

2024 Mercer Island Marine Patrol Boating Season Review and Reminders

Introductions:

- Sergeant Chad Schumacher, 17 years with Mercer Island PD, 15 years as a Marine Patrol Officer, lifetime boater, 50-ton USCG Captain's License, NASBLA Instructor.
- Marine Patrol Officer Luis Paz, 5 years with Mercer Island PD, 1 year as a Marine Patrol Officer. Training in Marine Law Enforcement, Boater Under the Influence Detection, and Boat Operator Search and Rescue.
- Staffing - 23 MIPD Officers certified as boat operators, so even when we are not on duty if there is a Marine Patrol call, an MPO on the road can handle it.

Patrol Vessels:

- Patrol 11, 30-foot Almar, twin 8.2-liter Mercury inboard engines, 430 horsepower each. Full Garmin radar, chart plotter, side view down view sonar, FLIR, VHF as well as 800-megahertz redundant radios, First Aid, search and rescue, and oxygen equipment.
- Patrol 14, 31-foot SafeBoat, triple 300 horsepower Mercury outboards, 500 gallons per minute fire and dewatering pump. Full Garmin radar, chart plotter, side view down view sonar, FLIR, VHF as well as 800-megahertz redundant radios. First Aid, search and rescue, and oxygen equipment.
- Patrol 12, 24-foot SafeBoat, twin 225 horsepower Mercury outboards, full radar, chart plotter. VHF and 800-megahertz radio, fire extinguishers. First Aid, search and rescue, and oxygen equipment.

Washington Boater Education Card: <https://parks.state.wa.us/>

- Required if born after January 1st, 1955, operating a vessel with a 15-horsepower (or greater) motor, or 12 years of age or older. Reciprocity with other states for visiting boaters. Must have it with you while boating. Just like a driver's license on land.
- Study and pass the course and pay a \$10.50 Washington State Parks fee. Throughout the Washington Boat Ed Course, you'll be tested on what you've learned.
- After completing the online course, you'll be able to immediately print out your Certificate of Course Completion. This can be used as a Boater Ed Card until yours arrives.
- You'll be mailed your permanent Washington Boater Education Card within 6 weeks by Washington State Parks.

Required Equipment: This is how you demonstrate to others you are experienced and know what you're doing. Officers will conduct a vessel safety inspection on all vessel stops and conduct courtesy inspections at boat ramps and at the request of boat owners.

- Current Vessel Registration – all motorized vessels are required to have registration; expire on June 30th.
- Properly displayed registration numbers and registration tab.
- PFD/Life Preservers. Must be US Coast Guard approved, one for everyone on board, correct size, and in good condition. Children under 12 must wear one at all times if a vessel is under 19'.
- Must have a Type IV (otherwise known as a boat cushion)

- Must have a USCG-approved fire extinguisher charged and in working order. Vessel length determines how many or the size of the fire extinguisher that is required on the vessel. The US Coast Guard states that these now expire every 12 years.
- Navigation Lights. The Port (left) is red. The starboard (right) is green. The stern (back of the boat) is white. Must be lit from sunset to sunrise. Jet skis are not allowed to be operated from sunset to sunrise.
- NO OTHER LIGHTS ARE PERMITTED. The above lights need to be observable by other vessels, so they know what direction/course you are heading. There are no lines to follow like on a roadway. Your lights tell other boaters what direction you are going and which way you are turning. Any other illumination can drown out your navigation lights to other boaters, which causes confusion.
- Ski boat docking lights are NOT headlights and are NOT permitted for use while underway. They are to be used ONLY upon directly approaching a dock or moorage. Docking lights do drown out your navigation lights as explained above.
- Distress signals – horn or whistle, flares.
- Engine blower
- Carbon Monoxide Decal – Dangers of Teak Surfing/riding on the stern of a boat.
- Skier Down Flag – Skier falls into the water, and the flag goes up. The skier comes up, the flag goes down.
- Designated Observer – Separate from the driver. Their job is to monitor the skier at all times and properly use the skier down flag.

Human-powered watercraft: Canoes, Kayaks, Stand-Up Paddle Boards

- Users are required to have a US Coast Guard-approved lifejacket for everyone onboard. Other required equipment includes a whistle and a light for use at night. Users are not required to wear the lifejacket, but the Mercer Island Marine Patrol recommends that you wear one. Approximately 50% of Washington State drownings are attributed to users of a human-powered watercraft not wearing a life jacket.

eHydrofoil Boards:

- Electric Hydrofoil Boards are becoming more and more popular. Keep in mind that Lake Washington is a federal waterway, and with that comes any motorized vessel is required to be registered regardless of the size of the vessel or engine. You are also required to wear your life jacket while operating an eHydrofoil Board and have a whistle attached.

Common Navigation Rules:

- Rules of the Road:
- If you are on a crossing course with another vessel that could result in a collision if the other vessel is on the right, it is the stand-on vessel, and you must yield.
- A sailboat under sail always has the right of way.
- If two vessels come head-on, each vessel alters course to pass on the right of the other.

Speed regulations:

- The speed regulation buoys are placed 300 feet / 100 yards from the nearest shore or dock. 8 nautical miles per hour/No Wake (defined as a cresting wave) inside those buoys to shore, or before, under, or after any bridge.

- Outside of these speed buoys, there is no speed limit, go as fast as conditions allow without being negligent or reckless to others.

Wake Issues:

- Boaters in Washington State are responsible for any damage their wake causes. This is a civil issue between the vessel operator and the homeowner.

What to do in Emergencies:

- Channel 16 on VHF radios are monitored by the US Coast Guard and local Law Enforcement Marine Units.
- 911 on your cell phone. Will work well in the greater Puget Sound region. Be ready to identify where you are, your address, the name of the facility, landmarks, etc. so others can find you. If you have a GPS on your boat/chart plotter/cell phone, be ready to give your Lat/Lon if needed. Give specific identifiers.

Questions or to request an Adventures in Boating Handbook:

- Please reach out to Sgt. Schumacher at Chad.Schumacher@mercergov.org or MPO Luis Paz at Luis.Paz@mercergov.org.
- Call 206-275-7953.