# Boating safety tips every captain needs to know.

If you're a boating enthusiast, this is your time of year! The Northeast offers so many opportunities for summer fun on the water. To protect your vessel and passengers through all your adventures, it's important to follow these boating safety tips.

**1. Study up before you shove off.** Most Northeast states require boaters to take some kind of course before they can operate a motorized boat. For instance, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont laws all require boaters to take a course and obtain a boater education card or certificate.

**2. Stock up on safety equipment.** Life jackets (enough for everyone on board), throwable flotation devices, fire extinguishers, visual distress signals, and sound devices (like a horn or bell) are all required by law. Besides these items, there are many other highly recommended pieces of boating safety equipment. Learn more about all the required and recommended safety equipment.

**3. Prep your passengers.** Have a safety talk with your passengers and crew. Make sure everyone knows:

- The locations of all emergency equipment, such as personal flotation devices, fire extinguishers, visual distress signals (such as flares), first aid kit, and bilge pump
- The importance of wearing their life jackets
- How to respond to a fire or someone falling overboard
- How to signal for help or use the radio to make a mayday call

- How to anchor the boat and handle the lines (ropes)

**4. Be a safe captain.** Whoever is piloting the boat has an even bigger responsibility for the safety of everyone on board. If you're in charge, remember:

- Let someone know your float plan. Make sure someone back on land knows where you're going, how long you plan to be gone, and how you can be contacted.
- Do a pre-departure check of all safety equipment, fuel and oil levels, lines, and ventilation.
- Operate at a safe speed. Just as when you're driving a car, driving your boat too fast makes it harder to react to obstacles and maneuver around them.
- Keep a close eye on the weather. Check the forecast before you leave, and cancel plans if storms are predicted. If an unexpected storm arises while you're out, get off the water as quickly as possible.
- Avoid alcohol. Boating while intoxicated is a federal offense subject to fines and criminal penalties. It's also very dangerous; almost half of all boating accidents involve alcohol.
- Set a good example. Wear your life jacket and follow safety rules.

And of course, don't get on board without adequate boat insurance to protect your investment.
Follow these boating safety tips, and you'll arrive back at the dock with a smiling crew, a ship-shape vessel — and lots of fond memories.

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