

Boating Safety

- Are lights, instruments, switches and whistles in good working order?
- Has the boat been checked for leaks and is all water bailed out?
- Are the bilges clean, clear and free of gasoline vapors?
- Do you have a tool kit and extra parts aboard?
- Has the weather forecast been received and considered?
- Check cooling system. Is overboard discharge normal?
- If this is an extended cruise, did you file a "float plan" with friends?
- Note wind, current and location of other boats. Are there any hazards in the area?
- Do not overload.

You're Underway

You're underway—have a good time. Remember that good sportsmanship and common courtesy are the fundamentals of good boating. Make your experiences and the experiences of others much more enjoyable by being courteous and considerate.

- Do not speed or be reckless.
- Do not dump refuse overboard.
- Obey all of the "rules of the road."
- Keep your boat under control at all times.
- Never tie up to buoys or other navigational markers.
- Never anchor in the middle of a channel.
- Never tie up to another boat without permission.
- Respect the rights of others.

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To The Captain

In the final analysis, all boating safety begins and ends with the skipper. As “Captain” of your vessel, regardless of its size, you are legally accountable for its proper operation and for the safety of your crew and passengers.

It is your responsibility:

1. To have your hull checked by a qualified person for cracks and dry rot.
2. To have your motor and/or engine tuned and in top running condition at all times.
3. To neither power nor load your boat beyond its labeled specifications.
4. To see that all legally required equipment is aboard, even on rented boats.
5. To have adequate knowledge of boat handling, cruise anticipated, probable hazards to be encountered and weather to be expected.
6. To know your guests’ abilities and their health. You should inform them of shipboard rules and instruct them on use of equipment.
7. To assist others if not endangering your own craft, or to stand by until other help arrives.
8. To train at least one other person to operate the boat in case you become injured or incapacitated for any reason.
9. To keep a sharp and constant watch on maneuvering of other boats in your area.
10. To never leave port under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when you know you are not physically able to operate your boat safely.

Trailer And Launching

You and your boat can expand your area of operation if you decide to trailer. The decision to trailer, however, should require careful consideration. The trailer size must be adequate for the weight of the boat, motor and all your gear. Check the manufacturer’s rating. Don’t skimp. If the boat is within 100 pounds of maximum capacity of the trailer, get the next larger size.

Driving with a boat trailer is an art in itself—one that can be mastered only through practice. Be sure you are proficient at backing with a trailer BEFORE you go on the highway. One principle rule to remember is: Make sure everything is fastened down securely and emptied before you start. Travel a little slower and allow yourself plenty of room to pass and stop.

Be sure your trailer is in tip-top shape. Check to be sure all of your signaling devices work. If wheels are usually submerged, be sure to lubricate the wheel bearings more frequently. Look over your hitch and be sure the ball is kept clean. Be sure to attach your safety chains. Secure and double check all boat straps.

Be careful to keep your body and face away from the winch handle when releasing the winch ratchet. When the boat is being launched, be sure the launching lines fore and aft are properly manned. Depart the launch area slowly and watch your wake.

Pre-Cruise Safety Checklist

- Is all safety equipment aboard and accessible?
- Are you sure you have one Coast Guard approved personal flotation device for each person on board?
- Are all lines coiled and out of the way?
- Are all supplies and equipment securely stowed?
- Do tanks have enough fuel for the trip with plenty to spare?
- In outboards, are the portable fuel tanks and batteries secured and connected?
- Are there paddles or oars on board?



Why Choose ERIE®?

The more you learn about your boat and boating, the more fun you will have. The following is a summary of safe boating tips. If you are a beginner, this guide will give you the fundamentals of boating safety. If you are an experienced skipper, the following tips can be a handy checklist and review.



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