

# Michigan Marine Law & Boater Safety

**It is the Responsibility of the Water Craft Operator to Know these Laws!**

## **I. SPEED LIMITS**

1. Slow – no wake speed within **100 feet** of the shoreline, any watercraft, pier, person, raft, swimming area, and swimmers, with special local exceptions.
2. Maximum speed **55 m.p.h.** in all water unless otherwise regulated.
3. Michigan law states that a person operating a vessel shall operate it in a careful and prudent manner and at such a rate of speed so as not to unreasonably endanger the life or property of any person. A person shall not operate a vessel at a rate of speed greater than will permit him, in the exercise of reasonable care, to bring the vessel to stop within an assured clear distance ahead.
4. A person shall not operate a vessel in a manner so as to unreasonably interfere with other persons lawfully using Michigan's water resources.

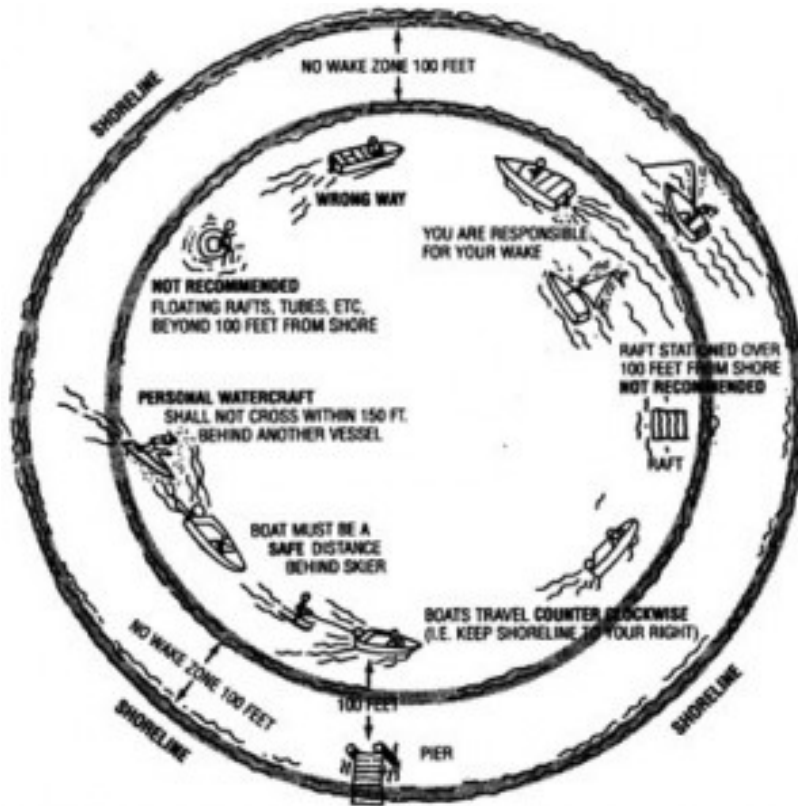
**SLOW – NO WAKE !** Means operating at a very slow to speed in order to minimize the wake created by your vessel.

## **II. TOWING OF PERSONS**

1. No water skiing between one hour after sunset and one hour prior to sunrise.
2. At least one competent person, in addition to the driver, shall be in any boat towing persons on water skis, sleds, etc. This additional person shall be in a position to observe the progress of the person being towed.
3. The tow boat must be equipped with a 170 degree wide angle rear view mirror affixed to permit the driver to observe the progress of the person being towed.

## **III. DISTANCE BETWEEN PERSONS BEING TOWED AND OTHER OBJECTS**

Vessels and persons being towed on water skis, water sleds, etc. shall maintain a distance of **100 foot** from any dock, raft, buoyed or occupied bathing areas, or vessels moored or at anchor, except when the vessel is proceeding at a slow-no wake speed or when water skiers are being picked-up or dropped off.



#### IV. COUNTER-CLOCKWISE OPERATIONS

Persons operating vessels shall operate in a **counter-clockwise** fashion when it reasonably possible.

#### V. NOISE LEVEL OF BOATS

Motorboats are required to have mufflers or an underwater exhaust system such that it does not produce sound levels in excess of 90 dB when subjected to a stationary (neutral) sound level test of its engine at no closer than one meter (3.3 feet).

#### VI. CHILDREN OPERATING MOTORBOATS

1. Persons under 12 years old operating motorboats:

- Must be under the direct supervision of a person 16 years of age or older; and,
- The boat must have no more than 35 HP.

2. Persons 12 through 15 years may operate motorboats if either condition below is met;

- Accompanied by at least one person 16 years or older, or, the person has a boating safety certificate.

3. Any person may operate a motorboat that is powered by a motor of no more than 6 HP.

4. As of October 1, 2011, a person of **less than fourteen (14) years of age** may not legally operate a PWC under any circumstances.

5. A person who was born after December 31, 1978 shall not operate a PWC on Michigan waters unless they have obtained a boating safety certificate.

## **VII. LIQUOR AND / OR CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

1. A person who is intoxicated (as defined in the same way as for driving a car) may not operate or be in control of any vessel. The Michigan implied consent law applies for boat operator intoxication testing. Severe fines and/or jail time await those who are observed operating a water craft while intoxicated on alcohol or drugs (legal or illegal).

## **VIII. OPERATION OF VESSELS**

1. Sailboats have the right-of-way to motorboats while they are under sail power.
2. Motorboats shall give way to non-motorized vessels.
3. When two vessels are approaching each other head-on, or nearly so, the operator of each shall cause his vessel to pass on the port (left) side of the other (i.e. keep the approaching boat to your left).
4. When over taking a vessel proceeding in the same direction, the operator of the over taking vessel, unless it is not feasible to so do, shall pass on the port (left) side of the vessel ahead (i.e. keep the overtaken boat to your right).
5. When two vessels are approaching each other at right angles or obliquely so as to involve risk of collision, the operator of the vessel which has the other on his own port (left) side shall hold his course and speed, and the operator of the vessel which has the other on his own starboard (right) side shall give way to the other by directing his course to starboard so as to cross the stern of the other vessel or, if necessary to do so, shall slacken his speed, stop or reverse.

All vessels are required to provide at least one United States Coast Guard approved PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE per passenger. Each child under the age of 6 years, and in an open deck area is REQUIRED by law to wear a PFD AT ALL TIMES!

## **IX. RESPONSIBILITY FOR VESSEL WAKE**

The owner of any vessel is personally responsible for any damage to life or property resulting from a wake or swell created by the negligent operation of the vessel, where the vessel is being operated with his consent. Always maintain safe speeds and follow no-wake laws.

## **X. DISTANCE FROM SCUBA DIVER'S FLAG**

A vessel shall not be operated within 200 feet of a buoyed diver's flag unless it is involved in tendering the diving operation. A person diving shall stay within a surface area of 100 feet of a diver's flag.

## **XI. PERSONAL WATERCRAFT REGULATIONS**

1. A person shall maintain a distance of 100 ft. from any dock, boat, raft, buoyed or occupied bathing area while driving at other than slow – no wake speed.
2. A person shall not cross within 150 ft. behind another vessel other than a personal watercraft, that is moving at greater than a slow – no wake speed.
3. A person shall not operate a PWC on the waters of this state from one hour before sunset to 8:00 A.M local time.

4. Maneuvers that endanger life, limb, or property, including weaving through congested traffic, jumping the wake of another vessel or turning unnecessarily close to another other vessel and/or swerving at the last moment to avoid a collision constitutes reckless operation of a vessel.
5. Carrying more persons than the vessel is designed to carry is prima facie evidence of reckless operation of a vessel.
6. Lanyards must be attached to the operator on vessels that are equipped with lanyards.
7. As of October 1, 2011, a person of less than fourteen (14) years of age may not legally operate a PWC under any circumstances.
8. A person who was born after December 31, 1978 shall not operate a PWC on Michigan waters unless they have obtained a boating safety certificate.
9. A personal watercraft shall not be operated at speeds in excess of (55 mph) except where otherwise posted.
10. A person shall not operate a PWC in waters less than two feet deep unless traveling at a slow no-wake speed.

A complete handbook of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities is available for free download on the internet at [www.boat-ed.com](http://www.boat-ed.com)

\*From Michigan Lake Stewardship Association