



Personal Watercraft

Recreational activities are pillars of summer/winter camp, summer school, and recreational center experiences. They provide an opportunity for socialization and learning in a fun setting. These activities also provide an increased liability and potential for staff and/or participant injury. The safety of participants and staff should be standard operating procedure. It should be completed to the highest professional standards and in line with federal, state, local, and accrediting agency guidelines. The following checklist template provides a high level oversight to assist with your activity structure. Your organization is responsible for the development of your own written program guidelines and policies for the oversight of your activities. Through consistent management and preventative programs, exposures can be reduced to help ensure a safe recreational experience.

Program Pre-Activity:

- Establish written program guidelines which outline major components including participant guidelines, age requirements, liability controls, safety equipment requirements, training, and other protocols as determined by your program.
- All participants undergo a rider selection process that is developed and customized to your operation.
- As with any type of boating, thoroughly understand boating laws and the rules of the road. Many states impose stricter age restrictions on personal watercraft use. Check local boating laws for the specifics in your area.
- Legally reviewed liability waivers, in line with state and federal guidelines, signed by legal guardians. Kept on file in a secure location.

Personal Watercraft Inspection:

- Familiarize yourself with the owners' manual and all safety warnings, paying particular attention to the operation of the jet pump.
- Familiarize yourself with the handlebar steering, throttle control and safety lanyard. Never operate a PWC without the safety lanyard attached to both craft and driver's wrist or life jacket. Remove the lanyard whenever the craft is unattended to prevent unauthorized use.
- The vessel is equipped with, at a minimum, Coast Guard-approved B-1 fire extinguisher.
- Visual and mechanical personal watercraft inspections completed per inspection protocols. This should also include the automatic shut off devices.
- Regular maintenance and corrective repairs per the manufacturer guidelines and completed by an OEM authorized repair shop.

Use of Personal Watercraft:

- Pay close attention to nearby boat traffic, remembering that other boaters might not be prepared for a PWC's quick response and short turning radius.
- Ride in designated areas only – do not ride in non-designated areas.
- Before initiating a turn, look to both sides, as well as behind, to make sure no boats are overtaking your craft.

Use of Personal Watercraft, Continued:

- Always give other boaters ample space.
- Never tow skiers, wakeboards, or riders in other floating devices.
- Never follow directly behind another watercraft, jump boat wakes, or attempt to spray other boaters, swimmers or beachgoers.

General Required Safety Equipment for a PWC:

- A life jacket for each operating passenger, and person being towed.
- A Coast Guard-approved B-1 fire extinguisher.
- An approved sound-signaling device such as a whistle or horn.
- An emergency engine cutoff lanyard attached to the operator.
- Proper display of registration numbers, letters and validation decals
- Vessel registration, to be displayed when requested.
- A functioning backfire flame arrestor and passive exhaust ventilation system.
- Check state laws for any other special or additional required equipment.

Additional Resources:

[American Red Cross - Life Jacket Safety](#)

[United States Coast Guard](#)

[Water Sports Industry Association](#)

[Personal Watercraft Safety Tips](#)

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to help our members
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