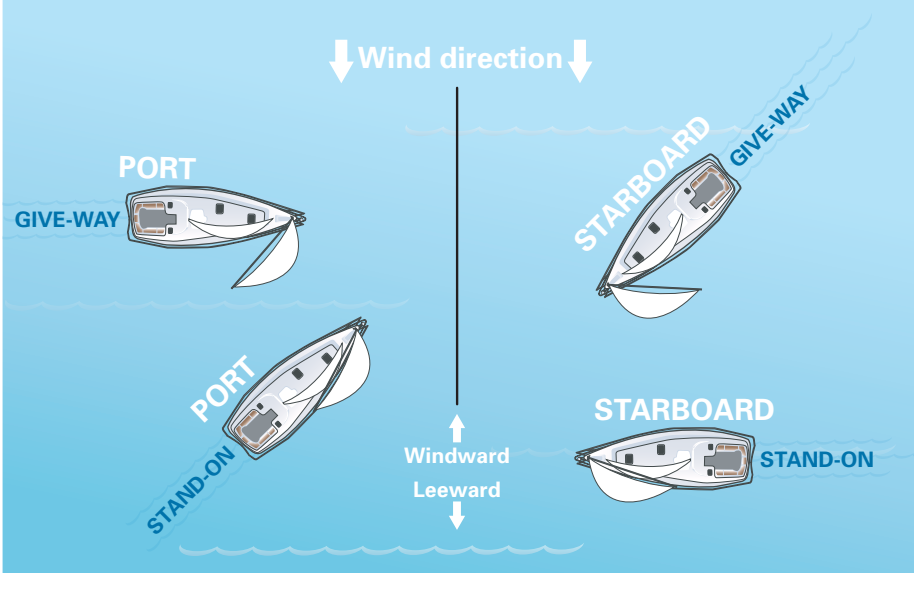
- A vessel in a narrow channel shall keep as near to the right side of the channel as is safe and practical.
- A power vessel proceeding down bound with a following current shall have right-of-way over an upbound vessel.
- Vessels less than 20 meters long, sailing vessels, vessels engaged in fishing or vessels crossing the channel shall not impede passage of a vessel that can safely navigate only within a channel.
- Vessels shall avoid anchoring in narrow channels.
- An overtaking vessel shall indicate its intention by sounding the appropriate signal and take steps to permit safe passing. The overtaken vessel sounds the same signal if in agreement.
- A vessel nearing a bend or an area where vessels may be obscured by an obstruction shall navigate with caution and sound appropriate signals.
- Vessels leaving a dock, slip, tie-up or mooring shall yield the right-of-way to all vessels approaching.

Sailing Vessels (OAC 1501:47-2-12)

When two sailing vessels are approaching one another with the wind on different sides, the vessel which has the wind on the port side shall keep out of the way of the other.



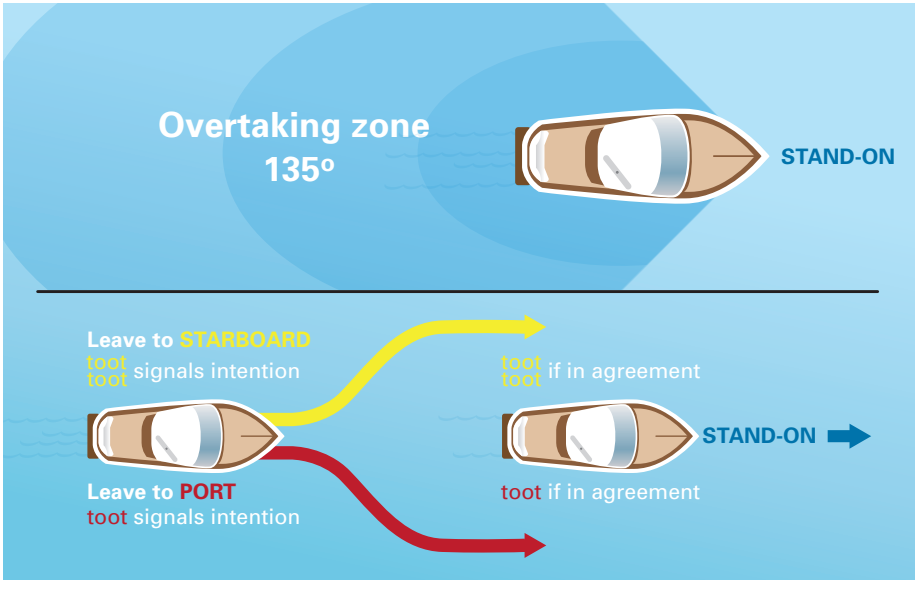
When both have the wind on the same side, the vessel which is to windward (upwind) shall keep out of the way of the vessel which is to leeward (downwind).



If a vessel with the wind on the port side sees a vessel to windward (upwind) and cannot determine if its wind is on the port or starboard, the vessel shall keep out of the way of the other. The windward side is opposite the side on which the mainsail is carried.

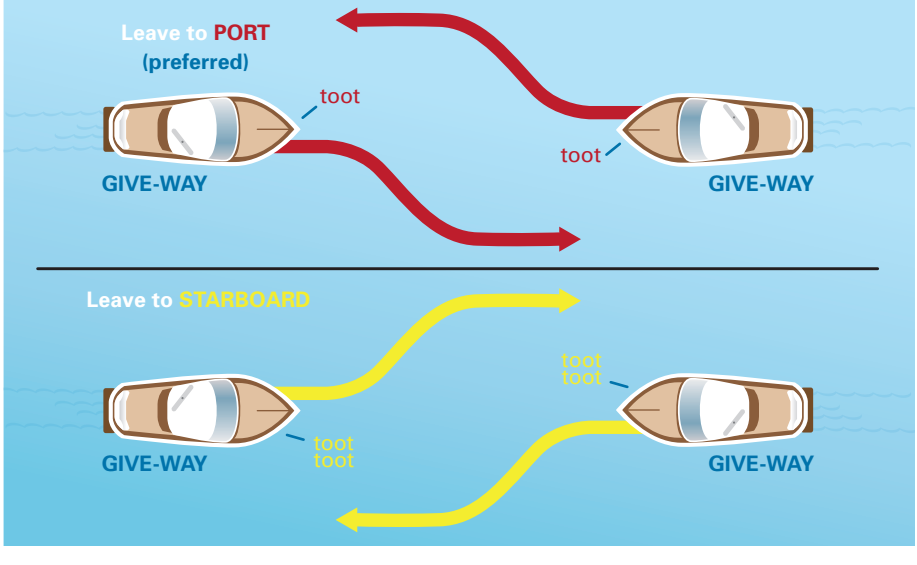
Overtaking (OAC 1501:47-2-13)

Any vessel overtaking another shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken.



Head-On Situation (OAC 1501:47-2-14)

Unless otherwise agreed, when two power-driven vessels approach head-on, each shall alter course to starboard (right) and pass on the port (left) side of the other. A head-on situation exists at night if both red and green sidelights are visible. A vessel in doubt as to whether such a situation exists shall assume that it does and act accordingly.



Navigation Rules include use of sound signals to communicate with other boaters.

toot = 1 second **tooooot** = 4-6 seconds

toot = I intend to leave you on my port side
toot toot = I intend to leave you on my starboard side.
toot toot toot = Engine in reverse.
toot toot toot toot toot = Danger
tooooot = Coming out of a slip.

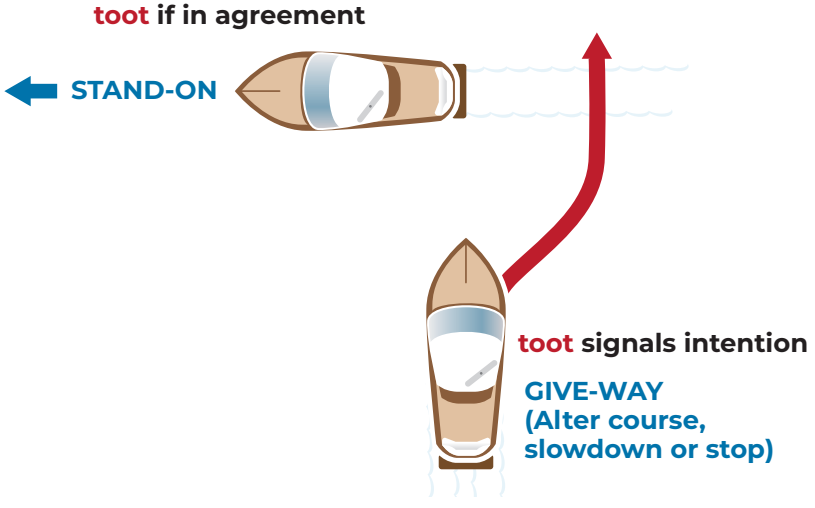
Additional sound signals are required during periods of reduced visibility.

Consult a copy of the federal publication "Navigation Rules" for more details.

Crossing Situation (OAC 1501:47-2-15)

When two power-driven vessels are crossing and risk of collision exists, the vessel which has the other on its starboard side shall keep out of the way and shall avoid crossing ahead of the other vessel.

A vessel crossing a river shall keep out of the way of a power-driven vessel ascending or descending the river.



Action by Give-Way Vessel (OAC 1501:47-2-16)

Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel shall, so far as possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear.

Action by Stand-On Vessel (OAC 1501:47-2-17)

Where one of two vessels is to keep out of the way, the other shall keep its course and speed.

The latter vessel or the stand-on vessel may take action to avoid collision as soon as it becomes apparent the give-way vessel is not taking appropriate action.

When the stand-on vessel finds itself so close that collision cannot be avoided by the give-way vessel alone, it shall take such action as will best aid to avoid collision.

A power-driven vessel which takes action to avoid collision with another power vessel shall not alter course to port for a vessel on its own port side.

Responsibilities Between Vessels (OAC 1501:47-2-18)

Except for narrow channel and overtaking rules:

A power vessel underway shall keep out of the way of a:

- Vessel not under command,
- Vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver,
- Vessel engaged in commercial fishing,
- Sailing vessel.

A sailing vessel underway shall keep out of the way of a:

- Vessel not under command,
- Vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver,
- Vessel engaged in commercial fishing.

A vessel engaged in commercial fishing shall keep out of the way of a:

- Vessel not under command,
- Vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver.

Discover Paddle Ohio!

Join the Paddle Ohio program and experience some of the best of Ohio's waters for canoeing and kayaking. Earn an official Paddle Ohio pin by completing paddling trips on at least four Paddle Ohio stream or lakes this year.

NAVIGATION LIGHTS

Visibility of Lights (OAC 1501.47-2-22)

On boats less than 12 meters in length (39.4 feet) the white masthead light and stern light must be visible for 2 miles. The red and green sidelights must be visible for 1 mile. Boats greater than 12 meters in length have requirements of greater visibility.

Power Driven Vessels Underway (OAC 1501.47-2-23)

Vessels less than 20 meters (65.6 feet) shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 1.

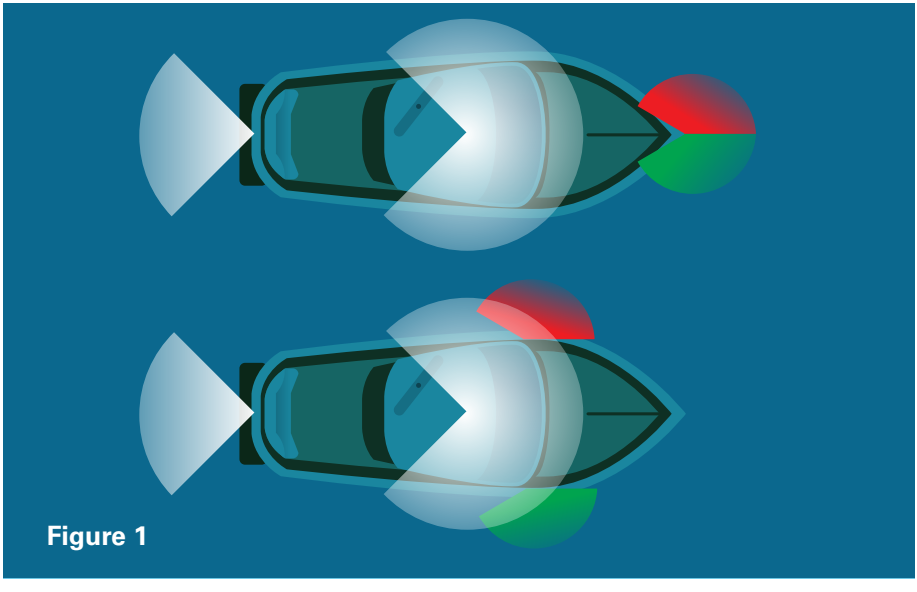


Figure 1

Vessels less than 12 meters (39.4 feet) shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2.

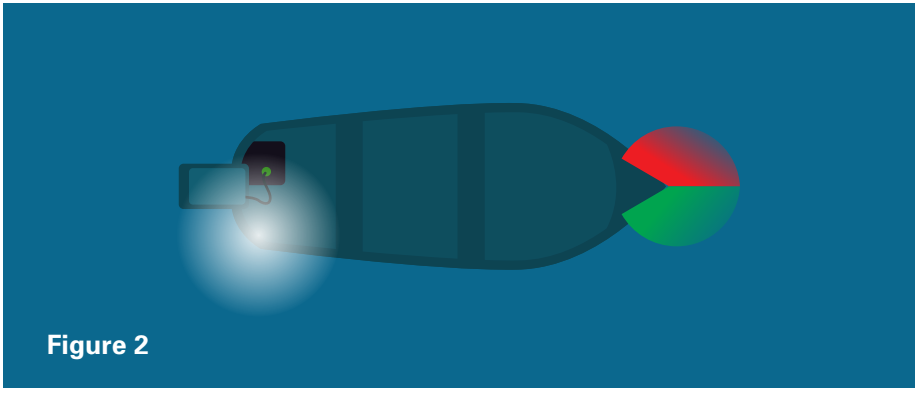
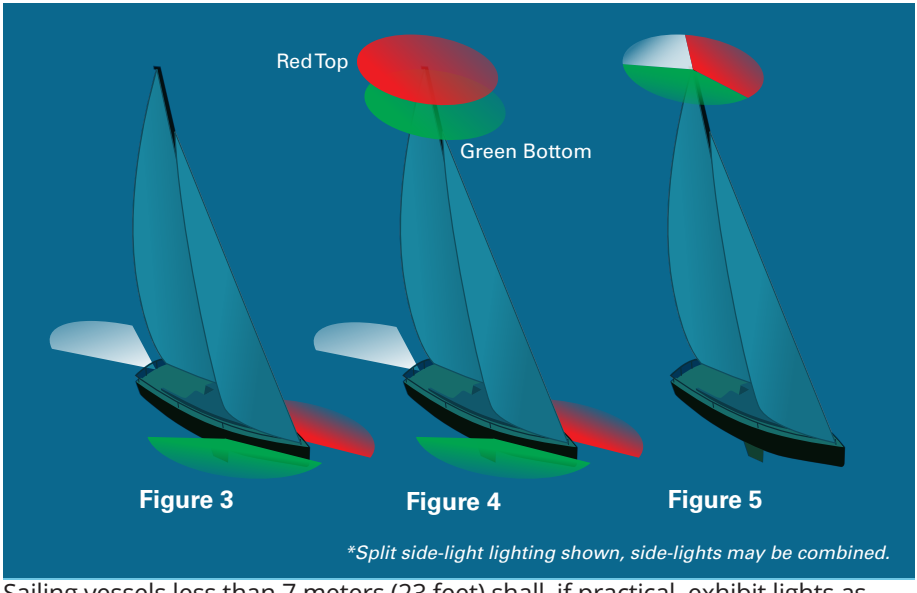


Figure 2

Sailing Vessels Underway (OAC 1501.47-2-25)

Sailing vessels less than 20 meters (65.6 feet) shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 3, Figure 4, or Figure 5.



Sailing vessels less than 7 meters (23 feet) shall, if practical, exhibit lights as shown in Figures 3, 4 or 5. If it is not practical, it shall have an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light in sufficient time to prevent collision.

Vessels Under Oars (OAC 1501.47-2-25)

A vessel under oars may exhibit lights for sailing vessels, but if not, shall have an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light in sufficient time to prevent collision.

Anchored Vessels (OAC 1501.47-2-30)

A white light visible all around the horizon shall be exhibited by all vessels, including canoes and kayaks, while at anchor.

OHIO OPERATING LAWS

Boating Education Requirement (ORC 1547.05)

No person born on or after January 1, 1982, shall operate a powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower unless the operator has received a certificate for successful completion of either of the following:

- A boating course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA),
- A proficiency examination approved by the ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft.

A person who possesses a valid merchant mariner credential issued by the U.S. Coast Guard with at least one endorsement of master or operator is exempt from Ohio boating education requirements while operating a recreational vessel and shall carry onboard documentation of these credentials and present them to a law enforcement officer upon request.

(ORC 1547.051)
A person required to have the certificate indicated above and stopped by a law enforcement officer while operating a powercraft more than 10 horsepower shall present to the law enforcement officer the certificate or proof of holding the certificate within 72 hours of being stopped.

(ORC 1547.052)
No rental business shall lease or rent a powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower to a person born on or after January 1, 1982, unless the person meets one of the following:

- The person signs the rental agreement or attachment indicating that they have completed an approved boating course or proficiency exam as indicated above.
- The person receives educational materials from the rental business and passes an abbreviated exam with a score of 90 percent or better. Achievement of the passing score will be indicated on or attached to the rental agreement.

Any person born on or after January 1, 1982, who operates or supervises the operation of a leased or rented powercraft, shall meet the requirements in the paragraphs above and be named as an operator on the rental agreement.

Child Operators: Supervising Person (ORC 1547.06)

Except as provided, no person under 16 years of age shall operate a personal watercraft (PWC). Individuals not less than 12, nor more than 15 years of age may operate a PWC if a supervising person 18 years of age or older is also on board. In the case of a supervising person born on or after January 1, 1982, the supervising person must hold a certificate meeting the requirements of ORC 1547.05 and in the case of rented powercraft, must meet the requirements of ORC 1547.052.

No person under 12 years of age shall operate any vessel unless under the direct visual and audible supervision of a person who is 18 years of age or older. This section does not apply to personal watercraft (see previous

paragraph) or other powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower (see following paragraph).

No person under 12 years of age shall operate powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower unless under the direct visual and audible supervision of a person 18 years of age or older who is aboard the powercraft (excludes PWC operation). In the case of a supervising person born on or after January 1, 1982, the supervising person must hold a certificate meeting the requirements of ORC 1547.05, and in the case of a rented powercraft, must meet the requirement at ORC 1547.052.
Child operators operating powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower are required to meet the mandatory education requirements as described in ORC 1547.05 even while supervised by a person 18 years of age or older.
No supervising person shall allow any person they are supervising to violate any watercraft law.

Personal Watercraft (ORC 1547.41)

Personal watercraft is defined as a vessel, less than 16 feet in length, propelled by machinery and designed to be operated by an individual sitting, standing or kneeling on the vessel rather than sitting or standing inside the vessel.

No person shall operate or permit operation of a personal watercraft unless each person aboard is wearing a personal flotation device (PFD). Operators on personal watercraft equipped with a lanyard-type engine cutoff switch must attach the lanyard to their clothing, PFD, themselves or as appropriate for the specific devices.
No person shall operate a personal watercraft between sunset and sunrise.
No person who owns or has charge over a personal watercraft shall permit operation in violation of laws.

Reckless Operation (ORC 1547.07)

No person shall operate a vessel, water skis or similar device:

- Carelessly or heedlessly,
- Without due caution,
- In disregard of the rights or safety of any person, vessel or property,
- At a rate of speed or in a manner so as to endanger any person, vessel or property.

No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in an unsafe manner. Unsafe operation includes:

- A vessel becoming airborne or completely leaving the water while crossing the wake of another vessel at a distance of less than one hundred feet, or at an unsafe distance, from the vessel creating the wake
- Operating at such a speed and proximity to another vessel or to a person attempting to ride on one or more water skis, surfboard, inflatable device, or similar device being towed by a vessel so as to require the operator of either vessel to swerve or turn abruptly to avoid collision
- Operating less than two hundred feet directly behind a person water skiing or attempting to water ski
- Weaving through congested traffic.

A vessel shall be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times.

Unsafe Condition and Termination (ORC 1547.071)

A law enforcement officer may determine that an unsafe condition presents an especially hazardous condition to persons aboard a vessel and may direct the operator to take immediate, reasonable actions to correct the situation. This includes directing the operator to return a vessel to shore until the condition is corrected or has ended. Refusal by an operator to terminate operation after being ordered to do so is a violation of the Ohio Revised Code. An especially hazardous condition exists if a reasonably prudent person would believe that continued operation would create a hazard to persons aboard.

The following situations present unsafe conditions:

- Insufficient personal flotation devices,
- Insufficient fire extinguishers,
- Overloaded, insufficient freeboard for the water conditions in which the vessel is operating,
- Improper display of navigation lights,
- Fuel leaks, including fuel leaking from either the engine or fuel system,
- Accumulation of or an abnormal amount of fuel in the bilges,
- Inadequate backfire flame control,
- Improper ventilation.

Failure to Control (ORC 1547.072)

No person shall operate or permit the operation of a vessel without sufficient control to avoid an incident that results in:

- Property damage,
- Physical injury,
- Loss of life,
- Any combination of the above.

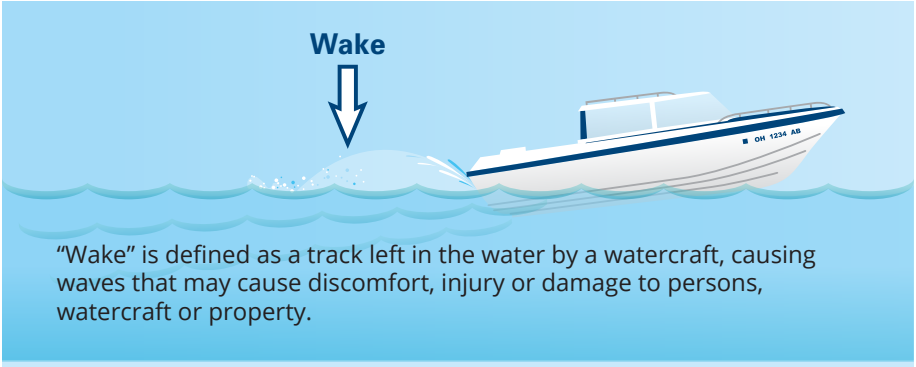
Operation in Restricted Areas (ORC 1547.08)

No person shall operate a vessel in designated "swim areas," areas buoyed off as "no boats," or within any area buoyed designating it as an area in which boats are prohibited.
Areas marked as "no boats" include the areas above and below dams and endangered species areas.
No person shall operate a vessel at greater than idle speed or create a wake under any of the following circumstances:

- Within any area buoyed or marked as a "no wake" area,
- Within 300 feet of any marina, boat docking facility, boat gasoline dock, launch ramp, recreational boat harbor or harbor entrance on Lake Erie or on the Ohio River,
- During sunset to sunrise between the Dan Beard bridge and the Brent Spence bridge on the Ohio River (Hamilton County) for any vessel not documented by the U.S. Coast Guard as commercial.

No person shall operate a vessel within 300 feet of an official diver's flag unless tendering the dive operation.

No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of these sections.



"Wake" is defined as a track left in the water by a watercraft, causing waves that may cause discomfort, injury or damage to persons, watercraft or property.

"Idle speed" is the slowest possible speed needed to maintain steerage and maneuverability.

Mooring and Interference with Buoys Prohibited (ORC 1547.09 and OAC 1501:47-1-10)

No person shall moor or anchor in any designated speed zone or water ski zone. Unless in distress, no person shall moor, anchor or tie to any marker, aid, buoy, light or other aid to navigation. No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

No person shall climb on, swim or hang on, dive off, tie a watercraft to, injure, sink, disconnect from its anchor, damage, deface or interfere with any buoy or other aid to navigation.

Obstructing a Waterway, Securing of Docked and Anchored Vessels (OAC 1501:47-1-13)

No person shall anchor, moor, tie-up or raft off to any other vessel, dock, launch ramp or structure in such a manner that the vessel blocks, impedes or restricts other vessels in their normal and reasonable use or navigation.
No person shall leave any vessel anchored, or in any dock space, or tie-up space, without first properly fastening and securing the vessel in such a manner as to avoid fouling or collision with any other vessel or from drifting free.

Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs Prohibited / Testing (ORC 1547.11 and ORC 1547.111)

No person shall operate or be in physical control of any vessel underway, or manipulate any water skis or similar device, if the person is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (including prescription drugs).

NOTE: It is an offense to operate a vessel while having a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.08 or more. A BAC less than 0.08 is admissible in court along with other evidence of impairment to prove operating under the influence. For persons under 21 years of age, it is an offense to operate a vessel while having a BAC of 0.02 or more. Further, it is an offense for persons under the age of 21 to purchase, possess, consume or be under the influence of alcohol.

Penalty for Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs		
Offense	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
First	3 days jail $150 fine	6 months jail $1,000 fine
Second	10 days jail $150 fine	6 months jail $1,000 fine
Third	30 days jail $150 fine	up to 1 year jail $1,000 fine

Any person who operates a vessel, water skis or similar device shall be deemed to have given consent to a chemical test or tests of their blood, breath or urine to determine alcohol or drug content if arrested. If a person under arrest refuses to submit to a chemical test, the person is prohibited from operating a vessel or water skis or from registering a vessel for a one-year period. If the person is the owner of the vessel, the registration certificate and tags will be impounded for a one-year period.

Incapacitated Operators Prohibited (ORC 1547.12)

No person shall operate any vessel if unable physically or mentally to operate in a safe and competent manner. No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

Complying with Officer; Eluding or Fleeing; Stopping or Yielding to Law Enforcement Vessel (ORC 1547.13, ORC 1547.131, and 1547.132)

No person shall fail to comply with any lawful order of an officer having authority to direct or regulate the operation or use of vessels. A boat operator shall not purposely elude or flee from an officer after a visible or audible signal to bring the vessel to a stop is given.

Upon the approach of a law enforcement vessel with a blue flashing light, the operator of any vessel shall stop or give-way in any situation until the law enforcement vessel has passed.

No person shall operate a vessel that creates a wake within 100 feet of a stopped law enforcement vessel with a blue flashing light.

No person shall operate a vessel that creates a wake within 100 feet of a public service vessel displaying a red and yellow alternating flashing light.

No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

NOTE: You are responsible for any damage or injury caused by your wake. Either steer well clear or pass at idle speed.

Skiing Confined to Ski or Open Zone (ORC 1547.14)

Any person who participates in any towed water sports shall confine that activity within a designated ski zone or open zone.

Exceptions to this section exist on Lake Erie, the Ohio River and their immediately connected harbors and anchorage facilities where these zones have not been established.

This does not apply if the vessel is traveling at idle speed in a designated No Wake zone.

As long as it is not within:

- 300 feet of a gas dock, launch ramp or harbor entrance,
- An anchorage area, boat swimming area or boat camping area,
- 300 feet or under a bridge underpass,
- Any area designated as a no ski zone.

No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

Observer Required when Towing Skier (ORC 1547.15)

Any person who operates a vessel towing a person on water skis, surfboard, other similar devices or barefoot skier shall have an observer 10 years of age or older in the vessel who shall at all times observe the person being towed. The vessel operator shall observe the traffic pattern. No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

Water Skiing After Dark Prohibited (ORC 1547.16)

No person shall water ski or be towed on any device or operate a vessel towing a person between sunset and sunrise except upon special permit. Consult an official sunrise-sunset table of the local area for exact times.

Sitting, Standing, Walking on Moving Vessels Restricted (ORC 1547.22)

No occupant of a vessel underway shall sit, stand or walk on any area not designed for that movement except when immediately necessary for safe and reasonable navigation or operation. No person shall permit any occupant to violate this section. No person shall operate or permit operation of any vessel in violation of this section.

One of the most common causes of boating fatalities is drowning after falling overboard. One way to reduce the risk of taking a plunge is to sit in seats designed for that purpose. Bow riding is especially dangerous because unexpected movement, large waves or sudden change in course could easily throw the passenger in the water. The risk of injury from being run over by the boat or being struck by the propeller is great in such situations.

Capacity Plates (ORC 1547.39 and ORC 1547.40)

No person shall operate or permit operation of a watercraft in excess of any of the stated limits on the capacity plate. When no capacity plate exists, no person shall operate or permit operation of a watercraft if a reasonably prudent person would believe the total load aboard or the total horsepower of any motor or engine presents a risk of physical harm to persons or property.

No person shall alter, remove or deface any information on the capacity plate.

A sample capacity Plate

Littering Prohibited (ORC 1547.49)

No operator or occupants shall discard litter improperly from any vessel regardless of intent. No operator shall allow litter to be discarded.

Refuse Disposal Prohibited (ORC 1531.29)

No person shall discard litter on land, in a waterway or on the bank of a waterway where it could be washed into the water.

Enforcement (ORC 1547.63)

Within the area of their jurisdiction, every sheriff, deputy sheriff, marshal, deputy marshal, municipal police officer township police constable, wildlife officer, park or conservancy district officer, or other law enforcement officer may enforce the state watercraft laws and has the authority to stop, inspect and board any recreational vessel.

Firearm Restrictions/Concealed Carry (ORC 1547.69 and 2923.12)

Except for persons legally engaged in hunting, no person shall discharge a firearm while in or on a vessel.
Except for persons legally engaged in hunting, OR persons legally licensed to carry a concealed handgun, OR persons meeting the definition of "qualifying adult" under Ohio law (R.C. 2923.111(C)(1)), no person shall transport or have a loaded firearm in a vessel in such a manner that the firearm is accessible

to the operator or any passenger. Except for persons legally permitted by Ohio law to carry a concealed handgun, no person shall transport or have a firearm in a vessel, unless it is unloaded and carried in a closed package, box or case OR in plain sight with the action open or the weapon stripped.
Not all states honor Ohio's concealed carry law. Visit the Ohio Attorney General's website (ohioattorneygeneral.gov) for a listing of reciprocity agreements. Handguns are restricted in Canada. Know the law before you leave U.S. waters. (rcmp-grc.ca/cfp-pcaf) Interpretation of Ohio's concealed carry law for handguns (ORC 2923.12) is administered by the Ohio Attorney General's Office.
This section does not apply to the possession or discharge of a U.S. Coast Guard approved distress signaling device when the device is possessed or used for the purpose of giving a distress signal. Such signaling devices shall only be loaded immediately prior to discharging a legal signal of distress.
No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

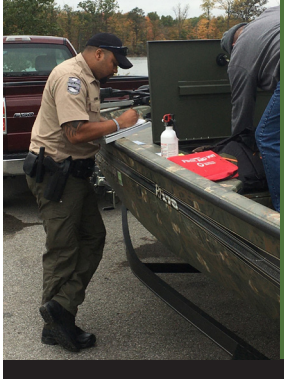
Not all states honor Ohio's concealed carry law. Visit the Ohio Attorney General's website (ohioattorneygeneral.gov) for a listing of reciprocity agreements. Handguns are restricted in Canada. Know the law before you leave U.S. waters. (rcmp-grc.ca/cfp-pcaf) Interpretation of Ohio's CCL for handguns (ORC 2923.12) is administered by the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

This section does not apply to the possession or discharge of a U.S. Coast Guard approved distress signaling device when the device is possessed or used for the purpose of giving a distress signal. Such signaling devices shall only be loaded immediately prior to discharging a legal signal of distress.

No person shall operate or permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

We're Hiring

Safeguard Ohio's natural treasures as a Natural Resource Officer.



- Uphold the law and serve the public with a job that keeps you outdoors and on your toes.
- Ideal canidates are self-driven, people-oriented, and service-minded individuals seeking a challenging but rewarding career.
- Work in state parks, forests, waterways, and other natural areas.
- Natural resources require natural problem solvers.

Training

- 22 Weeks paid cadet training. ($20.48 Hourly Rate)
- In-Residence Ohio Peace Officer's Training.
- Meals and uniforms provided.

Contact for Questions: NRORecruitment@dnr.ohio.gov
ohiostateparks.gov

VESSEL ACCIDENTS

Vessel Accidents (ORC 1547.10, ORC 1547.59 and OAC 1501:47-1-09)

The operator of a vessel involved in a collision or accident, to the extent possible without risking serious danger to their own vessel, crew and passengers, shall render assistance as may be practicable and necessary. Any person who renders assistance at the scene of an accident involving a vessel is not liable in a civil action for damages or injury from any act or omission in rendering assistance, except for willful or wanton misconduct.

The operator having knowledge of the accident or collision shall immediately stop and remain at the scene, to the extent that it is safe and practical, and give the operator's name and address and the boat owner's name and address, and registration number to any person injured or to the operator, owner or attendant of any vessel damaged or to a law enforcement officer. To report a boating accident, dial #ODNR.

If the accident results in loss of life, disappearance of an occupant, injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, damage to property in excess of $1,000 or complete loss of a vessel, the operator shall file a full report on a prescribed form. If the operator is incapacitated, an officer shall file the form.

To report a boating accident:

- Contact a Parks and Watercraft Field Office,
- Call 877-4BOATER (Ohio Only),
- Call #ODNR from a mobile phone.

Violation Resulting in Injury or Damage is Evidence of Negligence (ORC 1547.34)

Violations of watercraft law that result in injury to persons or damage to property shall constitute prima-facie evidence of negligence in a civil action.

CLOSE TO HOME

but far from ordinary

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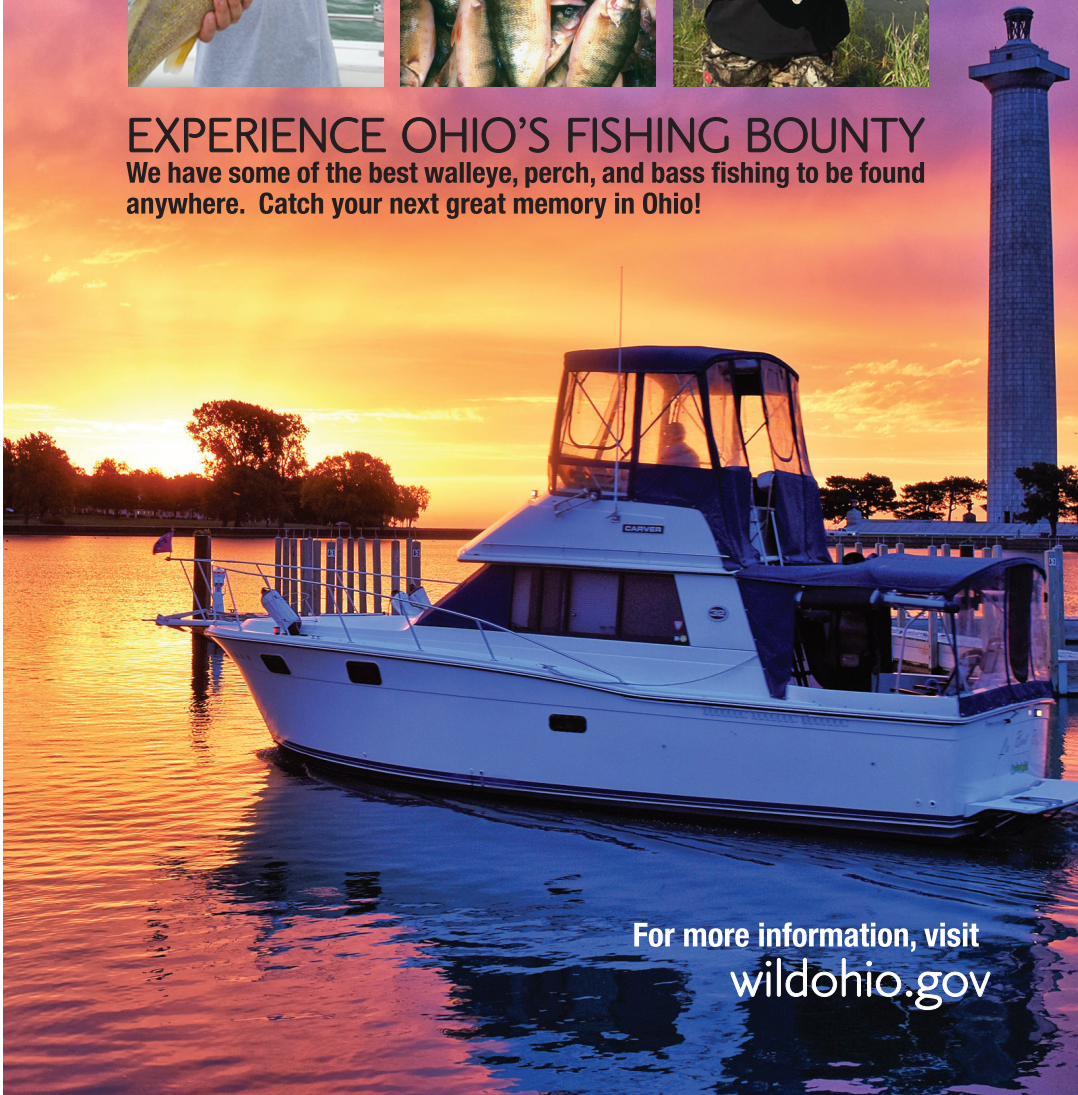
We have some of the best walleye, perch, and bass fishing to be found anywhere. Catch your next great memory in Ohio!



For more information, visit

wildohio.gov

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Water Bottle?
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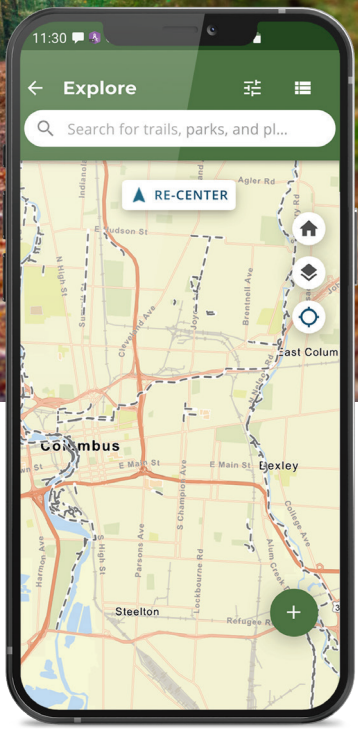

Take your DE**TOUR**

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

BOATING REGULATIONS SPECIFIC TO OHIO STATE PARK WATERWAYS (OAC 1501:47-3)

The following rules apply only to lakes at Ohio State Parks. On state park lakes, watercraft laws may be enforced by state natural resources officers, sheriff's deputies or other law enforcement units having jurisdiction in the area. Boating areas within other jurisdictions may have similar regulations.

Speed Limits; Speed and Ski Zone Operation (OAC 1501:47-3-08 and 1501:47-3-09)

The speed limit for all Ohio State Park lakes is 10 miles per hour, except from sunrise to sunset in designated speed zones, ski zones, or open zones.

No person shall operate a powercraft within a speed zone, ski zone or open zone at a greater speed than is reasonable, or in a manner without due regard to traffic, surface conditions and any other hazardous conditions.

Airfoils Prohibited (OAC 1501:47-3-10)

While being towed by a watercraft, no person shall have any airfoil or balloon for the purpose of becoming airborne over Ohio State Park waters.

Air Propelled Powercraft, Hovercraft (OAC 1501:47-3-11)

No person shall use or operate any air propelled powercraft or hovercraft on Ohio State Park waters except in the speed or ski zone and the water leading directly from a ramp or dock to these zones at Indian Lake, Grand Lake St. Marys, Buckeye Lake, Mosquito Lake, Rocky Fork Lake and Lake Milton.

No Wake Zones and Restricted Areas (OAC 1501:47-3-14)

No person shall operate a powercraft within or through a shore zone, danger zone or any area marked as a no wake zone at a speed that produces a wake.

Sleeping on Watercraft Prohibited (OAC 1501:47-3-21)

No boat operator shall sleep at night aboard a vessel adrift, at anchor, docked, moored, tied-up or beached on Ohio State Park waters except in designated locations.

Some parks have designated boat camping areas. Inquire about locations at the specific park office. Go online to ohiodnr.gov/boating to find out more.

Swimming Prohibited (OAC 1501:47-3-33)

No person shall swim, bathe, dive, or wade from any watercraft in Ohio State Park water except in officially designated boat swimming areas.

Most state parks have an area for boats to pull up to the public beach, and many parks have designated boat swim areas.

Intoxicating Beverage (OAC 1501:47-3-35)

No person shall overtly and publicly consume or display the presence of any beer or intoxicating liquor on any watercraft on any waters administered by Ohio State Parks.

The operator of any vessel is obligated to know the laws. Local jurisdictions may include but are not limited to neighboring states, ODNR Division of Wildlife, Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and city, village, county or township governments. Local rules may include horsepower or speed limits, vessel type and size restrictions, zoning restrictions or traffic patterns, additional equipment requirements or other general prohibitions.

Respect the River.

Ohio's rivers are beautiful – they are also wild places that can be dangerous.

Scan QR code for more information on paddling safety.

WEAR IT Ohio

DIVISION OF NATURAL AREAS & PRESERVES

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BOATING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The recreational boating experience is made richer when operating in clean water, bordered by pristine shoreline. How we operate and maintain our boats and deal with debris can significantly affect the marine environment.

Responsible Operation

- Educate yourself about products and practices that are safe for the environment. Share the information with your boating friends.
- Laws prohibiting speeding, littering and discharging sink waste into the water are designed to protect the environment. Obey these laws.
- Proceed slowly in shallow areas to avoid disturbing the environment. Stirring up sediment affects the natural life cycle.
- Watch your wake. Boat wake erodes shoreline and encourages silt build up.

Fuel and Engine Maintenance

- Keep your boat's engine well-tuned for fuel efficiency. Use engine cleaners minimally. Make sure your motor doesn't leak gas or oil into the water. Local jurisdictions may have additional boating laws, rules or ordinances.
- Remove all oil from the bilge. An oil absorbent bilge cushion can help. New products are being created that can remove petroleum hydrocarbons from bilge water.
- Do not drain engine fluids into the water.
- Flush winterizing agents and antifreeze from the engine prior to launching each season. Do not use ethylene glycol antifreeze in your boat; use only propylene glycol winterizing agents.
- Don't top off your tank when fueling. This reduces the risk of fuel overflow and allows for expansion in the tank. Make sure you wipe up all gasoline and oil spills.

Boat Painting and Cleaning

- Use environmentally friendly products on your boat – non-phosphate liquid detergents, biodegradable soaps and non-acidic teak cleaner to name a few.
- Properly dispose of hazardous products with high concentrations of toxins. Avoid using wood preserver, turpentine, paint thinners and dangerous cleansers on or near the water.
- Know and use legal bottom paints. Treat paint chips as hazardous waste when scraping bottom paint and dispose of them properly. Avoid using toxic tributyltin (TBT) paints.

Waste Disposal

- Use onshore restroom facilities or carry a portable toilet or marine head with a holding tank. Use the nearest pump-out or dump station for waste disposal.
- Secure trash and dispose of it properly on shore. Recycle when possible.
- Minimize disposable plastic products brought on board. Do not dispose of them in the water or let them get blown overboard. Fishing line, six-pack rings and plastic bags are harmful to fish, birds, vegetation and wildlife. They also tangle boat props, clog intakes and litter shorelines.
- Support marinas that are environmentally conscious. They will assist you in recycling oil, antifreeze, aluminum and plastic bottles and provide a pump-out facility for your sanitary system.
- Recycle old fire extinguishers and marine batteries.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)

- Educate yourself on the increasing threat of these uninvited guests. Milfoil, zebra mussels and other ANS are being increasingly regulated to prevent their spread.
- Remove all visible aquatic plants and animals from your boat, motor, trailer and other equipment before leaving the access area.
- Always drain live wells and transom wells before leaving the water.
- Never dump live bait into any lake, river or stream.

Ohio Clean Boater / Clean Marina Program

The basic goal of these programs is to increase environmental stewardship by making boaters and marinas more aware of environmental laws, rules and regulations and pump-out facilities. A priority is to get as many marinas as possible to "take the pledge" and follow the Clean Marinas Guidebook for best management practices, thus earning the "Ohio Clean Marina" certification.

Ohio's recreational boaters play a critical role by adopting the environmental boating practices listed above. Doing so will help preserve and protect the natural resources that we depend on – clean water and fresh air.

Information regarding aquatic nuisance species and the Ohio Clean Boater /Clean Marina Program is readily available from a variety of sources including online. Take the "pledge" by contacting the Ohio Sea Grant College Program at 419-609-4120 or ohioseagrant.osu.edu/cleanmarinas.

EMERGENCY RADIO CALL PROCEDURES

1. MAKE SURE RADIO IS ON
2. ON DIGITAL SELECTIVE CALLING (DSC) RADIOS, LIFT COVER AND PRESS DISTRESS BUTTON FOR 5 SECONDS AND RELEASE
3. VERIFY RADIO HAS SWITCHED TO **CHANNEL 16** AND GO TO STEP 5
4. ON NON-DSC RADIOS, CHANGE TO **CHANNEL 16**
5. PRESS AND HOLD THE TRANSMIT BUTTON
6. CLEARLY SAY: "MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY"
7. ALSO GIVE:
   - VESSEL NAME AND/OR DESCRIPTION
   - POSITION AND/OR LOCATION
   - NATURE OF EMERGENCY
   - NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON BOARD
8. RELEASE THE TRANSMIT BUTTON
9. WAIT 30 SECONDS – IF NO RESPONSE, REPEAT "MAYDAY" CALL

HAVE ALL PERSONS PUT ON LIFE JACKETS

* Intentional hoax calls are an offense and subject to prosecution.

** The U.S. Coast Guard does not monitor Channel 16 for inland waters. Local patrol units may monitor channel 16 if capable.

16

U.S. VHF Marine Channels

Channel	Usage
06	Intership Safety
09	Boater Calling
12	Port Operations
13	Bridge to Bridge
14	Port Operations
16	**International Distress, Safety and Calling**
17	State and Local Government Maritime Control
20	Port Operations
22A	Coast Guard Liaison and Maritime Safety Information
24-28	Public Correspondence
65-66	Port Operations
68-69	Non-Commercial
70	Digital Selective Calling
71	Non-Commercial
72	Non-Commercial (Intership)
73-74	Port Operations
77	Intership Port Operations
78A	Non-Commercial

Required Equipment for Boats in Ohio

NOTE: This chart is intended for quick reference only and is not a substitute for knowledge of the specifics of Ohio boating laws.

WARNING: If a vessel is exempted from carrying specific equipment, that does not mean that a wise skipper would not carry it anyway!

BOAT SMART OHIO!

		POWERBOATS (Including electric motors)					SAILBOATS (If attached see powerboats)				MANUALLY PROPELLED (No motor or sail)			
		Personal Watercraft (PWC) Less than 16 feet	Less than 16 feet in length (Class A)	16 feet but less than 26 feet in length (Class 1)	26 feet but less than 40 feet in length (Class 2)	40 feet but less than 65 feet in length (Class 3)	Less than 16 feet in length (Class A)	16 feet but less than 26 feet in length (Class 1)	26 feet but less than 40 feet in length (Class 2)	40 feet but less than 65 feet in length (Class 3)	Canoes, Kayaks	Rowboats	Inflatable Boats	Kiteboards, Paddleboards Belly Boats, Float Tubes
TITLE (ORC 1548.03) (not required to be carried onboard)		●	●[1]	●	●	●	●[1]	●	●	●		●[1]	●[1]	
REGISTRATION and NUMBERS (ORC 1547.53)		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●[2]	●[2]	●[2]	
PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (ORC 1547.25)	One wearable device for each person on board.	●[11]	●[3]	●[3]	●	●	●[3]	●[3]	●	●	●[3]	●[3]	●[3]	●[3]
	One throwable device as an extra.			●	●	●		●	●	●				
FIRE EXTINGUISHER(S) (ORC 1547.27)	One Type B-1	●	●[4]	●[4]										
	Two Type B-1 or one B-2				●									
	Three Type B-1 or one B-2 plus one B-1					●								
VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS (ORC 1547.251)	On Lake Erie, a USCG approved signal for both day and night use	12		●	●	●			●	●				
	On Lake Erie (sunset to sunrise), a USCG approved signal for night use	12	●				●	●			●	●	●	●
	On waters other than Lake Erie, a distress flag or USCG approved signal for day use	●	●	●	●	●	●[5]	●[5]	●	●				
SOUND SIGNALING DEVICES (OAC 1501:47-2-33)	On *Federal waters a whistle, horn or other device	●	●	●	●[6]	●[6]	●	●	●[6]	●[6]	●	●	●	●
	On inland waters a whistle, horn or other device			●	●[6]	●[6]								

ANCHOR and LINE (ORC 1547.26 and OAC 1501: 47-1-11)		● [7]	● [7]	●	●	●		● [7]	●	●		● [7]	● [7]	
LIGHTS (OAC 1501: 47-2)	Running lights as prescribed by federal and state law	12	●	●	●	●		● [8]	●	●				
	Running lights or electric torch or lighted lantern	12					●	● [9]			●	●	●	●
	Anchor light (displayed at anchor)	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
VENTILATION: Engine and fuel tank compartments (ORC 1547.29)		● [10]	●	●	●	●								
BACKFIRE FLAME ARRESTOR: Inboard engines (ORC 1547.28)		● [10]	●	●	●	●								
MUFFLING DEVICE or underwater exhaust (ORC 1547.31)		●	●	●	●	●								
ENGINE CUTOFF SWITCH LANYARD (ORC 1547.41)		●												
INLAND NAVIGATION RULES (OAC 1501: 47-1-29)					● [13]	●			● [13]	●				
GARBAGE PLACARD (OAC 1501: 47-1-28)					●	●			●	●				
OIL POLLUTION PLACARD (OAC 1501: 47-1-27)					●	●			●	●				

1) A title is not required for any vessel less than 14 feet long without a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or more.
2) Exemption of OH numbers for those with alternate registration for handpowered vessels.
3) On vessels less than 18 feet in length, any child less than 10 years of age must wear a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved flotation device at all times.
4) Exception for vessels propelled by an electric motor and vessels less than 26 feet in length designed for use with an outboard motor, of "open construction."
5) Exception for sailboats less than 26 feet in length with completely "open construction" and without propulsion machinery.
6) Vessels over 12 meters (39.4 ft.) must have a power whistle.
7) Exception for any vessel less than 14 feet in length, any canoe and any sailboat less than 21 feet in length.
8) Applies to sailing vessels of 7 meters (23.0 ft.) or more in length.
9) Applies to sailing vessels less than 7 meters (23.0 ft.) in length.
10) Some varieties of personal watercraft may be exempted by the USCG. Consult your watercraft dealer or the manufacturer to verify requirements for these devices.
11) Every person on board a personal watercraft must wear a properly fitted wearable flotation device.
12) Prohibited from operating between sunset and sunrise.
13) Applies to any vessel of 12 meters (39.4 ft.) or more in length.
* Federal waters in Ohio include Lake Erie and connecting bays and harbors, the Ohio River and the Muskingum River.

ATTENTION BOATERS

Ohio Vessel Mandatory Education Requirements (ORC 1547.05)
Operator Age Requirements (ORC 1547.06)
Supervising Person Requirements (ORC 1547.06)

Mandatory boater education is required for any person born on or after **January 1, 1982,** who operates a powerboat greater than 10 horsepower. *Ohio's Mandatory Education Law does not change operator age limits for youth.*

What the law says about age restrictions and supervising individuals:

Child operators operating vessels powered by more than 10 horsepower are required to meet the mandatory education requirements even while supervised by a person 18 years of age or older.

A supervising person is defined as an adult person who is 18 years of age or older and provides direct visual and audible supervision.

A supervising person must meet the mandatory education requirements as described above.

Personal Watercraft (PWCs)	• Individuals who are 16 years of age or older may legally operate (unsupervised). • Individuals 12-15 years of age may operate if a supervising person is aboard. • Individuals under 12 years of age may not operate at all.
Powercraft with **greater** than 10hp motor (excluding PWCs)	• Individuals 12 years of age or older may legally operate (unsupervised). • Individuals under 12 years of age may operate *if* a supervising person is aboard.
Powercraft with 10hp or **less** motor or vessels without a motor (excluding PWCs)	• Individuals that are 12 years of age or older may legally operate. • Individuals under 12 years of age may operate if the operator is under the direct visual and audible supervision of a supervising person (the supervising person is not required to be on board).

To comply, complete either a Certified Classroom Course, Home Study Course, Online Computer Course or Proficiency Exam.

For course listings, contact the ODNR Division of Parks & Watercraft at **877-4BOATER** (Ohio only) or visit our website at **ohiodnr.gov/boating.**

QUICK REFERENCE

OHIO STATE PARKS & WATERCRAFT

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF PARKS & WATERCRAFT

Boating information is available at any Ohio State Park office.
Visit ohiodnr.gov/boating for more information.

Proficiency exams for Ohio's mandatory boater education requirement are offered by appointment at the following locations:

HEADQUARTERS
2045 Morse Road, Building A
Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693
(614) 265-6480

ALUM CREEK STATE PARK
3615 S. Old State Road
Delaware, Ohio 43015
(740) 548-4631

BUCK CREEK STATE PARK
1976 Buck Creek Lane
Springfield, Ohio 45502
(937) 322-5284

BURR OAK STATE PARK
10220 Burr Oak Lodge Road
Glouster, Ohio 45732
(740) 767-3570

COWAN LAKE STATE PARK
1750 Osborn Road
Wilmington, Ohio 45177
(937) 382-1096

CLEVELAND
1150 E49th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
(216) 361-1212

DILLON STATE PARK
5265 Dillon Hills Drive
Nashport, Ohio 43830-9568
(740) 453-4377

GENEVA STATE PARK
4499 Padanarum Road
Geneva, Ohio 44041
(440) 466-8400

INDIAN LAKE STATE PARK
13156 State Route 235 North
Lakeview, Ohio 43331
(937) 843-2717

SHAWNEE MARINA/CAMPGROUND
11152 US Route 52
Stout, Ohio 45684
(740) 858-6681

SALT FORK STATE PARK
14755 Cadiz Road
Lore City, Ohio 43755
(740) 439-4076

EAST FORK STATE PARK
3294 Elklick Road
Bethel, Ohio 45106
(513) 734-2730

MAUMEE BAY STATE PARK
1400 State Park Road
Oregon, Ohio 43616
(419) 836-1466

ROCKY FORK STATE PARK
9800 North Shore Drive
Hillsboro, Ohio 45133
(937) 393-4284

SANDUSKY
1407 Cleveland Road
Sandusky, Ohio 44870
(419) 621-1302

WINGFOOT LAKE STATE PARK
993 Goodyear Park Boulevard
Mogadore, Ohio 44260
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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF
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