



BOAT SAFE and BE RESPONSIBLE KNOW the LAW

Excerpts from Wisconsin State Laws and Requirements Handbook**

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Report violations to Vilas County Sheriff's Department Non-Emergency at (715) 479-4441.

General Boating Requirements

- Operators who were born on or after January 1, 1989, and who are 16 years of age or older may operate a motorboat only if they have completed a boating safety course and carry the certificate at all times. Those born before January 1, 1989, are exempt from the required boating safety course.
- All boats must have one wearable life jacket for each person.
 - Children under the age of 13 must wear a life jacket at all times.
- Boats over 16 feet must have one throwable lifesaving device immediately available.
- It is illegal to operate a boat with a person riding on the bow, deck, transom, seat backs or gunwale of the boat.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel within any area marked off, or set aside as a prohibited area or a swim area or to weave through congested waterway traffic.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel at a distance from other vessels or at a speed that exceeds safe and reasonable limits given the waterway traffic, marked speed limits, weather and other boating conditions.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substance or have a blood alcohol level of 0.08% or greater.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel at greater than "Slow, No Wake Speed" within 100 feet of shoreline, docks, rafts, piers, swimmers or restricted areas.



* Definition for "Slow, No Wake Speed"

Slow, No Wake Speed means a speed at which a vessel moves as slowly as possible while still maintaining steerage control. Slow down gradually as you approach a No Wake area and speed up gradually as you leave a No Wake area. This makes it safer for other vessels in the area, helps keep the buoys from being damaged and protects our shorelines.

Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs) - Sunrise to Sunset Only

- Operators must be at least 12 years old and have completed an approved boating safety course. Those born before January 1, 1989 are exempt from the required boating safety course.
- Every person must wear an approved life jacket.
- Maneuvers that endanger people or property including chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife are prohibited.
- It is illegal to jump a wake with a PWC within 100 feet of another vessel.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC within 100 feet of a vessel towing a person on skis, inner tube, or wakeboard or other devices; or to operate within 100 feet of a tow rope or person being towed.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC at greater than "Slow, No Wake Speed" within 100 feet of a dock, pier, raft or restricted area; and within 200 feet of any shore. Same definition as above for "Slow, No Wake Speed" applies for all PWCs.

Requirements for Towing Skiers, Wakeboarders and other Devices - Sunrise to Sunset Only

- Do not come within 100 feet of other vessels, persons in water, swimming area or public boat landing.
- Must have a competent person on board to act as an observer or the vessel must be equipped with a wide-angle rearview mirror. PWCs need to be able to accommodate three people. Observer must be on board and in position to see person being towed or PWC is equipped with a wide angle rearview mirror.

** Refer to 2022 Handbook of Wisconsin Boating Laws and Responsibilities for a complete list of laws including all age restrictions to operate a motorboat or PWC and options to complete the boating safety course at: <https://widnr.widen.net/s/0vw8hwrae3>