

Wisconsin's Personal Watercraft Law

Personal Watercraft (PWC) are classified as Class A (less than 16 feet in length) inboard boats. All PWC must be registered and display valid registration decals and registration numbers on the forward half of both sides of the craft. Personal watercraft operators must obey all boating regulations just as any other motorboat. In addition, PWC operators must comply with the following additional regulations:

1. No person may operate a PWC from sunset to sunrise.
2. All persons riding a PWC must wear a PFD of the proper size and type (type I, II, III, or V).
3. No persons may operate a PWC equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard without the lanyard attached to the operator.
 - No person may sell a PWC manufacturer after 1/1/93 unless equipped with a lanyard or self-circling device.
4. No one under 12 may operate a PWC. (Rental age limit is 16.)
5. Persons at least 12 but under 16 must be in possession of a valid boating safety student certificate to operate a PWC. (Parental supervision is not a substitute for a boating safety certificate as with other motorboats. PWC operators must have a certificate.)
6. It is illegal to operate a PWC facing backwards.
7. Rental PWC:
 - No one under 16 may rent a PWC.
 - Rental agent must provide PFD of proper size and type.
 - Rental agent must provide renters with instruction on PWC operation unless the renter holds a valid boating safety student certificate or has previous experience operating a PWC.
8. There is no towing of persons engaged in water skiing, aquaplaning, or similar activities unless the PWC is designed to seat 3 people. There is no limit on number of skiers.
9. PWC towing of stranded or disabled boats is only allowed if speeds do not exceed slow-no-wake.
10. Operation of a PWC within 100 feet of another boat or PWC is only allowed if the following requirements are met:
 - Operation does not exceed a slow-no-wake speed.
 - Neither boat is involved in any type of water skiing or similar activity.
11. It is illegal to operate a PWC within 100' of the following:
 - Another boat towing a skier or person engaged in similar activity.
 - The tow rope of another motorboat towing a skier or person engaged in similar activity.
 - A person involved in skiing or a similar activity.
12. No person operating any type of motorboat (including PWC) that is towing persons engaged in water skiing, aquaplaning, or similar activity may operate within 100' of any occupied anchored boat, any personal watercraft, any marked swimming area, or public boat landing.
13. No person who is water skiing or engaged in similar activity, may get within 100 feet of a personal watercraft or allow the toe rope to get within 100 feet of a personal watercraft.
14. **Effective August 1, 1998, no person may operate a personal watercraft faster than slow-no-wake within 200' of shore on any lake in Wisconsin.**

Rules 11-13 do not apply to water ski pickup or drop areas that are marked with regulatory markers and that are open to operators of personal watercraft and to persons and motorboats engaged in water skiing.