



FIRE-RESCUE DEPARTMENT

FACT SHEET

Boating Safety

Recreational boating is a fun and enjoyable way to spend the Fourth of July weekend. San Diego has a wide variety of opportunities for boaters including Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean. While a wonderful source of recreation, boating can be a potentially dangerous sport for people who are unprepared or unaware of the safety regulations. Not knowing or obeying the navigation rules or the nautical rules of the road drinking alcohol or taking drugs while operating a boat, or choosing not to wear your life jacket are clearly NOT the smart things to do. Wearing a life jacket can reduce the number of boaters who drown each year by approximately 80%.

Knowledge and skills are important in reducing human error and improving judgment. If people are aware of the risk, they are likely to take the precautionary measures to protect themselves and their friends and family. That is why San Diego Lifeguards continue to spread the messages of boating safety not only during the 4th of July Weekend but throughout the entire year.

Boat operators are responsible for the safety of everyone on board and those around the boat. A good operator keeps a good lookout when driving and takes preventative measures to avoid getting into hazardous situations.

No matter how much experience you have, it's always a good idea for everyone to review boating safety rules before departures.

Minimum age

No person under 16 years of age may operate a boat with a motor of more than 15 horsepower, except for a sailboat that does not exceed 30 feet in length or a dinghy used directly between a moored boat and the shore or between two moored boats. The law allows children 12–15 years of age to operate boats with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboats over 30 feet if supervised on board by an adult at least 18 years of age.

General vessel speed

No person may operate a vessel at a speed greater than five (5) miles per hour within 100 feet of a swimmer or surfer.

Ocean vessel speed

No person may operate a vessel in excess of five (5) miles per hour within 1,000 feet of the oceanfront coastline of the City of San Diego. Separate boating regulations apply to Mission Bay.

Mission Bay vessel speed

The speed limit on Mission Bay from sunset to sunrise is five (5) miles per hour. At other times, certain areas have a designated speed limit of five (5) miles per hour or less. These areas include wherever buoys are posted with a five mile per hour limit near bridges; within 100 feet of shore and within 100 feet of another vessel



Equipment

Although equipment requirements vary depending on the size and type of boat, most pleasure boaters are required to have the following on board while underway:

- One throwable flotation device.
- One wearable flotation device for each person on board.
- One marine type fire extinguisher for motorboats of a closed hull construction.
- Navigation lights if operating after sunset.
- One sound producing device.
- One visual distress signal.
- Appropriate registration cards, numbers, and stickers.

For more information visit sandiego.gov/lifeguards