



# RENTAL VESSELS SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET



## EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

### A. LIFE JACKETS

One (1) wearable, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket on board for each person.  
**Life jackets must be readily accessible, in good condition and fit the wearer.**

**All children under the age of 13 on board a boat that is less than 21 feet in length MUST WEAR a life jacket while the vessel is underway.**

Children **under the age of 4** must wear a life jacket that features:

- A strap that is secured between the child's legs to fasten together the front and back of the life jacket.
- An inflatable headrest or high collar; and
- A web handle.

For boats 16 feet or longer, a throwable life ring or seat cushion (Type IV) is also required.

### B. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

One (1) Type B U.S. Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher for boats less than 26 feet in length. In case of a fire emergency, make sure all passengers are wearing their life jacket and then position the boat so that the fire is downwind. Aim the fire extinguisher at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth. Remember the word **P.A.S.S.**—Pull pin, aim at base of fire, squeeze handle and sweep side to side.

### C. VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS

Three (3) hand-held red flares satisfy the requirement for day and night visual distress signals. They are only to be used in the event of an emergency.

### D. SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE (i.e. Whistle, etc.)

All vessels must have a sound-signaling device that can be heard at least one-half mile away.

## RESPONSIBILITIES AS A BOAT OPERATOR:

### **Avoid Reckless or Negligent Operation: They are dangerous as well as ILLEGAL!**

- Don't operate in a swimming area.
- Don't operate under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Don't speed near other vessels or when dangerous conditions exist on the water.
- Don't ride on the front, sides, rear, seat backs or any other place where there is a danger of falling overboard. Bow riding, or sitting on the edge of a moving boat is illegal. A fall can put you in the path of the propeller resulting in death or serious injury.
- Don't jump the wake of a nearby vessel.
- Don't overload or overpower the vessel beyond the limits on the capacity plate. This plate indicates the maximum weight capacity and/or the maximum number of people that the boat can carry safely in good weather. Maximum weight is the combined weight of passengers, gear and motors. **DO NOT** exceed either the maximum weight capacity or the maximum number of people.

## SAFE OPERATION

**Designated operator(s) of a rented boat must demonstrate good judgment. They are responsible for the safety of all passengers and any damage they cause to the vessel. Designated operator(s) must obey boating laws and be aware of activity in and around the vessel.**

### Safe Speed

For safety, boats must travel at a speed that allows the operator to maintain control, avoid collisions and prevent damage to other people and property. Minimum wake speed zones are posted and must be obeyed. A minimum wake is the slowest possible boat speed necessary to maintain steering, not to exceed 3 knots.

### Risk of Collision

Maintaining a proper lookout is important to ensure that risk of collision is eliminated. It is every vessel operator's responsibility to avoid a collision.

In narrow channels, recreational vessels must not hamper the operation of large vessels that cannot maneuver outside of the channels. Recreational vessels should keep to the starboard side of the channel.

### Risk Management

Most accidents are caused by a simple mistake. Reduce your chances of being involved in an accident by paying attention to other boats, maintaining a safe speed and always wearing your life jacket. Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration and recognize that the wind, waves, noise and vibration of the engine have an impact on your body.

## Alcohol and Boating

It is illegal to operate a boat while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs. Under Maryland law, a person is considered to be boating under the influence if he or she has a blood alcohol content of 0.08% or greater. The effects of the sun, wind, waves, engine vibration and other environmental factors can make a boater tired after being out on the water for a short while. The addition of alcohol reduces a person's ability to safely operate a boat. Alcohol affects balance, vision, coordination, and judgment. It is not only important for the boat operator to be sober, but the passengers as well. Falls overboard are a major cause of boating deaths. About one half of the boating accidents are alcohol related.

### Anchoring

Select an area to anchor with plenty of room. It should be well protected and in a spot where other boats can easily see your vessel. You should never anchor in channels or areas such as launching ramps or other high-traffic areas. **NEVER** anchor from the stern or rear of the boat.

### Water Sports (tubing, skiing, knee boarding, etc.)

The operator of a vessel towing someone on water skis, tube, knee board, or any other towable device must be at least 12 years old. The spotter or person responsible for watching the person(s) being towed must also be at least 12 years old. Anyone being towed **must** be wearing a life jacket at all times.

### Weather

Be alert to weather conditions. Accumulating dark clouds, shifting winds and graying skies may be indications of danger. Listen for distant thunder. Head toward the nearest safe shore if a thunderstorm is approaching.

### Boarding

To prevent tipping over or capsizing a small boat when boarding, always stay low and keep the weight as close to the center of the boat as possible.

### Capsizing

If a small open boat capsizes, the best thing to do is stay with the boat until help arrives or flip the boat and paddle the swamped boat to safety.

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia can occur in warm water—even when you just go for a swim. If alone, use the **H.E.L.P.** position—Heat Escape Lessening Posture—to reduce heat loss. While wearing a life jacket, draw your knees to your chest and cross your arms in front of you. If with a group, huddle together tightly with the smallest person in the middle if possible.

# SAFETY TIPS AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Wearable, offshore life jackets provide the most buoyancy and will turn most people face-up in the water.



Wearable, near-shore life jackets are good for calm water and may turn a person face-up in the water.



Wearable, ski-vest style life jackets are good for water sports but are not recommended for rough water. They will not turn most persons face-up in the water.



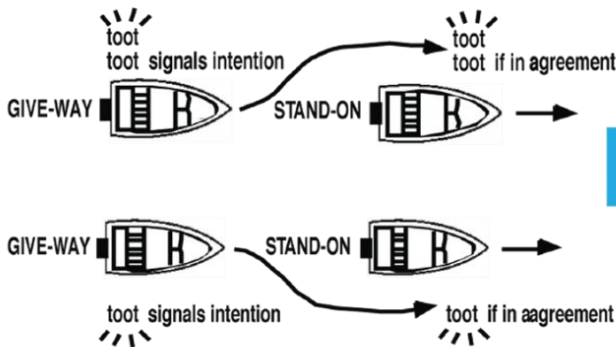
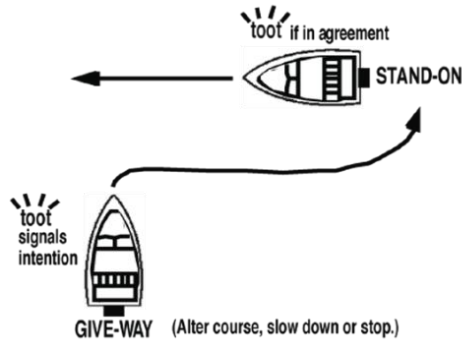
Throwable devices such as a life ring or seat cushion are designed to be thrown to someone in the water. Not intended to be worn.



Special-use life jackets are designed for specific activities and must be used in accordance with their labels.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** If you can put **more than three finger widths** in the **gap** between your shoulders and the shoulder area of the life vest, **your life vest is too big**. That vest will not keep your head above water. You must be at least 16 years old to wear an inflatable life jacket and it must be worn at all times.

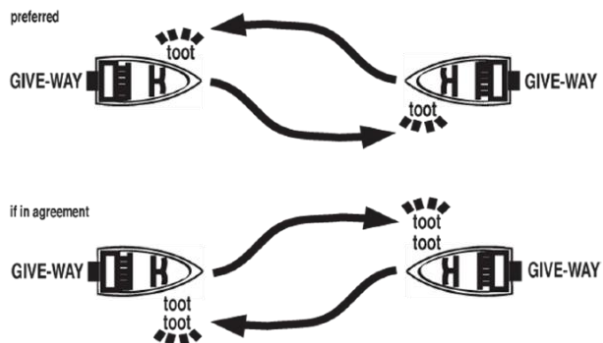
## CROSSING



## OVERTAKING



## HEAD-ON





# RIDE INSIDE

Bow riding, or sitting on the edge of a moving boat, is illegal. A fall can put you in the path of the propeller, causing death or serious injury.

## CONTROLLED AREA

### EXAMPLES:

No Wake  
Idle Speed  
Ski Zone

## DANGER or HAZARD

### EXAMPLES:

Shallow Water  
Stumps  
Rocks

## BOAT EXCLUSION AREA

### EXAMPLES:

No Boats  
Swim Area  
Dam



**NOTE:** This publication is intended as a guide only. For State laws and regulations, see the Natural Resources Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Code of Maryland Regulations, Title 08. Maryland laws and regulations can be found at the following web sites:

**Laws:** [lawlib.state.md.us](http://lawlib.state.md.us)

**Regulations:** [dsd.state.md.us](http://dsd.state.md.us)

Revised 5/2017