

Illinois

Safe Boating Practices



In **Illinois**, the following boating rules apply to minors:

1. **Children:** 13 years or younger **must be wearing** Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when on a watercraft that is 26 feet in length or less (see boaterexan.com).
2. **Adult supervision is required** for children who are **10 or 11 years of age** to operate a boat.
3. A person who is **between the ages of 12 and 18 years** may operate a motorboat only if:
 - a. They have a valid Boating Education Certificate of Competency issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources,
or
 - b. an adult is providing supervision.

Anyone born on or after January 1, 1998, must have a Boater Safety Certification card issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources if they plan on operating a watercraft of 10 or more hp.¹

Visit boaterexan.com for more information about boater's education in Illinois.

Boating Equipment you need to have on board your vessel

All boat operators must carry at least one Coast Guard-approved *life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD)** (I, II, or III) onboard for each passenger. All PFDs and life jackets must be in good condition and appropriate for the wearer. Also, all PFDs and life jackets must be easily accessible.

The operator must also carry a Type IV (throwable) flotation device if the watercraft is more than 16 feet in length.

*Life Jackets have more padding in the front and are designed to hold an unconscious person in the water in a face-up position. If you are face-down position, a life jacket will flip you on your back.

**PFD is for flotation and may not flip you. In either case, wearing a life jacket or a PFD will save lives!

Other equipment needed on board the vessel:

1. At least one Type IV PFD.
2. Fire extinguisher(s) on boats with engines:
 - a. Boats under 26 feet in length should carry one B1 Type Extinguisher
 - b. Boats between 26 feet and 40 feet should carry two B1 Type or one B2 Type extinguisher

Before leaving your mooring location, review how to operate an extinguisher with your family and guests.

3. Visual Signaling Devices – This is dependent on the size of your vessel and the state where you boat. You need to check the boating regulations of the state before you leave however a few devices to consider are day and night lights and flares.
4. Sound Signaling Devices – horns such as air horns are useful to have on board as well as whistles.
5. If you are operating boats less than 26 feet in length you must use the engine cut-off switch (ECOS) when needed. Be sure to fasten the kill switch lanyard to your life jacket or an article of clothing, such as a belt loop, or on your wrist or leg. If you fall out of your boat, the lanyard attached to the electrical system will disable the system, and your boat will not run over you.^{2,3}

Other Recommended Safety Items

1. A float plan—before you leave for the day, leave a float plan with a family member or friend. It should outline the vessel identification marks, guest names, where you plan to visit, and when you plan to return. Also, leave instructions on what to do if you do not check in with them within a specified time.
2. VHF marine radio, flashlight, and cellphone (in a sealed bag).
3. Boating safety kit, in case your boat needs repairs.
4. A bucket, in case your bilge pump fails, paddle(s), or oars.
5. First-aid kit.
6. Ziplock bag for your phone.
7. Change of clothes, hat, and sunglasses (include a lanyard for the glasses).
8. Sunblock lotion.

Summary checklists

| Safety Equipment | Safety Checklist |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> *Life jackets and or **PDFs plus a Type IV throwable floatation device | <input type="checkbox"/> Check *life jackets and or **PDFs, plus a Type IV throwable device. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Signaling and sound devices | <input type="checkbox"/> Know the local (marine) weather forecast before you leave. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire extinguishers | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a float plan and leave with someone who stays behind. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine radio and cellphone | <input type="checkbox"/> Check safety equipment. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Docking (extra lines) and an anchor | <input type="checkbox"/> Remember protective gear and clothing. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, including gauze, bandages, alcohol cleaning pads, aspirin, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a boating education course ¹ . |

Ask the Coast Guard for a vessel check. It's free!

Boater safety course: boat-ed.com/illinois

Boater safety exam: www.boaterexam.com/usa/illinois

¹ Some states have enacted legislation requiring boating classes. Boaters may be able to lower the insurance premiums if they have taken the state boating course. Check with your insurance company to determine if this is applicable in your state.

² boatingindustry.com/news/2021/03/15/new-boat-engine-cutoff-switch-law-takes-effect-april-1/

³ uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/engine-cut-off-switch-faq.php