

Boat safety for you and the lake

Boaters and watersports enthusiasts hit the lake for another summer season of fun in the sun. With increasing boat traffic and a fatal boating accident this season on Lake Windermere, it's time to brush up on safe vessel operation.

As with a car or truck, you must have a license to operate a boat or personal water craft. There are rules that need to be followed on the water, just like on the road. The license required is called the Pleasure Craft Operator Card, good for life and provides adequate education in boat safety and operation. But, like everything we learn, if we don't use it, we lose it. So a seasonal refresher is an excellent way to stay sharp on safe boating practices and operation etiquette.

Here's a quick review from Transport Canada's "Safe Boating Guide" on some of the things to keep in mind before heading out on the lake:

Take a boating safety course – *know how to prevent and manage emergencies*
Get your Pleasure Craft Operator Card – *you are responsible for safe and legal vessel operation*

Vessel condition – *should your boat leave the dock?*

Weather forecast – *is it safe to head out on the water?*

Sail plan – *file your sail plan before heading out (see the Safe Boating Guide)*

Charts, compass and local hazards – *know where you are at all times*

Safety gear – *it is required by law and essential for safety*

Safety briefing – *you are legally responsible for guests / crew*

Lifejackets / personal floatation devices – *wear them! They float, you don't!*

Don't cruise with booze – *drinking and driving a vessel is illegal and dangerous*

Relevant laws – *Competency of Operators Pleasure Craft Regulations, Navigation Safety Regulations, Boating Restriction Regulations, Small Vessel Regulations, Criminal Code of Canada, Collision Regulations, Canada Shipping Act, Charts and Nautical Publications Regulations*

Knowing the basics of boating safety gives peace of mind and lets you make the most of your time on the water. This is especially true this summer as the RCMP will be focusing on boat safety and licensing in their enforcement of boating regulations. Corporal Brent Ayers with the Columbia Valley RCMP reminds boaters to "be safe, courteous and aware of where you are boating. Keep depth and other lake users in mind."

Boating is part of our great Canadian heritage. From the traditional use of kayaks and canoes for hunting, fishing and transportation by the Inuit and First Nations people, to the wide variety of recreational uses today, boating has always played a significant role in Canadian life. For many, it's a passion (Safe Boating Guide).

The waters, wetlands, and shores of Canada belong to everyone. We all have a

responsibility to protect this priceless heritage by minimizing our impact on the aquatic environment (Protecting the Aquatic Environment: a Boater's Guide or PAEBG). If we forget to take care of our water, it will become unusable for any human or environmental cause, including recreation.

Here are some tips to follow that will help Lake Windermere stay in shape:

- Dispose of garbage properly on shore (reduce, reuse, recycle)
- Use a four stroke or lean-burn two stroke engine
- Fuel the vessel or tanks on shore away from the water
- Be prepared to clean up any type of spill (fuel, oil, antifreeze, anything); it is the law
- Don't use antifouling coatings (wax your boat)
- Take the vessel in for regular maintenance (on shore)
- Don't dump sewage into the lake (it is illegal)
- Don't use harsh cleansers and do all cleaning on shore (many alternatives in PAEBG)
- Stay well away from shore at high speeds (Law says no more than 10kph within 30m of shore)
- Take a straight course to reduce wake damage along the shoreline
- Watch out for wildlife, reduce speed, and give them lots of room
- Go slow in shallow areas or better still, avoid them

For more information, contact the Lake Windermere Project at 250-341-6898. You can also visit the Project office located in the old District of Invermere office beside the Invermere Community Centre. The Lake Windermere Project is a long-term comprehensive stewardship program dedicated to safeguarding the health of our lake. The Lake Windermere Project is made possible by generous support from Wildsight, Environment Canada, Columbia Basin Trust, the Real Estate Foundation of B.C, and those community members who have donated through the Lake Windermere Stewards and Ambassadors program.