

**AMENDMENTS TO THE NASBLA NATIONAL BOATING EDUCATION
STANDARDS
PRESENTED AT THE 2007 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS
IN BURLINGTON, VERMONT
ON SEPTEMBER 10, 2007**

Amendments in ***bold italics***

Standard 1.1 - Boat Capacities

The course will describe how to determine acceptable loading based on locating and determining a boat's gross load capacity (total weight and # persons) from the boat capacity plate and horsepower recommendations.

Rationale- A boat operator must be able to avoid capsizing situations by adhering to boat capacity limits and properly distributing the weight in the boat for safe operation. ***U.S. Coast Guard accident statistics indicate that capsizing and falls overboard are the most reported types of fatal accidents and accounted for over half of all boating fatalities.*** Many capsizing incidents have resulted from overloaded boats. ***Special care and attention is especially needed when loading small boats under 16 feet in length.***

Standard 1.2 - Boat Registration Requirements

The course will describe:

1. that all motorized boats and many other boats are required to be registered (check state requirements),
2. requirements for hull identification number,
3. the required certificate of number (registration documentation), and external display of numbers,
4. the requirements for federally documented vessels,
5. reciprocity regulations, and
6. registration requirements in the boat's state of principal use.

Rationale - Understanding the legal requirements for boat registration will help boaters to avoid unnecessary violations and resulting fines. ***All states require registration of powered vessels and many of the states also require registration for non-powered vessels. Penalties for failing to register a vessel may involve paying a fine of up to \$1,000 as well as the possibility of serving jail time.***

Standard 2.1 - Personal Flotation Device Types and Carriage

The course will describe the types of U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) and their respective uses, advantages, and disadvantages. The course will also describe the number and types of PFDs that must be carried on the boat according to applicable regulations and will discuss/describe label restrictions.

Rationale - U. S. Coast Guard statistics *show approximately seventy (70) percent of all fatal boating accident deaths are caused by drowning. Of those who drowned, approximately ninety (90) percent of the victims were not wearing their lifejacket.* Citations and fines are issued to those boat operators who are found carrying improper PFDs for the number and types of passengers on board. Special attention must be given to the use of hybrid Type 5 inflatable PFDs and special restrictions for totally inflatable PFDs.

Standard 2.2 – Personal Flotation Device Sizing and Availability

The course will communicate that PFDs must be readily accessible and correctly sized for the persons using them.

Rationale - Capsizing and falls overboard accounted for *over half of all boating fatalities.* Proper use of PFDs is essential for boater safety. The participant needs to understand how to adjust PFDs of various types and styles for themselves and other passengers.

Standard 2.3 - Wearing Personal Flotation Devices

The course must: inform boat operators of the importance of wearing PFDs at all times; emphasize the need to be aware that conditions can change quickly in conjunction with boating (i.e. weather and water conditions, boat traffic, etc.); address the difficulty to putting a PFD on in the water under distress; include state or federal regulations of children wearing PFDs aboard recreational watercrafts.

Standard 2.8 – Navigation Light Equipment

Deleted the reference to Standard 5.3.8.

Rationale – Recreational boats are required to display navigation lights between sunset and sunrise and during periods of reduced visibility. Boating accident statistics indicate that nighttime accidents account for a significant proportion of total boat collisions. Boat operators who know and follow navigation and

anchorage light requirements can help reduce nighttime collisions. Many of the navigation rules are devoted to navigation lights. The *U.S. Coast Guard website (www.uscgboating.org)*, provides a summary of the most relevant lighting requirements for recreational boaters.

Standard 2.9 - Sound Signaling Equipment

Deleted the reference to Standard 5.3.7.

Standard 2.10 – Visual Distress Signals

Deleted the reference to Standard 5.3.10.

Standard 3.1 - Checking Local Weather And Water Conditions

The course will describe how to make informed boating decisions based on forecasted local weather and water conditions. It will also describe dangerous weather conditions such as strong wind, storms, lightning, hurricanes, fog, and their importance in trip planning.

Rationale - *Boat operators must know the importance of getting, understanding, and using weather reports or reading weather changing signs in the sky in order to make an informed judgment about possible changing water conditions. It is the responsibility of the operator to decide to continue or make adjustments to the trip.* Often poor weather in combination with other unexpected emergencies accelerates the danger to boat operators and their passengers.

Standard 3.2 - Checking Local Hazards

The course will describe how to obtain information about local hazards that may impede the operation of a recreational boat.

Rationale - *It is important for the boat operator to become familiar with where to get local hazard conditions information and not become complacent with his/her knowledge of local hazards; hazards are ever changing in every type of water system (i.e. lakes, ponds, rivers, oceans, etc.). Types of hazards to*

be discussed should be state specific (i.e. low-head dams, rapids, sudden winds, tides, currents, white water, overhead cables, bridges, waves, heavy boating traffic, etc.).

Standard 3.3 - Filing a Float Plan

The course will describe the importance of notifying someone of your boating plans and the basic information that should be included.

Rationale - *Float plans act as a rescue tool for authorities in the event of an accident. Rescue authorities can respond faster and more efficiently if a float plan has detailed information about the time of departure, expected destination, boat description, how many people on board, course, and time of expected return.*

Standard 3.4 - Boat Preventive Maintenance

The course will communicate the need for regular inspection and maintenance of the boat and its key components (e.g., through-hull fittings, motor, electrical system, fuel system).

Rationale - Keeping a boat in good working order is as much a part of the boating experience as boating itself. Negligence in maintaining a boat may lead to an unsafe or disastrous experience. *In the last few years, 8% of vessels in reported accidents involved boat equipment/maintenance related factors. In addition, 4% of all fatalities were due to boat equipment/maintenance related factors.*

Standard 3.7 - Pre-Departure Checklist & Passenger Communication

The course must describe the importance of using a pre-departure checklist and conducting an onboard safety discussion with passengers. Passengers should be informed about the location of PFDs, fire extinguishers, flares, first-aid kit, discharge and management of waste procedures, anchoring procedures, emergency radio operation (if applicable), storm/rough weather procedures, line handling, emergency boat operation, and falls overboard procedure.

Rationale - Boat operators should inform passengers of relevant safety information to prevent accidents, increase safety, and reduce response time in the event of an emergency. *Boat operators should also conduct a mock training with passengers, so they understand and know what to expect in an emergency situation.*

Standard 4.1 – Environmental Laws and Regulations

Quagga mussels were added to the list of aquatic nuisance species in the rationale.

Standard 5.1 - Operator Responsibilities

The course will describe a boat operator's ultimate responsibility for safety and all activity aboard the boat. This responsibility extends to other water users and includes but is not limited to: controlling boat speed, obeying no wake/limited wake restrictions, refraining from careless, reckless, or negligent operations on the water, controlling boat noise, abiding by other general boater courtesy, and observing and operating in accordance with homeland security measures including:

5.1.1. Keeping a safe prescribed distance from military and commercial ships

5.1.2. Avoiding commercial port operations areas

5.1.3. Observing all security zones

5.1.4. Observing and reporting suspicious activities to proper authorities

(The reference to propeller strikes was deleted - see the new standard 5.8.)

Standard 5.2 - Influence of Drugs and Alcohol on Boat Operation

The course will describe the effects of drinking alcohol or using drugs while boating, and the boating laws pertinent to operating a boat while under the influence.

Rationale – Alcohol use plays a major part in the number of boating accidents and fatalities. It is illegal to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Further, according to the Drinking and Recreational Boating Fatalities study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 30%-40% of recreational boaters admitted to drinking while on the water. Although many felt that they could safely drink when they were the passengers, rather than the operators, the findings of the study indicated that the relative risk of death is similar for both operators and passengers when alcohol has been involved.

Standard 5.3 - Navigation Rules

This course will describe basic safe boating operation and good seamanship for recreational boaters. It is designed to assist the recreational boater when encountering

typical navigation rules situations. *Although you are responsible to be knowledgeable of the Navigation Rules in their entirety, this course will focus on only the following Inland Rules*:*

**In those states that Inland Rules do not apply, the equivalent International, Western Rivers or Great Lakes rule(s) may be substituted by the Course Provider.*

Standard 5.3.1 - Rule of responsibility – Rules 2(a) and 2(b)

Standard 5.3.2 - Proper lookout – Rule 5

Standard 5.3.3 - Safe speed – Rule 6(a)

*Standard 5.3.4 - Collision avoidance rules
Rules 7(a), 7(d), 7(d)(i), 7(d)(ii); Rule 8; Rules 13(a), 13(b); Rule 16; Rule 17; Rule 18
Inland Rules 14(a), 14(b), 14(c); Rule 15(a)*

*Standard 5.3.5 - Restricted visibility
Rules 19(a) through (e)*

Standard 5.3.6 - Disclaimer

“The navigation rules contained in this course summarize basic navigation rules for which a boat operator is responsible on inland waterways. Additional and more in-depth rules apply regarding various types of waterways, such as International Waters and Western Rivers, and operation in relation to commercial vessels and other watercraft. It is the responsibility of a boat operator to know and follow all the navigation rules. In those states that Inland Rules do not apply, the equivalent International, Western Rivers or Great Lakes rule(s) may be substituted by the Course Provider.

“For a complete listing of the navigation rules, refer to the document “Navigation Rules” published by the U.S. Coast Guard (COMDTINST 16672.2 Series) and available through the U.S. Government printing office or on the web at <http://www.uscg.mil/vtm/navrules/navrules.pdf>. For State specific navigation requirements, refer to the state laws where you intend to boat.”

Standard 5.4 - Aids to Navigation

The final sentence of the rationale was deleted. It stated: “This merger eliminates distinctions between the two systems and will ultimately create safer, less confusing waterways.”

Standard 5.8 – Propeller Intervention & Awareness

The course will describe the dangers, unsafe activities, safety equipment, and avoidance practices to mitigate or prevent propeller strikes in recreational boating.

Rationale – The USCG Office of Recreational Boating Safety statistics – fatalities and injuries – support the need for a comprehensive education standard and represent annually 4% of all fatalities with a growing number of injuries. In 2006, the USCG reported, prior to state reporting, 150 people struck by propeller with 25 fatalities, reflecting a 17% probability of fatality. At least 41 of the strikes were to children, ages 2 – 18.

Since the danger is not readily visible to participants the operator and passengers may not recognize or consider the consequences of accidental or inadvertent contact. Motorboat propellers can inflict severe, devastating injuries that result in death, loss of extremities, severe permanent deformity, disfigurement, and/or disability. Common propeller strike scenarios are man-overboard and/or the “circle of death” from runaway vessels due to the unexpected loss of the operator. Every year people who recreate on and around boats are struck by the propeller of their boat or another boat. Even propellers in neutral or at rest can cause serious injuries.

Standard 6.1 - Rendering Assistance

Deleted the reference to Standard 5.3.11.

Standard 6.2 – Capsizing/Falls Overboard

The course will describe how to prevent and respond to these emergencies. The prevention responses will include at least the following: stay centered and low, avoid standing and sudden moves, maintain three points of contact, never overload, balance your load, and avoid rough water. The responding procedures will include at least the following: wearing life jackets, taking a head count, staying with the craft when appropriate, signaling for assistance, using improvised floating aids, and initiation of procedures to recover people in the water.

Rationale – Capsizing and falls overboard emergencies are consistently the leading cause of boating fatalities. Overloading and passenger movement on smaller craft contribute to most of the capsizing/falls overboard accidents. This issue

highlights the need for boater education courses to stress the proper response/action in a capsizing falls overboard emergency.

Standard 6.3 – Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia Prevention

The course will describe the dangers of cold water immersion and hypothermia, including prevention and the physiological impact of cold water immersion (initial reaction, short-term immersion/swimming failure, long-term immersion/immersion hypothermia, *and post-rescue collapse*).

Rationale – Boaters have a much greater risk of dying when involved in a cold water immersion accident. Boaters’ risk of dying increases with colder water temperatures. Sportsmen who hunt or fish from boats in cold weather are at greater risk of fatalities from capsizing or falling overboard. Water temperature varies by season and location, *but the water does not have to be exceptionally cold for someone to experience the effects of cold water immersion.*

Capsizing and falls overboard into cold water account for a high number of boating fatalities. Researchers (Golden and Harvey 1981) identified four distinct stages in which a person immersed in cold water may become incapacitated and die. Boaters who understand the physiology of cold water immersion, understand the behaviors and conditions that cause immersion events (such as reaching overboard and improper loading), are adequately prepared for a cold water immersion event (such as wearing life jackets and carrying communication devices), and understand the decisions that should be made during such an event, have a greater chance of avoiding cold water immersion or surviving if it does occur.

Standard 6.4- Fire Emergency Preparedness

This standard was re-numbered, but no changes were made to the language in the standard or rationale.

Standard 6.5 - Running Aground Prevention and Response

The course will describe how to prevent and respond to running aground for recreational boats.

Rationale –*According to the U.S. Coast Guard statistics, groundings have accounted for a number of fatalities, injuries, and millions in property damage every*

year. Preventing running aground is an important boat operator competence. Following proper procedures in the event of a grounding can reduce or minimize fatalities, boat damage, submerged object damage, and responses by public and private entities for salvage operations.

Standard 6.6 - Accident Reports

This standard was re-numbered, but no changes were made to the language in the standard or rationale.

Standard 6.7 - Boating Accident Report Form

The course will include a sample accident report form, which can be included in the textbook or as a separate handout.

Rationale – U.S. Coast Guard reports indicate that only a small fraction of non-fatal boating accidents are reported. Most accidents are not reported because of ignorance of the law and difficulty in enforcing the law. Every effort to assist boaters to report accidents may increase the rate of compliance in reporting accidents.

Standard 7.1 – Personal Watercraft and other Jet Propelled Watercraft

The course will state that a Personal Watercraft is defined as a boat and must observe all boating regulations. It must describe the unique characteristics of Personal Watercraft (PWC), including at least the following topics:

- 7.1.1 – Operational characteristics of PWCs, including steering, stopping and stability of PWC
- 7.1.2 – Off- throttle steering
- 7.1.3 – PWC load capacities as per manufacturer recommendations
- 7.1.4 – Re-boarding a PWC
- 7.1.5 – The purpose and use of a Lanyard/Cut (Shut) off switch
- 7.1.6 – The purpose and use of a fuel reserve tank
- 7.1.7 – Laws and regulations
- 7.1.8 – Accident prevention
- 7.1.9 – Noise control
- 7.1.10 – Hours of operation

Rationale - Recreational boaters share waterways with personal watercraft or may themselves be operators of personal watercraft. Understanding the handling characteristics of personal watercraft can help keep adequate navigational distances to limit collisions and fatalities. Approximately 30% of all injuries sustained from boating accidents were attributed to the use of personal watercraft. For these reasons, special attention needs to be addressed to PWC accident prevention....

(rationale continues with no additional changes)

Standard 7.2 - Water Skiing

The course will describe procedures to follow when pulling water-skiers or operating in the vicinity of water-skiing or other activities using towed devices.

Rationale – The forces generated by water skiers and their possible trajectory in a fall necessitate that each boat maintain as much distance as possible with a minimum of a 200-foot wide “ski-corridor” (100 feet on either side of the boat and behind the skier). “Skier mishaps” has been consistently listed in the top five types of boating accidents as measured by total number of boats involved.

Standard 7.4 - Hunting & Fishing

The course will inform people who fish and hunt from boats that they are boaters and need to follow safe boating practices. Information must be provided about accident risks unique to this group of recreational boaters.

Rationale - Anglers and hunters often don’t consider themselves boaters and thus pay little attention to learning and observing boating safety rules. Approximately one-third of all boating fatalities occurred while the victim was participating in fishing activities. Likewise, more hunters die each year from drowning and the effects of hypothermia than from gunshot wounds. Many water-based hunting and fishing accidents occur from actions as simple as falling overboard while standing up to cast a line or while reaching for a decoy and other accidents are caused when the boat capsizes from an unbalanced load. However, many of the fatalities could have been prevented if the sports enthusiast had been wearing a life jacket.

Standard 7.5 – Paddlesports

The course will inform paddlers and rowers about accident risks and safe boating practices unique to this group of recreational boaters.

Rationale – Paddlers do not consider themselves boaters and thus pay little attention to learning and observing traditional boating safety rules, so messages should be crafted specifically for them. A significant portion of fatal capsizing accidents result from occupant movement. There is a need for messages that increase awareness about the risk associated with standing in or moving about a canoe and how to minimize this risk. Since paddlesports fatalities occur across the range of canoeing and kayaking activities, education efforts should continue to be directed to all segments of the paddlesports community. **More information on this topic is provided in Appendix B of the NASBLA-approval application paperwork.**