

CHAPTER 31

Watercraft Safety

Instruction: This chapter is revised to reflect current guidance, responsibilities, and includes two new appendices, Appendix 31-E for airboats and Appendix 31-F for non-motorized watercraft. Field offices have one year from the effective date of this directive to become compliant with the requirements established in Appendix 31-F.

1. **Purpose.** This chapter specifies minimum Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program requirements for the safe operation of watercraft and for the training and certification of watercraft operators.

A. This chapter applies to U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) operations and personnel who use any type of Class A or Class 1 motorboats or non-motorized watercraft. (Motorboats that are 26 feet in length or greater are covered by SM 445-2-H.49, Large Vessel Safety Program Management).

B. This chapter supplements existing regulations and requirements established by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the Department of the Interior (DOI), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Deviations from the requirements of this chapter are not permitted except as described in this chapter.

C. This chapter establishes requirements related to specialized watercraft modules and related safety training requirements.

2. References.

A. 33 CFR Navigation and Navigable Waters [Subchapter S \(Parts 173 - 199\)](#), Boating Safety.

B. [46 CFR Shipping](#).

C. U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Instruction [M16672.2D](#), Navigation Rules (International-Inland).

D. [Public Law 91-596](#) Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, [Section 19](#), Federal Agency Safety Programs and Responsibilities.

E. [Executive Order 12196](#), Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees.

F. [29 CFR 1910](#), Occupational Safety and Health Standard (General Industry).

G. [29 CFR 1915](#), Occupational Safety and Health Standards for Shipyard Employment.

H. [29 CFR 1917](#), Marine Terminals.

I. [29 CFR 1918](#), Safety and Health Regulations for Longshoring.

J. [46 US Code Section 2101](#), General Definitions.

K. American National Standards Institute (ANSI)/International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) [107-2010](#) American National Standard for High Visibility Safety Apparel and Headwear Devices.

L. SM 445-2-H.14, Safety and Health Training.

M. SM 445-2-H.49, Large Vessel Safety Program Management.

N. [485 Department Manual \(DM\) 22](#), Watercraft.

3. Definitions.

- A. *Watercraft*. Boats, including but not limited to air boats, hovercraft, jet skis, sailboats, canoes, kayaks, and rafts. Seaplanes used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water are not included.
- B. *Motorboat*. Vessels 65 feet in length or less and propelled by machinery (including steam).
- C. *Class A Motorboat*. Motorboats less than 16 feet in length.
- D. *Class 1 Motorboat*. Motorboats 16 feet or over and less than 26 feet in length.
- E. *Non-motorized Watercraft*. Watercraft propelled by oars, paddles, or other non-mechanical equipment.
- F. *Special Use Watercraft*. Watercraft often unique in design and propulsion with unique maneuvering capabilities requiring additional specialized training and safety considerations for the operator, crew, and passengers. Examples include airboats, hovercraft, and personal watercraft (jet skis).
- G. *Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC)*. Training course that certifies an individual to operate a motorized watercraft under 26 feet in length.
- H. *Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC)*. Training course that certifies an individual to instruct MOCC.
- I. *Motorboat Operator Certification Course Instructor Trainer*. A person approved by the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager to instruct MOCC instructors.
- J. *Operator*. Person in physical control of the watercraft.
- K. *Crew*. Personnel other than the operator who are essential to the operation of the watercraft.
- L. *Passenger*. Personnel on board a watercraft with no assigned crew duties or responsibilities.
- M. *Personal Floatation Device (PFD)*. Device designed to keep a person afloat in the water, commonly referred to as a life jacket.
- N. *Marlinespike*. The art of seamanship that includes the tying of various knots, splicing, working with cable or wire rope, worming, parceling, serving and even making decorative ornaments from rope or line.
- O. *Accident/Incident*. See SM 445-2-H.7, Incident/Accident Reporting and Serious Accident Investigation.

4. Requirements. Science Centers engaged in watercraft operations must establish a watercraft safety program that includes the following minimum requirements:

A. *Safe watercraft operation*.

- (1) Watercraft must be operated in a safe and prudent manner and in accordance with recognized Federal, State, and local laws and standards, in addition to the requirements of this chapter. In the event of any conflict, the more stringent requirement applies.
- (2) Watercraft must be operated in compliance with USCG Boating Safety Regulations and Standards referenced in this chapter.

- (3) All accidents and incidents involving watercraft must be reported and investigated.
- (4) Watercraft must have a dedicated operator while underway and sufficient number of crew members to support watercraft operations.
- (5) *Solo Operations.*
 - (a) Solo Operations will only be performed under the following:
 - (i) A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) will be established outlining specific safety concerns and methods to reduce risks.
 - (ii) A stringent float plan will be established including a call-in procedure.
 - (iii) The JHA will be reviewed annually.
 - (iv) Employees involved in shuttling a watercraft for the purposes of loading the boat at a boat ramp or picking up passengers or crew are exempt from this provision.
- (6) Watercraft will meet or exceed applicable USCG safety design/equipment requirements.
- (7) The capacity plate required by 33 CFR Part 183.23 must be permanently displayed in a legible manner and clearly visible to the operator.
- (8) All motorized monohull watercraft less than 20 feet in length (excluding sailboats, canoes, kayaks and inflatable boats) must have a manufacturer capacity plate indicating the maximum horsepower, maximum allowable load weight and any other safe load limits that apply.
- (9) Capacity, of all boats, not equipped with a manufacturer capacity plate should be estimated and communicated to the operator. Estimates may be calculated using 33 CFR Part 183 Subpart C, Safe Loading.
- (10) *Agency Identification.*
 - (a) Agency identification consists of USGS identifiers such as the USGS logo or research vessel name.
 - (b) Agency identification will be displayed at the most visible point of the craft on the port and starboard sides.
 - (c) In the event it is determined that USGS identity may compromise the execution of a mission or the safety of the field personnel, USGS identity may be temporarily removed or covered. Local law enforcement, marine patrol or other enforcement agencies will be notified prior to the mission. Upon completion of the mission, USGS identifiers will be displayed on the watercraft.
 - (d) Airboats must display the identifier on the rudder(s).
- (11) *Required equipment for all motorized watercraft.*
 - (a) In addition to primary safety devices required by Federal, State, and (or) local regulations, watercraft must be outfitted based on expected operating conditions such as large bodies of water, remote rivers, and coastal areas with other emergency safety equipment necessary for safe operation. This may include communications gear, navigation equipment, and satellite navigation.
 - (b) Special consideration will be given for the use of emergency location devices such as an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon, personal locator beacon, or commercially available satellite messenger system such as the Satellite Personal Tracker (SPOT) or DeLorme satellite messenger. Use of these devices is mandated where situations warrant the need such as remote areas with poor or no cell phone service.

(c) Watercraft must be equipped with adequate and proven communications for the area(s) of operation (e.g., cell phone, satellite phone, and (or) VHF radio). Incorporating the use of communications equipment into the float plan is highly recommended to ensure employee safety.

(d) USCG approved sound producing device.

(e) Type IV throwable floatation device is required for watercraft greater than 16 feet and recommended for watercraft 16 feet or less.

(f) Rope throw bag.

(12) *Additional required equipment for all motorized watercraft.*

(a) Three day/night visual distress signals.

(b) Bailing device and (or) bilge pump.

(c) Automatic kill cord. Redundant engine systems may be wired with one common automatic kill switch or two kill switches with lanyards securely combined.

(d) At least one portable Type ABC fire extinguisher and (or) a fire suppression system. These must be USCG approved for marine use, be mounted, and readily accessible.

(e) Adequate anchor and line for the conditions.

(f) First aid kit and tool kit. Both kits must be inspected at least annually to ensure integrity of components.

(13) *Lighting.* Special lighting will be placed on the watercraft when used in the performance of public safety activities or when the activity may pose a hazard to the public, e.g. conducting tag-line measurements or towing. Lighting will meet specifications of 33 CFR 88.12 (red and amber). The identification light signal must be located so not to interfere with visibility of the vessel's navigation lights. The identification light signal is used only as an identification signal and conveys no special privilege.

(14) *Hazards to Navigation.* When using a watercraft as a support platform for mission work and where equipment will create hazards to navigation, one or more of the following will be used to ensure employee and public safety:

(a) The use of a breakaway sounding reel cable kit.

(b) Provide immediate access to heavy-duty wire cutters capable of severing the suspension cable.

(c) Deploy strips of brightly colored flagging, hang polyvinyl chloride pipe with brightly colored reflective and glow-in-the-dark tape, suspend orange traffic cone(s) from the cable, or affix battery-powered strobe lights. Use of referenced attachments should be alternately spaced along the cable to provide adequate visibility to any oncoming boat traffic.

(d) Equip boat with a permanently mounted electric horn or compressed air horn capable of sounding the danger signal (5 short blasts).

(e) Station an additional person(s) as observer(s) for oncoming boat traffic.

(15) *Personal Floatation Devices.*

(a) All persons must wear a USGS-approved PFD at all times while on board any watercraft. If a PFD is worn below deck or in an enclosed space, a manually inflatable PFD is recommended to reduce the potential for entrapment in the event of capsizing.

(b) Employees and volunteers will wear appropriate PFDs while working on, in, over, or near the water when using watercraft.

(c) PFDs will be international orange in color or ANSI 107-2010 approved fluorescent yellow-green and equipped with retroreflective tape in accordance with [46 CFR 25.25-15](#) and [46 CFR 164.018](#). See Appendix 31-A, Retroreflective Material for Personal Floatation Devices.

(d) PFDs must properly fit the wearer.

(e) PFDs must be inspected by the wearer prior to and after each use. PFDs that do not meet code or are otherwise defective must promptly be destroyed in a manner that would preclude further use of the PFD.

(f) PFDs must be inspected as part of the annual watercraft inspection program.

(g) USGS-approved auto-inflate Type V PFDs have these additional requirements.

(i) Auto-inflate Type V PFDs will have a USCG approval number and statement of use on the label.

(ii) Auto-inflate Type V PFDs will only be allowed when in compliance with the following requirements:

(h) Detailed Inspection Maintenance Logs will be maintained by the wearer and (or) local Collateral Duty Safety Program Coordinator (CDSPC) or designee. At a minimum, maintenance logs will contain the wearer's name and (or) a unique number assigned to the auto-inflate Type V PFD, date of test, type of test performed, oral or manual test results, disposition of -auto-inflate Type V PFD (if the test failed), and initials of person(s) conducting inspection.

(i) Wafer-style auto-inflate Type V PFDs will be orally inflated semiannually and mechanically inflated, (submerged underwater) annually, at a minimum.

(j) Hydrostatic auto-inflate Type V PFDs will be orally inflated semiannually and mechanically inflated (submerged underwater) every 4 years, at a minimum.

(k) Copies of the maintenance log(s) must be made readily available for inspection during safety inspections/audits and (or) upon request by any Safety Manager. Inspection/maintenance records for all auto-inflate PFDs must be maintained for a period of 4 years.

(l) Auto-inflate Type V PFDs failing the oral inflation test or the water-activated mechanical test must be removed from service until the manufacturer has inspected the auto-inflate Type V PFD and resolved or corrected the failure issue.

(m) Warning. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations relating to the use of auto-inflate Type V PFDs. Use another type of USGS-approved PFD if you are a non-swimmer or weak swimmer, small in stature (less than 80 pounds), large in stature (with a chest girth greater than 52 inches), working in ambient conditions less than 40 degrees Fahrenheit (°F), or in conditions that could result in being subjected to impacts (such as falling or being thrown from a moving watercraft), or will be working in conditions where the buoyancy cell could be punctured or abraded and rendered useless.

(n) Cold Water PFDs.

(i) Cold water protective PFDs such as anti-exposure coats, coveralls, or bomber-style jackets, must be provided where operations pose a potential exposure to hypothermia (water temperatures of less than 70 °F) or in conditions where combined air and water temperatures are less than 100 °F.

(ii) Depending on environmental conditions, donning of this equipment is at the discretion of the watercraft operator.

(iii) The watercraft operator is responsible for briefing all passengers in the proper use of the available cold water protective PFDs.

(16) *Float Plan*. A float plan must be completed and provided electronically or in writing to the supervisor or someone knowledgeable of the watercraft operation. A generic float plan with

suggested measures to initiate a search can be found at <http://www.floatplancentral.org/download/USCGFloatPlan.pdf>. This generic float plan will be modified to fit individual center needs to include the following elements, at a minimum:

- (a) Considerations for “after-hours” point(s) of contact must be clearly defined in advance of mission work for each float plan filed.
- (b) Float plan emergency contact information must be reviewed frequently and updated accordingly.
- (c) Elements of the float plan must contain the following information:
 - (i) Description of the watercraft.
 - (ii) List of the occupants.
 - (iii) Point of departure.
 - (iv) Emergency equipment on board.
 - (v) Planned route.
 - (vi) Estimated time of departure.
 - (vii) Estimated time of return.
 - (viii) Means to contact the boat (e.g., cell phone, satellite phone, VHF radio) and contact schedule, if necessary.
 - (ix) Purpose of the trip.
 - (x) Description of vehicle(s) left at launch site.
 - (xi) Recommended plan of action if overdue, with a primary plan coordinator and a minimum of one back-up person.

B. Annual Inspection and Maintenance Programs for Watercraft.

- (1) Annual inspections and maintenance programs will be established for all watercraft. These inspections are more complex than a prelaunch inspection and must be performed by a qualified person (see paragraph (3) below).
- (2) Inspection and maintenance records must be kept for at least 3 years. Records must be made available for inspection during safety inspections/audits and (or) upon request by any Specialized Watercraft Safety or Occupational Safety and Health Manager.
- (3) Examples of personnel qualified to perform inspections are:
 - (a) U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Inspection Services.
 - (b) MOCC Instructors.
 - (c) Marine certified personnel such as marine mechanics.
 - (d) Other qualified persons must be approved by the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager or a Regional Watercraft Safety Program Manager.
- (4) Deficiencies affecting safe watercraft operation will be corrected before the watercraft is returned to service.
- (5) Out-of-service procedures are required to prevent the unauthorized use of watercraft until corrections are made.

C. Federally owned vessel exemption from State registration.

(1) The USGS will comply with State requests to register watercraft for statistical purposes.

(2) NOTE: Cooperative Research Units often maintain State-owned watercraft and will comply with State registration requirements.

D. Exceptions to Watercraft PFD Requirements.

(1) Exceptions from PFD requirements of this chapter may be permitted for special mission requirements. A request for exception must be prepared in writing by the local Center Director and submitted to the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager and Occupational Safety and Health Program Manager for review and consideration. The written exception request will identify the extenuating circumstances and alternate safety measures to be taken. Exceptions will be authorized on a case-by-case basis with concurrence from the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager and approval by the Occupational Safety and Health Program Manager.

(2) Exceptions may be authorized for a period not to exceed 1 year.

E. Appropriate Footwear on USGS Watercraft.

(1) Appropriate footwear must be worn when working on watercraft with heavy objects in and around the craft and (or) working on slippery deck conditions. Examples include handling lead sounding weights (hand or davit deployed), substrate samplers such as grab samplers, portable drill rigs, or metal throw-traps, and construction materials required for gauge/monitor installation and (or) maintenance.

(2) Appropriate footwear while on watercraft is defined as footwear that provides sufficient traction from slips on wet or slippery surfaces and offers protection to the feet and (or) lower legs from impacts with heavy objects.

(a) JHAs will reference any activities onboard a watercraft that would define the appropriate type of footwear required.

(b) In situations where heavy objects will be lifted or moved around the deck, appropriate footwear will require steel- or composite-toed safety footwear designed to protect against injury.

(c) In situations where no heavy objects are being lifted, tennis shoes and boating shoes may be considered appropriate footwear.

(3) Open-toed footwear is not authorized for use aboard watercraft.

F. Training and Certification.

(1) Operators of watercraft must be properly trained, tested, and certified prior to official operation of any watercraft. Prior to certification, personnel may practice motorboat operation under the direct supervision of a certified operator on board the watercraft. Except for training and certification purposes, untrained personnel are prohibited from operating USGS watercraft.

(2) Supervisors must ensure that watercraft operators receive safety and operations training on the specific watercraft, in the environmental conditions that can be reasonably expected and ideally in the area where they will be operating. Successful completion of the Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) does not imply that personnel are competent to operate a motorboat in all conditions that they may encounter.

(3) *Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC) Training.* MOCC Instructors must successfully complete the MOICC training requirements specified in Appendix 31-B, MOICC Standards. Personnel successfully completing the MOICC will be authorized to present the MOCC and to certify individuals to operate watercraft.

(4) *Motorboat Operator Certification Course Training.*

(a) Operators of all motorboats must successfully complete the MOCC training requirements specified in Appendix 31-C MOCC Standards.

(b) *Substituted watercraft training for MOCC.*

(i) Requests for substitution must be submitted for approval by the Occupational Safety and Health Program Manager, upon review and approval by the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager or Regional Watercraft Safety Program Managers.

(ii) Substituted training must demonstrate that it will meet the MOCC objectives, including on the water proficiency as described in Appendix 31-C.

(iii) Examples of acceptable training sources are U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, and Marine Law Enforcement Training Program.

(5) *Special-Use Watercraft Training.* Operators of special-use watercraft such as airboats, hovercraft, and jet skis will be required to successfully complete training specific to these crafts in addition to the MOCC training. Training requirements for operators of airboats are specified in Appendix 31-E, Airboat Operator Certification Course Standards.

(6) *Nonmotorized Watercraft Training.* Operators of Nonmotorized boats are exempt from the MOCC Training requirements. However, they will comply with the policies and guidance as set forth in Appendix 31-F, Nonmotorized Watercraft.

(7) While operating a watercraft, MOCC-certified operator(s) will carry a laminated, wallet-sized card showing current MOCC certification with an expiration date. It will be the responsibility of the MOCC Operator to maintain this card with updated information.

(8) *Recertification.* Motorboat operator certification will be valid for 5 years. Prior to recertification, operators will complete a refresher course that addresses the minimum subject areas described in Appendix 31-D, Motorboat Operator Refresher Training.

(9) *First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).*

(a) All operators, crew, and passengers who operate or work in watercraft will be required to maintain certification in American Red Cross Standard First Aid, or equivalent, and CPR.

(b) Watercraft operators and crew operating in areas where emergency medical response is determined to be greater than 1 hour away must receive additional training in Advanced First Aid or Wilderness First Aid. Recertification must be maintained as appropriate.

G. *Report Accidents.*

(1) Report accidents, incidents, and near misses in the Safety Management Information System (SMIS).

(2) In addition, for accidents involving watercraft, use [USCG CG-3865](#), "Recreational Boating Accident Report," to report the accident within 48 hours to the State Boating Law Administrator of the State in which the accident occurred.

(a) A copy of this form must also be forwarded to the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager within 48 hours of the accident.

(b) The report must be made for any accident that results in the loss of life, personal injury which requires medical treatment beyond first aid, complete loss of the vessel, or in which a person disappears from a vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury

(c) Report within 10 days other accidents that result in damage to the vessel or to other property in the amount set as a threshold by the State in which the accident occurred.

(d) Contact the State Boating Law Administrator of the State in which the accident occurred to verify the threshold for that State. The Federal threshold for reporting vessel damage is \$2,000.

5. Responsibilities.

A. Director.

- (1) Requires compliance with statutory, regulatory, and watercraft safety program criteria.
- (2) Holds the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official (DASHO), Associate Directors, and Regional Directors accountable for effectively fulfilling watercraft safety program responsibilities within region, mission area, or office.
- (3) Delegates sufficient authority to the DASHO to effectively manage and administer the watercraft safety program.

B. Associate Directors and Regional Directors.

- (1) Ensure adequate budget and personnel resources for implementation of watercraft safety program requirements.
- (2) Designate individuals as applicable to serve on the Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee. Representation on the Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee may consist of up to two technical and one management representative for each national scope or regional organization. All technical representatives must be DOI MOICC certified. The Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee may also include ex-officio members to address specific subjects as needed.

C. *Designated Agency Safety and Health Official.* Provides appropriate personnel and budgetary resources to establish a watercraft safety program.

D. *Chief, Office of Management Services.* Provides sufficient authority and resources to effectively support and represent the interests of the USGS in the oversight, management, and administration of the watercraft safety program.

E. Occupational Safety and Health Program Manager.

- (1) Designates an individual as the responsible person for all watercraft training and certification activities within the USGS (i.e., Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager).
- (2) Provides approval on substitutions to other watercraft training programs upon review and approval by the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager, Regional Watercraft Safety Program Managers, and (or) Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee.
- (3) Provides administrative support to the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager and Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee, as appropriate.
- (4) Provides for the establishment of a Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee that advises the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official through ad hoc membership on the Occupational Safety and Health Council to address and review watercraft issues, to review accidents related to watercraft, and to make recommendations to prevent recurrence of similar accidents.
- (5) Approves exceptions to the safe watercraft operation requirements on a case-by-case basis with concurrence from the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager.
- (6) Provide assistance to Regional Watercraft Safety Program Managers and CDSPCs in the establishment and implementation of watercraft safety program requirements and training.

F. Specialized Safety Programs Section Chief.

- (1) Provide watercraft safety program oversight, administration, budget coordination, and supervision of the Dive Safety Program Manager.
- (2) Collaborates with Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager on watercraft program policies, goals, and annual program plans and accomplishments.
- (3) Serves as the OSH Program Manager designee on the Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee.
- (4) Provides support, oversight, and supervision for the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager.

G. Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager.

- (1) Serves as the technical expert on watercraft safety issues and represents the USGS on watercraft issues requiring coordination with the Department and other bureaus or agencies.
- (2) Serves as the Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee Chair and is responsible for coordinating meetings, agendas, and publishing minutes.
- (3) When appointed, serves as the lead investigator or subject matter expert for watercraft accidents involving serious injury or major property damage. Reviews all watercraft-related accident reports to identify any trends and makes recommendations to prevent similar accidents in the future.
- (4) Coordinates with the OSH Program Manager to compile a fiscal year watercraft safety program action/accomplishment plan and submit the plan annually to the OSH Program Manager.
- (5) Completes an annual watercraft safety program self-assessment via the Inspection and Abatement System.
- (6) Monitors watercraft operator and instructor training to ensure consistency, accuracy, coverage, and overall quality.
- (7) Maintains watercraft safety program management databases (e.g., training, operator, instructor, and watercraft asset).
- (8) Establishes and coordinates responsibilities with the Regional Watercraft Safety Program Managers.
- (9) On a case-by-case basis, concurs with the Occupational Safety and Health Program Manager for any exceptions to the safe watercraft operation requirements.

H. Regional Watercraft Safety Program Managers.

- (1) Serve as liaison to the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager in coordinating the watercraft safety program.
- (2) Assist the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager in providing support and assistance to the field, CDSPCs, and MOICC instructors in establishing and implementing watercraft safety program requirements and training.
- (3) Maintain contact with Regional Safety Managers relative to implementation of the watercraft safety program.
- (4) Maintain contact with Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee members relative to watercraft safety program requirements.
- (5) Assist Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Managers and (or) conduct watercraft safety program inspections or assistance visits in coordination with Regional Watercraft Safety Programs Managers.

I. Bureau Watercraft Safety Committee. See SM 308.66 for the membership and responsibilities of the committee.

J. *Science Center Directors, Cost Center Managers, and Project Chiefs.* Provide appropriate personnel and budget resources to establish a local watercraft safety program including operator training, periodic inspection and maintenance, personal protective equipment, and other equipment as is necessary for the safe operation of watercraft in all expected conditions.

K. *Watercraft Operators.*

- (1) Are responsible for the overall safety of all personnel on board regardless of position and grade, and are responsible for operating the watercraft in compliance with existing policies, guidelines, and training.
- (2) Routinely evaluate weather, environmental, and other conditions. Look for site-specific hazards. Abort activity any time unsafe conditions affect an operator's ability to pilot the watercraft safely.
- (3) Thoroughly inspect the watercraft and boat trailer components to ensure safety, reliability, and functionality prior to launching for each mission.
- (4) Ensure that effective emergency communications equipment is in good working condition prior to launching for each mission. Communications equipment (e.g., 2-way radio, cell phone, SPOT) will be adequate and reliable for the area(s) of the mission.
- (5) Brief crew members and passengers on the location and use of all emergency equipment on the watercraft, including PFDs.
- (6) Report accidents and near misses in the Safety Management Information System, to the Bureau Watercraft Safety Program Manager, and to the State Boating Law Administrator of the State in which the accident occurred.
- (7) Have absolute final authority over the operation of the watercraft.

I. *Watercraft Crew and Passengers.*

- (1) Comply with instructions of the operator.
- (2) Adhere to all watercraft safety regulations.
- (3) Conduct themselves in a reasonable and prudent manner at all times.