

Personal Watercraft - Regulations by State

Boating regulations, including those specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs) vary by state. This document references licensing requirements, age restrictions, and state specific rules relevant to PWCs as of Summer 2019. We encourage readers to reference the data source for each state to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information.

State	Education/Licensing Required	Age Restrictions for Operation	Time Restriction Details	PWC Rental Requirement Details	Source for Detailed Information
AL	Yes	Under 12	After sunset w/ navigation lights	None	https://www.alea.gov/dps/marine-patrol/boat-ing-rules-and-regulations
AK	No	No	After sunset w/ navigation lights	None	http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/boating/pdf/alaskaboaterhand-book032014.pdf
AZ	No	Under 12-unless w/ adult	Sunset to sunrise	None	https://www.azgfd.com/boat-ing/regulations
AR	Yes	Under 16 unless with an adult	½ hour after sunset and ½ hours before sunrise	Cannot rent to a person under 18. Livery must provide instruction	https://www.agfc.com/en/fish-ing/boating-information/
CA	Yes	Under 16. 12-15 w/ adult	Sunset to Sunrise	None	http://dbw.parks.ca.gov/pages/28702/files/DBW_ABCs_of_Boating_2017.pdf
CO	Yes	Under 16 14-15 w/ boating safety education	½ hour after sunset and ½ hour before sunrise	Must be 14 with a boating certificate	https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Boating/BoatingRegulations.pdf
CT	Yes	Under 16 unless w/adult and PWC education	Sunset to sunrise	None	https://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/Boating/boating_guide/part3.pdf
DE	Yes	Under 16 14 -15 w/ adult supervision	After sunset w/ navigation lights	Must have valid driver's license. Livery must obtain acknowledgement of educational materials from renter	https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/boating/safety/
DC	Yes	Under 18 w/ boating safety education or w/adult	After sunset w/ navigation lights	Must be 18 and have boating safety education to rent	https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/personal-watercraft-safety-rules-and-guidelines
FL	Yes	Under 14	1/2 hour after sunset to 1/2 hour before sunrise	Must be 18 to rent. Livery must provide instruction and demonstration	https://myfwc.com/boating/regulations/
GA	Yes	Under 12	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 to rent. Watch a 10 minute education video and sign a checklist	https://gadnrle.org/boat-ing-rules-regulations

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HI	Yes	Under 15	No Navigation lights must conform to USCG	Livery to establish a safety instruction program to include safe use of vessel and PFD use*	http://files.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dobor/rules/compiled/HAR256-Compiled.pdf
ID	No	None	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	Rental company must pro- vide instruction on the laws, rules and safe operation	https://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/26/260130.pdf
IL	Yes	Under 10. 10-12 w/ adult. 13 and older w/ safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Livery shall offer approved operating and safety instruction	https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/boating/Documents/BoatDigest.pdf
IN	Yes	Under 15	During daylight hours or w/naviga- tion lights	None	https://www.in.gov/dnr/lawenfor/8678.htm
IA	Yes	Under 12 may operate w/adult. 12-17 w/ boating safety education.	Sunset to Sunrise	None	https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ico/chapter/462A.pdf
KS	Yes	Under 12 w/ adult 12-20 w/boating safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Must meet boating educa- tion requirements	https://ksoutdoors.com/Boating/Boating-Legally/Requirements/Personal-Watercraft
KY	Yes	Under 12. 12-17 w/ boating safety edu- cation	Sunset to Sunrise	None	https://fw.ky.gov/FishBoatGuide/Pages/Boating.aspx
LA	Yes	Under 16	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 to rent	http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/boating/courses
ME	Yes	Under 16. 16-17 w/ boating safety education or w/adult	Sunset to Sunrise	None	http://www.mainerec.com/boating5.asp?Category=73&PageNum=73
MD	Yes	Under 16	Sunset to Sunrise	Instruction and test*	https://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/Documents/BoatingSafety/Safety_PWC_Brochure.pdf
MA	Yes	Under 16 16 and 17 w/ boating safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 to rent. Safe operation and state regulations addressed*	http://dnr.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/regulations/home.aspx
MI	Yes	Under 14. 14-15 w/ boating safety education and w/ adult	Sunset and 8:00am	Livery must provide training if the renter does not have a boating safety certificate	https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79119_79144_80298-37311--,00.html
MN	Yes	Under 13 13-17 w/ boating safety education	1 Hour prior to sunset and 9:30am	Livery provide a summary of laws and operation	https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/education_safety/safety/boat-water/pwc-brochure.pdf
MS	Yes	Under 12 if accom- panied by adult	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	None	http://www.mdwfp.com/
MO	Yes	Under 14 unless w/ someone 16 or over	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	None	https://www.mshp.dps.missouri.gov/MSHPWeb/Publications/Brochures/documents/SHP-651.pdf

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MT	Yes	Under 12 unless w/ adult. 13 and 14 w/ boating safety education.	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	Must be 18 to rent	http://fwp.mt.gov/fwpDoc.html?id=91951
NE	Yes	Under 14	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 18 to rent	http://outdoornebraska.gov/boatingregulations/
NV	Yes	Under 14	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	Must be 18 to rent. Livery must provide instruction on operation, laws and safety.	https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-488.html#NRS-488Sec580
NH	Yes	Under 16 unless w/ adult w/ safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Familiar with 8 boating regulations and mandatory boating education*	https://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/nhsp/fob/marine-patrol/boating-education/
NJ	Yes	Under 16	Sunset to Sunrise	Livery to provide navigation rules, handling characteristics, operating under the influence*	https://www.state.nj.us/mvc/pdf/license/boatingsafety.pdf
NM	Yes	Under 13	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 to rent. If oper- ator does not have boater education training livery must provide instruction*	http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/BOATINGWeb/LawsRegulations.html
NY	Yes	Under 14 or w/ adult, or w/safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 to rent. Livery must demonstrate and explain the operating procedure to renter.	https://parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating/documents/NYSBoatersGuide.pdf
NC	Yes	Under 14. 14 - 15 if w/adult or w/ safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Livery must provide the renter with basic safety instruction and operation	https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S43v4.pdf
ND	Yes	Under 12 must be w/ adult. 12-15 w/safety education or w/adult	Sunset to Sunrise unless equipped w/ navigation lights	Livery must comply with rules and regulations R-30- 05-02	https://gf.nd.gov/boating/safety-regulations
OH	Yes	Under 12. 12-15 if with an adult w/safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Valid boating certificate or livery must provide educa- tional materials and exam	http://watercraft.ohiodnr.gov/laws/ohios-boater-education-law
OK	Yes	Under 12. 12-15 w/ adult and boating safety education	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	None	https://www.boat-ed.com/assets/pdf/handbook/ok_handbook_entire.pdf
OR	Yes	Under 12. 12-15 w/boating safety education and w/ adult	Sunset to sunrise w/navigation lights	Must be 18 to rent. Livery must complete dockside safety checklist with renter.	https://www.oregon.gov/osmb/boater-info/Pages/PWC.aspx
PA	Yes	Under 12. 12-15 may not have passengers under 16	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 to rent. Orientation to boat safety, laws, equipment and proper handling characteristics of the vessel	https://www.fishandboat.com/Boat/BoatingRegulations/Documents/boatrecap.pdf
RI	Yes	Under 16	½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise	View an instructional video*	http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/law/boating-safety-topics.php

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SC	Yes	No	Sunset to Sunrise	None	http://www.dnr.sc.gov/boating/safety.html
SD	No	Under 14 unless w/ adult	Sunset to Sunrise w/navigation lights	None	https://gfp.sd.gov/safety/
TN	Yes	Under 12 must have an adult on-board	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 17 or over to rent. First-time renter must be provided with approved TRWA safety orientation	https://www.tn.gov/twra/boating/regulations-and-safety-concerns.html
TX	Yes	Under 13 unless accompanied by an adult	Sunset to Sunrise	Livery must provide boating regulations and operational characteristics of vessel	https://tpwd.texas.gov/faq/learning/boater_education/index.phtml
UT	Yes	Under 16 unless w/ adult on-board	Sunset to Sunrise	Livery must inform renter of boating laws and rules	https://site.utah.gov/state-parks/wpcontent/uploads/sites/13/2015/02/8x11-boating-laws-and-rules-final-1.pdf
VT	Yes	Under 16	Sunset to Sunrise	None	https://vtfishandwildlife.com/fish/boating-in-vermont
VA	Yes	Under 14	Sunset to sunrise	Livery must provide instruc- tion on the laws, watercraft operation and equipment	https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/
WA	Yes	Under 14	During darkness	Must be 16 or over to rent. Livery must review vessel safety checklist with renter.	https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=79A.60
WV	Yes	Under 12. 12-14 must have adult on-board	Sunset to Sunrise	Liver provides boating safety orientation to renter and operational characteristics of vessel	http://www.wvdnr.gov/lenforce/boating.shtm
WI	Yes	Under 12. 12-15 w/ boating safety education	Sunset to Sunrise	Must be 16 or over to rent. Review of Wisconsin PWC rules.	https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/boat/
WY	No	Under 16 unless with an adult	Sunset to Sunrise unless equipped w/ navigation lights	None	https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Fishing-and-Boating/Boating-and-Watercraft/Boating-Safety-Courses

Michael Gerard

Police Practices & Premises Security Expert

Mr. Gerard is a retired police officer with experience enforcing maritime law in the Great Lakes Region. Mike has unique qualifications pertaining to the lawful operation of boats and personal watercraft, as well as the responsibilities of those who permit others to operate personal watercraft. He applies his knowledge of state and local watercraft laws, and US Coast Guard rules and regulations to watercraft rescue, crash reporting and safe boat operation. He has provided public education on boating safety, and provided a law enforcement and security presence at lakefront bars and nightclubs.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

The experts at Robson Forensic can speak to PWC operation, Rules of the Road and the training and education necessary for the safe operation of personal watercraft on all waterways. When appropriate, our marine engineers are available to reconstruct an incident. We also have professional mariners who can speak to the responsibility of commercial vessels.

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