

**AMENDMENTS TO THE NATIONAL BOATING EDUCATION STANDARDS
PRESENTED AT THE 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS (NASBLA)
IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS
ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2009**

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. *PWCs or other boats without capacity plates should reference the owners' manual and state laws*

Rationale- A boat operator must be able to avoid capsizing situations by adhering to boat capacity limits *and maintaining proper distribution of* 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 *improperly loaded or* overloaded boats.

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- *Registration and numbering violations are one of the top reasons for citations or arrests.* 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 *and territories* also require registration for non-powered vessels. Penalties for failing to register a vessel may involve paying a fine as well as the possibility of serving jail time.

Standard 2.1 - Personal Flotation Device Types and Carriage

The course will explain that there are different classifications, types and sizes of U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFDs), including inflatable life jackets and throwable Type IV devices, and will feature examples of their respective uses, advantages, and disadvantages based upon the activity for which they are intended. The course will also describe the number and types of PFDs/life jackets that must be carried aboard the boat according to applicable regulations, discuss and clarify label restrictions, and emphasize that the best PFD/life jacket is the one that will be worn all the time.

Rationale- U. S. Coast Guard recreational boating 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 fail to carry sufficient PFDs/life jackets or are found carrying improper PFDs/life jackets for the number and types of passengers on board. It is important for boaters to understand that some PFDs/life jackets are also referred to as life jackets and that they can be designed for different uses or activities, such as inflatable PFDs/life jackets. It is also important for boat operators to read and understand the information on the PFD/life jacket label and apply that to the intended wearer. The best PFD/life jacket is the one people will wear.

Standard 2.2 – Personal Flotation Device Sizing and Availability

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

Rationale- Capsizing and falls overboard account for over half of all boating fatalities. All boat occupants must know where the PFD/life jackets and throwable Type IV devices are located and how to use them. Participants need to understand that PFDs/life jackets are designed for various uses/activities, the advantages and disadvantages of different styles, and how to adjust various types for themselves and other passengers.

Standard 2.3 - Wearing Personal Flotation Devices

The course must: inform boat operators of the importance of wearing PFDs/life jackets at all times; show passengers how to correctly put on their PFDs/life jackets and tell them to wear them; emphasize the need to be aware that conditions can change quickly while

boating (i.e. weather and water conditions, boat traffic, etc.); address the difficulty of putting on a PFD/life jacket in the water while under distress; and include state or federal regulations pertaining to children wearing PFDs/life jackets aboard recreational watercraft.

Rationale- It is essential that boater safety education repeatedly emphasize the importance of always wearing a PFD/life jacket. Research has shown most drownings associated with recreational boating might not have occurred if the person had been wearing a PFD/life jacket. In fact, in a recent 10 year period, PFDs/life jackets were not worn in 82% of all fatal accidents. Today's PFDs/life jackets are truly wearable and new designs allow more comfort and maneuverability for every boating activity. Wearing a PFD/life jacket at all times is the single most important behavior that a boater can do to be safe and prevent drowning: Once a person enters the water, it is almost impossible to put on a life jacket.

Standard 2.9 - Sound Signaling Equipment

Rationale- Sound producing devices are required equipment on recreational boats. In certain boating conditions, boat operators must be able to alert other boats to their presence or operation intentions. The number one type of reported boating accident is "collision with another vessel." *Boating safety courses should demonstrate how sound producing equipment can be used to prevent collisions by signaling intentions to other recreational watercraft, and commercial and military vessels.*

Standard 2.10 – Visual Distress Signals

The course will describe the types and use of visual distress signals required on recreational boats operating on coastal waters and adjoining rivers two (2) miles or more wide at the mouth and up to the first point the river narrows to less than two (2) miles as summarized in Federal Requirements and Safety Tips for Recreational Boats.

Rationale- Visual distress signals provide an effective means for the recreational boater to alert others of a boater in distress. In those situations where radio communications are ineffective, a boater may have no other means to gain the attention of another boater, or persons on shore, of their situation. *Proper use of flare devices provides an important visual distress signal. Numerous boaters in distress have successfully signaled for assistance using flare devices.*

Standard 3.1 - Checking Local Weather And Water Conditions

The course will describe how to make informed boating decisions based on forecasted local weather, water conditions, *boater skill level, vessel range and capability pertinent to those conditions.* It will also describe dangerous weather conditions (*i.e.,* strong wind, storms, lightning, hurricanes, fog) *and water conditions (i.e., high water, sand bars, currents, large waves)* 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 *as they pertain to their boating skill and experience.* It is the responsibility of the operator to decide to continue or make adjustments to the trip. *Most accidents occur on calm, clear days. However,* poor weather in combination with *operator skill level and* unexpected emergencies *can accelerate* the danger to operators and passengers.

Standard 3.2 - Checking Local Hazards

The course will describe how to obtain information about local hazards that may impede the *safe* 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, *sand bars,* 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 *are* on board, course, and time of expected return. *Float plans can be communicated through paper plans, telephone*

conversations, electronic emails, text messages or other forms of communication.

Standard 3.5 – Transporting and Trailering

Rationale- The majority of recreational boats in the U.S. are trailered to and from the water. Neglecting the trailer's maintenance can result in damage to a boat, the towing vehicle, or both, as well as create a hazard for other boats and vehicles. Good trailering skills can help boaters avoid accidents and reduce conflicts on boat ramps.

Standard 3.6 - Fueling Procedures

Rationale- Gasoline vapors can explode. Ignition of spilled fuel vapors continues to cause injuries and fatalities. The probability of explosion can be reduced by following safe fueling procedures. Use of ethanol fuels in equipment not designed for these fuel types can result in equipment malfunction.

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 and use of PFDs/life jackets (and shown how to put them on), fire extinguishers, flares and first-aid kit; the 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 procedures.

Rationale- Boat operators should inform passengers about the importance of wearing PFDs/life jackets at all times, and make passengers aware of other relevant safety information to prevent accidents, increase their safety, and reduce response time in the event of an emergency. Boat operators should also conduct a mock training with passengers to demonstrate how to put on PFDs/life jackets in difficult conditions, use the radio, get the anchor down, and respond to man-overboard incidents, so they understand and know what to expect in emergency situations.

Standard 5.1 - Operator Responsibilities

The course will describe a boat operator's ultimate responsibility for **operator proficiency, situational awareness, safety of boaters aboard and anyone coming into contact with the boat**, 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. Homeland security measures include: keeping a safe prescribed distance from military and commercial ships; avoiding commercial port operations areas; observing all security zones; and observing and reporting suspicious activities to proper authorities. **The course should indicate that it is but the beginning of the boater's education and that other courses are available.**

Rationale- Boaters need to respect the rights of other people who live, recreate, or work on the water. On average, three-quarters of all reported boating accidents and half of all fatalities involve operator controllable factors. The most common types of such factors include careless or reckless operation, operator inattention, operator inexperience, excessive speed, loading **and movement** of passengers and gear, and failure to maintain a proper lookout. It is critical that all boaters be aware of and comply with current Department of Homeland Security measures and any other relevant regulations.

Standard 5.2 - Influence of Drugs and Alcohol on Boat Operation

Rationale- Alcohol use plays a major part in the number of boating accidents, **and especially**, fatalities. It is illegal to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. **Moreover, alcohol is a stressor and significantly increases the effects of other conditions related to being out on the water (sun, wind, fatigue, etc.) These conditions significantly compound the effects of alcohol and drugs. Passengers who are drinking should be especially encouraged to wear life jackets.**

Standard 5.3 - Navigation Rules

Rationale- **Recreational boaters must operate according to established navigation rules such as those mentioned above. Yet, each year,** U.S. Coast Guard boating accident statistics show that there are numerous violations of the navigation rules

by recreational boaters. The most common violations are caused by excessive speed, not maintaining a proper lookout, or not following other established navigation rules.

Standard 5.4 - Aids to Navigation

The “note” section in the rationale was deleted.

Standard 5.5 - Docking and Mooring

Rationale- Significant boat/property damage, accidents and injuries result from docking and mooring of boats in marinas and boat ramp areas, particularly in adverse weather conditions. Docking techniques, ***including the use of lines and fenders,*** vary depending on wind, current, location, degree of boat traffic in the harbor, type of boat, size of boat and skills/abilities of the boater and crew.

Standard 5.6 - Anchoring

The course will describe ***the importance of carrying an anchor,*** the selection of anchors, related ground tackle, and their use for different types of boats in various boating conditions. The course must describe procedures for anchoring, use of anchors as safety devices in emergency situations, and the hazards of stern anchoring.

Rationale- Anchoring skills and decisions of where to, ***as well as where not to anchor (e.g. busy channel),*** can make the difference between a successful ***and*** unsuccessful boating experience. Significant property and environmental damage can occur when improperly anchored boats slip anchor and drift into reefs, boats, marinas, or run aground. ***Knowing how to anchor is one way to reduce or avoid other causes of accidents.***

Standard 5.7 – Carbon Monoxide

Rationale- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that can be toxic in even small quantities. ***It*** is produced by engines, generators, grills and other equipment commonly used by boaters. Every year, people who recreate on and around boats are overcome by the effects of carbon monoxide.

Recreational boaters need to be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning prevention practices such as regular professional boat inspections; the installation and maintenance of marine rated carbon monoxide detectors in living spaces; trusting the detector when the alarm is sounding; the hazards of “teak surfing”; exhaust leaks from CO sources, such as engines, generators, grills and propane appliances; specific boat design features of concern; and the danger of swimming near the stern of the watercraft while generators, engines or other carbon monoxide producing equipment is in operation.

Standard 5.8 – Propeller Intervention & Awareness

Rationale- The U.S. Coast Guard recreational boating statistics on fatalities and injuries support the need for a comprehensive education standard, as propeller incidents represent annually 4 percent of all fatalities, with a growing number of injuries. Since the danger is not readily visible to boating participants, the boat operator and passengers may not recognize or consider the consequences of accidental or inadvertent contact with propellers.

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 6.2 – Capsizing/Falls Overboard

Rationale- Capsizing and falls overboard emergencies are consistently the leading causes of boating fatalities. Overloading, shifting of loads, and passenger movement on smaller craft contribute to most of the capsizing/falls overboard accidents. Boat operators must take action to prevent themselves and their passengers from falling overboard. In addition, boat operators need to provide sufficient instruction to their passengers on how to assist in the quick recovery of persons in the water in various water conditions, water temperatures and watercraft. Procedures could include throwing them a Type IV PFD or any other immediately available floating aid. This issue highlights the need for boater education courses to stress prevention of falls

overboard, wearing of PFDs/life jackets at all times, and the proper response/action in a capsizing/fall 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, including information on the various stages which include initial reaction (involuntary gasp reflex), short-term immersion/swimming failure, long-term immersion/immersion hypothermia, and post-rescue collapse.

Standard 6.6 - Accident Reports

This standard was deleted and merged with 8.2.12.

Standard 6.7 - Boating Accident Report Form

This standard was deleted and merged with 8.2.13.

Standard 7.1 – Personal Watercraft and other Jet Propelled Watercraft

The course will inform all boat operators about safe boating practices, operational characteristics and special accident risks unique to personal watercraft (PWC) such as: PWC handling characteristics/stability; off throttle steering; stopping (including braking and reverse systems); re-boarding a PWC; and the use of a lanyard cut-off switch.

Rationale- Recreational boaters share waterways with personal watercraft or may themselves be operators of personal watercraft. Many states and local areas have laws and regulations specific to PWC operation and safety. Boating operators must understand PWC characteristics and regulations in order to boat safely and legally.

PWCs are operated differently from other boats, and each PWC model has its own unique characteristics. PWC operators need to consult their owner's

manual and understand the handling characteristics of personal watercraft. PWCs are highly maneuverable. The jet drive propulsion system is extremely responsive to slight steering turns. This responsiveness in maneuvering can encourage operators to attempt maneuvers that are dangerous and beyond the safe operation of the PWC. Further, some PWCs completely lose the ability to steer when the operator releases the throttle. Newer technology reduces the off-throttle steering loss. Operators must be able to re-board the PWC in deep water after falling off. This is most easily done from the rear (stern) of the craft. This maneuver is more challenging when the operator is tired or hindered by water conditions. A properly used lanyard cut-off switch stops the PWC when the operator falls overboard, preventing the operator from being stranded or the PWC running uncontrolled. Knowing how to effectively handle a PWC takes practice. New operators should practice their skills with an experienced operator who can guide them on controlling the PWC and making safe boating decisions.

A review of boating accident reports indicates that PWCs are involved more frequently in certain types of accidents (collisions with other vessels or hazards). The course will provide information on these common accidents and how to prevent them such as: maintaining a proper lookout when turning (look all around and behind before turning); maintaining a proper distance from other boats and hazards; and making sure that all operators, not just the owners of the PWC, have proper knowledge and skill to operate the PWC.

Standard 7.2 - Water Skiing, Towed Devices and Wake Sports

The course will describe procedures to follow when pulling water skiers, towing anyone behind a vessel, or allowing anyone to participate in an activity using the wake of the vessel (wake boards, tubes, etc.).

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. Emphasis should be placed on all towed water sports and any towed device that has the potential to become airborne.

Standard 7.4 - Hunting & Fishing

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 on trips involving fishing activities. Likewise, more hunters die each year from drowning and the effects of cold water shock and 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 and Small Boats

The course will describe that all boat operators, including paddlers and small boat operators, should be aware of their interactions around paddle boats, including the effect of motor boat wakes on paddle boats, other smaller boats and swimmers.

Additionally, the course should provide information about the unique considerations for paddle sport boats and safety procedures including: being prepared to enter the water, knowing how to swim and how to effect self rescues in rivers/currents and other moving water conditions (strainers, low head dams, unusual high water conditions); how to load the boat properly and move around in the boat (e.g. keep the weight centered both from side to side and bow to stern).

Rationale- Since paddle sport fatalities occur across the range of canoeing and kayaking activities, education efforts should continue to be directed to all segments of the paddle sports community. Analysis of recent paddlesport accident statistics identified the following priority problem areas: the vast majority of all paddling related fatality victims were not wearing a PFD/life jacket at the time of the accident; occupant movement and weight shift within a canoe played a major role in roughly 50 percent of all canoeing accidents; approximately 50 percent of canoe and kayak related fatalities were fishing at the time of the accident; at least 25 percent of victims in fatal canoeing accidents are believed to have consumed alcohol immediately prior to the accident. More information on this topic is provided in the NASBLA Paddlesports Education standards.

Standard 8.1 - Continuing Education

Rationale- It is important for boat operators to understand that one of their responsibilities is to keep up-to-date with new developments in boating laws and safety information. State laws vary with regard to licensing, equipment requirements, accident reporting procedures, etc. **Thus, boaters must be aware of the rules in the states in which they are operating in addition to those in their home state. The** boating equipment and safety information available to boat operators is constantly changing and improving. Boat operators who stay abreast of these changes will be ready for new situations, thus improving their own boating enjoyment as well as the safety of all boating participants. **Skills based and/or advanced courses involving navigation, piloting, etc., are also available.**

Standard 8.2 - State Specific Boating Information

8.2.2 - laws for required wearing of **PFDs**/life jackets for children, certain types of boats, and for special boating activities such as personal watercraft, skiers and others being towed.

8.2.12 - boat accident reporting requirements **including how, when, and where to file the report. Accident reports are legally required when the accident involves: 1) disappearance or loss of life; or 2) personal injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid; or 3) property damage in excess of current state or federal thresholds; or 4) complete loss of the boat.**

8.2.13 - a state approved boating accident report form **or U.S. Coast Guard form.**

Standard 9.2 – Boat Operator Knowledge Exams

TESTING STANDARD 3

The examination must consist of at least 50 questions based on Standards 1-7 (or as described in Testing Standard 4) in accordance with the following examination plan:

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Test Weight</u>
The Boat	
Standard 1.1 - Boat Capacities	<u>2%</u>
Standard 1.2 - Boat Registration Requirements	<u>0</u>
Boating Equipment	

Standard	Test Weight
Standard 2.1 - Personal Flotation Device Types and Carriage	<u>2%</u>
Standard 2.2 – Personal Flotation Device Sizing and Availability	<u>2%</u>
Standard 2.3 - Wearing Personal Flotation Devices	<u>4%</u>
Standard 2.4 - Personal Flotation Device Serviceability	<u>2%</u>
Standard 2.5 – Fire Extinguisher Equipment	<u>2%</u>
Standard 2.6 – Back-Fire Flame Control Device	<u>0</u>
Standard 2.7 – Ventilation Systems	<u>0</u>
Standard 2.8 – Navigation Light Equipment	<u>2%</u>
Standard 2.9 - Sound Signaling Equipment	<u>0</u>
Standard 2.10 – Visual Distress Signal Equipment	<u>2%</u>
Trip Planning and Preparation	
Standard 3.1 - Checking Local Weather And Water Conditions	<u>2%</u>
Standard 3.2 - Checking Local Hazards	<u>2%</u>
Standard 3.3 - Filing a Float Plan	<u>0</u>
Standard 3.4 - Boat Preventive Maintenance	<u>2%</u>
Standard 3.5 – Transporting and Trailering	<u>2%</u>
Standard 3.6 - Fueling Procedures	<u>2%</u>
Standard 3.7 - Pre-Departure Checklist & Passenger Communication	<u>2%</u>
Marine Environment	
Standard 4.1 – Environmental Laws and Regulations	<u>2%</u>
Standard 4.2 - Human Waste Disposal	<u>0</u>
Standard 4.3 – Disposal of Toxic Substances	<u>0</u>
Safe Boat Operation	
Standard 5.1 - Operator Responsibilities	<u>8%</u>
Standard 5.2 - Influence of Drugs and Alcohol on Boat Operation	<u>6%</u>
Standard 5.3.1 - Rule of responsibility – Rules 2(a) and 2(b)	<u>2%</u>
Standard 5.3.2 - Proper lookout – Rule 5	<u>4%</u>
Standard 5.3.3 - Safe speed – Rule 6(a)	<u>4%</u>
Standard 5.3.4 - Collision avoidance rules	<u>4%</u>
Standard 5.3.5 - Restricted visibility - Rules 19(a) – (e)	<u>2%</u>
Standard 5.3.6 - Disclaimer	<u>0</u>
Standard 5.4 - Aids to Navigation	<u>4%</u>
Standard 5.5 - Docking and Mooring	<u>2%</u>
Standard 5.6 – Anchoring	<u>2%</u>
Standard 5.7 – Carbon Monoxide	<u>2%</u>
Standard 5.8 – Propeller Intervention & Awareness	<u>2%</u>

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Test Weight</u>
Emergency Preparedness	
Standard 6.1 - Rendering Assistance	<u>2%</u>
Standard 6.2 – Capsizing/Falls Overboard	<u>6%</u>
Standard 6.3 – Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia Prevention	<u>2%</u>
Standard 6.4- Fire Emergency Preparedness	<u>2%</u>
Standard 6.5 - Running Aground Prevention and Response	<u>2%</u>
Other Water Activities	
Standard 7.1 – Personal Watercraft and other Jet Propelled Watercraft	<u>6%</u>
Standard 7.2 - Water Skiing, Towed Devices and Wake Sports	<u>2%</u>
Standard 7.3 - Diving and Snorkeling	<u>0</u>
Standard 7.4 - Hunting & Fishing	<u>2%</u>
Standard 7.5 – Paddlesports and Small Boats	<u>2%</u>
Total (out of 50 questions)	100%

In order to receive NASBLA approval, any examination offered for boater certification in a state must conform to the examination plan adopted by the Boating Law Administrator of that state.