

BOATING AND WATER SAFETY

Catawba County requires every description of watercraft other than a seaplane to carry at least one life preserver, life belt, ring buoy, etc., as prescribed by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission for each person on board on all lakes in Catawba County. All persons operating vessels on Catawba County Lakes must stop for a blue light or siren exhibited by any law enforcement officer during the performance of duties. Motorboats must be equipped with an efficient muffler, underwater exhaust or other device which at all times adequately muffles or suppresses the sound of the motor exhaust and motors cannot be equipped with a cutout. The County's noise ordinance also prohibits loud, disturbing and unnecessary noises.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT SAFETY

In 1999 NC General Assembly enacted new regulation for Personal Watercraft. This new law, which is effective December 1, 1999, affects the age limit and required certification for operators of personal watercraft, how personal watercraft can be operated, and the rental of personal watercraft.

The following is a synopsis of this new legislation.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL WATERCRAFT



A personal watercraft (PWC) is a small vessel which uses an outboard or propeller-driven motor, or an inboard motor powering a water jet pump, as its primary source of motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on, or being towed behind the vessel, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.

WHO CAN OPERATE A PWC

No person under 12 years of age can operate a PWC on the waters of this state.

A person of at least 12 years of age but under 16 years of age can operate a PWC on the waters of this state

IF:

1. The person is accompanied by a person of at least 18 years of age who physically occupies the watercraft.
- OR**
2. The person possesses on his or her person while operating the watercraft, identification showing proof of age and a boater safety certification card issued by the Wildlife Resources Commission or proof of other satisfactory completion of a boating safety education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA); and produces the identification and certification card upon request of an officer of the Wildlife Resources Commission or local law enforcement agency.

Any person 16 years of age or older is not required to have a boating safety course to operate a PWC under this law.

It is unlawful for the owner of a PWC or a person who has temporary or permanent responsibility for a person under the age of 16 to knowingly allow that person to operate a PWC.

OPERATION OF A PWC:

No person shall operate a PWC on the waters of this state at any time between sunset and sunrise.

No person shall operate a PWC on the waters of this state, nor shall the owner of a PWC knowingly allow another person to operate that PWC on the waters of this state,

UNLESS:

- Each person riding on or being towed behind such vessel is wearing a type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (PFD) approved by the US Coast Guard. Inflatable PFD's do not satisfy this requirement.

- If the PWC is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cut off switch, the lanyard must be securely attached to the person, clothing or PFD of the operator at all times while the PWC is being operated in such a manner to turn off the engine if the operator dismounts while the watercraft is in operation.

No person shall operate a PWC towing another person on water skis or similar device
UNLESS:

The PWC has on board, in addition to the operator, an observer who shall monitor the progress of the person or persons being towed, or the PWC is equipped with a rearview mirror; **AND:**
The total number of persons operating, observing, and being towed does not exceed the number of passengers identified by the manufacturer as the maximum safe load for the vessel.

PWC's must at all times be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner. Maneuvers that endanger life, limb, or property shall constitute reckless operation of a vessel. These maneuvers include:

Unreasonably or unnecessarily weaving through congested vehicle traffic;
Jumping the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of such vessel or when visibility around such vessel is obstructed;
Intentionally approaching another vessel in order to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid collision;
Operating at a greater than no-wake speed within 100 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, the shoreline, a dock, pier, swim float, marked swimming area, swimmers, surfers, persons engaged in angling, and any manually operated propelled vessel; and
Operating contrary to the "rules of the road" or following too closely to another vessel, including another PWC. "Following too closely" means proceeding in the same direction and operating at a speed in excess of 10 miles per hour when approaching within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another vessel that is underway unless that vessel is operating in a narrow channel, in which case a PWC may operate at the speed and flow of other vessel traffic.

NOTE: Nothing in this law prohibits local governments, marine commissions, or local wake authorities from passing more restrictive regulations on PWC's or regulate additional aspects of PWC operation that are not covered by this law.

RENTING PWC'S

No livery shall lease, hire, rent a PWC to or for operation by a person under 16 years of age unless that person meets the requirements listed under the previous section "WHO CAN OPERATE A PWC?"

It is unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation to engage in the business of renting PWC's to the public for operation by the rentee unless such person, firm, or corporation has secured insurance for his own liability and that of his rentee in the amount of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000), from an insurance company duly authorized to sell liability insurance in this state. This insurance shall be on each PWC rented.

Where to take a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved boating safety course:

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission at (919) 733-7192 or
www.state.nc.us/Wildlife/LawEnforcement or contact your local wildlife enforcement officer

US Power Squadron at
1-888-FOR-USPS (1-888-367-8777) or
www.usps.org

BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water
1-800-336-BOAT (1-800-336-2628) or

Boat/US online free course at
www.boatus.com/

