

BROAD OVERVIEW OF STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR LIFE JACKETS

To learn more about a specific state's life jacket requirement, or the state boating agency for the boating destination, please visit the National Association of Boating Law Administration's database of [state boating contacts](#).

For anyone on board a personal watercraft (PWC or "jet ski") or anyone being towed:

- All must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.

For a boat less than 16 feet long (or a canoe or a kayak of any length):

- A U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket carried for each person on board. If stored, these life jackets must be readily available (easy to get to), and a boater must show passengers the location of life jackets and other safety equipment.
- Some state laws vary but it is always safe to assume and a smart move no matter what the age, that on recreational boats underway, children under 13 years old must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket unless they are below decks or in an enclosed cabin. For more information, please check with local Marine Law Enforcement Authorities.

For a boat 16 feet or longer, a boater must carry a life jacket for each passenger:

- The same requirements as above and one immediately accessible (easy-to-reach) Type IV device designed for throwing – such as a ring, cushion or horseshoe buoy for each boat.

Updated: February 2017