



Whatcom County Sheriff's Office

Recreational Boating Safety Program

State and Local Recreational Boating Laws

Boater Education Card (RCW 79A.60.640)

- A person may operate a motor driven vessel with **15hp or greater** if:
 - At least **12** years of age (14 years of age for PWC) ; **and**
 - Has in his or her possession a boater education card; **or**
 - Is accompanied by and is under the direct supervision of a person 16 years of age or older who is in possession of a boater education card
 - Exception; any person born before January 1, 1955.

Age of Vessel Operator (Whatcom Co. Code 11.28.030)

- 10 years and under may not operate motor vessels.
- 11-16 may operate a vessel up to 10 HP.
- 12-16 may operate with an adult present.
- 16 years to rent a jet ski.
- 16 years and over may operate all vessels.

Speed Regulations (Whatcom Co. Code 11.16.030)

- 6 miles per hour: within 150 ft of docks, floats and shoreline on all lake except Lake Whatcom.
- within 300 ft of docks, floats and shoreline on Lake Whatcom.
- within 300 ft of public boat launch.
- within 100 ft of swimmer or vessels not propelled by a motor.
- 8 miles per hour: ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise.
- 40 miles per hour: daylight hours in unrestricted areas.
- All vessels must observe due care and caution.
- The South Bay of Lake Whatcom is a "No Wake" area.

Skiers (Whatcom Co. Code 11.20.010)

- A red/orange flag must displayed by the towing vessel when a person not under tow is in the water.
- Skiing is prohibited from ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise.
- Must have a spotter at least 8 years of age.
- 150 and 300 ft shore distance rules apply except to take off and drop off skier. Take off and drop off at 45 degree angle or greater from shore or dock.
- Skier in-tow must stay at least 100 ft from other swimmers and vessels.
- No drop off, take off, or skiing within 300 ft of a public boat launch.
- No one may follow closer than 300 ft behind a skier or cross the bow of a towing vessel closer than 200 ft, or travel alongside closer than 100 ft to skier or vessel.

Required Equipment (RCW, WAC and Whatcom Co. Code)

- All vessel shall carry a sound producing device (WAC 352-60-065)
- All motorized vessels shall carry a type BI or BII fire extinguisher (WCC 11.12.010)
- All vessels less than 16' in length, to include SUP, kayaks and canoes, shall carry a personal flotation device of type I, II or III for each person on board (WAC 352-60-030)
- All vessels 16' or more shall carry a personal flotation device of type I, II or III for each person on board, plus a type IV throwable (WAC 352-60-030)
 - Must be serviceable, accessible and of proper fit for each person on board.
 - Skiers and PWC operators are required to wear a PFD.
 - All persons under the age of seven years shall wear at least a type III PFD of an appropriate size, any time they are on a vessel on any waterway (WCC 11-12-030)
 - All persons age 12 and under must wear a PFD when on a vessel under 19' in length. (RCW 79A.60.160(4))
- All PWC's must be equipped with and utilize an engine cut-off switch lanyard (RCW 79A.60.190(2))

Boating Accident Report (BAR)

- The operator or owner of a vessel involved in a boating accident must complete a BAR and submit it to law enforcement if:
 - At least one person involved dies or disappears
 - A person involved requires medical attention beyond first aid (admitted to hospital) or, damage to vessel and other property exceeds \$2000
 - If a person dies within 24 hours of accident, requires medical attention beyond first aid, or disappears from a vessel the report must be submitted within 48 hours
 - All other accidents reports must be submitted within 10 days.

Washington State Recreational Boating Required Equipment Checklist

	PWCs	Boats < 16' Class A	Boats 16' to < 26' Class 1	Boats 26' to < 40' Class 2	Human Powered: Any Length
Vessel Registration On Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Registration Decals Displayed	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Registration Numbers Displayed	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Boater Ed Card (= or > 15 hp)	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
PFD: Type I, II, III, or V (/per)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PFD: Type IV	no	no	✓	✓	no
Type B-I Fire Ext (power boats)	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Ignition Safety Switch	✓	no	no	no	no
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Muffler	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skier-Down Flag	✓	✓	✓	✓	no
Navigation Lights	n/a	✓	✓	✓	flashlight
CO Warning Sticker	no	✓	✓	✓	no