



26 | 327.39 Personal watercraft regulated.—

27 | (1) (a) A person may not operate a personal watercraft  
 28 | unless each person riding on or being towed behind such vessel  
 29 | is:

30 | 1. Wearing a personal flotation device, other than an  
 31 | inflatable device, currently approved by the United States Coast  
 32 | Guard and used in accordance with the United States Coast Guard  
 33 | approval label.

34 | 2. Wearing a wet suit bottom or clothing other than normal  
 35 | swimwear that provides equivalent protection against forceful  
 36 | water entry into the lower body openings. Normal swimwear is not  
 37 | considered adequate protection against forceful water entry.

38 | 3. If under the age of 18, wearing a helmet that is  
 39 | properly fitted and is fastened securely upon the head by a  
 40 | strap and that meets state or federal safety standards for such  
 41 | helmet. A helmet purchased before July 2, 2022, that meets the  
 42 | standards of the American National Standards Institute or the  
 43 | Snell Memorial Foundation, or any other nationally or  
 44 | internationally recognized standards for personal watercraft  
 45 | helmets, in compliance with rules established by the commission  
 46 | may continue to be worn until January 1, 2026. On and after  
 47 | January 1, 2026, a person under the age of 18 must wear a helmet  
 48 | that is approved by the United States Department of  
 49 | Transportation, the Economic Commission for Europe, or the Snell  
 50 | Memorial Foundation, in compliance with rules established by the

51 commission.

52 (b) A person may not operate a personal watercraft towing  
53 another person on water skis or other towables unless:

54 1. The total number of persons operating, observing, and  
55 being towed does not exceed the specified number of passengers  
56 as identified by the manufacturer as the maximum safe load for  
57 the personal watercraft.

58 2. The personal watercraft has on board, in addition to  
59 the operator, a rear-facing observer who monitors the progress  
60 of the person being towed.

61 (2) A person operating a personal watercraft equipped by  
62 the manufacturer with a lanyard type engine cutoff switch must  
63 attach such lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or personal  
64 flotation device as is appropriate for the specific vessel.

65 (3) A person may not operate a personal watercraft at any  
66 time between the hours from one-half hour after sunset to one-  
67 half hour before sunrise. However, an agent or employee of a  
68 fire or emergency rescue service is exempt from this subsection  
69 while performing his or her official duties.

70 (4) A personal watercraft must at all times be operated in  
71 a reasonable and prudent manner. Maneuvers which unreasonably or  
72 unnecessarily endanger life, limb, or property, including, but  
73 not limited to, weaving through congested vessel traffic,  
74 jumping the wake of another vessel unreasonably or unnecessarily  
75 close to such other vessel or when visibility around such other

76 vessel is obstructed, and swerving at the last possible moment  
 77 to avoid collision shall constitute reckless operation of a  
 78 vessel, as provided in s. 327.33(1). A ~~Any~~ person operating a  
 79 personal watercraft must comply with ~~the provisions of~~ s.  
 80 327.33.

81 (5) A ~~No~~ person under the age of 16 ~~may not~~ ~~14~~ ~~shall~~  
 82 operate any personal watercraft on the waters of this state.

83 (6) (a) ~~It is unlawful for~~ The owner of any personal  
 84 watercraft or a ~~any~~ person having charge over or control of a  
 85 personal watercraft may not ~~to~~ authorize or knowingly permit the  
 86 personal watercraft ~~same~~ to be operated by a person under 16 ~~14~~  
 87 years of age ~~in violation of this section.~~

88 (b)1. ~~It is unlawful for~~ The owner of any leased, hired,  
 89 or rented personal watercraft, or a ~~any~~ person having charge  
 90 over or control of a leased, hired, or rented personal  
 91 watercraft, may not ~~to~~ authorize or knowingly permit the  
 92 watercraft to be operated by a ~~any~~ person who has not received  
 93 instruction in the safe handling of personal watercraft, in  
 94 compliance with rules established by the commission.

95 2. A ~~Any~~ person receiving instruction in the safe handling  
 96 of personal watercraft pursuant to a program established by rule  
 97 of the commission must provide the owner of, or person having  
 98 charge of or control over, a leased, hired, or rented personal  
 99 watercraft with a written statement attesting to the same.

100 3. The commission has ~~shall have~~ the authority to

101 establish rules pursuant to chapter 120 prescribing the  
102 instruction to be given, which shall take into account the  
103 nature and operational characteristics of personal watercraft  
104 and general principles and regulations pertaining to boating  
105 safety.

106 (c) The owner of, or a person having charge of or control  
107 over, any leased, hired, or rented personal watercraft may not  
108 authorize or knowingly permit the watercraft to be operated by a  
109 person who is under 18 years of age unless:

110 1. The person possesses a helmet that is approved by the  
111 United States Department of Transportation, the Economic  
112 Commission for Europe, or the Snell Memorial Foundation, in  
113 compliance with rules established by the commission; or

114 2. The owner of, or person having charge of or control  
115 over, the leased, hired, or rented personal watercraft provides  
116 a helmet for the person to wear that is approved by the United  
117 States Department of Transportation, the Economic Commission for  
118 Europe, or the Snell Memorial Foundation, in compliance with  
119 rules established by the commission.

120 (d)(e) A Any person who violates this subsection commits a  
121 misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s.  
122 775.082 or s. 775.083.

123 (7) (a) A company that provides personal watercraft for  
124 lease, hire, or rent shall maintain liability insurance coverage  
125 of at least \$1 million. Proof of such insurance must be

126 available for inspection at the location where personal  
127 watercraft are leased, hired, or rented.

128 (b) Before leasing or renting a personal watercraft,  
129 operators of the company shall provide:

130 1. The name and address of the operator's insurance  
131 carrier and the insurance policy number to each person leasing  
132 or renting a personal watercraft;

133 2. Boating safety instruction in compliance with rules  
134 established by the commission to a person leasing or renting a  
135 personal watercraft who does not possess valid identification  
136 and a course completion certificate or proof of successful  
137 completion of the requirements under subsection (8); and

138 3. The following written information to each person  
139 leasing or renting a personal watercraft:

140 a. The operational characteristics of the personal  
141 watercraft.

142 b. The boating regulations specific to the area where the  
143 personal watercraft will be operated, including, but not limited  
144 to, no-entry zones, no-wake zones, channel routes, water  
145 hazards, and tidal flow.

146 c. An explanation of the common courtesies of operating a  
147 personal watercraft on the water and the effect of personal  
148 watercraft operation on wildlife, the environment, and other  
149 water users.

150 (8) (a) 1. A person may not operate any personal watercraft

151 powered by a motor of 10-horse power or greater unless the  
 152 person has a course completion certificate or proof of  
 153 successful completion of:

154 a. A boater safety course approved by the commission and  
 155 the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators; or

156 b. A proficiency examination on the curriculum of a boater  
 157 safety course approved by the commission and the National  
 158 Association of State Boating Law Administrators.

159 2. A nonresident operating a personal watercraft on the  
 160 waters of this state is subject to the education course and  
 161 equivalency examination requirements of this subsection unless  
 162 he or she has proof of successful completion of an education  
 163 course or equivalency examination within their state of  
 164 residence that meets or exceeds such requirements.

165 3. A person operating a personal watercraft on the waters  
 166 of this state must have on board the personal watercraft proof  
 167 of successful completion of an education course or equivalency  
 168 examination required under this subsection.

169 (b) This subsection does not apply to a person who leases,  
 170 hires, or rents a personal watercraft pursuant to subsection  
 171 (6).

172 (9) ~~(7)~~ This section does not apply to:

173 (a) A performer engaged in a professional exhibition or a  
 174 person preparing to participate or participating in a regatta,  
 175 race, marine parade, tournament, or exhibition held in

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176 compliance with s. 327.48.

177 (b) A person who holds a valid master, mate, or operator  
178 license issued by the United States Coast Guard.

179 (c) A law enforcement officer or other emergency responder  
180 engaged in the performance of their official duties.

181 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.