



# BONNEY LAKE POLICE DEPARTMENT

## MARINE SERVICE UNIT

### WATERCRAFT REGULATIONS

Do you know the laws?

**Do I need a Boaters Card?** This year, 2013, If you are 50 years old or younger you will need to have a Boaters Education Card before operating a vessel on any body of water in Washington State. In 2014, all persons operating a vessel in Washington State will be required to have a Boaters Education Card as noted by RCW 79A.60.640.

**What is the legal age of vessel 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.

**What is the required vessel safety equipment?** Depending on the type of vessel you use, length and propulsion, certain items are required.

**1) 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

type IV throwable floatation device. Every child 12 years or younger must wear a Coast Guard approved personal floatation device that is in serviceable condition and the appropriate size when on board any vessel, except while in a cabin.

**2) 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.

**FOR EMERGENCIES  
CALL 911**

The following information is provided by the Bonney Lake Police Department and the Marine Service Unit. This information was developed in an effort to assist you in having a safe and pleasurable boating experience. These rules and regulations are enforced on all waterways throughout Pierce County. Please take the time to read and familiarize yourself with this information.

For more details, PLEASE CALL 253-863-2218 or visit [www.ci.bonney-lake.wa.us](http://www.ci.bonney-lake.wa.us)

**3) Sound producing device:** Every vessel must have some means of making an efficient sound signal. For vessels without an installed horn, a functioning hand held whistle is adequate.

**4) 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.

**Do I need my vessel registration?** You are required to carry the vessel registration certificate on board your vessel at all times. **In Washington State all, vessel registration expire every year on June 30<sup>th</sup>.** On the first of July, every boater should have the new validation sticker

affixed and 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 solid color contrasting with the background.**

**What are the speed limits and hours of operation?** Speeds of 5mph or less are required when operating within 100 feet of swimmers or other vessels. Speeds of 5mph or less are required when operating within 200 feet of shore, docks, bridges or public swimming or boat launching facilities. During the hours of darkness, (between legal sunset and sunrise), no vessel may exceed 8 mph.

**Is there a specific direction of travel?** The general direction

of travel is counter clockwise around the lake. This means that when traveling over 8mph you must keep the shoreline on your starboard or right side.

**Are there marked restricted areas?** Yes, certain areas of the lake have been designated as restricted or regulated areas. A visible system of buoys has been installed to identify these area. Please observe and obey all restrictions and speed limits.

**Can I move a buoy?** No, 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 anyway. Marker buoys are not for boat moorage or swimming activities.

## PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (PWC) SAFETY RULES

Do you know what is required?

**Are life jackets required?** No one may operate or ride on a Personal Water Craft (PWC) without wearing an approved personal floatation device.

**Do I need a engine cutoff switch or lanyard?** No one may operate an PWC without attaching the lanyard to his/her person, Life jacket and the PWC.

**Can I operate my PWC at night?** PWC's can only be operate after

legal sunrise and before legal sunset.

**Is there an age requirement for PWC's?** Yes, you must be at least 16 years of age to operate a personal watercraft in Pierce County.

**Can I jump other vessel wakes?** The law states, you cannot operate a PWC in a reckless manner, to include recklessly weaving through congested

vessel traffic, recklessly jumping the wake of another vessel or when visibility around the vessel is obstructed, or recklessly swerving at the last possible moment to avoid a collision.

**Do PWC's have required equipment?** Yes, a PWC 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

## WATER SAFETY

vessel, must carry a registration and display the numbers in the same manner as all other vessels.

**What does “Reckless Operation” mean?** Reckless or recklessly means, acting carelessly 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 and/or any drugs. Boating Under the Influence (BUI) will be aggressively prosecuted.

**What does “Negligent Operation” mean?** 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 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 water.

**What are “Hazardous Conditions”?** Law Enforcement 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 (life jackets). No fire extinguishers, no navigation lights, vessel is overloaded, fuel leakage, improper ventilation or backfire flame control.

## WATER SKIING SAFETY

What are the laws?

Observers are required when towing any person on water skis, inner tube, knee board, or other water accessories. 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 12 inches 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 alternatives to the designated ski flag. No waterskiing, inner tubing, knee boarding, etc. is allowed without a life jacket (PFD).

You must take off and land your skier as near to perpendicular to the shoreline as possible, in no case less than a forty-five degree angle to any shoreline or dock. You may not run parallel with the shoreline for any distance within 200 feet of shoreline in excess of 5mph.

## VESSEL INSPECTIONS

Are they necessary?

Our primary concern is boater safety and education. Officers from the Marine Service Unit (MSU) will make courtesy inspections of vessels on the waterway or boat launch. This is done to insure vessels have all required safety items should they need them while on the waterways.

**REMEMBER, A DANGER FORESEEN IS A DANGER AVOIDED!**

Be responsible and enjoy the summer!