

It's the Law: On the Water

In addition to the laws mentioned previously, here are some other Michigan regulations that apply when vessel operators are on the water.

Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

Michigan law designates these dangerous operating practices as illegal.

- **Reckless Operation** of a vessel or reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or similar device is defined as operation which disregards the safety or rights of others or endangers the person or property of others. Some examples are:
 - Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic or swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision
 - Jumping the wake of another vessel unnecessarily close to the other vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is restricted
 - Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel
 - Causing damage from the wake of your vessel
- **Failure To Regulate Speed** is operating a vessel at speeds that may cause danger to life or property of any other person or at speeds that will not permit you to bring your vessel to a safe stop. It is illegal to operate a vessel:
 - In excess of 55 mph unless you are at least one mile offshore on the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair
 - At greater than "slow, no wake speed" when a person is in the bow of a vessel without proper seating
 - Faster than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions (weather, vessel traffic, etc.)

"**Slow, No Wake Speed**" means the slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering and which does not create a wake.

- **Improper Distance** is not maintaining a proper distance while operating a vessel or towing a person. To maintain a proper distance when you are operating at greater than "slow, no wake speed" (except in channels that are not posted), the vessel or persons being towed must not be within 100 feet of:
 - A shoreline (if operating in water less than three feet deep)
 - Any moored or anchored vessel
 - A dock or raft
 - Any marked swimming area or person(s) in the water
- **Improper Distance for PWCs** means that, if operating at greater than "slow, no wake speed," PWCs also must:
 - Stay at least 200 feet from any Great Lakes shoreline.
 - Not cross within 150 feet behind another vessel other than another PWC.

- **Improper Direction** is defined as the failure to operate in a counterclockwise direction except in areas marked by well-defined channels or rivers.
- **Boating in Restricted Areas** is defined as operating within a restricted area clearly marked by buoys, beacons, diver-down flags, etc.
- **Riding on the Bow** is illegal if the vessel is not equipped with bow seating and the vessel is operating at greater than "slow, no wake speed." Persons also are not allowed to ride on the gunwale. While underway, persons on a vessel may not sit, stand, or walk on any portion of a vessel not designed for that purpose.

