State of Louisiana

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Introduction

As the boaters of this state travel our bayous, bays, lakes, rivers, and ponds, they can all feel a sense of pride for the great wealth of resources they possess. This state has over four million acres of water which are open to boaters. It affords the public the opportunity to engage in numerous water related activities from water skiing to commercial fishing.

For years, we have taken for granted the carefree pleasure of a summer boat ride or trawling in a secluded bay without the presence of other boats. As leisure time increases, the number of boats has continued to increase as well. There are now nearly 350,000 recreational boats in the state, and the number is growing rapidly.

Because of this growing number of boats, it became evident that the use of our water ways must be shared by a number of different users. Each must respect the rights of others and everyone must be more knowledgeable about the rules and regulations of using a boat.

The Louisiana Boater's Guide is but one step the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Boating Safety Section has taken to provide that informa-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District I</th>
<th>District V</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minden Office</td>
<td>Lake Charles Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 915</td>
<td>1213 N. Lakeshore Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minden, LA 81055</td>
<td>Lake Charles, LA 70601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(318) 266-7593</td>
<td>(318) 491-2580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District II</td>
<td>District VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monroe Office</td>
<td>Opelousas Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO Box 4004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monroe, LA 71203</td>
<td>Opelousas, LA 70570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(318) 343-2417</td>
<td>(318) 264-5074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District III</td>
<td>District VII</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexandria Office</td>
<td>Baton Rouge Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO Box 278</td>
<td>PO Box 98000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tioga, LA 71477</td>
<td>Baton Rouge, LA 70898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(318) 487-5634</td>
<td>(504) 765-2999</td>
</tr>
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<td>District IV</td>
<td>District VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferriday Office</td>
<td>New Orleans Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 426</td>
<td>400 Royal Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferriday, LA 71334</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA 70130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(318) 487-5009</td>
<td>(504) 568-5616</td>
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Method of Registration

All boats with motors, including electric trolling motors, operating on the waters of the state, must be registered and numbered. Boat registration applications are available from most boat dealers, from any Wildlife and Fisheries district office in Alexandria, Monroe, Minden, Ferriday, Lake Charles, Opelousas, New Orleans, and from main headquarters (Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Motorboat Section, PO Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898). Phone: 765-2898.

Specific instructions on the application explain how to fill out the form. Read these instructions and follow them carefully. All blanks must be filled in correctly and completely or the application will be returned. Incomplete or incorrect applications may cause a delay in your boat registration.

The fee for a first-time boat registration is $15.00. After completing the application, mail it with your check or money order to the main headquarters for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Allow six to eight weeks for processing. There is a $1 postage and handling fee for all transactions.

Upon receipt and approval of your application, the Department will issue you a certificate of number, stating the number assigned to the boat, and two decals. Every certificate of number awarded is valid for three years.

Your boat registration certificate must be on board the vessel at all times. It is wise to keep a copy of it on board in a waterproof container and the original in a safe place where it can be readily found by the owner. The original registration certificate is as important as the pink slip to automobile registration.

Display of Number and Decals

The number assigned (and no other) shall be painted on or attached to each side of the forward half of the vessel's hull. It should be placed so it is clearly visible and legible. The letters and numbers must be of a plain block design and good size, not less than 3 inches high, and of a color which will contrast with the hull for maximum visibility and legibility, (light numbers on a dark hull or vice versa). The number and letters must be vertical (not slanted) and plain (not script or varying in thickness). Border, outline, or "shadowing" must be disregarded in determining height or color contrast. Between the prefix, the numerals, and the suffix there must be a hyphen or space. The hyphen or space must be at least the width of a number (except "1") or any letter (except "i"). Examples of correct number display are:

LA-123-AB or LA 123 AB

Decals received from the Department must be attached to each side of the vessel's bow within six inches of the numbers.
Expiration and Renewal

Boat registrations expire on the date stated on the registration certificate. Certificates of number must be renewed within 60 days of the expiration date. Application for renewal can be done on the same form used for new, duplicate, transfer, or change of address procedures, by checking the box labeled “Renewal.” The renewal fee is $10.00.

Transfer of Ownership

Certificates of number that have not expired or been cancelled can be transferred. For instance, this means that if you sell your boat, the new owner does not obtain new boat numbers but a transfer of the original boat registration numbers and certificate to his name.

When a boat is sold, the Department must be notified within 15 days of the date of the transaction. The regular registration application should be used for this purpose. The fee for transferring a certificate of number is $5.00.

On a transfer application you must include the Louisiana registration number, the hull identification number, and proof of ownership from the previous owner. This may be the certificate of number card with the re-assignment of ownership on the reverse side completed and signed by the prior owner, or a hand written statement from the prior owner stating he sold the boat to you.

Duplicate Certificates

If a certificate is lost or destroyed, the boat owner must notify the Department in writing within 15 days, describing the circumstances of the loss. In addition to this report, the owner must fill out the regular boat registration form and check the box for duplicate copy. The fee for a duplicate certificate is $5.00.

Change of Address

The law requires that the Department be notified within 15 days of any change in the mailing address of the owner of a vessel registered with the state. Again, the regular boat registration application form should be filled out and the box for change of address checked. The cost for a certificate of number showing the address change is $5.00.

Lost, Stolen, Destroyed, or Abandoned Vessels

When a registered boat is lost, stolen, destroyed, or abandoned, the law requires the owner to notify the Department within 15 days so that the certificate of number for the motorboat involved can be terminated.

In cases where a boat is lost or stolen, the owner should also report the incident to local law enforcement authorities having jurisdiction. Report the vessel’s registration number, the owner’s name and mailing address, and any distinctive boat markings.

Tax Payment Certificates

Louisiana law requires that, before registration, all vessels (old or new) purchased from a boat dealer in Louisiana or a boat coming in from out of state must show proof that all necessary sales taxes have been paid. A special tax payment certification form must therefore be filled out cor-
rectly, signed, and returned to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries along with the registration application.

The certification must be signed by either the dealer, builder, or by a Revenue Deputy of the Department of Revenue in the case of a boat brought into Louisiana from another state. Tax certification is not required on casual sales between individuals within Louisiana.

**Hull Identification Number**

A hull identification number is a 12-digit combination of letters and numbers located on the outside transom in quarter inch minimum letters. Any vessel constructed after November 1, 1972, must have this number permanently displayed on the boat by the manufacturer before the boat can be sold. (Boats manufactured prior to this date will have a metal tag serial number.)

All owners or backyard builders of homemade boats will be assigned a hull identification number by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries when they submit their registration application.

The boating registration application requires a hull identification number. Without the number, the application will be rejected. *Do not confuse the hull identification number with the boat registration numbers that are displayed on the bow.*

It is a violation of Federal and State law to possess knowingly any vessel or motor from which the hull identification or serial number has been removed. Salvage or found vessels, or vessels with no identification markings must be reported immediately to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Vessels of this type will not be eligible for registration until a physical inspection has been performed by an Enforcement Officer of the Department.
Required Safety Equipment

PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES

Every recreational vessel less than 16 feet in length must have a Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III, IV, or V Personal Flotation Device for each person. On watercraft 16 feet in length or more you must have a Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person plus one Type IV. Motorboats carrying passengers for hire must have a Coast Guard approved Type I or II PFD for each person.

All PFDs carried on board must be serviceable, readily accessible, and of appropriate size for the intended wearer. A serviceable PFD is free of rot, tears, punctures and waterlogging. In addition, all straps and buckles must be attached and functional. Readily accessible means that the PFD can be immediately reached in an emergency situation. Never keep any PFD under lock and key. Make certain your passengers always know the location of these important life saving devices.

When shopping for a PFD look for the United States Coast Guard approval label and read it. This label will tell you many important features about the device as well as letting you know if it is adequate for the intended purpose.

Type I PFD (Offshore Lifejacket). This device has the greatest required buoyancy and is designed to turn most unconscious persons in the water from a face down position to a vertical and slightly backward position (righting ability). The Type I is a good choice if you plan to venture offshore or onto waters where chances of immediate rescue are slight. This device is available in two sizes only: Adult (individuals over 90 lbs.) and Child (individuals less than 90 lbs.).
(individuals more than 50 but less than 90 lbs.), and two categories of small child (individuals less than 50 lbs. and individuals less than 30 lbs.).

**Type III PFD (Flotation Aide).** This PFD has about the same buoyancy as a Type II PFD but little or no righting ability. These devices are designed specifically for activities such as water skiing, fishing, and sailing.

**Type IV PFD (Throwable Device).** This device has limited applications and should only be used upon protected waters where there is probability of quick rescue. These devices are intended to be thrown to a victim in the water rather than worn by a passenger.

**Type V PFD (Special Use Devices).** This device is the newest addition to the family of PFDs. This model has a minimum of 7½ lbs. of buoyancy which can be further inflated to 22 lbs. of buoyancy by the wearer. Should you select this PFD, it is required to be worn at all times while aboard the boat.

NOTE: These devices — Types III and V — require wearer participation for maneuvering of the vertical and slightly backward position required to keep the face out of the water. Handicapped, injured, or unconscious persons may not achieve the proper positioning by using these PFDs.

NOTE: On boats less than 26 feet, children 12 or younger must wear their PFD when the boat is underway.

**VISUAL DISTRESS EQUIPMENT**

All recreational boats, when used on coastal waters and the territorial seas, up to a point where a body of water is less than two miles wide must be equipped with visual distress signals. Boats owned in the United States operating on the high seas must also be equipped with visual distress signals. The following are excepted from the requirements for day signals and only need to carry night signals when operating at night:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Distress Signals</th>
<th>Red Distress Flare (Hand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange Flag</td>
<td>use day only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm Signals (Use Bright Cloth)</td>
<td>use day only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Smoke Signal (Hand)</td>
<td>use day, night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Meteor</td>
<td>use day, night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dye Marker</td>
<td>use day only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

use night only
• Recreational boats less than 16 feet in length.
• Boats participating in organized events such as races, regattas, or marine parades.
• Open sailboats less than 26 feet in length not equipped with propulsion machinery.
• Manually propelled boats.

Pyrotechnic visual distress signals must be Coast Guard approved, in serviceable condition and stowed to be readily accessible. They are marked with a date showing the serviceable life, and this date must not have passed. Launchers produced before January 1, 1981, intended for use with approved signals are not required to be Coast Guard approved.

USCG approved pyrotechnic visual distress signals and associated devices include:

• Pyrotechnic red flares, hand-held, or aerial.
• Pyrotechnic orange smoke, hand-held or floating.
• Launchers for aerial red meteors or parachute flares.

Non-pyrotechnic visual distress signaling devices must carry the manufacturer's certification that they meet Coast Guard requirements. They must be in serviceable condition and stowed to be readily accessible. This group includes:

• Orange distress flag.
• Electric distress signal.

No single signaling device is ideal under all conditions and for all purposes. Consideration should therefore be given to carrying several types. For example, an aerial flare can be seen over a long distance on a clear night, but for closer work, a hand-held flare may be more useful.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

All mechanically propelled vessels less than 26 feet must carry one B-I U.S. Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher. (Not required on outboard motorboats less than 26 feet in length, if the construction of such motorboats will not permit the entrapment of explosive or flammable gases or vapors and if fuel tanks are not permanently installed.)

Mechanically propelled vessels **26 feet to less than 40 feet** must carry two B-I United States Coast Guard approved fire extinguishers.

**Vessels over 65 feet** must comply with **Federal Standards**.

Extinguishers approved for motorboats are hand portable, of either B-I or B-II Classification or their U.L. Equivalents, and have the characteristics shown above.

Two B-I fire extinguishers may be replaced by one B-II extinguisher. Vessels equipped with fixed extinguishing systems in the engine space may...
delete one B-I fire extinguisher.
Although outboards are generally exempted from fire extinguisher requirements, certain types of construction or closed spaces may necessitate the carriage of an extinguisher. If in doubt, check with the United States Coast Guard or your local marine patrol.

ANCHORS
All mechanically propelled vessels should carry an anchor and anchor line of sufficient weight and strength to provide safe anchorage. Select the appropriate anchor for your boat and for the type bottom you expect to be anchoring in. If in doubt, consult your marine dealer or local marine patrol.

Generally speaking, the prudent mariner should carry an anchor, which when planted in the bottom, can hold a vessel when subjected to the worse conditions of wind and tide. The anchor cable in turn should be between four and seven times the depth of water normally anchored in.

WHISTLE (HORN) AND BELL
All vessels 16 to 26 feet in length must carry a hand, mouth, or power operated whistle on board. All vessels over 26 feet in length must carry a bell. For added requirements, see the chart on the inside back cover.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boat Length (Feet)</th>
<th>Anchor Size (Pounds)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danforth</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-16</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-24</td>
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NAVIGATION LIGHTS (UNDERWAY)
Recreational boats must display their required navigation lights at all times between sunset to sunrise, and during daylight periods of reduced visibility. (See pages 20 and 21.)

All of the larger vessels illustrated on page 22 are restricted in their ability to maneuver. The prudent recreational boater should always exercise particular caution when encountering these larger and less maneuverable vessels. Never hamper the progress of these vessels and always take ample and sufficient action to avoid a close quarters situation.

Police Boats. Law enforcement vessels engaged in enforcement activities may display a flashing blue light. When you see such lights slacken speed, yield right of way, or if necessary stop your vessel.

ANCHOR LIGHTS
All vessels 22.96 feet (7 meters) in length up to 164.04 feet (50 meters) in length, when at anchor, must exhibit where it can best be seen an all around white light. (By day — a black ball shall be exhibited.) However vessels less than 22.96 feet (7 meters) in length are not required to display anchor lights unless anchored in or near a narrow channel, fairway or anchorage, or where other vessels normally navigate.
### Lights (Ranges and Arcs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Lights On Vessel</th>
<th>Visible Range in Miles</th>
<th>Arc in Degrees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Masthead light" /></td>
<td>Less than 39.36 ft.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="All-round light" /></td>
<td>39.36 ft. or more</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sidelights" /></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sternlight" /></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Power Driven Vessels

**Figure 1**

A or B

**Figure 2**

A or B

Note: A sailing vessel operating under machinery alone, or under sail and machinery power is considered a power-driven vessel. Only vessels less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length may show the required sidelights as a combined lantern.

### Sailing Vessels

**Figure 3**

A or B

(Mandatory)

**Figure 4**

A or B

(Optional red over green)

**Figure 5**

Combined Tricolor Light
The Rules of the Nautical Road

The rules of the road are an internationally accepted standard by which all mariners are to comply when operating any vessel upon the water. Basically, the rules require that every operator conduct his vessel in a prudent manner, at a safe speed, constantly maintaining a proper lookout by all means available to him.

The Sound Signals. Under the Inland Navigation rules, signals are used to indicate the maneuvers of a vessel. In Inland waters, you signal your intentions and wait for the other vessel's operator to reply. He can either reply with the same signal and you can pass as agreed, or give the danger signal.

Under the International Rules, sound signals are used only when the movement is being executed.
1. One short blast. Inland: I plan to pass with you on my port side. International: I am changing course to starboard.
2. Two short blasts. Inland: I plan to pass with you on my starboard side. International: I am changing course to port.
3. Three short blasts: both international and Inland: I have my engines in reverse.
4. Five or more short blasts: Indicates danger.

All vessels approaching each other at such angles or directions so as to involve the risk of collision shall exchange the above signals and direct themselves in the following manner:

Crossing. When two vessels are approaching at perpendicular or oblique angles, the vessel which has the other on her starboard side shall keep out of the way of the other vessel. The rules allow either vessel to initiate the one blast in this situa-
tion which should then be answered by one blast from the other vessel.

**Meeting head on.** When two vessels are approaching on reciprocal courses in a head on or nearly so situation, both vessels should exchange one blast and pass with safe room on each others’ port side.

**The overtaking situation.** When one vessel is overtaking another vessel from any direction two or more points abaft the other vessel’s beam, that vessel is an overtaking vessel and thus required to keep clear of the other vessel. The overtaking vessel should indicate the intended side on which it desires to pass and wait until the overtaken vessel signals a similar signal before passing.

Keep these things in mind:

1. Most practical situations upon the water involve more than two vessels operating under less than ideal conditions. In such multiple vessels encounters, all mariners should exercise good seamanship, operate at a safe speed, and if ever in doubt as to the intentions of another vessel, immediately sound the danger signal, slacken speed, or stop the vessel until danger of collision passes.

2. As a stand on or privileged vessel (vessel with right of way) in any of the mentioned situations, you are required to hold course and speed until such time as it becomes apparent to you that action by the give way or burdened vessel (vessel that should yield) alone cannot avoid the collision. (Don’t be stubborn, even if you are entitled to the right of way—you may be dead right. Exercise prudent seamanship in all close quarters situations.) Again if you, at any time, are in doubt as to the intentions of another vessel, sound the danger signal and take neces-
sary action to avoid the collision. Remember that there are a lot of operators on the water who don’t know the first thing about boating, not to mention the rules of the road.

Rules for Restricted Visibility. When operating under conditions of reduced visibility such as fog, heavy rain, snow, etc., all vessels must travel at a safe speed for the prevailing conditions, and in addition, sound one blast on the horn or whistle once every two minutes. Under reduced visibility conditions always navigate with extreme caution and keep a sharp lookout for lights and signals from other vessels.

When at anchor in reduced visibility every vessel must ring the ship’s bell or other device for a period of five seconds, once every two minutes. This does not apply to vessels moored in approved anchorages or in close-in areas where vessels don’t normally navigate. Should you be anchored in a channel or in other frequently navigated waters you must sound the bell to alert others to your position.

Responsibilities Between Vessels: Who Has the Right of Way?
1. A power-driven vessel underway shall keep out of the way of:
   • A vessel not under command (unable to maneuver).
   • A vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver.
   • A vessel engaged in fishing.*
   • A sailing vessel.
2. A sailing vessel underway shall keep out of the way of:
   • A vessel not under command.
   • A vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver.
   • A vessel engaged in fishing.*
3. A vessel engaged in fishing* when underway shall, so far as possible, keep out of the way of:
   • A vessel not under command.
   • A vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver.

* A vessel engaged in fishing does not include vessels fishing with trolling lines or other apparatus which does not restrict maneuverability.

As a general rule, it's best to avoid hampering the progress of any large vessel even if you think you have the right of way. Keep in mind that large vessels can only operate in the navigable channels whereas your boat may safely navigate in very little water. If you feel you need to stay within the designated channel due to your draft, observe good seamanship and keep as far to the right side of the channel as is safe and practical for your vessel.

Another thing to remember is that large vessels, even at slow speed, may throw a large wake. Large deeply laden vessels can also take up to a half mile or more to come to a complete stop. Never put your vessel in a position where a pilot has to execute an emergency maneuver to avoid running you down. Large vessels have extreme momentum behind them. When meeting them upon the water, a little common sense and courtesy goes a long way.

While on the subject of larger vessels, never haul or launch your boat at a ramp when these larger vessels are passing. The amount of water displaced by the vessels passing may not only damage your boat but endanger your life as well. If you're swimming by the shore when a large vessel approaches, get out of the water. The suction effect will probably pull you way out into the river, over your head.

Never run between a tow boat and her tow. The tow line may only be submerged a few feet. Should the cable become taut it could damage your vessel and endanger your life. Learn the signals displa-ayed by tug boats and stay well clear of the tug, tow, and cable.

Stay well clear of a tug boat pushing a barge. The operator may not be able to see you as much as 1,000 feet ahead of the barge. If you break down, and the barge is 1,000 feet away, you only have one minute to get out of the way and the barge cannot stop.

**Boating on the Gulf Coast**

All the dangers which confront the freshwater boater are magnified when boating on the gulf coast.

When wind hits the unobstructed expanse of the gulf, waves build dangerously high in a short time. Also, the distances involved handicap rescue efforts.

Boat traffic can be very congested along the Louisiana coast and throughout the Mississippi delta region's waterways. The coastal waterways are often shallow and filled with shell reefs and rocks. Because of this, much of the traffic, from small skiffs to huge barges, uses marked channels.

When traveling in these channels, the recreational boater must stay alert when overtaking or meeting a large ship, barge, or string of barges. These large vessels are difficult to maneuver, so they have the right-of-way and they expect the recreational boater to stay clear. Also from some angles, they have difficulty seeing small craft.

Strings of loaded barges can look deceptively innocent as they slide along with only a foot or two showing above the water. But these reach nine or 10 feet down into the water. A tremendous disturbance of the water occurs when they pass, and the small boat operator should reduce his speed and give them ample clearance.
Tides are not as big a factor in Louisiana as in other parts of the country. The average daily variation between high and low tide is one foot, but during rough weather it can vary as much as 10 feet.

Before going boating on the coast, refresh your knowledge of weather, rules of the road, and navigation. Make sure that your boat and all the equipment aboard is in good condition and that you and your crew know how to handle a boat in emergency situations.

Alcohol Safety

Coast Guard studies indicate that as many as 50 percent of all boating accidents may be alcohol related.

To learn how drinking affects boating, we must first look at how alcohol affects people. Although alcohol has been used since about 8000 B.C., there are still many myths about alcohol that are not true.

Myth: Beer is less intoxicating than other alcoholic beverages.

Fact: One 12 ounce can of beer, one 6 ounce glass of wine, or one shot of 80 proof liquor all contain about the same amount of alcohol and have the same effect.

Myth: A cold shower, a walk in the fresh air, or black coffee will sober you up.

Fact: Once you have consumed alcohol, nothing will sober you up except time. Your body will metabolize about one ounce of alcohol per hour. If you are legally drunk it will take about seven hours to sober up.

Myth: It's easy to tell if someone is too drunk to drive.

Fact: Many experienced drinkers have learned to compensate for alcohol's outwardly visual effects and can hide their intoxicated condition.

Myth: You are the best person to judge whether you are fit to drive.

Fact: One of the first things you lose when drinking is your judgment.

Some of the effects of alcohol on boaters are:

Balance: Most people who die in boating accidents either fall out of their boat or capsize their boat and end up in the water. Balance is one of the first things you lose when you consume alcohol. The problem is that you may not notice the reduction in ability and a small unstable boat is very unforgiving.

Coordination: As the amount of alcohol you drink increases, your ability to coordinate your arm and leg movement is reduced. A drunk boater will have great difficulty trying to swim to a life saving device, let alone put it on, despite his sober ability.

Vision: Since vision provides about 90 percent of the information we use in a traffic situation or driving a boat, it is important to understand how it is affected by alcohol.

The pupil of the eye acts like the shutter on a camera. As you drink alcohol, the pupil's ability to control the amount of light entering the eye is diminished, which reduces your ability to see, particularly at night.

Alcohol is actually a depressant and affects the control of the small muscles that focus both eyes on the same object. The result may be fuzzy vision or double vision. If you are seeing double, your brain may suppress one image; you will only be seeing with one eye, and you will lose depth perception.

Alcohol reduces peripheral vision, the ability to see objects to your side. As speed increases, our
ability to see to the side decreases, with the final result being tunnel vision, the ability to see and react to only those objects directly ahead of you.

Alcohol reduces your ability to distinguish between colors, particularly red and green, such as the running lights on a boat.

Combining all these effects, the wrong amount of light entering the eye, poor focus or double vision, loss of depth perception, tunnel vision, and the inability to distinguish color, is very dangerous.

**Judgment and Risk Taking:** As in cases of fatigue and hypothermia, one of the first things you lose when you start to drink is your judgment. After a drink or two, people tend to loosen up, lose their inhibitions, and are more likely to try to perform daring and bold acts. Since their judgment is already affected, they may not even be aware of their bold actions.

Blood alcohol content (BAC) may be estimated by referring to the chart shown here.

### Blood Alcohol Content Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Weight in Pounds</th>
<th>Number of Drinks in a Two Hour Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>160</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **BAC to .05%**
  - Be Careful—Loss of judgment and coordination
- **BAC .05% to .09%**
  - Abilities Impaired—Chance of accident increased
- **BAC 10% and over**
  - Do Not Operate a Boat—High risk of accident

### Float Plans

Before you leave in your boat, write down a float plan and give it to someone reliable. Items to include are where you are going, when you expect to leave, who is going with you, and when you will return. An accurate description of your boat should be given in case the marine patrol has to search for you. If your plans change, notify your contact as soon as possible.

### Storm Warnings

A responsible boat operator will always keep abreast of changing weather conditions and will never leave a dock while small craft advisories are posted. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) transmits weather forecasts and issues small craft advisories which may be obtained from:

1. Local radio stations.
2. National weather service (listed under U.S. Commerce Department).
3. Many marinas and yacht clubs which fly storm warnings or monitor weather broadcasts.
4. Marine VHF—NOAA broadcasts weather information and any storm warnings every four to six minutes.

### New Garbage Regulations

The dumping of garbage into the sea has become a worldwide problem. Plastic refuse dumped in the water can kill fish and marine wildlife, and can foul vessel propellers and cooling intakes. Other forms of waterborne garbage can litter our beaches and make people sick. Because of this, Coast Guard regulations completely prohibit the dumping of plastic refuse or other garbage mixed
with plastic into the water anywhere, and restrict the dumping of other forms of garbage within specified distances from shore.

The regulations require U.S. recreational boaters and other U.S. vessel operators, if their vessel is 26 feet or more in length, to affix one or more placards to their vessel. The placard must also note that state and local regulations may further restrict the disposal of garbage. Operators shall ensure that one or more placards are displayed in prominent locations and in sufficient numbers so that they can be observed and read by the crew and passengers. Each placard must be at least 9 inches wide and 4 inches high, made of durable material, and lettered with letters at least ½ inch high.

U.S. recreational boaters and other U.S. Vessel operators, if their vessel is 40 feet or more in length and engaged in commerce or equipped with a galley and berthing, to carry a Waste Management Plan if the vessel operates, or is certified to operate, beyond 3 nautical miles from shore.

Observation of boats and vessels in violation of Annex V may also be reported to the closest U.S. Coast Guard Captain or The Port or Marine Safety Office.

**Accidents**

Most boating fatalities are the result of a capsizing or fall overboard. Most non-fatal boating accidents are the result of a collision with another boat or an object in the water, such as rocks, pilings, or debris. A little knowledge, common sense, and courtesy could prevent most accidents.

Most boating fatalities occur in small open boats on small inland bodies of water in mid to late afternoon, on weekends during the summer months. The weather is normally good, with calm winds and water, and good visibility. Approximately 90 percent of the fatalities are the result of drowning, and nearly 80 percent of those who die in boating accidents do not use a PFD. Most accidents, capsizings, falls overboard, and collisions are a sudden, unexpected occurrence. You have little if any warning ahead of time to prepare for it. Your PFD could save your life, but it will be of little use to you if you don’t wear it.

**Fueling**

Improper fueling practices are the cause of most fires on board vessels. Gasoline vapors are heavier than air, and spread rapidly. It is important to check the bilges and all closed compartments for any presence of gasoline vapor. The best method is to stick your *nose* in the space to detect any vapors.

Precautions to be taken during fueling:

1. Moor boat securely to dock.
2. Remove all passengers.
3. Extinguish all galley fires and *smoking materials*.
4. Shut off all engines and electrical equipment.
5. Close all hatches and ports.
6. Fill approved portable tanks on dock.
7. Keep fuel nozzle in contact with fill opening.
8. Wipe up any spillage, check bilges for any leakage.
10. After fueling, open all hatches and run blower before starting engines.
11. Never start engines until all traces of fuel vapors are gone.
12. Secure all fuel tanks before leaving dock.
Note. Alcohol blended fuels have been found to accelerate the deterioration of fuel hoses and other parts of the fuel systems. Some alcohol blends make hoses brittle, leading to cracking. Others turn soft and spongy, allowing vapors to permeate through the hose. Recreational boats that are allowed to sit are most prone to this condition. It is important to contact the engine manufacturer about any problems concerning their product and alcohol blended gasoline.

**Mufflers**

The law requires that engines on all boats be reasonably muffled while being operated anywhere within the state. NOTE: See the section on rules and regulations, page 44 and following.

Search Lights and Whistles

If it becomes necessary to attract the attention of another vessel, any light or sound signal may be used as long as it cannot be mistaken for any signal defined in the Rules of the Road. A vessel shall shine a search light in the direction of a danger and refrain from directing a bright light toward another vessel. Embarrassing a vessel with a search light will cause momentary loss of night vision and may hamper the safe operation of that vessel.

**Water Skiing**

Water skiing can be an exciting and fun sport, but can also be dangerous. It is for this reason that water skiing is a three person operation. The first individual involved is the boat operator who has the duty to ensure the safe navigation of the vessel and skiers. He ensures that the boat's speed is adjusted to the abilities or desires of the skier. The second individual, the observer, must be at least 12 years old and is charged with the responsibility of the safety of the skier by observing the skier, tow rope, and wakes and relaying this information to the boat operator. Lastly, the skier is responsible for the safe operation while on water skis by not exceeding his abilities. The skier should ensure that the safe operation of the vessel is followed and communicate to the boat operator any corrections to its operation. It is for this reason the following hand signals are shown to be known by all involved.

**Overloading**

Overloading a boat will decrease its stability
and reduces the boat's performance. A capacity plate is put aboard a boat by the manufacturer to let the owner know the number of persons the boat is designed to carry. This capacity information has a margin of safety to take into consideration an average amount of additional equipment carried. If an unusually large amount of equipment is to be taken aboard, be sure to deduct one person from the vessel's rated capacity for every 150 lbs. carried.

**Overpowering**

Boat operators should follow manufacturers' guidelines when selecting a motor. A motor which is too large may make you go faster, but the boat may not be constructed to handle the added weight. Besides adding more weight the steering mechanism may not handle the heavier load, lead-

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**Don't overload your boat.**

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Recommended by the American Water Ski Association
ing to reduced control at high speeds. The hull may not be built to withstand the greater amount of stress when operated at high speeds. Most manufacturers will void any warranties, and insurance companies may cancel policies if a boat is found to be overpowered.

Diving Operations

All motorboat operators should be aware of the two flags used to indicate the presence of divers. The official flag, Alpha, is an internationally recognized indicator for all diving operations. Any vessel displaying the Alpha flag is to be considered restricted in its ability to maneuver and should be afforded the right of way. The second flag, probably seen most often, is the red flag with a white diagonal stripe. The prudent mariner should afford the same privileges to vessels displaying this flag as would be afforded a vessel displaying Alpha.

Under no circumstances should any vessel approach within 100 feet of any craft or object displaying either flag.

Diver's Flag
Recognized and widely used though not an official diving flag.

Alpha Flag
Internationally recognized diving flag.
Part Three
Louisiana Rules and Regulations
Basic Safety Regulations

State and federal boating laws exist so boaters can engage in water recreation under the safest possible conditions. To be a safe boater, you must be aware of the following basic regulations and requirements. Use these guidelines only as a starting point.

Careless Operation

A boat operator should not operate a vessel in a careless manner that is grossly indifferent to other persons or the property of other persons, or travel at a rate of speed greater than will permit a safe stop in a safe distance. Such careless operation is a crime punishable by a fine of not more than $300, or imprisonment for 30 days, or both.

Reckless Operation

Never operate a watercraft or manipulate water skis, surfboards, or similar devices in a negligent or reckless manner that endangers the life or limb, or damages the property of any person. Doing so is a crime punishable by a fine not to exceed $500, or 90 days in jail, or both.

Negligent Homicide

Any person who causes the death of another person due to the operation of a watercraft at an unsafe rate of speed or in a careless, reckless, or negligent manner, is guilty of negligent homicide. The sentence for this offense is a fine of not more than $1,000, or one year in jail, or both.

Interference with Navigation

Never interfere unnecessarily with other water-
skiing should not be attempted on Louisiana waters from one hour after sunset to one hour prior to sunrise. It is highly recommended that the skier wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life preserver. Remember that a ski belt is not a Coast Guard approved PFD.

**Overloading and Overpowering**

Never load a boat with passengers or cargo beyond its safe carrying capacity, taking into consideration weather and other existing conditions. Do not equip a boat with a motor or other propulsion machinery beyond its safe power capacity. For a guide, check the manufacturer's capacity plate.

**Litter Disposal**

Boaters should not throw any trash, junk, or other refuse overboard. A good skipper collects all garbage and disposes of it properly on shore. Our state waters are not meant to be garbage dumps.

**Pollution Control**

If you have a marine head (toilet) installed in your boat, it must be U.S. Coast Guard certified and of a type authorized for the area where you will be boating. Check with the U.S. Coast Guard for the latest information. These regulations do not apply to portable toilets.

It is a violation of the Federal Pollution Control Act to pump or discharge any kind of oil into navigable waters. Persons caught on federally controlled waters with oil in the bilge of their boat must be able to show how they intend to dispose of it properly. Boats 26 feet or longer should display a 5” x 8” sign near the bilge pump control station stating the regulations of the Federal Pollution Control Act.

**Federally Controlled Waters**

When operating on the federally controlled waters, Louisiana boat owners must meet U.S. Coast Guard equipment requirements. Be aware of the fact that state equipment regulations for vessels on their state waters may not satisfy federal standards.

**Accident Reporting**

The filing of boating accident reports help state and federal authorities reduce future accidents.

In Louisiana, when a boating accident results in injury, death, or property damage in excess of $200, the vessel's operator must submit a full description of the accident to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Boating Safety Section within 10 days on an approved accident report form.

Boating accident report forms are available at all U.S. Coast Guard and Wildlife and Fisheries offices.

**Personal Watercraft**

As used in this part, "personal watercraft" means a vessel which uses an inboard motor powering a water jet pump as its primary source of motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.

A person shall not operate a personal watercraft unless each person aboard is wearing a Type I, Type II, Type III, or Type V personal flotation device approved by the United States Coast Guard.
A person operating a personal watercraft equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard type engine cutoff switch shall attach such lanyard to his person, clothing, or personal flotation device as appropriate for the specific vessel.

A person shall not operate a personal watercraft at any time between the hours from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise. A personal watercraft shall at all times be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner as defined in R.S. 34:851.5.

No person under the age of thirteen shall operate a personal watercraft on the water of this state.

It shall be unlawful for the owner of any personal watercraft or any person having charge over or control of a personal watercraft to authorize or knowingly permit the same to be operated by a person under thirteen years of age in violation of this Section. Any person who violates this Subsection shall be fined not more than one hundred dollars ($100.00).

A livery shall not lease, hire, or rent a personal watercraft to or for operation by any person who is under thirteen years of age.

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