

Boating Regulations:

FOR EMERGENCIES CALL 911

- **LEGAL AGE OF OPERATION:** For any vessel powered over 10 horsepower, the operator must be at least 16 years of age. Operators under the age of 16 must have a parent or guardian present in the vessel.
- **REQUIRED VESSEL SAFETY EQUIPMENT:** Depending on the type of vessel you use, length and propulsion, certain items are required. Personal floatation devices (life jackets): **EVERY VESSEL SHALL CARRY AT LEAST ONE U.S.C.G. APPROVED WEARABLE TYPE I,II,III, PFD FOR EACH PERSON ON BOARD.** The life jacket must be of appropriate size, in serviceable condition and readily available. Additionally, vessels 16 feet or longer must also carry a throw-able type IV floatation device. **EVERY CHILD 12 YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER MUST WEAR A COAST GUARD APPROVED PERSONAL FLOATION DEVICE THAT IS IN SERVICEABLE CONDITION AND THE APPROPRIATE SIZE WHILE ON BOARD ANY VESSEL, EXCEPT WHILE IN A CABIN.**
- **FIRE EXTINGUISHER:** Vessels less than 26 feet must carry at least one B-1 type U.S.C.G. approved fire extinguisher. The only exception is for vessels without permanent tanks or enclosed areas where gas fumes may be trapped.
- **SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE:** Every vessel must have some means of making an efficient sound signal. For vessels without an installed horn, a hand held whistle will be adequate.
- **VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNALS:** While not required, it is highly recommended that all vessels have some means of signaling for help or assistance. Use only U.S.C.G. approved day and/or night distress signals.
- **VESSEL REGISTRATION:** You are required to carry the vessel registration certificate on board at all times. In Washington State, vessel registrations expire every year on June 30th. On the first of July, every boater should have the new validation sticker displayed on the vessel behind the hull numbers. Vessel registration numbers must be displayed on the forward half of the hull in three-inch block letters, in a color contrasting with the background.
- **SPEED LIMITS AND HOURS OF OPERATION:** During the hours of darkness, between legal sunset and legal sunrise, no vessel may exceed 8 MPH. Speeds of 5 MPH or less are required when operating within 100 feet of swimmers or boat launching facilities. The maximum speed limit on Lake Tapps is 60 MPH providing you are at least 200 ft. from shore and at least 100 ft. from any other vessel.
SPEEDS OF 5 MPH OR LESS ARE REQUIRED WHEN OPERATING WITHIN 200 FEET OF SHORE, DOCKS, BRIDGES, OR PUBLIC SWIMMING OR BOAT LAUNCHING FACILITIES.
- **DIRECTION OF TRAVEL:** The general direction of travel is counter-clockwise around the lake. This means that when traveling over 8 MPH you must keep the shoreline on your starboard or right side.

- **RESTRICTED AREAS AND BOUYS:** Certain areas of the lake have been designated as restricted or regulated areas. A visible system of buoys has been installed to identify these areas. Please observe and obey all restrictions and speed limits.
- **TAMPERING WITH BOUYS:** It is illegal to move or remove any marker buoy placed by law enforcement. Additionally, it is unlawful to strike or damage a buoy in any way. Marker buoys are not for boat moorage or swimming activities.
- **RECKLESS OPERATION:** Reckless or recklessly means acting carelessly and heedlessly in a willful and wanton disregard of the rights, safety, or property of another. It will be considered reckless to operate a vessel while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any drug. Boating under the influence (BUI) will be aggressively prosecuted.
- **NEGLIGENT OPERATION:** It will be considered negligent to operate a vessel in disregard of careful and prudent operation, or in disregard of careful and prudent speeds that are no greater than is reasonable and proper under the conditions existing at the time, so as not to unduly or unreasonably endanger life, limb, property or other rights of any person entitled to the use of such waters.

Hazardous conditions: Law enforcement officers may order that immediate steps be taken to correct hazardous conditions to include returning to a dock or shoreline. Examples of conditions considered hazardous are; insufficient or inadequate PFD's (life jackets), Fire extinguishers, navigation lights, overloading of vessel, fuel leakage, improper ventilation or backfire flame control.

WATER SKIING SAFETY RULES

- **OBSERVER REQUIRED:** When towing any person on water skis, inner tubes, kneeboards, or other water toys, there must be a competent observer on board who shall continuously observe the person being towed and immediately display a flag whenever the person is in the water. The flag must be at least a 12 inch square mounted on a 24 inch pole or longer and be either bright red or brilliant orange in color. Life jackets, towels, swimming trunks or t-shirts are NOT acceptable as ski flags.
- **LIFE JACKET (PFD) REQUIRED:** No water skiing, inner tubing knee boarding, etc. is allowed without a PFD.
- **TAKING OFF AND LANDING A SKIER:** You must take off and land your skier as near to perpendicular as possible but in no case less than a forty-five degree angle to any shoreline or dock. You may not run parallel with the shore line for any distance within 200 feet of shore in excess of 5 MPH.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT SAFETY RULES

- **LIFE JACKET (PFD) REQUIRED:** No one may operate or ride on a personal watercraft without wearing an approved personal flotation device.
- **ENGINE CUTOFF SWITCH AND LANYARD:** No one may operate a PWC without attaching the lanyard to his or her person, clothing or PFD. It is illegal to disable or remove an engine cutoff switch.
- **HOURS OF OPERATION:** Personal watercraft cannot operate after legal sunset or legal sunrise.

- **AGE OF OPERATION:** You must be at least 16 years of age to operate a personal watercraft in Pierce County.
- **RECKLESS OPERATION OF PWC:** You cannot operate a PWC in a reckless manner, to include recklessly weaving through congested vessel traffic, recklessly jumping the wake of another vessel unreasonably or unnecessarily close to the vessel or when visibility around the vessel is obstructed, or recklessly swerving at the last possible moment to avoid collision.
- **REQUIRED EQUIPMENT:** A personal watercraft is required to carry all necessary safety equipment, to include a fire extinguisher and sound-signaling device. Additionally, a PWC must be licensed as a vessel with the same numbering and registration requirements.
- **VESSEL INSPECTIONS:** Marine services officers will make courtesy inspections of vessels both on the water and at the launch facility. **OUR PRIMARY CONCERN IS FOR BOATING SAFETY AND EDUCATION.** If you would like to schedule a vessel inspection at your residence please call 253-863-2218 ext. 245 and make an appointment with Officer Sainati. Upon successful completion you will be provided with a safety inspection sticker which will save you time getting in the water at the boat launch.
- **NO RAFTING OF BOATS:** The tying off of two or more vessels (commonly known as rafting) is now against boating regulations. The only exception to this on Lake Tapps is next to Dyke #4 which is located just to the North of the Pierce County Park.