

# THE HANDBOOK

of Arkansas Boating Laws  
and Responsibilities  
2024 Edition



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# THE HANDBOOK

## of Arkansas Boating Laws and Responsibilities

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## Stay up to date on new boating laws...

- Call the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at **501-227-2357**, or visit our website at **www.agfc.com**.
- For federal boating laws, visit the U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety website at **www.uscgboating.org**.

Be sure to stay abreast of educational requirements and course options by calling the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at **1-833-345-0325**.

Information in this handbook does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in Arkansas, which is found in the Arkansas Code and federal laws.

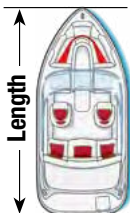
# Before Going Out

Before going out on the water, take steps to make the outing safe and enjoyable.

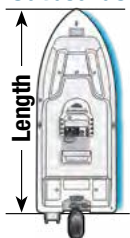
## Vessel Length Classes

- A vessel's length class determines the equipment necessary to comply with federal and state laws.
- Vessels are divided into length classes:
  - Less than 16 feet
  - 16 feet to less than 26 feet
  - 26 feet to less than 40 feet
  - 40 feet to less than 65 feet
- Length is measured from the tip of the bow in a straight line to the stern. This does not include outboard motors, brackets, rudders, bow attachments, or swim platforms and ladders that are not a molded part of the hull.

### Inboards

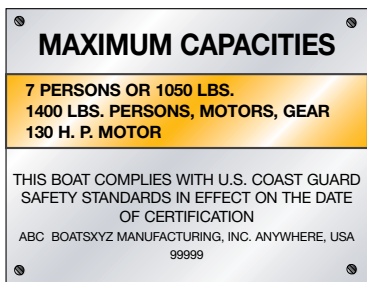


### Outboards



## Vessel Capacity

- Always check the capacity plate, which is usually found near the operator's position or on the vessel's transom. This plate indicates the maximum weight capacity and/or maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely. It also indicates the maximum horsepower.
- Personal watercraft (PWC) and some other vessels are not required to have a capacity plate. Always follow the recommended capacity in the owner's manual and on the manufacturer's warning decal.



## Fueling a Vessel

Never fuel at night unless it is an emergency. If you must refuel after dark, use only electric lights. Try to refuel away from the water or on a commercial fueling ramp.

### ■ Before beginning to fuel:

- Dock the boat securely and ask all passengers to exit.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke or strike a match.
- Check all fuel lines, connections, and fuel vents.
- Turn off anything that might cause a spark—engines, fans, or electrical equipment.
- Shut off all fuel valves and extinguish all open flames, such as galley stoves and pilot lights.
- Close all windows, ports, doors, and other openings to prevent fumes from entering the boat.
- Remove portable fuel tanks and fill them on the dock.

### ■ While filling the fuel tank:

- Keep the nozzle of the fuel-pump hose in contact with the tank opening to prevent producing a static spark.
- Avoid spilling fuel into the boat's bilge or the water.
- Never fill a tank to the brim—leave room to expand.
- Wipe up any spilled fuel.

### The most important safe fueling practice...

If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine to remove gas vapors in the bilge.

### ■ After fueling:

- Open all windows, ports, doors, and other openings.
- Before starting the engine, sniff the bilge and engine compartment for fuel vapors.

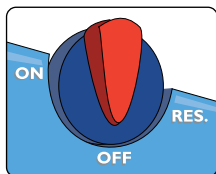
## Additional Safety Procedures for PWC

- Do not tip the PWC in order to fill it all the way up. If the tank is overfilled, the fuel may expand and spill into the water.
- After fueling, open the door of the engine compartment and sniff to check for any evidence of gas fumes. Do this before starting the engine. If you do smell gas fumes, determine the source and make repairs immediately.

## Fuel Selector Switch on a PWC

This switch can help you avoid becoming stranded without fuel.

- Use the “Off” position when the PWC’s engine is turned off.
- Use the “On” position while you are underway.
- Use the “Reserve” position if you run out of fuel while underway. This will allow you to return to shore. Don’t forget to switch back to “On” after refueling.



## Preventing Theft

Defend against theft of your vessel and equipment.

- Store your vessel so that it is not easily accessed.
  - Store your vessel and trailer in a locked garage or storage area.
  - Park another vehicle in front of the trailer, or lock the trailer to a fixed object in a well-lit area.
  - Secure the vessel and trailer to a fixed object with a good-quality chain and lock. If moored, secure the vessel to the dock with a steel cable and lock.
  - Remove a trailer wheel if parked for an extended time.
  - Purchase a quality trailer hitch lock and use it.
- Chain and lock the motor and fuel tanks to the vessel.
- Mark or engrave all equipment with an identifier such as your driver’s license number.
- Photograph or videotape the interior and exterior of your vessel, showing all installed equipment and additional gear and equipment. Make a complete inventory of your equipment, vessel, and trailer.
- Remove expensive electronics or other valuables if the vessel is left unattended.
- Cover your vessel and always remove the keys.
- Title and register your vessel.



## Filing a Float Plan

Before going out on a vessel, it is always a good idea to leave a float plan with a relative or friend, or at least with a local marina. A float plan should:

- Describe the vessel, including its registration number, length, make, horsepower, and engine type.
- State where you are going, the detailed route, your planned departure time, and your expected return time.
- Give the name, address, and telephone number of each person on board and an emergency contact.

### Pre-Departure Checklist

You can help ensure a good time while operating your vessel by performing this pre-departure check.

- ✓ Check the weather forecast for the area and time frame during which you will be boating.
- ✓ Make sure that the steering and throttle controls operate properly and all lights are working properly.
- ✓ Check for any fuel leaks from the tank, fuel lines, and carburetor.
- ✓ Check the engine compartment for oil leaks.
- ✓ Check hose connections for leaks or cracks, and make sure hose clamps are tight.
- ✓ Drain all water from the engine compartment, and be sure the bilge plug is replaced and secure.
- ✓ Check to be sure you have a fully charged engine battery and fire extinguishers.
- ✓ If so equipped, make sure the engine cut-off switch (ECOS) and wrist lanyard are in good order.
- ✓ Make sure you have the required number of personal flotation devices (PFDs), and check that they are in good condition.
- ✓ Leave a float plan with a reliable friend or relative.

# On the Water

Safe navigation on Arkansas waterways is everyone's responsibility. All operators are equally responsible for taking action to avoid collisions.

## Encountering Other Vessels

Even though no vessel has the "right-of-way" over another vessel, there are some rules that every operator should follow when encountering other vessels. It is the responsibility of both operators to take the action needed to avoid a collision. The next page shows what to do when encountering another vessel.

**To prevent collisions, every operator should follow the three basic rules of navigation.**

- Practice good seamanship.
- Keep a sharp lookout.
- Maintain a safe speed and distance.

## Encountering Vessels With Limited Maneuverability

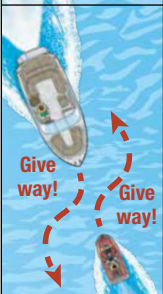
- When operating a power-driven vessel, you must give way to:
  - Any vessel not under command, such as an anchored or disabled vessel
  - Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver, such as a vessel towing another or laying cable, or one constrained by its draft, such as a large ship in a channel
  - A vessel engaged in commercial fishing
  - A sailboat under sail unless it is overtaking
- When operating a vessel under sail, you must give way to:
  - Any vessel not under command
  - Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver
  - A vessel engaged in commercial fishing

## Navigation Rules

There are two terms that help explain these rules.

- **Stand-on vessel:** The vessel that should maintain its course and speed
- **Give-way vessel:** The vessel that must take early and substantial action to avoid collision by stopping, slowing down, or changing course

### Power vs. Power

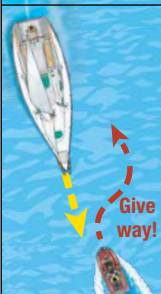


### Meeting Head-On

**Power vs. Power:** Neither vessel is the stand-on vessel. Both vessels should keep to the starboard (right).

**Power vs. Sail:** The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.

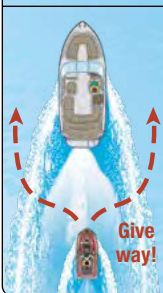
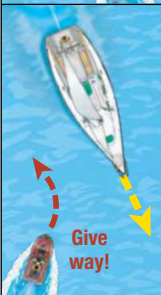
### Power vs. Sail



### Crossing Situations

**Power vs. Power:** The vessel on the operator's port (left) side is the give-way vessel. The vessel on the operator's starboard (right) side is the stand-on vessel.

**Power vs. Sail:** The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.



### Overtaking

**Power vs. Power:** The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.

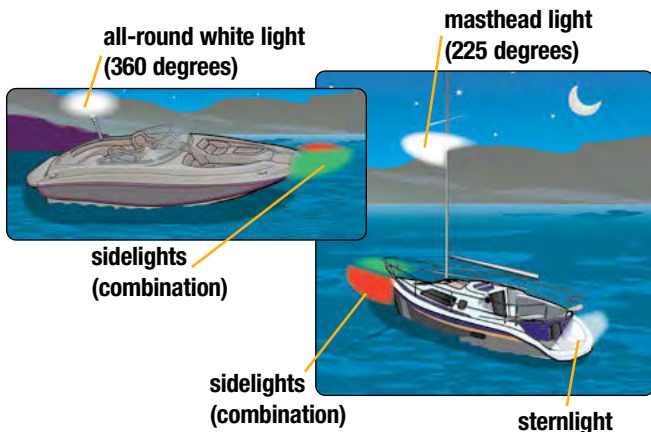
**Power vs. Sail:** The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



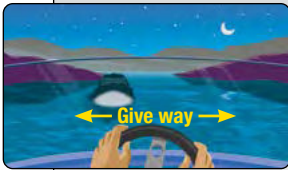
## Nighttime Navigation

Be on the lookout for the lights of other vessels when boating at night. Several types of lights serve as navigational aids at night. There are four common navigation lights.

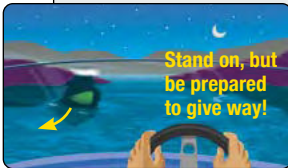
- **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (also called combination lights) because they are visible to another vessel approaching from the side or head-on. The red light indicates a vessel's port (left) side; the green indicates a vessel's starboard (right) side.
- **Sternlight:** This white light is seen from behind or nearly behind the vessel.
- **Masthead Light:** This white light shines forward and to both sides and is required on all power-driven vessels. A masthead light must be displayed by all vessels when under engine power. The absence of this light indicates a sailboat under sail.
- **All-Round White Light:** On power-driven vessels less than 39.4 feet in length, this light may be used to combine a masthead light and sternlight into a single white light that can be seen by other vessels from any direction. This light serves as an anchor light when sidelights are extinguished.



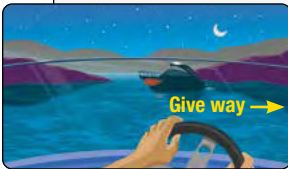
## Encountering Vessels at Night



When you see only a white light, you are overtaking another vessel. It is the stand-on vessel whether it is underway or anchored. You may go around it on either side.



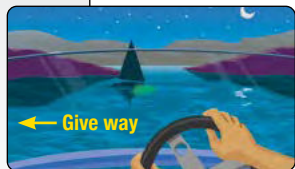
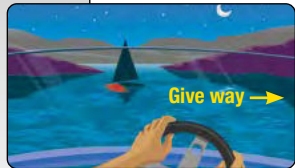
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.



When you see a red and a white light, you must give way to the other vessel. Slow down and allow the vessel to pass, or you may turn to the right and pass behind the other vessel.

## Encountering a Sailboat at Night

When you see **only a red light** or **only a green light**, you may be approaching a sailboat under sail and you must give way. The sailboat under sail is always the stand-on vessel.



## U.S. Aids to Navigation System (ATON)

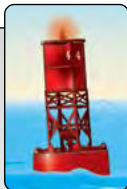
Buoys and markers are the “traffic signals” that guide vessel operators safely along some waterways. They also identify dangerous or controlled areas and give directions and information. As a recreational boat or PWC operator, you will need to know the lateral navigation markers and non-lateral markers of the U.S. Aids to Navigation System (ATON).

### Lateral Markers

These navigation aids mark the edges of safe water areas, for example, directing travel within a channel. The markers use a combination of colors and numbers, which may appear on either buoys or permanently placed markers.

#### **Red colors, red lights, and even numbers**

indicate the right side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.



#### **Green colors, green lights,**

**and odd numbers** indicate the left side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.

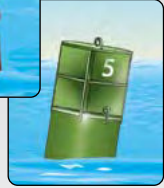
**Red and green colors and/or lights** indicate the preferred (primary) channel. If green is on top, the preferred channel is to the right as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream; if red is on top, the preferred channel is to the left.



**Nuns** are red cone-shaped buoys marked with even numbers.

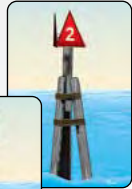
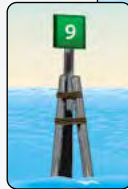


**Cans** are green cylindrical-shaped buoys marked with odd numbers.



**Lighted Buoys** use the lateral marker colors and numbers discussed above; in addition, they have a matching colored light.

**Daymarks** are permanently placed signs attached to structures, such as posts, in the water. Common daymarks are red triangles (equivalent to nuns) and green squares (equivalent to cans). They may be lighted also.



## Red Right Returning

is a reminder of the correct course when returning from open waters or heading upstream.

## Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigation aids that give information other than the edges of safe water areas. The most common are regulatory markers which are white and use orange markings and black lettering. These markers are found on lakes and rivers.



### Information

Squares indicate where to find food, supplies, repairs, etc. and give directions and other information.



### Controlled

Circles indicate a controlled area such as speed limit, no fishing or anchoring, ski only or no skiing, or "slow, no wake."



### Exclusion

Crossed diamonds indicate areas off-limits to all vessels such as swimming areas, dams, and spillways.



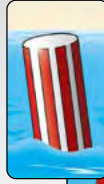
### Danger

Diamonds warn of dangers such as rocks, shoals, construction, dams, or stumps. Always proceed with caution.



## Other Non-Lateral Markers

**Safe Water Markers** are white with red vertical stripes and mark mid-channels or fairways. They may be passed on either side.



**Inland Waters Obstruction Markers** are white with black vertical stripes and indicate an obstruction to navigation. You should not pass between these buoys and the nearest shore.

## Mooring Buoy

Mooring buoys are white with a blue horizontal band and are found in marinas and other areas where vessels are allowed to anchor.



## Weather Emergencies

Weather can change very rapidly and create unexpected situations for boat operators. Even meteorologists have trouble predicting rapid weather changes. You should always monitor weather developments. One way is to tune a VHF radio to the frequencies listed on the next page.

### What to Do if Caught in Severe Weather

#### ■ Prepare the boat to handle severe weather.

- Slow down, but keep enough power to maintain headway and steering.
- Close all hatches, windows, and doors to reduce the chance of swamping.
- Stow any unnecessary gear.
- Turn on your boat's navigation lights. If there is fog, sound your fog horn.
- Keep bilges free of water. Be prepared to remove water by bailing.
- If there is lightning, disconnect all electrical equipment. Stay as clear of metal objects as possible.

#### ■ Prepare your passengers for severe weather.

- Have everyone put on a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)–approved PFD (life jacket). If passengers are already wearing their PFDs, make sure they are secured properly.
- Have your passengers sit on the vessel floor close to the centerline for their safety and to make the boat more stable.

#### ■ Decide whether to go to shore or ride out the storm.

- If possible, head for the nearest shore that is safe to approach. If already caught in a storm, it may be best to ride it out in open water rather than try to approach the shore in heavy wind and waves.
- Head the bow into the waves at a 45-degree angle. PWC should head directly into the waves.

- If the engine stops, drop a “sea anchor” on a line off the bow to keep the bow headed into the wind and reduce drifting while you ride out the storm. In an emergency, a bucket will work as a sea anchor.
- If the sea anchor is not sufficient, anchor using your conventional anchor to prevent your boat from drifting into dangerous areas.

### VHF Frequencies Broadcasting NOAA Weather Reports

162.400 MHz	162.450 MHz	162.500 MHz	162.550 MHz
162.425 MHz	162.475 MHz	162.525 MHz	

These are the most commonly used VHF channels on United States waters.

**Channel 6** Intership safety communications.

**Channel 9** Communications between vessels (commercial and recreational), and ship to coast (calling channel in designated USCG Districts).

**Channel 13** Navigational use by commercial, military, and recreational vessels at bridges, locks, and harbors.

**Channel 16** Distress and safety calls to USCG and others, and to initiate calls to other vessels; often called the “hailing” channel. (Some regions use other channels as the hailing channel.) When hailing, contact the other vessel, quickly agree to another channel, and then switch to that channel to continue conversation.

**Channel 22** Communications between the USCG and the maritime public, both recreational and commercial. Severe weather warnings, hazards to navigation, and other safety warnings are broadcast on this channel.

**Channels 24–28** Public telephone calls (to marine operator).

**Channels 68, 69, and 71** Recreational vessel radio channels and ship to coast.

**Channel 70** Digital selective calling “alert channel.”

## Other Boating Emergencies

A safe boater knows how to prevent and respond to other boating emergencies.

### Falling Overboard

#### ■ To prevent persons from falling overboard:

- Don't sit on the gunwale, bow, seat backs, motor cover, or any other area not designed for seating.
- Don't sit on pedestal seats when underway at greater than idle speed.
- Don't stand up in or lean out from the boat.
- Don't move about the boat when underway.

#### ■ If someone on your boat falls overboard:

- Reduce speed and toss the victim a throwable device.
- Turn your boat around and slowly pull alongside the victim, approaching the victim from downwind or into the current, whichever is stronger.
- Turn off the engine. Pull the victim on board over the stern, keeping the weight in the boat balanced.

### Capsizing or Swamping

#### ■ To reduce the risk of capsizing or swamping:

- Don't overload your boat. Balance the load.
- Slow your boat appropriately when turning.
- Secure the anchor line to the bow, never to the stern.
- Don't boat in rough water or in bad weather.

#### ■ If you capsize or swamp your boat, or if you have fallen overboard and can't get back in:

- Stay with the boat.
- Try to reboard or climb onto it in order to get as much of your body out of the cold water as possible.

#### ■ If the boat sinks or floats away, don't panic.

- If wearing a PFD, remain calm and await help.
- If you aren't wearing a PFD, look around for one or for other buoyant items to use as a flotation device.
- In cold water, float rather than tread.

## Hypothermia

### ■ If you are boating in cold water:

- Dress in several layers of clothing under your PFD or wear a wetsuit or drysuit.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of hypothermia. Symptoms begin with shivering and bluish lips and nails, and progress to a coma and, ultimately, death.

### ■ To reduce the effects of hypothermia:

- Put on a PFD if not wearing one. It helps you to float without excessive movement and insulates your body.
- Get as much of your body out of the water as possible.
- Don't take your clothes off unless necessary—clothes can help you float and provide insulation.
- Don't thrash or move about. Excess motion consumes energy and increases loss of body heat.
- Draw your knees to your chest and your arms to your sides, protecting the major areas of heat loss.
- If others are in the water with you, huddle together with your arms around their shoulders.

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas that can be deadly. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, keep air flowing through the boat and take extreme caution when running a generator at a dock or at anchor.

- Whenever people are using a swim platform or are in the water close to the stern, turn off all gasoline-powered generators with transom exhaust ports.
- Swimmers should never enter the cavity between the swim platform and the stern of the boat.
- When boating, be careful running downwind as exhaust gases may blow back on board. On cabin cruisers, be aware that exhaust gases can blow back into the stern when traveling into the wind.



## Specifically for PWC

Although a PWC is considered an inboard vessel and comes under the same rules and requirements of any other vessel, there are specific considerations for the PWC operator.

### Steering and Stopping a PWC

#### steering control



#### steering nozzle

- PWC are propelled by drawing water into a pump and then forcing it out under pressure through a steering nozzle at the back of the unit. This “jet” of pressurized water is directed by the steering control—when the steering control is turned, the steering nozzle turns in the same direction. For example, if the steering control is turned right, the nozzle turns right and the jet of water pushes the back of the vessel to the left, which causes the PWC to turn right.

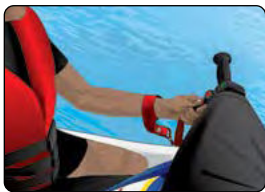
#### **Remember—no power means no steering control...**

Most PWC and other jet-drive vessels must have power in order to maintain control. If you allow the engine on a PWC or other jet-propelled vessel to return to idle or shut off during operation, you may lose all steering control. Many PWC will continue in the direction they were headed before the engine was shut off, no matter which way the steering control is turned. New PWC allow for off-throttle steering.

- **Most PWC do not have brakes.** Always allow plenty of room for stopping. Just because you release the throttle or shut off the engine does not mean you will stop immediately. Even PWC that have a braking system do not stop immediately.

## Engine Cut-Off Switch (ECOS)

- Most PWC and powerboats come equipped by the manufacturer with an important device called an emergency engine cut-off switch (ECOS). If properly worn, this is a safety device that is designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown from the proper operating position. The USCG requires that operators of vessels equipped with an ECOS use the device at all times.
- A lanyard is attached to the ECOS and the operator's wrist or PFD. The switch shuts off the engine if the operator falls off the PWC or out of the powerboat. If your vessel does not come equipped with an engine cut-off switch, you should have one installed.
- In many states, it is illegal to ride your PWC without attaching the lanyard properly between the switch and yourself.



## Reboarding a Capsized PWC

After a fall, the PWC could be overturned completely. You should be familiar with the proper procedure to right the PWC and to reboard from the rear of the craft.

- Most manufacturers have placed a decal at the rear or bottom of the craft that indicates the direction to roll your PWC to return it to an upright position. If no decal exists, check your owner's manual or ask the dealer. If you roll it over the wrong way, you could damage your PWC.
- Practice reboarding with someone else around to make sure you can handle it alone. Don't ride your PWC if you are very tired because reboarding will be difficult. Also, avoid riding where there are strong currents or winds, which could hamper your reboarding efforts.



## Courtesy When Encountering Other Vessels

- Jumping the wake of a passing boat, or riding too close to another PWC or boat, creates risks and is restricted or even prohibited in some states. The vessel making the wake may block the PWC operator's view of oncoming traffic and also conceal the PWC operator from approaching vessels.
- Excessive noise from PWC often makes them unwelcome with other vessel operators and people on shore. Be a courteous PWC operator.
  - Vary your operating area, and do not keep repeating the same maneuver.
  - Avoid congregating with other PWC operators near shore, which increases annoying noise levels.
  - Avoid making excessive noise near residential and camping areas, particularly early in the morning.
  - Avoid maneuvers that cause the engine exhaust to lift out of the water because that increases noise levels.
  - Do not modify your engine exhaust system if it increases the noise. Improperly modified exhausts will not make your PWC faster and may raise the noise to an illegal level.

## Environmental Considerations

When operating your PWC, consider the effect you may have on the environment.

- Make sure that the water you operate in is at least 30 inches deep. Riding in shallow water can cause bottom sediments or aquatic vegetation to be sucked into the pump, damaging your PWC and the environment.
- Avoid causing erosion by operating at slow speed and by not creating a wake when operating near shore or in narrow streams or rivers.





- Do not dock or beach your PWC in reeds and grasses. This could damage fragile environments.
- Take extra care when fueling your PWC in or near the water. Oil and gasoline spills are very detrimental to the aquatic environment. Fuel on land if possible.
- Never use your PWC to disturb, chase, or harass wildlife.

## Other PWC Considerations

- Remember that everyone on board a PWC must wear a USCG–approved PFD.
- Keep hands, feet, loose clothing, and hair away from the pump intake area. Before cleaning debris away from the pump intake, be sure to shut off the engine.
- Keep everyone clear of the steering nozzle unless the PWC is shut off. The water jet can cause severe injuries.
- Frequently inspect your PWC's electrical systems (e.g., starter and engine gauge connections) to ensure there is no potential for electrical spark. Gas fumes could collect in the engine compartment, and an explosion could occur. After fueling, sniff the engine compartment for any evidence of gas fumes.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity for your PWC.
- Know your limits, and ride according to your abilities.



# BE A LIFESAVER!

ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!

[www.SafeBoatingCampaign.com](http://www.SafeBoatingCampaign.com)

# Before Going Out

All vessel operators are required to obey laws that regulate the vessel's registration and operation.

## Registering a Motorboat

- You must have an Arkansas Certificate of Number (registration) and validation decals to operate a motorboat on Arkansas public waters. The only exceptions are:

- Vessels that are propelled **solely** by sails
- Vessels properly registered in another state and using Arkansas waters for 90 or fewer consecutive days
- Vessels documented by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)

- *The Certificate of Number must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the motorboat is operated.*

- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.

- Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to the forward half of each side of the motorboat and placed to be clearly visible.
- Number must read from left to right on both sides of the motorboat.

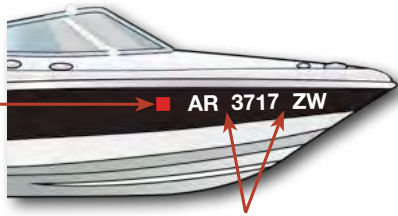
ARKANSAS BOAT REGISTRATION			
(REGISTERED TO)			
SMITH	JOHN G		
100 ELM STREET		AR 72022-0000	
BRYANT			
REG NO	DECAL NO	EXPIRATION DATE	
AR7818ZW	09020080	06-31-2024	
HWN		YEAR	
SAB05417K596		1996	
MAKE		MOTOR HPG	
SEA ARK	JOHNSON OUTBOARD		
MOTOR NO	H.P.	FUEL	PROPULSION
04078908	115	G	OUTBOARD
VESSEL TYPE USED FOR		HULL CONSTRUCTION	
OPEN PLEASURE		METAL	
LENGTH	TRIBUTAL REG FEE	BOAT RESIDENCE COUNTY	
20' 00"		SALINE	
ISSUE DATE/TIME			
03-20-2022 12:01A.M.			
OWNER'S SIGNATURE _____			

## Arkansas Definitions

Arkansas Code (law) defines terms used in the "It's the Law!" section as follows.

- **Motorboat** is defined as any vessel operated upon water that is propelled by sail or machinery, whether or not the machinery is the principal source of propulsion.
- **Vessel** is defined as every description of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation.

## Validation Decal



Spaces or hyphens  
should appear here.

- Number must be in at least 3-inch-high, bold, **BLOCK** letters.
  - Number's color must contrast with its background.
  - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen: **AR 3717 ZW**, **AR-3717-ZW**, **AR 999 AZZ**, or **AR-999-AZZ**.
  - No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
  - Decals must be affixed on each side of the motorboat, toward the stern of the registration number, and three inches from and in line with the number.
- If your motorboat requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your motorboat unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

## How to Apply for Registration

Requests for registration require a completed application along with all of the other documentation shown below and the proper fee.

- Proof of ownership—current registration or bill of sale
- Proof of personal property assessment and proof of current paid taxes
- Proof of insurance
- Hull Identification Number verification (printed photograph or pencil rubbing)

*Note: Homemade vessels without a Hull Identification Number applying for new registration must be inspected first.*

## Fees to Register Your Motorboat

### Registration of Motorboat (original or renewal)

Motorboat less than 16 feet long.....	\$7.50
Motorboat 16 feet to less than 26 feet long .....	\$15.00
Motorboat 26 feet to less than 40 feet long .....	\$51.00
Motorboat 40 feet long or longer.....	\$105.00

## Other Facts About Registration

- As of January 1, 2020, boats manufactured in 2020 and after are required to be titled through the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration Office of Motor Vehicle. (See Act 733 of the 92nd Arkansas General Assembly—Regular Session, 2019.)
- The owner of a motorboat that requires registration must apply for the registration within 30 days of the date of purchase. The motorboat may be operated during this period if the owner has on board a dated proof of purchase.
- A Certificate of Number is valid for three years.
- If an outboard engine is purchased for a previously registered motorboat, the serial number of the engine must be provided to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA).
- If ownership of a registered motorboat changes, the new owner must apply to the DFA for transfer of the registration within 30 days of the ownership change.
- If a registered motorboat is abandoned or destroyed, the owner must notify the DFA within 15 days of the event and the Certificate of Number will be terminated.
- If you lose or destroy your registration card or decals, you must apply for a duplicate and submit a processing fee.
- Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the USCG. Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information.  
**Note:** Documentation through the USCG does not relieve the owner of his or her responsibility to assess the motorboat for personal property taxes.

## Where to Register

Registration application and renewal forms can be obtained from:

- The Arkansas DFA *or...*
- County Revenue Offices (Boaters may register in their county of residence or the county of principal use.)

You can submit your registration application, required documents, and fee to your County Revenue Office or to:

Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration  
P.O. Box 1272  
Little Rock, AR 72203

## Liability Insurance Requirement

- All motorboats powered by engines of more than 50 horsepower, and all personal watercraft (PWC), must be covered by a liability insurance policy.
  - The policy must provide at least \$50,000 of liability coverage per occurrence.
  - It is illegal for the owner of such a vessel to operate it, or allow others to operate it, unless the vessel has the required insurance.
- Proof of insurance must be carried on board the vessel and be available for inspection by an enforcement officer.
- Registration applications for vessels requiring liability insurance must be accompanied by proof of the insurance policy.

## Registration Questions?

Call the Arkansas DFA at **1-800-662-8247** or **501-682-4692**. Also, you can call or visit your County Revenue Office, or visit the DFA on the Internet at **[www.arkansas.gov/dfa](http://www.arkansas.gov/dfa)**.



## Hull Identification Number (HIN)

The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.



- These numbers:
  - Distinguish one vessel from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- Owners of homemade vessels that do not have an HIN may request an inspection by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), Boating Division by calling **501-227-2357**. Upon favorable inspection, an agent will assign your vessel an identification number.
- Under the Boat Identification Act, it is illegal to remove, cover, alter, mutilate, or destroy the HIN.

## Boater Education Requirement

- To operate any motorboat (including a PWC) legally on Arkansas waters, a person who is of legal age to operate a vessel, whether an Arkansas resident or non-resident, and who is born on or after January 1, 1986, must have:
  - A boating education certificate showing successful completion of an approved AGFC safe boating course *or...*
  - A valid boating education certificate issued by another state from a boating education course that is approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).
- *Proof of certification must be carried on board the vessel.*

## Who May Operate a PWC

A person under 16 years of age may not operate any PWC that is not rated to carry at least two people. The following requirements also apply to operation of a PWC.

- **A person under 12 years of age** must have a person at least 21 years of age on board who must:
  - Satisfy the boating education requirement if born on or after January 1, 1986, *and...*
  - **Be in a position to take immediate control of the PWC.**

- **A person 12 through 15 years of age** must have a person at least 18 years of age on board who must:
  - Satisfy the boating education requirement if born on or after January 1, 1986, *and...*
  - Be in a position to take immediate control of the PWC.
- **A person 16 years of age or older** must satisfy the boating education requirement if born on or after January 1, 1986.
- It is illegal for the owner or person in control of a PWC to allow someone who does not meet the age or boating education requirements to operate the PWC.
- A PWC livery (rental agency) may not lease a PWC to a person under 18 years of age.

## Who May Operate a Motorboat Other Than a PWC

The following requirements apply to operation of a motorboat powered by an engine of 10 horsepower or more.

- **A person under 12 years of age** must:
  - Satisfy the boating education requirement *and...*
  - Be under the direct visible and audible supervision of a parent, guardian, or person over 17 years of age.
- **A person 12 years of age or older** must satisfy the boating education requirement if born on or after January 1, 1986.
- It is illegal for the owner or person in control of a motorboat to allow someone who does not meet the age or boating education requirements to operate the vessel.

## Local Regulations

Local waterways may have specific equipment and operational restrictions in addition to those in this handbook. Check for local regulations before you go boating, especially if you are planning to boat in a water supply reservoir.

## Enforcement

- The boating laws of Arkansas are enforced by AGFC enforcement officers, sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, state police officers, Department of Parks and Tourism enforcement officers, municipal police officers, and the USCG.
- Officers may legally stop and board your vessel in order to check for compliance with state and federal laws. You must follow the directive of a person with law enforcement authority.

# Required Equipment

When preparing to go out on a vessel, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board.

## Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- All vessels must have at least one USCG–approved wearable PFD (life jacket) for each person on board.
- In addition to the above requirement, one USCG–approved throwable device must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer.
- Children 12 years old and younger must *wear* a USCG–approved PFD *securely fastened* to their persons at all times while on any vessel. The only exception is if the child is within the enclosed area of a houseboat or cruiser, or within the area enclosed by railings on a party barge, cruiser, or houseboat, *and* the vessel is *not* underway.
- If a person chooses to wear a PFD that is not USCG approved (when not specifically required), a properly fitting USCG–approved PFD must be carried on board the vessel to meet the state and federal carriage requirements
- Each person on board a PWC must *wear* a PFD approved by the USCG. Inflatable PFDs are *not* approved for use on PWC.
- Each person being towed behind a motorized vessel on water skis, an aquaplane, or other device must *wear* a USCG–approved PFD.
- Besides being USCG approved, all PFDs must be:
  - *In good and serviceable condition.*
  - *Readily accessible*, which means you are able to put the PFD on quickly in an emergency.
  - *Of the proper size for the intended wearer.* Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

## PFD Label

Every USCG–approved PFD has a label that contains important information. While boating, you may encounter old- or new-style PFD labels.

Not all PFDs available are USCG approved. Regardless if the PFD label is in the old or new style, there must be a USCG approval number, and the PFD must be used in accordance with the labeling information to meet the legal requirements.



- The older legacy labels have a type number (Types I to V).
  - The type number indicates the conditions and the intended use for which the PFD is designed.
  - PFDs with these labels may still be used in the country where they are approved as long as they are in serviceable condition.
- The new labels have a performance level icon that contains a number, typically ranging from 50 to 150.
  - A lower number means the PFD is intended for near-shore activities in calm waters. PFDs designed for near-shore use offer greater mobility and comfort. However, they will not turn most unconscious persons face up.
  - A higher number means the PFD is intended for offshore activities. PFDs designed for offshore use offer greater flotation, turning ability, and stability.
  - PFDs with these labels are approved for use in both the U.S. and Canada.

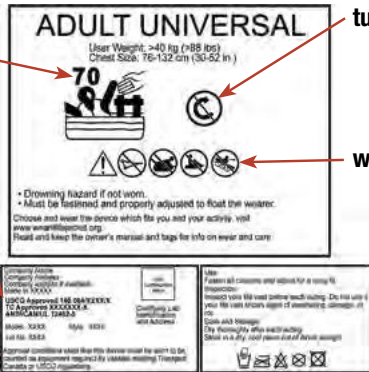
performance level

turn ability

USCG approved

warnings

approved for use in U.S. and Canada



## Warnings

Some PFDs are **not** approved for certain activities:



Water-skiing



PWC or wakeboarding



Tubing



Whitewater paddling

## Turn Ability



The PFD will turn an unconscious person face up. Test before use.



The PFD will not turn an unconscious person face up.

## Navigation Lights

The required navigation lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility. On Arkansas state waters, all motorboats must have lighting sufficient to make their presence and location known to any other vessels. On federal waters, the following requirements apply.

### Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

**If less than 65.6 feet long**, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:

- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

### Unpowered Vessels When Underway

Unpowered vessels are sailboats or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed.

- **If less than 65.6 feet long**, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2. The required lights are:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away.
  - A sternlight visible from at least two miles away.
- **If less than 23.0 feet long**, these vessels should:
  - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 65.6 feet in length.
  - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight shining a white light as in illustration 3.

### All Vessels When Not Underway

**All vessels** are required to display a white light visible from all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area between sunset and sunrise.

## 1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



The masthead light and sternlight may be combined as an all-round white light on vessels less than 39.4 feet long.

## 2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



An alternative to the side-lights and sternlight is a combination red, green, and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.

## 3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23.0 Feet



Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.

## Fire Extinguishers

**Effective April 20, 2022**, any non-rechargeable (disposable) fire extinguisher that is older than 12 years should be removed from service. Refer to the date of manufacturing stamped on the bottle; for example, "05" means "2005."

- State and federal laws require all vessels, including PWC, to have a Type B USCG–approved fire extinguisher on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Any inboard engine
  - Closed compartments where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Double bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not filled completely with flotation material

- Closed living spaces
  - Closed storage compartments in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks (any tank where the removal of the tank is hampered by the installation of tie-down straps or clamps)
- Type B fires are of flammable liquids such as gasoline or oil.
  - Approved types of fire extinguishers are identified by the following marking on the label—"Marine Type USCG Approved"—followed by the type and size symbols and the approval number.
  - When required, fire extinguishers must be on board the vessel and readily accessible—where they can be easily reached. When deciding on a place to store a fire extinguisher, make sure to consider how easy it is to reach in the event of a fire. It is recommended that the fire extinguisher be conspicuously and securely mounted on its intended hanger or bracket.

The following information is **effective April 20, 2022**.

- Vessels that have a **model year** of 2018 and newer may carry only 5-B or 20-B rated fire extinguishers with date stamp.
- Vessels with a model year between 1953 and 2017 may carry either:
  - Unexpired 5-B or 20-B rated fire extinguishers *or...*
  - B-I or B-II rated fire extinguishers that are in good and serviceable condition.

**Model Year** means the period beginning June 1 of a year and ending on July 31 of the following year and being designated by the year in which it ends.

Use this chart to determine the size and quantity required for your vessel.

Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*
Less than 26 ft.	one 5-B	none
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	two 5-B (or one 20-B)	one 5-B
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	three 5-B (or one 20-B and one 5-B)	two 5-B (or one 20-B)

\*refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system

*Note: One 20-B portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B portable fire extinguishers. For vessels with a model year between 1953 and 2017, one 20-B/B-II portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B/B-I portable fire extinguishers.*

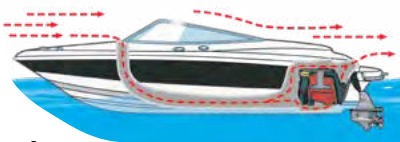
- Extinguishers must not be expired or appear to have been previously used. They must be maintained in good and serviceable condition. Good and serviceable condition means that the fire extinguisher on board:
  - Is charged and indicates it is charged if the extinguisher has a pressure gauge reading or indicator *and...*
  - Has a pin lock that is firmly in place *and...*
  - Does not show visible signs of significant corrosion or damage *and...*
  - Has a discharge nozzle that is clean and free of obstructions.

## Engine Cut-Off Switch (ECOS)

No person shall operate a vessel that is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cut-off switch (ECOS) without first attaching the lanyard to their person or PFD when the engine is engaged, unless traveling less than 5 miles per hour.

## Ventilation Systems

The purpose of ventilation systems is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases. Properly installed ventilation systems greatly reduce the chance of a life-threatening explosion.



- All gasoline-powered vessels, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls to remove the fumes.
- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine.
- If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a PWC), open the engine compartment and sniff for gasoline fumes before starting the engine.

## Backfire Flame Arrestors

Backfire flame arrestors are designed to prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

- All powerboats except outboards that are operating on federal waters and are fueled with gasoline must have a backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor. The arrestors must be USCG approved (must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards).
- It is also *strongly recommended* that these vessels be equipped with backfire flame arrestors if on state waters.

## Mufflers

- It is *strongly recommended* that all vessel engines have an effective muffling system.
- The use of dry stack headers or pipes extending directly from the engine of a motorboat that does not have any type of muffler is prohibited except for motorboats competing in an authorized marine event.

## Sound-Producing Devices

In periods of reduced visibility, a sound-producing device is essential.

- The following is required on vessels only when operating on federal waters; however, it is *strongly recommended* that all vessels be so equipped.
  - Vessels less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length, which includes PWC, must have some way of making an efficient sound signal. Examples are a handheld air horn, an athletic whistle, an installed horn, etc. A human voice is not acceptable.
  - Vessels that are 39.4 feet (12 meters) or more in length must have a sound-signaling device that can produce an efficient sound signal. The sound signal should be audible for one-half mile and should last for 4 to 6 seconds.
- No vessel may be equipped with a siren, except vessels used by law enforcement officers.

Some sound signals that you should be familiar with as a recreational boater are as follows.

### Restricted Visibility

- One prolonged blast at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by powerboats when underway.
- One prolonged blast plus two short blasts at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by sailing vessels.

### Warning

- One prolonged blast is a warning signal (for example, used when coming around a blind bend or exiting a slip).
- Five (or more) short, rapid blasts signal danger or signal that you do not understand the other boater's intentions.

## Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)

Visual distress signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency. VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night), or both day and night signals.

VDSs are not required on Arkansas state waters, but it is *strongly recommended* that you carry VDSs on your vessel.



### USCG–Approved VDSs

#### Day

- Handheld Orange Smoke (Pyrotechnic)
- Floating Orange Smoke (Pyrotechnic)
- Orange Flag (Non-Pyrotechnic)

#### Night

- Electric Light (Non-Pyrotechnic)

#### Day and Night

- Red Meteor (Pyrotechnic)
- Red Flare (Pyrotechnic)

### Arm Signal

Although this signal does not meet VDS equipment requirements, wave your arms to summon help if you do not have other distress signals on board.



# On the Water

In addition to the laws mentioned previously, here are other Arkansas regulations that apply when on the water.

## Unlawful Operation

Arkansas law states that these dangerous operating practices are illegal.

- **Reckless Operation** of any motorboat or other vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, an aquaplane, or other device is operating in a manner that causes danger to the life, limb, or property of any person. Examples of reckless operation are:
  - Weaving through congested waterway traffic
  - Operating within 100 feet of a towboat that is underway
  - Jumping the wake of another vessel too close to that vessel or when visibility is obstructed
  - Swerving at the last possible moment to avoid collision
  - Chasing or harassing wildlife with your motorboat or vessel
- **Negligent Operation** is operating a vessel in a negligent manner such as:
  - Not paying attention to the operation of the vessel
  - Failing to keep a proper lookout
  - Failing to observe the navigation rules
  - Colliding with another vessel or object
  - Operating a motorboat equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type ECOS without attaching the lanyard to your person, clothing, or PFD

### **Remember—vessel owners are responsible...**

As an owner or lessee of a vessel, you are responsible for any injury or damage caused by the negligent operation of your vessel by others you knowingly allow to operate it. It will be assumed that you have given consent if your vessel is operated by an immediate family member.



- **Grossly Negligent Operation** is operating a vessel or manipulating water skis, an aquaplane, or other device in a manner that results in serious injury or death.
- **Improper Speed or Distance** is not maintaining a proper speed or distance while operating a vessel. Specifically, it is illegal to operate a vessel:
  - In a manner or at a speed that exceeds the safe and reasonable limits under existing circumstances
  - At greater than “**slow, no wake speed**” in any posted “no wake” zone
  - At a rate of speed that creates a hazardous wash or wake on approaching or passing vessels, for example, a wake that causes other vessels to take on water or a wake sufficient to toss the occupants of other vessels about in a manner that causes injury or the risk of injury
  - At greater than “no wake speed” within 100 feet of a designated recreation area, dock, pier, raft, float, anchored vessel, dam, intake structure, or other obstruction unless a different speed limit has been established in the area

“**Slow, No Wake Speed**” means the speed at which the vessel does not produce a wake, not to exceed 5 miles per hour.

- **Overloading or Overpowering** is loading or powering the vessel beyond the recommended carrying capacity or horsepower shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel’s manufacturer. Also, it is illegal to load a vessel without a capacity plate in a manner that is unsafe or that results in the vessel sinking or capsizing.
- **Riding on the Bow or Gunwales** is allowing passengers to ride or sit on the gunwales or on the decking over the bow while underway on a motorboat 26 feet or less in length, unless the motorboat is equipped with adequate guards or railing to prevent falls overboard.

## Obstructing Navigation

It is illegal to:

- Operate any vessel in such a way that it will interfere unnecessarily with the safe navigation of other vessels.
- Anchor a vessel in the traveled portion of a river or channel that will prevent or interfere with any other vessel passing through the same area.
- Moor or attach a vessel to a buoy (other than a mooring buoy), beacon, light, or any other navigational aid placed on public waters by proper authorities.
- Move, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.

## Homeland Security Restrictions

- Observe and avoid all security zones, including restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc. Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel. Violators can expect a quick and severe response.
- Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary. Report all activities that seem suspicious to the local authorities or the USCG.

## Alcohol and Drugs

You are prohibited from operating any motorboat or other vessel, or manipulating water skis or other devices, while under the influence of alcohol, a controlled substance, or both.

- Arkansas law states that a person is considered to be boating while intoxicated if he or she:
  - Has a blood, breath, or urine alcohol concentration of 0.08% or more (if under the age of 21, 0.02% is considered intoxicated) *or...*
  - Is under the influence to such a degree that his or her reactions, motor skills, and judgment are substantially altered and endanger anyone.



Just remember this simple rule:  
***Don't Drink and Boat!***

- Arkansas law establishes the following penalties for boating while intoxicated.
  - Upon a first conviction, a person will lose his or her driver's license for a period of 6 months. In addition, the person may be fined up to \$1,000 and jailed up to one year.
  - In addition, the convicted person will be required to complete, at his or her own expense, an approved alcohol education or alcoholism treatment program.
- By operating a motorboat or other vessel on Arkansas waters, you have given "implied" consent to alcohol testing if an officer has reasonable cause to believe you are boating while intoxicated. Refusal can result in the loss of operating and driving privileges for up to 6 months.

## Boating Accidents

- An operator involved in a boating accident must:
  - Stop his or her vessel *immediately* at the scene of the accident *and...*
  - Assist anyone injured or in danger from the accident, unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her own vessel or passengers *and...*
  - Give, in writing, his or her name, address, and vessel identification to anyone injured from the accident and to the owner of any damaged property.
- The operator or owner of a vessel involved in an accident must notify *immediately* the AGFC or local sheriff's department if:
  - A person dies or disappears *or...*
  - A person is injured *or...*
  - Damage to the vessel or other property is \$2,000 or more.
- State law requires all reportable accidents to be investigated. Call **1-833-356-0824**.

## Diver-Down Flags

- Scuba divers or skin divers in federal waters must display a diver-down flag to mark their diving area. Those spear fishing in Arkansas state waters must display a diver-down flag and are required to stay within 300 feet of the displayed flag.
- Vessels not engaged in diving operations should stay at least 100 feet away from a displayed diver-down flag.



### Divers Flag

A rectangular red flag with a white diagonal stripe is attached to a vessel, float, or buoy.

### Alfa Flag

A blue-and-white International Code Flag A (Alfa flag) is flown from a vessel on federal waters.

## Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

- You are not allowed to discharge oil or hazardous substances into the water.
- You are not allowed to dump oil into the bilge of the vessel without means for proper disposal.
- You must dispose of oil waste at an approved reception facility. On recreational vessels, a bucket or bailer is adequate for temporary storage prior to disposing of the oil waste at an approved facility.
- If boating on federal waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a 5 x 8-inch placard made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery spaces or at the bilge pump control station, stating the Federal Water Pollution Control Act's law.

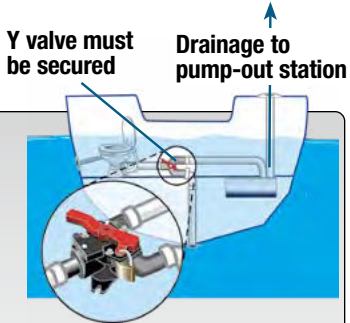
If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances into the water, call the National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.



## Discharge of Waste

- State law prohibits vessels from discharging any untreated sewage into the waters of Arkansas.
- All recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD).
- Vessels 65 feet in length and under may use a Type I, II, or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must install a Type II or III MSD.

### Typical Marine Sanitation Device



### Types of MSDs

There are three types of MSDs.

- Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large vessels. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged. Types I and II MSDs with Y valves that would direct the waste overboard must be secured so that the valve cannot be opened. This can be done by placing a lock or non-reusable seal on the Y valve or by taking the handle off the Y valve in a closed position.
- Type III MSDs provide no treatment and are either holding tanks or portable toilets. Collected waste should be taken ashore and disposed of in a pump-out station or onshore toilet.

## Discharge of Trash

It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into any state or federal waters. Many forms of litter can kill birds, fish, and marine mammals.

- You must store trash in a container while on board and place it in a proper receptacle after returning to shore.
- If boating on federal waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer, you must display a Garbage Disposal Placard that is at least 4 x 9 inches and notifies passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.

## Glass Containers and Trash

The following restrictions apply to any vessel that is easily susceptible to swamping, tipping, or rolling (such as a canoe, kayak, or inner tube) and operating within the banks of Arkansas's navigable waterways (any navigable river, lake, or other body of water).

- Except for containers for substances prescribed by a licensed physician, no one may have or use glass containers within a vessel.
- All persons using a cooler, icebox, or other container for foodstuffs and beverages must:
  - Ensure that the container seals or locks in the contents to prevent them from spilling into the water.
  - Upon removing beverages from the cooler or other container, put them into or attach a floating holder or other device so that beverages cannot sink beneath the surface of the water.
  - Carry and affix to the vessel a sturdy container or a bag of mesh construction suitable for containing their trash and capable of being securely closed.
  - Transport all their trash to a place where the materials may be disposed of safely and lawfully.
- A container is not required for persons traveling without foodstuffs or beverages.

### *Remember when you caught your first fish?*

Our children will not experience that same thrill unless we keep this country's waterways pollution-free. Using pump-out stations and properly disposing of our trash is something we can all do to protect our waters.

**Help us keep Arkansas waters clean!**



# Specifically for PWC

PWC operators must obey the laws that apply to other vessels as well as obey additional requirements that apply specifically to the operation of PWC.

## Requirements Specific to PWC

- Every person on board a PWC must *wear* a PFD approved by the USCG.
- An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ECOS must attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD.
- PWC may be operated only between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.
- There are age restrictions on operators of PWC.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC in an unsafe or reckless manner. Examples include:
  - Becoming airborne or completely leaving the water while crossing the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of the vessel creating the wake
  - Weaving through congested traffic
  - Operating at greater than “slow, no wake speed” within 100 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, shoreline, dock, pier, swim float, marked swim area, swimmer, surfer, person fishing, or any manually propelled vessel
  - Failing to observe the navigation rules or following too close to another vessel, including another PWC.

(**Note:** Following too close means moving in the same direction and operating at a speed greater than 10 miles per hour when approaching within 100 feet to the rear of or 50 feet to the side of another vessel that is underway, unless the vessel is in a channel too narrow to keep the required distance, in which case a PWC may be operated at a speed that is reasonable and prudent.)

## Sharing Your PWC...Safely!

Sharing the fun of your PWC with friends is all part of the boating experience. Before you share your PWC, however, make sure that others you allow to operate it understand their responsibilities as an operator. They need to know that they have the same responsibilities as any other vessel operator, including obeying the navigation rules.

In addition:

- Make sure that anyone you allow to operate your PWC meets the minimum age and education requirements for PWC operation in Arkansas and the local waterway you are using.
- Show new operators how to start and reboard the PWC while on shore or in shallow water.
- Explain how to steer and control the PWC. Tell all new operators and remind experienced operators that ***power is required for steering control.***
- Make sure that the operator understands how to use the ECOS and attaches the lanyard to his or her person or PFD before starting the engine.
- Have anyone new to PWC go out in an uncongested area first. Tell them to stay clear of other PWC, boats, or persons in the water.
- Explain how to recognize a “slow, no wake speed” marker and what to do when approaching one.





# Specifically for Skiing

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device have additional laws they must follow.

## Towing Skiers

- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis, an aquaplane, or other device must have on board, in addition to the operator, an observer at least 12 years old and in a position to observe the progress of the person(s) being towed.
  - Boats equipped with a wide-angle, convex, marine rear-view mirror in a position to observe the skiers being towed are exempt from this requirement.
  - PWC operators may *not* substitute a mirror for an observer (that is, a PWC must have an observer at least 12 years old).
- All persons being towed behind a motorboat or motorized device on water skis, an aquaplane, or other device must *wear* a USCG–approved PFD.
- It is illegal for vessels to tow a person(s) on water skis, an aquaplane, or other device between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise. This restriction does not apply to night water-skiing or aquaplaning on controlled areas that are designated for those purposes and have adequate lighting provided.
- It is illegal to operate or manipulate any towing vessel, a tow rope, or other device in such a way as to cause the towed device or towed person(s) to collide with or strike any object or person(s).
- If towing a person on skis or other device with a PWC, the PWC must be rated to carry at least three people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.



# Federal Waters in Arkansas

## COE Impoundments/Entergy Lakes and Reservoirs

Beaver	Catherine	Dierks	Greeson	Norfolk
Blue	Dardanelle	Gillham	Hamilton	Ouachita
Mountain	DeGray	Greers	Millwood	Ozark
Bull Shoals	DeQueen	Ferry	Nimrod	Table Rock

## Navigable Rivers or Pools Include:

- Arkansas River from the mouth to the Oklahoma state line
- Black River from the mouth to the Missouri state line
- Mississippi River from the Louisiana state line to the Missouri state line
- Ouachita River from the mouth to Blakely Dam
- Red River from the Louisiana state line to the Oklahoma state line
- White River from the mouth to Dam No. 1 at Batesville

## Aquatic Nuisance Species

Introducing non-native species into Arkansas waters can upset the balance of the ecosystem, thereby harming the environment. Aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, and giant salvinia (a top threat right now), most often spread between waterways by hitching a ride on vessels and trailers. When transplanted into new waters, these organisms proliferate, displacing native species and damaging the water resource.



## How You Can Help

- Inspect your vessel and trailer, and remove any plants and animals you see before leaving the area.
- Clean your boat and trailer by removing all visible plants or animals. Wash the boat with soapy water, preferably with a pressure washer.
- Drain all the water from your boat by removing all plugs and running the bilge pump. **This is a state requirement.**
- Dry the boat by allowing it to sit out at least five days if possible before going on to a new waterbody.
- Empty your bait bucket on land. Never release live bait into a body of water or release aquatic animals from one body of water into another.
- For more information or to report an aquatic nuisance species, visit [www.agfc.com/ans](http://www.agfc.com/ans) or call 501-747-9012.

## Arkansas Required Equipment Checklist



	PWC	Boat Less Than 16 Ft.	Boat 16 Ft. to Less Than 26 Ft.
Boater Education Certificate on Board	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1
Certificate of Number on Board	✓	✓	✓
Validation Decals Displayed	✓	✓	✓
Wearable PFDs	✓ 2	✓ 3	✓ 3
Throwable Devices			✓
ECOS	✓	✓ 4	✓ 4
Type 5-B Fire Extinguisher	✓ 5	✓ 5	✓ 5
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓ 5	✓ 5,6	✓ 5,6
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓ 5	✓ 5	✓ 5
Navigation Lights	7	✓	✓

1. A valid boater education certificate is required for motorboat operators who were born on or after January 1, 1986.
2. Everyone on board PWC must *wear* an approved PFD (life jacket) at all times.
3. Children 12 years of age and younger must *wear* an approved PFD while underway in any open area of any vessel.
4. Required when operating a motorboat.
5. Required when boating on federal waters.
6. Required on inboards and stern drives only.
7. Certain items are not applicable to PWC because they are not allowed to operate at night.

# ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

## Headquarters

2 Natural Resources Drive  
Little Rock, AR 72205  
Little Rock: 501-207-0326  
Toll Free: 1-833-345-0325

## Regional Offices

Northwest Regional Office  
455 Dam Site Road  
Eureka Springs, AR 72631  
1-833-340-7506

East Central Regional Office  
1201 North Main Street  
Brinkley, AR 72021  
1-833-345-0283

North Central Regional Office  
1 Game and Fish Road  
Calico Rock, AR 72519  
1-833-356-0883

South Central Regional Office  
500 Ben Lane  
Camden, AR 71701  
1-833-356-0860

Fort Smith Regional Office  
8401 Massard Road  
Fort Smith, AR 72916  
1-833-356-0871

Southwest Regional Office  
7004 Highway 67 East  
Perrytown, AR 71801  
1-833-372-2434

Hot Springs Office  
350 Fish Hatchery Road  
Hot Springs, AR 71913  
1-833-356-0933

Northeast Regional Office  
600-B East Lawson Road  
Jonesboro, AR 72404  
1-833-200-5199

Southeast Regional Office  
771 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
1-833-363-7638

West Central Regional Office  
1266 Lock and Dam Road  
Russellville, AR 72802  
1-833-356-0879

Visit us on the Internet at  
[www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com).



For lost Boating or Hunting Education  
Cards, visit [www.ilostmycard.com](http://www.ilostmycard.com)  
or call 1-800-830-2268.

Planning to boat on the lakes of  
Arkansas's neighbors? Learn  
their boating laws before you  
go!

States vary in their boating laws—especially with respect to the age required to operate a vessel legally and the requirements for boater safety certification. Below are the state agencies to call and find out before you go boating.

### Louisiana

Louisiana Department of Wildlife  
and Fisheries  
Call: 225-765-2984

### Mississippi

Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources  
Call: 228-374-5000

Mississippi Department of Wildlife,  
Fisheries and Parks  
Call: 601-432-2400

### Missouri

Missouri State Water Patrol  
Call: 573-751-3333

### Oklahoma

Oklahoma Highway Patrol - Troop W  
Call: 918-847-2001

### Tennessee

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency  
Call: 615-781-6682

### Texas

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
Call: 1-800-792-1112