

OPERATION OF VESSELS – Emergency Cut-Off Switch Requirement

What is being considered?

The Department is considering establishing a requirement that operators of certain vessels use an emergency engine cut-off switch (ECOS) while operating on plane or above displacement speed. The vessels covered by this requirement would be recreational vessels less than 26 feet in overall length that have an engine capable of developing 115 pounds or more of static thrust. Operators of vessels that have a main helm that is installed within an enclosed cabin and vessels that do not have an engine cut-off switch installed by the manufacturer do not need to install an engine cut-off switch. The requirement to use the engine cut-off switch is only for operators of vessels which have an engine cut-off switch installed.

Why is this change being considered?

This is already a United States Coast Guard requirement but adding it to state regulations will allow the Natural Resources Police to more easily enforce the requirement and better ensure the safe operation of vessels in Maryland waters. State rules should be consistent with U.S. Coast Guard rules whenever possible.

Who will this affect?

Any individual who operates a vessel that:

- 1) Is less than 26 feet overall in length;
- 2) Has an engine capable of developing 115 pounds or more of static thrust;
- 3) Does not have an enclosed cabin; and
- 4) Has an engine cut-off switch installed by the manufacturer.

Additional Information

[Coast Guard Engine/Propulsion Cut-Off Devices FAQ](#)

[Technical Report Basic Boating Knowledge Core Plus Power](#) – ECOS is covered in Section 3.4.4, page 58

When will this be effective?

The Department anticipates that this change could be effective in the fall of 2025. The Department will follow our normal [procedures](#) if this topic moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with advisory bodies or other interested individuals?

The idea was scoped with the Boat Act Advisory Committee at their meeting in May 2025.