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# Synopsis of New Hampshire Boating Laws Rules and Regulations

Published with the cooperation and approval of  
State of New Hampshire  
Department of Safety  
Richard M. Flynn  
Commissioner  
Division of Safety Services  
David T. Barrett  
Director

Note: This synopsis of N.H. laws pertaining to private boats is offered as a convenience to boat users and has no legal weight. There may be other restrictions upon navigation and/or boat operation adopted since the publication of this chart. For exact wording, refer to N.H. revised statutes as published.

**Accident Reporting (270:1-a)** Accidents involving personal injury, death, or total damage of \$500.00 or more shall be reported to the Division of Safety Services immediately and a written report shall be filed within ten days. Penalty for failure to do so is a misdemeanor.

**Registration (270:1)** All power boats and sailboats 12 feet long and greater shall be registered in the State of New Hampshire. This includes boats with electric motors as well as vessels documented with the U.S. Coast Guard. These boats must also display a valid registration decal in addition to a bow number when applicable. Any boat legally registered in another state or foreign country may operate on N.H. waters for a period up to 30 consecutive days before registering in N.H.

**Registration, Revocation & Suspension (270:E-17)** The Commissioner of Safety may revoke or suspend any boat registration for violations of rules or regulations, non-payment of taxes, improper operation or pending accident investigations.

**Revocation and Suspension of Right to Operate (270:16-b, 270:16-c)** The Director of Safety Services may revoke or suspend the privilege of operating a boat for improper operation, violations of rules or regulations or pending an accident investigation.

**Injuring Buoys, Obstructions, Interference with a Vessel (270:26, 270:26-a)** It is unlawful to interfere or tamper in any way with any buoy or light; to moor to any buoy or light; to create any obstruction to navigation; or to cut away or let loose a moored vessel. Penalty for doing so is a misdemeanor.

**Age of Operator (270:30)** For boats greater than 25 HP, minimum age to operate is 16, unless accompanied by a responsible adult.

**Scuba Diving (270:31, 270:32, 270:32-a)** A Diver's Flag extending at least 3 feet above the water surface must be displayed while scuba diving. No boat may approach a Diver's Flag within 75 feet.

**Ski Craft (270:4)** All ski craft operators must be at least 16 years old and wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket or vest (PFD). No person shall operate a ski craft on the lakes and ponds of the state of less than 75 acres. Ski craft are further restricted on other specified lakes and ponds of the state. Contact the New Hampshire Marine Patrol for further restrictions. No person shall operate a ski craft at greater than headway speed within 300 feet of shore.

**Littering (163-B)** Littering is unlawful and is a misdemeanor.

**Operating Boats Under Influence of Liquor or Drugs (270:48-a)** Anyone operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or a controlled drug is guilty of a violation. Conviction can result in a fine, a one-year revocation of the privilege to operate a boat in the state is mandatory. Operation after revocation also constitutes a violation.

## II Equipment Requirements and Definitions

**403:01 Personal Floatation Devices:**  
a. All recreational boats less than 16 feet in length, and all canoes, kayaks and one-man sailboards must have one Type I, II, III or IV device of a suitable size aboard for each person.  
b. All recreational boats 16 feet in length and over must have one Type I, II or III device of a suitable size aboard for each person and, in addition, one throwable Type IV device.  
c. The Type I, II and III devices shall be readily accessible to all persons on board. The Type IV device shall be immediately available for use.  
d. All the above-mentioned devices must be Coast Guard approved and in good serviceable condition.



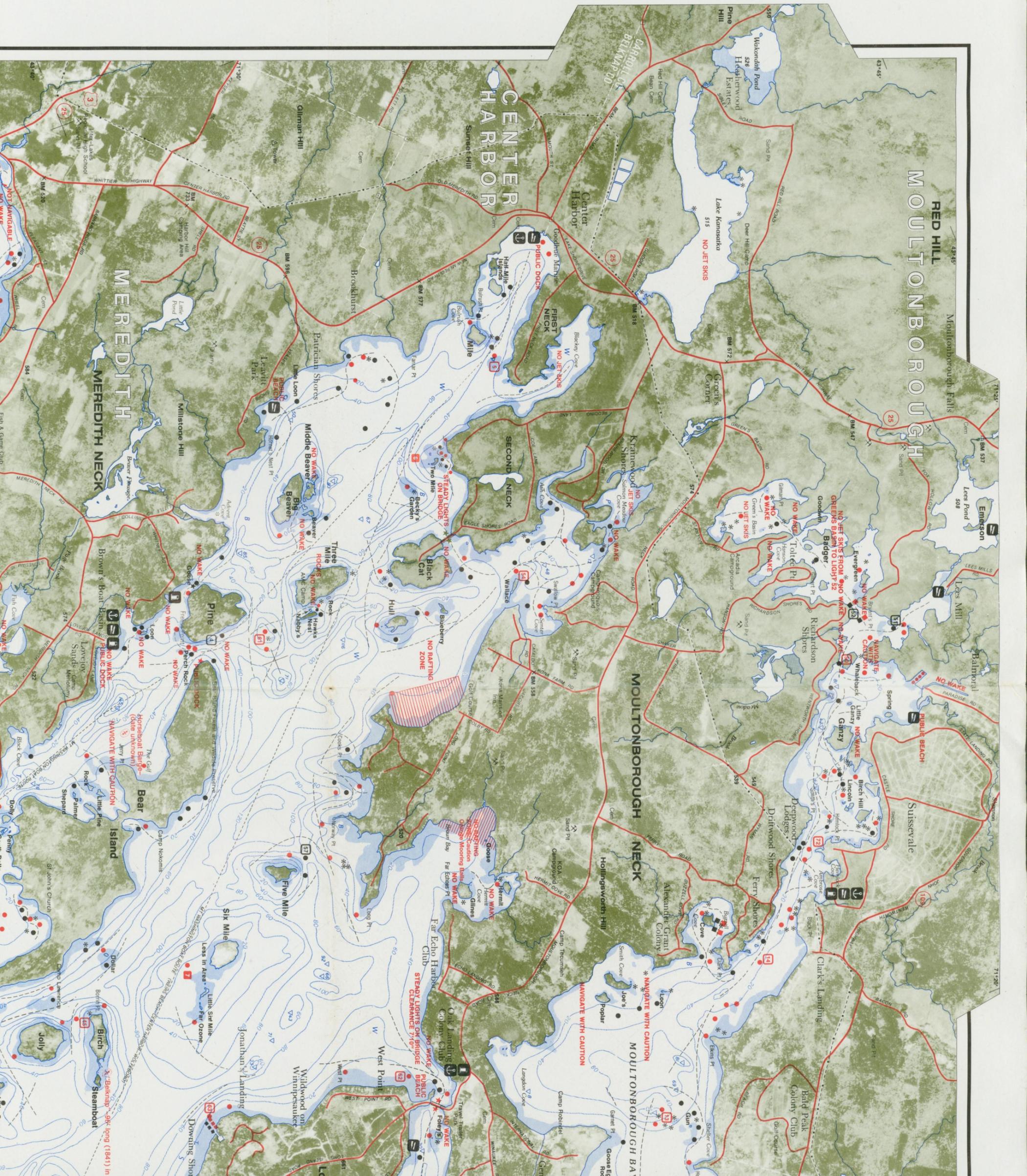
**403:03 Classification of Boats:** The Division of Safety Services recognizes and approves the following classes of power boats:  
Class I Less than 16 feet in length  
Class II 16 feet to less than 26 feet in length  
Class III 26 feet to less than 40 feet in length  
Class III 40 feet and over in length

**403:05 Fire Extinguishers:** Every motorboat shall be provided with such number, size and type of fire extinguishers approved by the United States Coast Guard, as set forth below, which are capable of promptly and effectively extinguishing burning gasoline. Said extinguishers shall be kept in condition for immediate use and so placed as to be readily accessible at all times. The provisions of this section shall not apply to motorboats propelled by outboard motors while competing in any authorized race or such use as is incidental to turning up of such boats and motors for the race.

a. Minimum Number of B-1 Hand Portable Fire Extinguishers Required (One B-2 hand portable fire extinguisher may substitute for two B-1 hand portable fire extinguishers):

Class of Motorboat	No. Fixed Fire Extinguishers	Fixed Fire Extinguishing System in Machinery Spaces
A	1	0
I	1	1
II	2	1
III	3	2

b. Fire Extinguisher Classification:  
Type Size  
Classification (Gallons) Discharge  
Carbon Dry  
Chemicals (Foam)  
Type Size  
Classification (Gallons) Discharge





... or power operated whistle.  
 ... 15 feet to less than 26 feet: One hand, mouth or power  
 ... whistle audible at least one-half mile.  
 ... 26 feet to less than 40 feet: One bell and one hand or  
 ... operated whistle audible at least one mile.  
 ... 40 feet or over: One bell and one power operated whis-  
 ... audible at least one mile.  
 ... flashing lights: No person, except an authorized repre-  
 ... of the state, or any of its political subdivisions, shall use a  
 ... flashing blue or red lights on state waters.  
 ... ne for lights: The rules concerning lights shall be compiled  
 ... when sunset and sunrise, and during such time said lights shall  
 ... and no other lights which may be mistaken for the pre-  
 ... lights shall be exhibited.

**III BOATING RULES AND REGULATIONS**

**Under Bridges:** Boats shall be operated at headway speed  
 ... passing under all bridges.  
**Boats Meeting Head On:** When boats are approaching each  
 ... on or nearly so, it shall be the duty of each to keep to the  
 ...

**Passing or Overtaking Boats:** When boats are running in the  
 ... and the boat which is astern shall desire to pass the  
 ... shall do so only when sufficient distance between the boats is  
 ... to avoid danger of collision and at such reduced speed that  
 ... will not endanger the boat being passed or its occupants.  
**Safe Passing or Meeting Distances:** All boats must keep at  
 ... of hundred fifty (150) feet distance from other boats, rafts,  
 ... line of floats outlining swimming areas, or the shore, except  
 ... prevented by a narrow channel, or when approaching or leaving  
 ... rafts, floats or the shore. In such latter exceptions, the  
 ... of all boats shall be reduced to headway speed, so as to pro-  
 ... visibility and control, and prevent their wash from being thrown  
 ... causing excessive rocking to, other boats, barges, water  
 ... aquaplanes or other boats, rafts or floats. This regulation shall  
 ... ed by power boats and the operator of a towing boat shall  
 ... nable for compliance therewith.

**Adway Speed Defined:** For the purpose of these regulations,  
 ... speed is the slowest speed that a power boat may be oper-  
 ... maintain steerage way, but in no case to exceed six miles per  
 ... any of the public waters of the state.

**Disturbance Defined:** For the purpose of these regulations, wak-  
 ... disturbance created on the surface of the water as a result  
 ... need vessel motion and hull displacement where such distur-  
 ... may constitute an actual or potential hazard.

**Lights of Canoes, Rowboats and Sailboats:**  
 ... whenever it can be reasonably avoided, no power boat shall  
 ... sailboat on its windward side.  
 ... rule shall not be construed to allow deliberate impediment of  
 ... boats.

**Power Boats Towing Water Skiers and Aquaplanes, Etc.:**  
 ... person shall operate a boat while towing water skiers, aqua-  
 ... or similar devices unless there is present in said boat in  
 ... to the boat operator, another person in a position, and  
 ... fully able to observe and assist the person or persons op-  
 ... erated. The observer shall be thirteen (13) years old or older.  
 ... operator of such boat will be held responsible for compliance  
 ... the navigating rules for both the boat and the person or appur-  
 ... (person) being towed by a power boat shall comply with all  
 ... rules and regulations.

**Person Towed:** Whenever a person shall be towed on water skis or other apparatus  
 ... said person is wearing a life jacket.

**Overloading:** No boat shall be operated while carrying passen-  
 ... ger beyond its safe carrying capacity, taking into considera-  
 ... tion and other operating conditions.

**Boats, Private, Rental and Commercial:** These may be  
 ... by the Director of Safety Services or his duly authorized rep-  
 ... to determine their seaworthiness, at any time. No person  
 ... to remain on the waters of this state, any vessel which fails  
 ... such inspection.

**Ident Assistance:** In the case of collision, accident, or other  
 ... involving a boat, subject to this Chapter, it shall be the duty  
 ... rator, if and so far as he can do so without serious danger to  
 ... raft, or persons aboard, to render such assistance as may be  
 ... and necessary to other persons affected by the collision,  
 ... or casualty in order to save them from danger caused by the  
 ... accident, or casualty. He shall also give his name, address  
 ... location of his boat to any person injured, to the operator of  
 ... (boats) involved, and to the owner of any property damaged.

**Boating on Gunwales, Bow and Transom:** No person shall  
 ... power driven boat or ride as a passenger therein while sit-  
 ... on the starboard or port gunwales or the transom, and no  
 ... shall straddle the bow while underway. The operator of such  
 ... be responsible for compliance therewith.

**IV BUOYING SYSTEM (Aids to Navigation)**

... guarantee that lights and buoys will always be in their prop-  
 ... er condition. Caution is advisable at all times.  
 ... navigation and waterway markers are as follows:

**Buoys:**  
 ... Buoy with Black Top—go north or east. When navigating on  
 ... east-west or west-east course go north. When navigating on  
 ... south or south-north course go east.  
 ... Buoy with Red Top—go south or west. When navigating on a  
 ... east or west-east course go south. When navigating on a  
 ... north or south-north course go west.  
 ... Buoy—go between it and its companion All Red Buoy. When  
 ... Buoy is used together with the All Red Buoy to mark a well  
 ... channel.  
 ... Buoy—go between it and its companion All Black Buoy. When  
 ... Buoy is used together with the All Black Buoy to mark a well  
 ... channel.

**Warning Light Buoys:** These are orange or general direction indi-  
 ... cating buoys. The light does not control navigation directions.  
 ... way adjacent to such lights indicates the governing direction  
 ...

