

Title/Subject: **BOAT SAFETY**

Applies to: faculty staff students student employees visitors contractors

Effective Date of This Revision: May 1, 2012

Contact for More Information: College of Science & Technology

Board Policy Administrative Policy Procedure Guideline

PURPOSE:

Working from boats is a potentially hazardous activity and the University has an interest in minimizing the risk of accidents and injuries to faculty, staff, students and visiting researchers who perform work in boats. Because this is a health and safety issue the following policies are mandatory and failure to follow them will result in termination of all boat-based work. Failure to follow and ensure employees and students under one's supervision follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action and also make one liable to criminal or civil prosecution in the event of a boating-related fatality or accident.

DEFINITIONS:

Operating a boat means being ultimately responsible for the navigation and operation of the vessel and the safety of all passengers. Faculty, staff and students may ride in CMU boats as passengers without possessing a Michigan Boating Safety Certificate but are required to follow the directions of the boat operator at all times.

This policy applies to all boats used for CMU research or education regardless of ownership, including but not limited to those boats owned by CMU, other Universities, State or Federal Agencies and CMU faculty, staff and students. For example, if members of faculty, staff or students use their own boats for CMU research they are required to follow the policy regarding PFD use even if this differs from their practice when the boat is used for non-CMU business or pleasure.

POLICY:

This policy differentiates between boat operators (the *de facto* captain of the vessel) and passengers who are not approved to operate a CMU vessel and who are required to follow the directions of the boat operator at all times. Boat operators who carry faculty, staff and students who are not qualified to operate a vessel under this policy must make sure that these individuals understand their obligation to follow this policy (e.g., wearing a personal flotation device (PFD) at all times) and the absolute requirement to follow the directions of the boat operator at all times.

PROCEDURE:

In order to avoid confusion and debate under potentially hazardous conditions, where two or more personnel in the vessel are CMU approved boat operators, one must be designated as the primary operator for that specific trip and assume command of the vessel; this should be the individual with the greatest experience with the type of

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vessel and water body in question regardless of academic or supervisory rank.

1. Required Training and Research Vessel Operator Requirements

Use of boats less than 20 feet in length - All employees, graduate or undergraduate students and non-CMU researchers or students operating CMU boats less than 20 feet in length must possess a Michigan Boating Safety Certificate. This requires taking a proctored exam at a local county Sheriff's office or DNR district office. The following web site provides links to an online training course and an online pre-certification exam that should be taken prior to taking the proctored exam. <http://www.boaterexam.com/usa/michigan/>

Use of boats greater than or equal to 20 feet in length - All employees, graduate or undergraduate students and non-CMU researchers or students operating CMU boats greater than or equal to 20 feet in length must be trained in the following: basic navigation, piloting, navigational chart if reading, aids to navigation, and marine radio usage. All individuals operating on the Great Lakes with a vessel 20 feet or larger are required to complete the United States Power Squadron America's Boating Course one time or possess a US Coast Guard Operator Uninspected Passenger Vessel (USCG OUPV) or Master Captain's license. Visit <http://www.usps.org/> to check out a training course option that works for you.

The Institute for Great Lakes Research (IGLR) or College of Science and Technology (CST) will cover the cost of taking the required exams for any employee or student who is required to operate a vessel for their research or professional responsibilities.

A copy of the boat operator's Michigan Boating Safety Certificate and any other documentation (e.g. US Coast Guard Captain's License) must be on file at either the CMU Biological Station (CMUBS) or IGLR offices.

2. Students Taking Courses

Based on a ruling by the US Coast Guard, students taking courses are considered paying passengers and as such can only be carried in a vessel piloted by an individual with a US Coast Guard Captain's license of the appropriate class for the number of passengers in the vessel. This does not apply to students engaged in research projects or hired as employees.

3. Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

All employees, graduate or undergraduate students and non-CMU researchers or students using CMU boats are required to wear a personal flotation device (Type I, II, III or IV) **at all times and regardless of the size or nature of the vessel or water body.**

PFDs must be:

- Coast Guard Approved
- In good condition (straps etc.)
- Of the correct size for the wearer
- Have a whistle or other signaling device attached.
- Inflatable PFDs are acceptable provided they are Coast Guard approved and a spare CO₂ cylinder and arming mechanism is carried at all times.

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Exceptions: The only exceptions to the PFD policy are as follows

- Working on a boat securely moored at a dock.
- Working on an anchored vessel of at least 16 feet in length and a beam of at least 4 feet.

4. *Minimum number in party*

- a. Under no circumstances should any member of faculty or staff or student work alone in a boat. A minimum of two people are required for all boat-based work.
- b. The only exception is where work is performed from single-person vessels (e.g., kayaks) in this case the requirement would be for a minimum of two people in the field team in different vessels.

5. *Research Vessel Requirements*

- a. Each research boat (except for small unpowered vessels exempt from this requirement under State Law) should be registered with the State of Michigan and copies of the registration must be filed in the IGLR or CMUBS office.
 - Boats can be registered in Michigan through the Secretary of State Office.
 - Display boat registration numbers on the hull according to state regulations.
 - Keep a copy of the boat registration on-board and a copy in the tow vehicle's glove compartment.
- b. Research boats must be equipped with all required gear (e.g., navigation lights, horns) and safety equipment (e.g., personal flotation devices, fire extinguisher) according to state regulations. These regulations vary according to boat length. See the Michigan Boat Guide or call the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division for specifics, or call the United States Coast Guard for additional information if research is being conducted on navigable waters. Note that the University's policy on PFD use is more stringent than the Michigan DNR requirements.
- c. Except for small vessels of 16 feet or less used in inland waters boats must also be equipped with the following equipment. When checking out boats from the IGLR or CMUBS offices users will be provided with a dry bag containing all required equipment. It is the users responsibility to check that the equipment is present and in working condition. Please notify the IGLR or CMUBS office immediately if equipment is missing or broken.
 - GPS navigation system
 - Compass
 - Navigation charts (Great Lakes only)
 - 2-way radio
 - Tool kit including spares for motor
 - Spare batteries for required electrical equipment
 - Spare fuel in an approved container
 - Oars or spare engine
 - Anchor and rope
 - Spotlight and emergency flares.

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- e. In addition to the required PFDs small vessels of 16 feet or less (e.g., canoes and rowboats) must be equipped with:
 - Spare oar or spare paddle
- f. All individuals working on boats must carry foul weather gear, and extra warm clothes. A dry bag for this gear is highly recommended unless the vessel possesses a weatherproof cabin or storage lockers.

6. *Float plans*

- a. A float plan must be filed with a responsible party on shore. This could be the departmental, CMUBS or IGLR offices (assuming return is in normal office hours), or when working from remote locations, with some other dependable person, preferably a CMU employee. The float plan must include:
 - i. Names of all persons on vessel including designated operator(s) of the vessel
 - ii. Cell phone number of at least one person in party (unless boat will be in radio contact)
 - iii. Destination(s)
 - iv. Time of Departure
 - v. Time of Return
 - vi. Overdue time; no more than 3 hours after time of return. Because this is the margin of safety before initialing search and rescue efforts it should be shorter than 3 h under hazardous conditions (e.g., working at night or winter work on the Great Lakes)
- b. The responsible party on shore must be fully aware of what is expected of them. They must be available via phone or radio throughout the planned trip. The responsible party must notify emergency services (local police for inland water and the coast guard for the Great Lakes) if the boating party does not return or contact them before the overdue time.
- c. The boating party must contact the responsible party on shore as soon as they return to shore. They should also radio or telephone to report a later-than anticipated return giving new times of return and overdue.

7. *Boat Towing Information*

- a. Register boat trailers with the Michigan Secretary of State Office (<http://www.michigan.gov/sos>) and submit copies of the registration to the Department.
- b. License plate should be properly secured on the trailer.
- c. Signals and lights should be working properly.

8. *General Towing Information*

- a. Individuals are highly encouraged to practice towing their boat on campus prior to heading to field sites.
- b. Do not exceed the maximum towing capacity for the trailer, ball and hitch setup, or towing vehicle.
- c. A proper match should be made between the ball and hitch. Trailer safety chains should be properly connected to the towing vehicle.
- d. Trailer wheel bearings should be checked frequently.
- e. Trailer tires should be properly inflated.
- f. Always check boat trailer lights for proper function prior to towing.

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- g. Boat engine should be secure and radio antennas lowered (if applicable). Remove or tie down all gear which can potentially blow out of the boat when towing.
- h. Carry a spare trailer tire.
- i. Drive at a speed appropriate for the trailer, but do not exceed the posted speed limit.

9. *Other guidelines*

- a. Check if weather conditions are favorable before leaving the dock. No one should be on the water during thunder and/or lightning. It is recommended to take a weather band radio to the field to monitor weather conditions.
- b. Carry an extra set of truck and boat keys in case a set is lost overboard.
- c. Place boat keys on a floating key ring and store an extra set in towing vehicle.
- d. Carry a change of clothes on-board or in the towing vehicle.

Central Michigan University reserves the right to make exceptions to, modify or eliminate this policy and or its content. This document supersedes all previous policies, procedures or guidelines relative to this subject.