

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Safety Management

Part 485: Safety and Occupational Health Program

Chapter 22: Watercraft Safety

Originating Office: Office of Occupational Safety and Health

485 DM 22

22.1 **Purpose.** This chapter establishes the minimum requirements for the safe operation of Department of the Interior (DOI) watercraft and for the training of Departmental watercraft operators.

22.2 Scope.

A. The policy in this chapter applies to watercraft for which the DOI is responsible (e.g., watercraft the DOI owns, borrows, rents, or leases), anyone on board watercraft for which the DOI is responsible, and DOI personnel conducting official duties on watercraft regardless of ownership. Employees performing official duties on commercially licensed watercraft (ferries, tour boats, commercial vessels, etc.) will abide by established maritime standards for those vessels, orders issued by the captain of the vessel and in accordance with all relevant safety standards and authorities noted in this chapter.

B. Seaplanes are not within the scope of this chapter.

C. Contractors are not within the scope of this chapter but must comply with the safety and health clauses in their contract agreement and with Federal, State, and local watercraft requirements.

22.3 Authorities.

A. Public Law 91-596, Sec. 19, Federal Agency Safety and Health Program Responsibilities.

B. Executive Order 12196, Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees.

C. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) General Industry Standards, 29 CFR 1910; Shipyard Standards, 29 CFR 1915; Marine Terminals, 29 CFR 1917; Longshoring Standards, 29 CFR 1918.

D. 46 USC 2109 - Public vessels.

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E. 33 CFR, Navigation and Navigable Waters, Subchapter S, Boating Safety.

F. 46 CFR 25, Shipping, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Department of Transportation, Requirements, Subpart 25.25.

22.4 References.

A. 410 DM - Department of the Interior Property Management Regulations.

B. American National Standards Institute (ANSI)/International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) 107-2004, High Visibility Safety Apparel and Headwear.

C. U.S. Coast Guard, Navigational Rules, International-Inland.

D. U.S. Coast Guard, 46 CFR Part 160, Inflatable Personal Flotation Devices.

22.5 Definitions.

A. Crew. Personnel other than the operator essential to the operation of the watercraft.

B. Motorboat. Any motorized watercraft 65 feet or less in length and does not require a USCG license or certification to operate.

C. Operator. The individual in physical control of the watercraft.

D. Personal Flotation Device (PFD). Commonly known as a life jacket. Various types of PFDs are available. The type of PFD selected depends on user activity, weather conditions, and user preference. See section 22.7C of this chapter.

E. Watercraft. Boats and ships, collectively, that are propelled manually, by wind, or machinery (i.e. airboats, sailboats, inflatable rafts and other vessels), excluding seaplanes.

22.6 Responsibilities.

A. Heads of bureaus and offices. Responsible for implementing a watercraft safety program within their bureau or office in compliance with this chapter.

B. DOI Office of Occupational Health and Safety.

(1) Coordinating with the DOI Safety and Health Council, developing and maintaining standards for watercraft safety training such as the Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC), Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC), Refresher training, and MOCC modules (e.g., Airboat Module, Open-Water Module, and River Module).

(2) Coordinating with the DOI Safety and Health Council to develop and provide

training materials.

C. DOI Safety and Health Council. Sponsoring the DOI Watercraft Safety Work Group by providing guidance and assistance.

D. Bureau Safety Managers.

(1) Ensuring the appointment of a bureau watercraft safety coordinator.

(2) Accomplishing the following or delegating authority to the bureau watercraft safety coordinator:

(a) Reviewing requests for deviations to Personal Floatation Device (PFD) requirements as described in section 22.7C of this chapter. This responsibility may be delegated to regional safety managers.

(b) Reviewing requests for MOCC and MOICC substitutions, and approving or denying each request based on the requirements in the MOCC Instructor Manual.

(c) Identifying Internet or other courses that are approved for use in completing the refresher training educational module.

E. DOI Watercraft Safety Work Group.

(1) Recommending to the DOI Safety and Health Council, program and policy changes to this chapter.

(2) Meeting as necessary, but at least annually, for peer group discussions and exchange of best business practices.

(3) Working cooperatively with other agencies and organizations (e.g. USCG, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Scientific Boating Safety Association, National Safe Boating Council, etc.) to increase the watercraft training opportunities available to DOI personnel (e.g., through the development of training modules, and expanding the numbers of courses that have reciprocity with the DOI-MOCC).

F. Watercraft Safety Coordinators.

(1) Serving as the watercraft safety program point of contact for their respective bureau or office and helping coordinate watercraft safety activities and operator training.

(2) Successfully completing MOCC and MOICC training.

(3) Serving as the bureau or office representative on the DOI Watercraft Safety Work Group.

G. Supervisors.

- (1) Establishing protocols to ensure that all DOI personnel and volunteers:
 - (a) Conduct watercraft operations in a safe manner and in compliance with established bureau and office policies and procedures.
 - (b) Maintain equipment in compliance with existing policies and procedures.
 - (c) Ensure that operators have the skills needed for the conditions in which they are reasonably expected to operate watercraft.
- (2) Ensuring that all DOI personnel who operate and work in watercraft on official duty have training in watercraft operations appropriate for:
 - (a) Type and size of watercraft used;
 - (b) Geographic, climatic, and physical nature of the operations; and
 - (c) Operational tasks being performed.
- (3) Providing safety and survival equipment that the watercraft operator identifies as necessary.

H. Watercraft Operators.

- (1) Successfully completing the training requirements outlined in this chapter.
- (2) Safety of personnel on board regardless of position and grade, and operating the watercraft in compliance with existing policies, guidelines, and training.
- (3) Conduct of watercraft operations while in control of the vessel.

I. Watercraft occupants other than the operator.

- (1) Obeying the instructions of the watercraft operator.
- (2) Adhering to all safety regulations.
- (3) Conducting themselves in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times.

22.7 Requirements. Bureaus engaged in watercraft operations will establish a watercraft safety program that includes the following minimum requirements:

A. Safe Watercraft Operation.

(1) Departmental watercraft will be operated in a safe and prudent manner and in accordance with Federal standards in addition to the requirements in this chapter.

(2) Departmental watercraft will meet or exceed applicable USCG design and equipment requirements.

(3) In addition to basic safety devices required by Federal regulations, Departmental watercraft will be outfitted, based on expected conditions, with other equipment necessary for safe operation. This may include communications gear, navigation aids, and satellite navigation. Special consideration should be given for the use of up-to-date commercially available tracking systems.

(4) Departmental personnel will be trained prior to operating watercraft. See sections 22.7E of this chapter.

(5) DOI personnel operating watercraft normally subject to USCG licensing regulations will be licensed in accordance with the requirements in 46 CFR 25. Departmental watercraft will meet the applicable USCG inspection and certification requirements.

(6) Periodic inspection and maintenance programs will be established for all Departmental watercraft, as required by 410 DM - Department of the Interior Property Management Regulations. Records of inspections and maintenance will also be kept in accordance with 410 DM.

B. Float Plans.

(1) Prior to using a watercraft, the operator must provide verbal or written notification to a reliable contact with at least the following information:

- (a) Description of watercraft
- (b) List of occupants
- (c) Emergency equipment on board
- (d) Point of departure
- (e) Planned route
- (f) Estimated time of departure
- (g) Estimated time of return
- (h) Means of contact (e.g., VHF radio, mobile phone), and contact schedule

- (i) Purpose of the trip
- (j) Description of vehicle(s) left at launch site(s)
- (k) Recommended plan of action if overdue

(2) Deviation from these requirements is permitted if special mission situations prevent the conveyance of this information.

C. Personal Flotation Devices.

(1) All personnel are required to wear a PFD in open areas of watercraft less than 65 feet in length. An operator can require occupants to wear a PFD in any area of the watercraft regardless of the length of the watercraft. A manually-inflatable PFD is recommended for use in enclosed areas of watercraft to reduce the risk of entrapment in the event of capsizing.

(2) PFDs must be USCG-approved and appropriately rated for the type of watercraft, and designed for operational applications, durability and mission requirements. The outer shell of PFDs will be international orange unless a different high-visibility color is required for special uses (e.g., ANSI 107-2004 approved fluorescent yellow-green). In accordance with 46 CFR 25.25-15, each PFD is required to have at least 200 sq. cm. (31 sq. in.) of retroreflective material attached to its front side, at least 200 sq. cm. of material on its back side, and, if the item is reversible, at least 200 sq. cm. of material on each of its reversible sides. The material attached on each side of the item must be divided equally between the upper quadrants of the side, and the material in each quadrant must be attached as closely as possible to the shoulder area of the item. In accordance with 46 CFR 25.25-13, each PFD is to be equipped with a light securely attached to the front shoulder when on board watercraft being operated in coastal waters, the ocean, sea, or large lake. PFD requirements for non-motorized watercraft use and operation will be determined at the discretion of the individual bureaus, however PFD colors and reflectivity must provide for enhanced visibility and search and rescue purposes.

(3) Deviation from the high-visibility color requirements in Section 22.7C(2) in this chapter may be permitted if special mission requirements, such as those involved in law enforcement, cannot be otherwise satisfied. Deviations must be requested in writing by the supervisor of the organizational unit conducting the operation prior to the conduct of the activity. The written request will identify alternate safety measures to be taken. Deviations will be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the individual bureau or office safety manager for a period not to exceed one year.

(4) All PFDs must be inspected and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. PFDs should be stored in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight. A "dry" area is considered any suitable area where water will not condense on a PFD. All PFDs should be kept away from oil, paint, and greasy substances.

D. Cold weather personal protective equipment (PPE). Cold weather PPE (e.g., USCG-approved exposure suit) will be worn when the sum of air and water temperatures is less than

100 degrees Fahrenheit. An exception to this requirement may be made if the operator determines that risks associated with wearing cold weather PPE (e.g. crew performance degradation, thermal stress) are offset by the benefits of not wearing cold weather PPE. Prior to use, personnel will be trained in the use of this equipment.

E. Training.

(1) DOI personnel must complete the MOCC before operating motorboats while conducting official duties, and the MOCC must be completed by anyone operating motorboats for which the DOI is responsible (e.g., watercraft the DOI owns, borrows, rents, or leases).

(2) Motorboat operator certification will be valid for 5 years. To be recertified, operators will successfully complete the refresher training outlined in the MOCC Instructor Manual.

(3) Successful completion of the MOCC does not imply that personnel are competent to operate any motorboat in all conditions that they may encounter. Supervisors must ensure that watercraft operators receive safety and operations training on the watercraft, in the environmental conditions, and in the areas, they will be operating. MOCC modules, developed by the DOI to help meet some specialized training needs, are outlined in the MOCC Instructor Manual.

(4) Operators of non-motorized watercraft are exempt from the requirement to complete the MOCC, but must be provided practical operator safety training pertinent to the watercraft and environmental conditions in which the watercraft is operated. Examples of how this need might be met include completion of the non-motorized version of the MOCC River Module, or one of the American Canoe Association (<http://www.americancanoe.org>) Water Safety and Rescue Courses.

(5) In preparation for taking the MOCC or an MOCC module, DOI personnel may practice elementary operating skills under the on-board supervision of an experienced operator who has completed the corresponding training.

(6) The MOCC and MOCC modules will be conducted in accordance with the objectives outlined in the MOCC Instructor Manual.

(7) DOI personnel successfully completing the MOICC will be qualified to teach the MOCC as outlined in the MOCC Instructor Manual.

(8) Other watercraft training may be substituted for the Departmental MOCC and MOICC. Requests for substitutions must be submitted to the bureau or office safety manager or, at his or her discretion, the bureau or office watercraft safety coordinator. Any training that is substituted must be comparable to MOCC or MOICC objectives.