

WATER SAFETY



Get to know the Iowa boating laws!

The following are few points in the laws for boating in Iowa. The laws are set to keep the waters safe for everyone, please take a moment to review them.

- You must have an **Iowa Registration Certificate and registration decals** to operate a vessel on Iowa's public waters legally. Exceptions to registration are:
 - Inflatable vessels that are 7 feet or less in length
 - Canoes and kayaks that are 13 feet or less in length and have no motor or sail
 - Vessels properly registered in another state and using Iowa waters for 60 or fewer days within one calendar year
- A person under 12 years of age may operate a vessel propelled by a motor of more than 10 horsepower, including a personal watercraft, only if he or she is accompanied on board by a responsible person who is at least 18 years old and experienced in operating the vessel.
- A person 12 years of age or older but younger than 18 years of age may operate a vessel propelled by a motor of more than 10 horsepower, including a personal watercraft, only if he or she:
 - Has successfully completed a boater education course approved by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources or ...
 - Is accompanied on board by a responsible person who is at least 18 years old and experienced in operating the vessel.

- Life Jackets** - All vessels must have at least one USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket for each person on board.

In addition to the above requirement, one USCG-approved throwable flotation device must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer except canoes or kayaks.

Children Must Wear Life Jackets: While underway on a recreational vessel on any Iowa waters, a child under 13 years old must wear a USCG-approved life jacket unless the child is below deck or in an enclosed cabin.

Each person on board a personal watercraft (PWC) or being towed behind a vessel on water skis, a surfboard, or similar device must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket. Inflatable life jackets are not approved for persons on PWCs or being towed. Windsurfers are not required to wear a life jacket.

- Navigation Lights** are required for all vessels to be displayed between sunset and sunrise and whenever the weather reduces visibility. For engine driving and longer vessels sidelights and sternlight are required. Regardless of length, vessels must have on board a white light to be used when necessary between sunset and sunrise when operated on bodies of water other than those listed above. Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight.

- Fire Extinguisher** - Vessels on Iowa state waters are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher(s) on board if the vessel is propelled by an outboard motor of greater than 10 horsepower.

- Sound Producing Device** - in periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position, a sound producing device is essential.

- Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)** allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency. VDSs are not required on Iowa state waters, but it is strongly recommended that you carry VDSs on your vessel.

- Unlawful Operation of a Vessel** - In Iowa, these dangerous operating practices are illegal.

Reckless or Negligent Operation of a vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or similar device is operating in a manner that causes danger to the life, limb, or property of any person.

Improper Speed or Distance (the most common violation) is not maintaining a proper speed or distance while operating a vessel.

Overloading is loading the vessel with more passengers and crew than the capacity number recorded on the Registration Certificate.

Overpowering is powering the vessel beyond the recommended carrying horsepower shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer.

Leaving Vessel Unattended is leaving an unattended vessel tied or moored to a dock that is located immediately adjacent to a public boat launching ramp or to a dock that is posted for loading and unloading.

How parents can help youngsters learn to swim

What would summer be without days spent frolicking at the beach or afternoons spent splashing in the pool? Fun in the water makes hot days more enjoyable and bearable, and few summertime activities do not involve water play in one aspect or another.

Although time spent in the water can be refreshing and entertaining, water does present certain hazards, particularly for those who do not know how to swim. Learning to swim, especially at a young age, is advisable and a great way to remain safe around the water.

The World Health Organization says drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury death across the globe, accounting for 7 percent of all injury-related deaths. Children, males and individuals with increased access to water are most at risk of drowning. In general, children under five years of age have the highest drowning mortality rates in the world, though adult males in Canada and New Zealand drown at higher rates than children.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, parents should consider swimming lessons for most children between the ages of one and four. New research has revealed that swimming instruction for children between the ages of one and four may decrease drowning risk. However, parents should be advised that swimming lessons do not remove all risk. Children still need constant supervision when in and around water. Additionally, learning CPR can be a life-saving measure.

When enrolling children in swim lessons, parents should look for safety-certified instructors who have first aid and resuscitation training and certification. Many programs offered are sponsored by the American Red Cross or the YMCA. Private swim clubs may have their own instructors.

Children between the ages of one and three typically do not have the motor coordination to swim effectively. These

children can benefit from swim lessons that emphasize getting used to the water, safety and learning some swimming readiness skills. Instruction may involve teaching children how to move their legs and arms and strengthen muscles used for swimming. Children between the ages of four and five may be more developmentally ready for swimming. Such youngsters may move from water-safety lessons to actual swimming with or without support. A study titled "Children's readiness for learning front crawl swimming" published in The Australian Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport showed that whether kids "started lessons at two, three or four years of age," they learned to swim well at "approximately the same mean age of five and a half years."

In addition to swimming lessons, parents and other adults can ensure water safety by taking the following precautionary measures:

- Children should never be left unattended in the water. It takes mere inches of water for a youngster to drown.
- In the pool or another body of water, caregivers should be within touching distance of young swimmers to provide help if needed, even if the child is wearing a flotation device.
- Keep rescue equipment by the pool.
- Remove toys from the pool when it's not in use. These toys can attract children who will go in after them.
- A fence around the perimeter of the yard may be mandatory, but a fence around the pool itself is another safety barrier to consider. The fence should feature a self-latching gate.
- Even adults should be watched while swimming. It is always a safe idea to swim with a buddy, so that the other person can get help if something goes wrong.

The information for this article was from the www.iowadnr.gov.

For a complete list of the laws and to take a Safe Boaters Course go to www.boat-ed.com.

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