



BOAT RENTAL SAFETY ORIENTATION GUIDELINES

Boat rental businesses, also known as liveries, can be found at many state and county parks, along major rivers, water trails, and at some marinas, boat dealerships, and outdoor outfitters. Boat rental businesses provide introductory experiences for interested people to try boating without committing to the purchase and maintenance of boats and related equipment. Boat rental businesses also provide opportunities for experienced boaters to experiment with different types of boating or get on the water without transporting their own equipment to a new location. Some of these businesses provide unique boating opportunities like whitewater rafting. Because these businesses provide a wide variety of services to a broad diversity of people and are often a gateway to boat ownership, boat rental businesses play an important role in boating safety.

Pennsylvania law ([PA C.S. Title 30 § 5122\(a\)\(2\)](#)) authorizes the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) to promulgate rules and regulations relating to boat rental business operators. PFBC regulations at [58 Pa. Code Chapter 117](#) specify rental boat business responsibilities including inspections, record keeping, required safety equipment, and accident reporting. These regulations also require rental boat businesses to provide an orientation/introduction to boating safety and conditions, as specified by the PFBC Executive Director.

This document provides specific guidance on the required boating safety and boat operations orientation to be provided by all boat rental businesses which must include:

- a review of state-specific laws and regulations applicable to the type of boat being rented,
- local conditions and known boating hazards on the waters on which the boat will be used,
- proper operations and handling characteristics of the rented boat, and
- the use of safety equipment such as life jackets, fire extinguishers and visual distress signals (if applicable).

MATERIALS

The following materials provide the minimum information to be covered in safety orientations. Boat rental businesses may use other materials, as appropriate, to supplement the required orientation.

1. PFBC posters containing Pennsylvania-specific regulations for all boat rental types are available as printer-friendly downloads at www.fishandboat.com:
 - [Motorboat Poster](#)
 - [Personal Watercraft \(PWC\) Poster](#)
 - [Unpowered Boat Poster](#)
 - [Whitewater Safety Poster](#)
2. Videos for motorboat rentals may be viewed on-demand at www.rentalboatsafety.com or <https://www.youtube.com/@RentalBoatSafetyTube/videos>. DVDs can be requested through the Rental Boat Safety website.
3. Spanish Speaking videos and resources can be found at <https://es.rentalboatsafety.com>

PROCEDURES

The following procedures shall be followed by boat rental businesses **each time a boat is rented to any person for operation on Pennsylvania waters**. These procedures may take up to thirty minutes to complete. Instruction may be provided in group settings.

Unpowered Boat Rental*

1. Use the PFBC's posters to review the laws, regulations and boating tips relating to the proper operation of unpowered boats with all individuals renting or using a boat.
2. Describe all known boating hazards on the waters where the renter will use the boat. Include such hazards as dams, bridge piers, shallow areas, swim areas, obstructions in the water (including strainers), rapids or whitewater areas, docks, piers, boating access areas, areas of heavy motorboat traffic, and other areas to exercise caution or avoid.
3. Provide all required safety equipment in accordance with the PFBC's regulations and explain its proper use.
4. Obtain a signed and dated acknowledgment of all individuals completing the orientation/introduction to boating safety and conditions as outlined in steps 1 through 3 above.
5. *Optional:* Show the relevant unpowered boat video at www.rentalboatsafety.com to orient renters to proper operations and boat handling.
6. *Optional:* Use the USCG/RentalBoatSafety paddling checklist to ensure important safety topics are covered with the renter.

*Unpowered boat rental businesses operating in Pennsylvania under an agreement with the National Park Service and in compliance with the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) Safety Orientation Requirements meet the requirements outlined above.

Motorboat Rental

1. Use the PFBC's posters to review the laws, regulations and boating tips relating to the proper operation of motorboats with all individuals renting or using a boat.
2. Show the relevant powerboat video at www.rentalboatsafety.com.
3. Provide hands-on orientation of proper operations and boat handling specific to the boat being rented.
4. Identify the designated area of operation, if applicable.
5. Describe all known boating hazards on the waters where the renter will use the boat. Include such hazards as dams, bridge piers, shallow areas, swim areas, obstructions in the water, slow-no-wake areas, docks, piers, boating access areas, areas of heavy motorboat traffic, and other areas to exercise caution or avoid.
6. Provide all required safety equipment in accordance with the PFBC's regulations and explain its proper use.
7. Obtain a signed and dated acknowledgment of the renter's completion of the motorboat rental orientation/introduction to boating safety and conditions as outlined in steps 1 through 6 above.
8. *Optional:* Use the relevant USCG/RentalBoatSafety powerboat checklist to ensure important safety topics are covered with the renter.

Boat rental businesses are encouraged to require life jacket wear at all times on rental boats, even when not required by state or federal law.

Questions about the Boat Rental Safety Orientation Guidelines may be directed to:
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Bureau of Boating, 717-705-7851, RA-FBBOATRENTAL@pa.gov