

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
TOPIC	Sections
Overview: Purpose, Scope, Authorities, and Responsibilities	1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? 1.2 What is the scope of this chapter? 1.3 What are the authorities for the watercraft safety program? 1.4 What is the Service policy for operation of watercraft? 1.5 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter? 1.6 Who is responsible for the watercraft safety program?
Training, Operating, and Reporting Requirements	1.7 What are the training requirements for watercraft operators? 1.8 What safety and survival equipment are required for watercraft? 1.9 When must operators use a kill switch? 1.10 What are the minimum maintenance documentation requirements? 1.11 What are the requirements for a float plan? 1.12 What are the requirements for surf landings? 1.13 What are the requirements for accident reporting and investigations? 1.14 How are explosives transported on a watercraft? 1.15 How long can an operator drive or operate a vehicle/equipment (including watercraft) in one day?

1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter:

- A.** Describes responsibilities for implementing the Department of the Interior (Department)-mandated watercraft safety program, and
- B.** Establishes minimum requirements for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) safe operation of motorboats and other watercraft.

1.2 What is the scope of this chapter?

A. This policy applies to:

- (1)** Watercraft for which the Service is responsible (e.g., watercraft the Service owns, borrows, rents, or leases),
- (2)** Anyone on board watercraft for which the Service is responsible, and
- (3)** Service personnel conducting official duties on watercraft, regardless of ownership. Employees performing official duties on commercially licensed watercraft (ferries, tour boats, commercial vessels, etc.) must abide by established maritime standards for those vessels, any orders the captain of the vessel issues, and all relevant safety standards and authorities in this chapter.

B. The policy does not apply to:

- (1)** Operators of watercraft larger than 65 feet in length. Those operators must have a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) license and follow USCG operator requirements;
- (2)** Seaplanes; and

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

(3) Contractors. Contractors must comply with the safety and health clauses in their contract agreements and with Federal, State, and local watercraft requirements.

1.3 What are the authorities for the watercraft safety program?

- A.** Federal Agency Safety Programs and Responsibilities ([Public Law 91-596, Sec 19](#)).
- B.** [Executive Order 12196](#), Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees.
- C.** Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs and Related Matters ([29 CFR 1960](#)).
- D.** Navigation and Navigable Waters (33 CFR Parts 1-199).
- E.** Shipping, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, Uninspected Vessels (46 CFR Part 25, Subchapter C), and Lifesaving Equipment (46 CFR Part 160).
- F.** [485 DM 22](#), Watercraft Safety.

1.4 What is the Service policy for operation of watercraft? We must operate all watercraft in a safe and prudent manner in accordance with local and State laws, USCG and Departmental regulations, and this chapter.

1.5 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter? See Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Watercraft Safety Program Terminology	
Term	Definition
A. Anti-exposure clothing	Apparel designed to protect the wearer from exposure to particular elements, which includes the following or its functional equivalent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) USCG-approved Type V immersion suit. (2) USCG-approved Type V worksuit. (3) USCG-approved Type III float coat in combination with flotation bib coveralls or comparable clothing, such as a USCG-approved Type III float coat in combination with chest waders. The chest waders may be made of neoprene, or, if you wear adequate thermal protection under the waders, non-insulating material. (4) A dry suit and a USCG-approved personal flotation device. The dry suit must be worn with the proper under gear (i.e., the layer against the skin should be synthetic and the second layer should be fleece thermal).
B. Immersion Suit	A USCG-approved Type V personal flotation device that is generally stowed on board, is put on if there's an emergency, and provides greater hypothermia protection than anti-exposure clothing.
C. Kill Switch	A device designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown overboard or away from the controls.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

Table 1-1: Watercraft Safety Program Terminology	
Term	Definition
D. Motorboat	Any motorized watercraft 65 feet or less in length that does not require the operator to hold a USCG license or certification.
E. Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC)	The 24-hour training course that Service-authorized personnel who operate motorboats must successfully complete.
F. Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC)	The training course required in order to teach the MOCC.
G. Operator	The person in physical control of the watercraft.
H. Personal Flotation Device (PFD)	A Department and USCG-approved device designed to keep the user afloat while in the water.
I. Watercraft	Boats and ships collectively that are propelled by hand, wind, or machinery (i.e., motorboats, airboats, sailboats, inflatable rafts, kayaks, and all other vessels).

1.6 Who is responsible for the watercraft safety program? See Table 1-2.

Table 1-2: Responsibilities for the Watercraft Safety Program	
This official...	Is responsible for...
A. The Director	<p>(1) Ensuring sufficient support and resources to effectively implement watercraft safety program requirements, and</p> <p>(2) Appointing the Service Watercraft Safety Coordinator.</p>
B. The Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations	<p>(1) Nominating the Service Watercraft Safety Coordinator to the Director, with assistance from the Chief, Division of Safety and Health; and</p> <p>(2) Providing sufficient support and resources to the Chief, Division of Safety and Health, to ensure that the Chief can effectively accomplish his/her watercraft safety program responsibilities (see section 1.6D).</p>
C. Regional Directors	<p>(1) Ensuring there are sufficient resources and support to implement this policy within their areas of responsibility, and</p> <p>(2) Appointing a qualified Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinator.</p>
D. The Chief, Division of Safety and Health	<p>(1) Facilitating, administering, and supporting the Service Watercraft Safety Working Group;</p> <p>(2) Working with the Service Watercraft Safety Working Group to update and revise this policy;</p> <p>(3) Working closely with the Service Watercraft Safety Coordinator to ensure that he/she actively participates on the Departmental Watercraft Safety Working Group;</p> <p>(4) Conveying pertinent watercraft safety issues to the Departmental Safety</p>

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

Table 1-2: Responsibilities for the Watercraft Safety Program	
This official...	Is responsible for...
	<p>Council; and</p> <p>(5) Interpreting the requirements in this chapter and resolving Servicewide issues and questions about the policy.</p>
E. Service Watercraft Safety Coordinator	<p>(1) Successfully completing MOCC and MOICC training. If the Service Watercraft Safety Coordinator has not taken these two courses prior to appointment, he/she must have a minimum of 5 years of boating experience and must complete the two courses within 1 year of appointment;</p> <p>(2) Serving as the watercraft safety program point of contact with other bureaus and the Department;</p> <p>(3) Serving as the chairperson of the Service Watercraft Safety Working Group;</p> <p>(4) Serving as our representative on the Departmental Watercraft Safety Working Group; and</p> <p>(5) Reviewing requests for MOCC course substitutions and approving or denying each request based on the requirements in section 1.7A.</p>
F. Service Watercraft Safety Working Group	<p>(1) Meeting as necessary, but at least annually, for peer group discussions and exchange of best practices;</p> <p>(2) Assessing training needs and discussing standardized approaches and best business practices for conducting the MOCC, MOCC refresher training, the MOICC, and any additional specialized watercraft training modules;</p> <p>(3) Ensuring watercraft safety training meets the operational needs of our workforce;</p> <p>(4) Evaluating the adequacy of the requirements in this chapter and proposing policy and procedural additions or changes, as appropriate; and</p> <p>(5) Working cooperatively with other agencies and organizations (e.g., USCG, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Scientific Boating Safety Association, National Safe Boating Council, etc.) to increase the watercraft training opportunities available to Departmental personnel. The group does this by developing training modules and reviewing the courses that all agencies/organizations offer to see if they meet the same requirements as the MOCC.</p>
G. Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinators	<p>(1) Successfully completing MOCC and MOICC training. If a Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinator has not taken these two courses prior to appointment, he/she must have a minimum of 5 years of boating experience and must complete the two courses within 1 year of appointment;</p> <p>(2) Coordinating and overseeing the Regional MOCC program, which includes approving all Service MOCCs taught in the Region and their lead</p>

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

Table 1-2: Responsibilities for the Watercraft Safety Program	
This official...	Is responsible for...
	<p>instructors;</p> <p>(3) Coordinating Regional compliance with policies and procedures governing the training, maintenance, and safety of watercraft operations;</p> <p>(4) Actively participating on the Service Watercraft Safety Working Group;</p> <p>(5) In conjunction with the Regional Safety Manager, reviewing requests for exemptions to use auto-inflating PFDs as described in Exhibit 1, Safety and Survival Equipment Requirements;</p> <p>(6) Determining when a motorboat operator must use a kill switch (see section 1.9);</p> <p>(7) Sending requests for MOCC substitutions to the Service Watercraft Safety Coordinator; and</p> <p>(8) Working cooperatively with other agencies and organizations (e.g. USCG, NOAA, Scientific Boating Safety Association, National Safe Boating Council, etc.) to increase the watercraft training opportunities available to Departmental personnel.</p>
H. Regional Safety Managers	<p>(1) Working with the Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinator to provide technical support, and</p> <p>(2) Reviewing requests for authorizations to use auto-inflating PFDs as described in Exhibit 1.</p>
I. Project Leaders/ Supervisors	<p>(1) Establishing protocols to ensure that all employees, volunteers, and others:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(a) Conduct watercraft operations in a safe manner and in compliance with established Departmental and Service policies and procedures, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(b) Maintain equipment in compliance with policies and procedures, such as the Service's Maintenance Management System (372 FW 1 and 2);</p> <p>(2) Ensuring that employees, volunteers, and others who operate and work in watercraft on official duty are trained and have the skills in watercraft operations appropriate to the (also see section 1.7D):</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(a) Type and size of watercraft used;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(b) Geographic, climatic, and physical nature of the operations; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(c) Operational task(s) being performed;</p> <p>(3) Entering information into the Department's Learning Management</p>

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

Table 1-2: Responsibilities for the Watercraft Safety Program

This official...	Is responsible for...
	<p>System (i.e., DOI Learn) to document when employees, volunteers, and other participants complete initial watercraft training and refresher training. If the system will not allow them to enter this training, the Project Leader/supervisor must maintain and track safety and health training by a documentable and producible means;</p> <p>(4) Reviewing and sending requests for authorization to use auto-inflating PFDs to the Regional Watercraft Coordinator as described in Exhibit 1, Safety and Survival Equipment Requirements;</p> <p>(5) Providing the safety and survival equipment that the watercraft operator identifies as necessary and as described in Exhibit 1, Safety and Survival Equipment Requirements; and</p> <p>(6) Completing an accident report within 6 days of being notified about an accident using the Department's Safety Management Information System (SMIS), regardless of whether or not injuries occurred and regardless of the cost of the associated property damage.</p>
J. Watercraft Operators	<p>(1) Successfully completing the MOCC and maintaining certification;</p> <p>(2) Successfully completing training courses and requirements in specialized subjects (e.g., airboat operations, shallow-drive watercraft, jet boats, moving water operations, open water operations) as necessary to meet mission and environmental operating conditions;</p> <p>(3) Ensuring the safety of all personnel on board;</p> <p>(4) Operating the watercraft in compliance with existing policies, guidelines, and training;</p> <p>(5) Before beginning any boat trip:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(a) Determining what safety and survival equipment is needed and ensuring that the required equipment is on board and maintained in good, serviceable condition,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(b) Showing others on board where emergency equipment is located and providing any other information that is essential for an emergency,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(c) Completing an operational risk assessment evaluation before starting operations and as conditions change throughout the day (the protocol is in the MOCC Student Manual located on NCTC's Web site), and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(d) Providing a written or verbal float plan to a responsible individual outlining pertinent details (e.g., when departing and returning, etc.) of the trip. FWS Form 3-2227, Float Plan, lists float plan requirements. It may be necessary to deviate from these requirements for certain operations (see section 1.11);</p>

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

Table 1-2: Responsibilities for the Watercraft Safety Program	
This official...	Is responsible for...
	<p>(6) Using a kill switch when required (see section 1.9); and</p> <p>(7) Immediately reporting to their Project Leader or supervisor any accident, regardless of whether or not injuries occurred or the cost of any associated property damage.</p>
K. Other personnel on board any watercraft	<p>(1) Obeying the watercraft operator's orders,</p> <p>(2) Adhering to all safety regulations and this policy, and</p> <p>(3) At all times conducting themselves in a reasonable and prudent manner.</p>

1.7 What are the training requirements for watercraft operators?

A. Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) & Refresher Training.

- (1)** Service-authorized operators of motorboats must, at a minimum, successfully complete the Department's MOCC or an approved substitute course.
- (2)** Before taking the MOCC, personnel may practice motorboat operation under the supervision of a MOCC-trained operator on board the watercraft. Personnel who have not taken the MOCC may only operate motorboats to gain experience.
- (3)** Contact the Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinator to register for the MOCC or to request approval for a substitute course. Substitute training must meet the MOCC objectives, including on-water proficiency.
- (4)** Operators must complete MOCC refresher training every 5 years to maintain certification. Details about the MOCC and MOCC refresher are in the MOCC minimum standards on [NCTC's Web site](#).

B. Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC). Individuals who have successfully completed the MOICC instruct MOCC courses. Details regarding the MOICC are found in the minimum standards on [NCTC's Web site](#).

C. Airboat Training.

- (1)** Before operating an airboat independently, airboat operators must:
 - (a)** Take the "Airboat Module" in addition to the MOCC, and
 - (b)** Have 40 hours of documented driving time. The driving time:
 - (i)** May occur before or after completing the Airboat Module and only under the supervision of a qualified airboat operator, and
 - (ii)** Must be documented on [FWS Form 3-2238](#), which the operator and the Project Leader/supervisor sign.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

(2) If an operator doesn't drive an airboat frequently enough to maintain proficiency, the operator must retake the "Airboat Module" at least every 5 years.

D. Additional Training. Project Leaders and supervisors must ensure that watercraft operators have received adequate training (personal qualifications) to safely operate their motorized or non-motorized watercraft within the type of water and environmental conditions they encounter. Successful completion of the MOCC does not mean that someone is competent enough to operate a watercraft in all conditions that they may encounter.

(1) Training courses in special subjects, such as airboat operations, river operations, and open water operations are available.

(2) Operators of non-motorized watercraft (e.g., kayak, canoe, pirogue) must take a non-motorized watercraft operators course, demonstrate their competence, or receive on-the-job training to become competent before they may operate the watercraft.

(3) Lack of course availability for training operators does not alleviate the Project Leader or supervisor of the responsibility of ensuring that the operator is properly trained. Contact the Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinator for information.

1.8 What safety and survival equipment are required for watercraft?

A. Each watercraft must meet or exceed applicable USCG, Departmental, and Service design and equipment requirements and be outfitted based on expected conditions with equipment necessary for safe operation. Personnel must maintain all USCG-required personal safety equipment as mandated by USCG regulations and State and local laws.

B. For detailed information on the requirements for PFDs, fire protection equipment, anti-exposure clothing, immersion suits, communications equipment, navigation aids, and auxiliary power, see Exhibit 1, Safety and Survival Equipment Requirements.

1.9 When must operators use a kill switch?

A. Use requirement: Operators must use a kill switch when there is a risk that they could be thrown overboard or away from the controls, except in rare instances when doing so increases the risk to personnel. For example, it might be riskier to use a kill switch when operating upstream from a significant hazard, operating in extremely rough water, performing a rescue, or performing nonhazardous work tasks within the boat. When the use of a kill switch during a specific mission is determined to pose a greater hazard than not using a kill switch, the Project Leader or supervisor or his/her designee must write a Job Hazard Assessment (JHA) to identify measures to prevent injuries associated with the operation (see 240 FW 1).

B. Watercraft without kill switches: We will install kill switches if there is a risk the operator could be thrown from the controls.

C. Outboard with tiller: When operating an outboard with a tiller, the operator must attach the kill switch before shifting out of neutral.

D. Airboats: Airboat operators must use kill switches at all times except in those rare instances when doing so increases the risk to personnel. For example, it might be riskier to use a kill switch when operating in deep water in narrow channels where suddenly stopping the engine could swamp the airboat.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

1.10 What are the minimum maintenance documentation requirements?

A. Project Leaders/supervisors must ensure that all watercraft are maintained in good, serviceable condition as required by the manufacturer and this chapter. They may use [FWS Form 3-2226](#), which is a preventative maintenance checklist.

B. The watercraft operator must:

(1) Inspect the watercraft for seaworthiness and proper equipment before taking it out, and

(2) Keep a maintenance log for each watercraft, motor, and trailer. Logs for each item can be maintained in separate notebooks or all in one notebook. The logs must contain the results of inspections, maintenance performed, fueling operations, trip information, total hours, and trailer maintenance information. Operators should keep maintenance logs on board when space allows.

1.11 What are the requirements for a float plan? Before using a watercraft, the operator must notify a reliable contact either verbally or in writing (you may use [FWS Form 3-2227](#), Float Plan) about the plans for the trip. The form describes what information to provide about the trip.

1.12 What are the requirements for surf landings? Landing a watercraft under high surf conditions is dangerous and requires special skills. Only trained personnel with supervisor approval may attempt these landings. A second vessel should be standing by to render assistance.

1.13 What are the requirements for accident reporting and investigations? Operators must report all accidents and near accidents to their Project Leader or supervisor. The Project Leader or supervisor is responsible for completing an accident report using the Department's [Safety Management Information System](#) (SMIS), regardless of whether or not injuries occurred or the cost of any associated property damage.

A. We must investigate and report serious accidents (loss of life, three or more people hospitalized, or Service property loss of \$250,000 or more) in accordance with Service policy in 240 FW 7, *Accident Investigation and Reporting*. The investigation team, appointed by the Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations, must include at least one member of the Service Watercraft Safety Working Group. Investigators cannot be from the Region where the accident occurred.

B. The operator must also complete a Boating Accident Report (USCG Form 3865) whenever an accident involving a Service watercraft (including watercraft under contract) occurs in U.S. waters or in U.S. territory waters, and:

(1) It results in more than \$2,000 in property damage,

(2) The boat is destroyed,

(3) A person is injured and requires medical treatment beyond first aid,

(4) A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury, or

(5) A person dies.

You can find more information about boating casualty investigations on the [USCG Web site](#).

C. If required by State law, the operator must also report the accident to local authorities. State

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

**Occupational Safety and Health
Chapter 1 Watercraft Safety**

**Part 241 Safety Operations
241 FW 1**

requirements for reporting boating accidents may be more stringent than Federal (e.g., some States require that all boating accidents be reported immediately). Check with your Regional Watercraft Safety Coordinator for reporting procedures.

1.14 How are explosives transported on watercraft? See [244 FW 1](#), Explosives Safety.

1.15 How long can an operator drive or operate a vehicle/equipment (including watercraft) in one day?

A. When possible, supervisors planning work must not require more than 8 hours of operating vehicles, watercraft, and/or equipment in one duty shift.

(1) Supervisors must consider factors such as work environment, number of consecutive days performing work (fatigue), and medical conditions that may affect an employee's ability to operate a vehicle, watercraft, and equipment safely. Supervisors must adjust maximum operating time to address fatigue or other conditions as applicable.

(2) Operators are always responsible for safe vehicle, watercraft, and equipment operation. If at any time an operator feels like he/she cannot operate a vehicle, watercraft, or equipment safely due to fatigue or any other reason, he/she has an obligation to safely stop the vehicle, watercraft, or equipment. This may mean staying overnight to rest and continue the trip the next duty shift.

B. Employees must not exceed 10 hours operating time (control of vehicle/equipment/watercraft, including rest stops) during a 16-hour duty period. However, if an operator cannot complete a run within 10 hours, he/she may drive up to 2 additional hours to complete the run or reach a place offering safety for the vehicle occupants and security for the vehicle and its cargo.

(1) Trip planning must allow for at least 8 consecutive hours off duty prior to each duty period this section covers.

(2) We allow an exception when exceeding these times is essential to addressing immediate and critical law enforcement issues.

(3) When an operator must exceed a 16-hour work shift, the operator's supervisor must document the mitigation measures used to reduce fatigue.

/sgd/ Rowan W. Gould
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Date: September 17, 2014