

462A.12 Prohibited operation.

1. No person shall operate any vessel, or manipulate any water skis, surfboard or similar device in a careless, reckless or negligent manner so as to endanger the life, limb or property of any person.

2. A person shall not operate any vessel, or manipulate any water skis, surfboard, or similar device while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage, marijuana, a narcotic, hypnotic, or other drug, or any combination of these substances. However, [this subsection](#) does not apply to a person operating any vessel or manipulating any water skis, surfboard, or similar device while under the influence of marijuana, or a narcotic, hypnotic, or other drug if the substances were prescribed for the person and have been taken under the prescription and in accordance with the directions of a medical practitioner as defined in [chapter 155A](#), provided there is no evidence of the consumption of alcohol and further provided the medical practitioner has not directed the person to refrain from operating a motor vehicle, any vessel, or from manipulating any water skis, surfboard, or similar device.

3. No person shall place, cause to be placed, throw, or deposit onto or in any of the public waters, ice, or land of this state any cans, bottles, garbage, rubbish, and other debris.

4. No person shall operate on the waters of this state under the jurisdiction of the commission any vessel displaying or reflecting a blue light or flashing blue light unless such vessel is an authorized emergency vessel.

5. No person shall operate a vessel and enter into areas in which search and rescue operations are being conducted or an area affected by a natural disaster unless authorized by the officer in charge of the search and rescue or disaster operation. Any person authorized in an area of operation shall operate the person's vessel at a no wake speed and shall keep clear of all other vessels engaged in the search and rescue or disaster operation. A person who must operate a vessel in a disaster area to gain access or egress from the person's home shall be considered an authorized person by the officer in charge.

6. An owner or operator of a vessel propelled by a motor of more than ten horsepower shall not permit any person under twelve years of age to operate the vessel unless accompanied in or on the same vessel by a responsible person of at least eighteen years of age who is experienced in motorboat operation. A person who is twelve years of age or older but less than eighteen years of age shall not operate any vessel propelled by a motor of more than ten horsepower unless the person has successfully completed a department-approved watercraft education course and obtained a watercraft education certificate or is accompanied in or on the same vessel by a responsible person of at least eighteen years of age who is experienced in motorboat operation. A person required to have a watercraft education certificate shall carry and shall exhibit or make available the certificate upon request of an officer of the department. A violation of [this subsection](#) is a simple misdemeanor as provided in [section 462A.13](#). However, a person charged with violating [this subsection](#) shall not be convicted if the person produces in court, within a reasonable time, a watercraft education certificate. The cost of a watercraft education certificate, or any duplicate, shall not exceed five dollars.

7. A person shall not operate watercraft in a manner which unreasonably or unnecessarily interferes with other watercraft or with the free and proper navigation of the waters of the state. Anchoring under bridges, in a heavily traveled channel, in a lock chamber, or near the entrance of a lock constitutes such interference if unreasonable under the prevailing circumstances.

8. A person shall not operate a vessel in violation of restrictions as given by state-approved buoys or signs marking an area.

9. A person shall not operate on the waters of this state under the jurisdiction of the commission a vessel equipped with an engine of greater horsepower rating than is designated for the vessel by the federally required capacity plate or by the manufacturer's plate on those vessels not covered by federal regulations.

10. A person shall not leave an unattended vessel tied or moored to a dock which is placed immediately adjacent to a public boat launching ramp or to a dock which is posted for loading and unloading.

11. A person shall not operate a vessel within fifty feet of a diver's flag placed in accordance with the rules of the commission adopted under [chapter 17A](#).

12. A person shall not operate a personal watercraft at any time between sundown and sunup.

13. A person shall not chase or harass animals while operating a personal watercraft or motorboat.

14. A person shall not operate a personal watercraft that is equipped with a cut-off switch, at any time, without first attaching the accompanying cut-off switch lanyard to the operator's person while the engine is running and the personal watercraft is in use.

15. A person shall not operate a vessel on the waters of this state under the jurisdiction of the commission unless every person on board the vessel who is under thirteen years of age is wearing a type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device, including "float coats" that meet this definition, that is approved by the United States coast guard, while the vessel is under way. [This subsection](#) does not apply when the person under thirteen years of age is in an enclosed cabin or below deck, or is a passenger on a commercial vessel with a passenger capacity of twenty-five persons or more.

[C39, §[1703.17](#), [1703.21](#); C46, 50, 54, 58, §[106.17](#), [106.21](#), [106.28](#); C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §[106.12](#); [82 Acts](#), ch [1028](#), §[15](#), [16](#)]

[86 Acts](#), ch [1143](#), §[1](#); [87 Acts](#), ch [215](#), §[38](#)

C93, §[462A.12](#)

[2002 Acts](#), ch [1133](#), §[2](#), [3](#); [2003 Acts](#), ch [44](#), §[77](#); [2005 Acts](#), ch [137](#), §[8](#); [2007 Acts](#), ch [28](#), §[7](#); [2008 Acts](#), ch [1161](#), §[11](#) – [13](#); [2012 Acts](#), ch [1100](#), §[60](#); [2020 Acts](#), ch [1062](#), §[56](#)

Referred to in [§462A.2](#), [462A.14A](#), [805.8B\(1\)\(c\)](#), [915.80](#)

For applicable scheduled fines, see [§805.8B](#), subsection 1, paragraph c

Section not amended; editorial changes applied