

PREPARATION

Mandatory Boater Education Requirements

The California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) recommends that all recreational boaters take a state-approved boating safety course. These courses are listed on the DBW website under “Safety and Education” and “Aquatic Centers.”

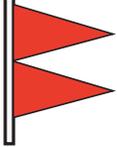
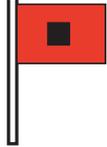
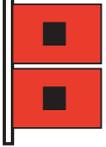
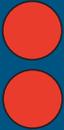
Beginning on January 1, 2018, recreational power boat operators who are aged 20 and younger shall be required to carry a boater education card. Once issued by the Division of Boating and Waterways, the California Boater Card remains valid for a boat operator’s lifetime. DBW will issue the cards to persons who provide proof that an approved vessel operator examination has been passed since January 1, 2015. Approved courses may be found online at www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com.

The California Boater Card requirement will be phased in over the next several years based on operator age:

Year	Operator Age
January 1, 2018	Persons 20 years of age or younger
January 1, 2019	Persons 25 years of age or younger
January 1, 2020	Persons 35 years of age or younger
January 1, 2021	Persons 40 years of age or younger
January 1, 2022	Persons 45 years of age or younger
January 1, 2023	Persons 50 years of age or younger
January 1, 2024	Persons 60 years of age or younger
January 1, 2025	All persons regardless of age



California
**BOATER
CARD**

STORM ADVISORIES				
Daytime Signals				
Night Signals				
	Small Craft Winds up to 38 mph	Gale Winds 39 to 54 mph	Storm Winds 55 to 73 mph	Hurricane Winds 74 mph and up

NOTE: In some areas, the display of storm advisory flags has been discontinued. Boaters should check current weather conditions before starting their trip.

Weather

Before getting underway, check the latest local conditions such as weather, currents, rapids, flow levels, and hazards, including low-head dams. The latest coastal conditions and wave forecasts can be found on the DBW Web site. Detailed information can also be obtained by tuning to local radio stations or the National Weather Radio broadcasts on frequencies of 162.400, 162.425, 162.450, 162.475, 162.500, 162.525, and 162.550 MHz in areas where available or by consulting local news sources.

At selected locations in and near boating areas, storm advisories are displayed by flag hoists or lights. Coast Guard stations and many marinas no longer display storm advisory flags. Remaining display points are located at some park ranger stations, marinas or municipal piers. Become familiar with area display stations and the meanings of the signals.

Safety Communications

According to the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center, a VHF marine radio is the single most important radio system a recreational boat owner/operator should have onboard. If you are cruising more than a few miles offshore, you should also have a MF/HF radio telephone or mobile satellite telephone, an Emergency Position Indicating Radio

Beacon (EPIRB). For added safety have a second VHF radio or cellular telephone to use during a marine emergency and receive high seas marine weather warnings.

Marine radios may require an FCC license depending on international travel areas and use. For information about marine radios, visit <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/>. EPIRBs must be registered with NOAA. For registration information, visit www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov.

Cellular telephones on recreational vessels are not a substitute for the regular maritime radio distress and safety systems, however they do have a place on board for boating on waterways where there is cell phone coverage.

Fueling

Most fires happen after fueling. To prevent fires, follow these common sense rules:

- Don't smoke or strike matches.
- Shut off motors. Turn off electrical equipment.
- Close all windows, doors and openings.
- Take portable tanks out of the boat and fill them on the dock.
- Keep the filling nozzle in contact with the fill pipe or tank.
- Wipe up any spilled gas with petroleum-absorbent pads. Discard the pads in a safe manner.
- Ventilate for at least five minutes. Make sure there is no odor of gasoline anywhere in the boat.
- Periodically check the system for fuel leaks.
- Visually check for leaks or fuel in the bilges.

Boat Capacity

Single-hull motorboats less than 20 feet in length that were manufactured after 1972 must display capacity and safe horsepower information. The maximum weight in people, gear and motors is offered as a guide to boaters and should not be exceeded.

While local, state, and federal laws may differ, please, keep in mind that other states may cite operators who exceed capacity and horsepower limitations. Some insurance companies will not insure craft exceeding horsepower maximums, and some boat manufacturers will void any applicable warranties for the same reasons. Boaters using vessels and personal watercraft without capacity plates should refer to the owner's manual and state law.



Photo courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard

Loading

As the operator, it's your responsibility to see that supplies are carefully loaded and all passengers are properly seated. For safety onboard, remember to:

- Spread weight evenly.
- Keep passengers seated.
- Fasten gear to prevent shifting.
- Don't overload your boat.

File a Float Plan

Before you go boating, it is a best practice to let a reliable family member or friend know where you are going and when you will return. This is known as "filing a float plan." If you do not return on time, your friend or family member can contact the Coast Guard or other rescue agency and will be able to tell them where you had planned to be and information about your boat, so they can locate you.

If you have a change in plans, or will be delayed, notify the person holding your float plan. Finally, close your plan by notifying the holder you have arrived home safely, and if the holder has reported you overdue, notify all applicable rescue authorities of your safe return.

Do not file your plan with the Coast Guard. A sample plan is on the next page. It is also available to download at www.dbw.ca.gov/PDF/FloatPlanForm.pdf. The Coast Guard and other organizations also offer float plan apps for cell phones.

CHECKLIST AND FLOAT PLAN

CHECKLIST

Before going on the water:

1. File a Float Plan (see below)
2. Give consideration to basic safety items, including the following:

<input type="checkbox"/> Vessel in good condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra starting battery
<input type="checkbox"/> Vessel properly loaded	<input type="checkbox"/> Life jackets/Throwable devices (Coast Guard-approved)
<input type="checkbox"/> Ample supply of fuel	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire extinguishers (Coast Guard-approved)
<input type="checkbox"/> Check weather reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual distress signals
<input type="checkbox"/> Compass and charts	<input type="checkbox"/> Oars or paddles
<input type="checkbox"/> Good anchoring equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine VHF radio
<input type="checkbox"/> Bailing Device	<input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight
<input type="checkbox"/> Spare parts	<input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone
<input type="checkbox"/> First-aid kit	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tools	
3. Cancel your Float Plan when you return

FLOAT PLAN

Operator: _____
Name and address of operator *Phone number*

Searches for an overdue boat have a much greater chance of being successful if the Coast Guard or other rescue agencies have certain facts. For your own safety and before going on the water, complete this form and leave it with a reliable family member or friend who will notify authorities if necessary. You can also text or email a float plan, but be sure to include all relevant information.

If overdue, contact: _____
Name and phone number of rescue agency near point of departure

Vessel: _____
Name *CF Number* *Length*

Power, Inboard - Outboard *Rig, If Sail* *Hull Color*

Type/Style *Range* *Speed*

Persons: _____ **Radio:** _____
Number Persons Aboard *Frequencies*

Departure from: _____
Place *Date/Time Depart*

Car Parked License # *Trailer Parked License #* *Where Parked*

Destination: _____
Place *Stops en Route* *Date/Time Return*

DISCLAIMER: *The Float Plan and checklist is not a definitive list of everything that may be required for safe boating on any particular boat or boating excursion. Knowing what is required is the responsibility of each individual boater.*

Important: *Don't forget to **cancel** your Float Plan when you return.*
 Checklist and Float Plan also available at: www.dbw.ca.gov/PDF/FloatPlanForm.pdf