

## Boating Education Requirement

Anglers using boats must obey boating laws. In West Virginia, anyone born after December 31, 1986 must successfully complete a N.A.S.B.L.A.-approved Boating Education Course before operating a motorboat.

Contact a Conservation Officer for an available course near you. You can also take the online Boating Education Course available at [www.wvdnr.gov](http://www.wvdnr.gov). Click on boating under the Law Enforcement heading.



## Fishing and Boating Access Sites

1. Public boating and fishing access facilities shall be used solely for the purpose of launching and retrieving watercraft or fishing from the shore. No other use of the access sites is allowed.
2. After launching, vehicles shall be parked in available parking spaces.
3. Any law enforcement officer acting under proper authority may prohibit an individual from launching a watercraft from any public boating and fishing access sites.

### The following are prohibited at fishing and boating access sites:

- consumption of alcoholic beverages or possession of an open container of alcoholic beverages.
- swimming or bathing.
- camping.
- open fires.
- trash disposal except where trash receptacles are provided.
- discharge of firearms, fireworks and explosives.
- leaving unattended watercraft.
- commercial use except as authorized by the director.
- parking of any vehicle or the mooring of any watercraft in such a manner as to obstruct any avenue of ingress or egress, except for the purpose of launching.

## Safe Boating Rules

Boating accidents usually result from a collision with another boat or an object in the water such as rocks or pilings. A little boating knowledge, common sense and courtesy could prevent most accidents.

- Don't operate a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Don't overload the boat.
- Don't sit on the edge of the boat.
- If you must stand up, do so carefully away from the sides.
- Drive at a safe speed.
- Use navigation lights at night.
- Keep a lookout for other boats and follow the rules of navigation.
- Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Don't fish during a thunderstorm.

Check the weather conditions before you leave. Lightning, strong wind and high waves create hazardous conditions. If caught on a lake in a strong storm, put all fishing gear in the bottom of the boat, stay low in the boat and get off the water as soon as possible. In high waves, the best way to keep from capsizing is to steer the boat at a slight angle into the waves.

## Alcohol and Drugs

Operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs creates the same risks and carries the same penalties as DUI. Intoxication affects your balance, which is already challenged by being in a boat. It also affects your coordination, vision and thinking ability. Alcohol also causes you to lose body heat faster should you fall into the water, increasing the risk of hypothermia.

## Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

Most boating fatalities are the result of a boat capsizing or passenger falling overboard. Nearly 80 percent of those who died in boating accidents were NOT wearing a PFD.

If you are fishing from a boat, West Virginia law requires that you have one PFD on board and readily available for each person on the boat. Any child under 12 years of age must wear a PFD while the boat is in progress. Make sure the PFD is in good condition (try it out in the water from time to time), readily available and fits properly. Boats over 16 feet must also have a ring or cushion on board that can be thrown to a person in the water.