

# Boat Operator Legal Responsibilities

## CARRYING REQUIRED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

### Required Items Include:

- Life jacket(s)
- Fire extinguisher(s) (on most gasoline-powered craft)
- Anchor and line
- Visual distress signal(s)
- Sound signaling device
- Navigation lights
- Ventilation system (gasoline-powered only)
- Backfire flame arrestor (gas engines, except outboards)
- Exhaust muffling device (or underwater exhaust)
- Engine cut-off switch lanyard (PWC only)

### Items Must Be:

- U.S. Coast Guard approved
- In good serviceable condition
- Readily accessible
- Life jackets must be correct size for each person

**Safety Tip:** The items required vary by vessel type and length. Consult the Required Equipment Chart in the Ohio Boat Operator's Guide for details.

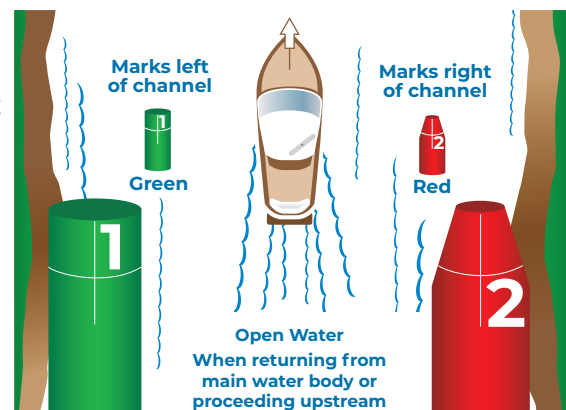
## SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE APPROVED BOATING COURSE OR EXAM, REQUIREMENT

Persons born on or after 1/1/1982 must successfully complete a National Association of State Boating Law Administration-approved boating course or proficiency exam prior to operating a powercraft more than 10 horsepower. When operating a rental powercraft more than 10 horsepower, they must do one of the following:

- Sign a statement that they have completed an approved boating course or proficiency exam.
- Receive education material from the rental business and pass an exam given by the rental business.

### Channel Marker Buoys

All-green and all-red companion buoys indicate that the boating channel is between them. The red buoy is on the right side of the channel when facing upstream.



## OPERATE YOUR BOAT SAFELY

### Reckless Operation

Reckless operation laws apply to any person operating any type of vessel and includes persons being towed on water skis or any other device. Reckless operation includes operating:

- Carelessly or heedlessly
- In disregard of the rights or safety of any person, vessel, or property
- Without due caution, at a rate of speed, or in a manner that endangers any person, vessel, or property

### Unsafe Operation

Unsafe operation laws apply to any person operating any type of vessel and requires that a vessel be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times. Unsafe operation includes:

- Becoming airborne while crossing the wake of another vessel at a distance less than 100 feet or at an unsafe distance
- Operating at a speed and proximity to another vessel (or person being towed on water skis or other device) that requires either vessel to swerve abruptly to avoid a collision
- Operating less than 200 feet directly behind a person water skiing
- Weaving through congested traffic

### Unsafe Conditions

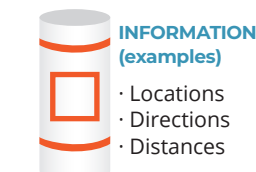
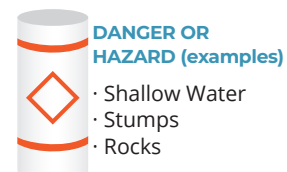
By Ohio law, all of the following are unsafe conditions. An operator may be ordered to remove a vessel from the water if these situations exist:

- Insufficient life jackets
- Insufficient fire extinguisher(s)
- Overloaded, causing insufficient freeboard for the water conditions
- Improper navigation lights
- Fuel leaks or fuel in the bilges
- Inadequate backfire flame control
- Improper ventilation

**Safety For personal watercraft operators:** If a personal watercraft engine returns to idle or shuts off during high-speed operation, you will lose all ability to control the steering. You must use the throttle to swerve or otherwise maneuver to avoid a collision.

### No Wake And Idle Speed Zones

These zones may be marked by buoys with an orange circle. These zones also include all areas within 300 feet of any dock, launch ramp, marina, harbor entrance, etc. Many lakes have an unmarked "shore zone" designated as "no wake." "Idle speed" and "no wake" means the slowest possible speed needed to maintain steerage and maneuverability.

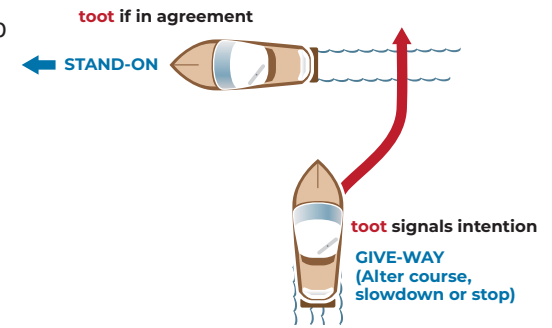


## OBEYING NAVIGATION RULES

The Navigation Rules are laws which help boat operators avoid collisions. The Navigation Rules include three major responsibilities:

- Practice good seamanship
- Keep a proper lookout
- Maintain a safe speed

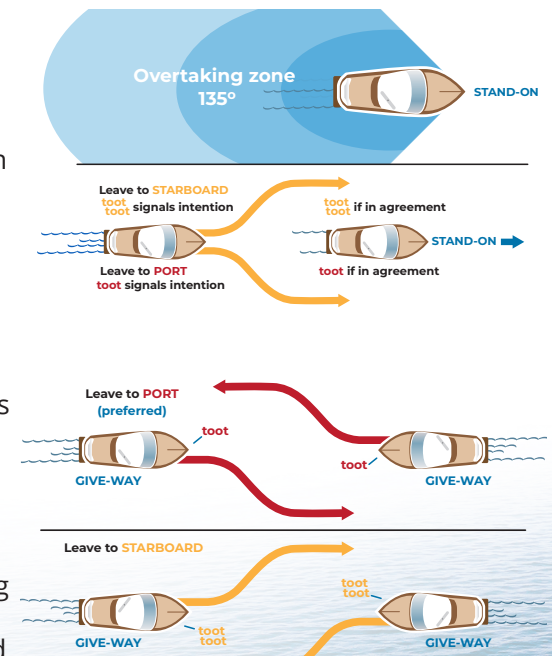
The Navigation Rules include Steering Rules which direct a vessel's actions when approaching other vessels. The steering rules use the following terms:



**Give-way Vessel** – a vessel directed by a rule to keep out of the way of another vessel. A give-way vessel must take early and substantial (obvious) action to keep well clear.

**Stand-on Vessel** – a vessel directed by a rule to maintain its course and speed. A stand-on vessel must take action to avoid a collision if a give-way vessel is not taking necessary action.

When taking action(s) to avoid a collision, the action must be made in ample time, must result in passing at a safe distance, and changes in course or speed must be obvious.



**Safety Tip:** Give-way to boats that are less maneuverable than your boat such as barges, commercial boats, sailboats and hand-powered boats.



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