SKI SMART!

Maryland waters offer wonderful opportunities for recreational boaters. With the ever-increasing number of boaters, it is everyone's responsibility to work together to ensure that our waters are safe and clean.

Water-skiing, along with being towed on a tube, kneeboard, or any other device, is very popular with Maryland boaters. These activities are both fun and challenging; however, towing people on skis or any other device requires additional knowledge and skills. Please invest the time to educate yourself in the practices necessary to be safe and responsible by reviewing the following laws and safety tips. They contain everything you'll need to know when water-skiing in Maryland and will also help to make your boating experience a memorable one.

Safe and fun skiing requires a driver and skier to make good judgments. The effects of sun, wind, waves, and vibration can impair judgment. Don't stay on the water too long. Drinking alcoholic beverages, taking prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications, or using illegal drugs can also contribute to impaired judgment. Never operate a vessel or ski when your judgment is impaired, and remember, operating a boat while intoxicated is illegal and dangerous.

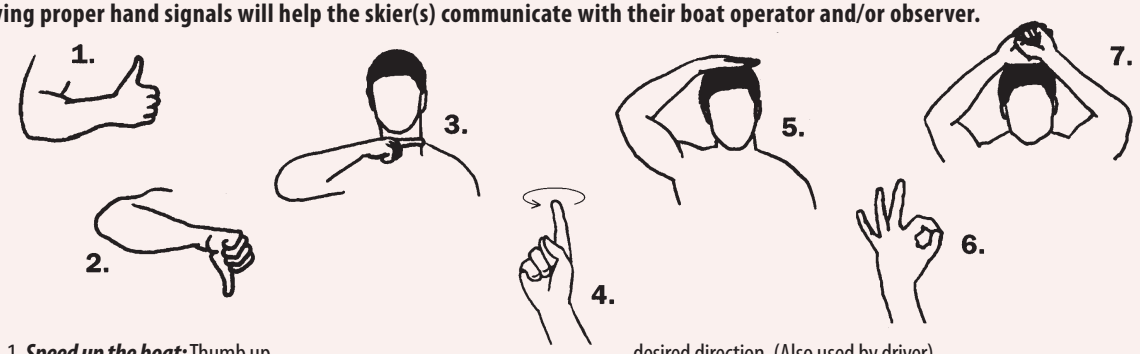
The vessel operator is responsible for keeping the skier away from dangerous areas, as well as giving him or her an enjoyable ride. Keep the boat a safe distance from the shore, docks, and other objects in the water. Be on the lookout for other boats about to enter the ski area. If this happens, shut down the boat and wait for the area to clear. The driver must be alert for skiers in the water or stopped boats in his or her path. Before turning the boat, look to each side and behind to make sure there are no overtaking boats and that the turn will not endanger the skier. Remember, the person at the end of the towrope is an extension of the boat, and the operator must continually be aware of their presence and safety.

SPEED LIMITS

In an area that is too populated with boats and/or persons to allow unlimited skiing, speed limits of 6 knots are in effect and skiing is not allowed. These areas are posted with white signs or buoys with the restrictions stated within an orange circle. These signs and buoys conform to the nationwide system of state markers, and special time restrictions are as posted. It is the operator's responsibility to avoid these areas while water skiing or towing a similar device

HAND SIGNALS FOR SKIERS

Knowing proper hand signals will help the skier(s) communicate with their boat operator and/or observer.



1. ***Speed up the boat:*** Thumb up.
2. ***Slow down the boat:*** Thumb down.
3. ***Cut Motor/Stop:*** Slashing motion over neck. (Also used by driver or observer)
4. ***Turn the boat:*** Circle motion with arms over head then point in desired direction. (Also used by driver)
5. ***Return to dock:*** Pat on head
6. ***Speed and boat path OK or signals understood:*** OK signal with hand.
7. ***Skier OK after falling:*** Hands clasped over head.

Owners of shoreline property cite that the increase of large powerboats and speed/ski boat traffic traveling at high rates of speed, creates damaging wakes. Increased boat traffic leads to erosion, damage to docked boats, and damage to property.

WATER SKIING IS SAFEST WHEN SKIERS AND BOAT OPERATORS KNOW AND USE COMMON-SENSE RULES. BEFORE TOWING A SKIER, THE OPERATOR SHOULD:

- Review hand signals with the skier to ensure proper communications.
- Make sure the skier is wearing a USCG approved life jacket.
- Make sure the tow lines are of the same length if towing multiple skiers.
- Be familiar with the area and aware of any hazards such as shallow water, rocks, or bridge pilings in the water.
- Choose a safe location and know that water-skiing should never be attempted in swimming areas, low-speed mooring lanes, or marina channels.
- Operate in an area at least 200 feet wide, giving a safety area of 100 feet on either side of the boat. A corridor length of 2,000 to 3,000 feet is desirable.
- Remember to keep the boat a safe distance from the shore, docks and other objects in the water. You are responsible for your wake!
- Never ski at night! It is both hazardous and illegal.

VESSEL OPERATORS TOWING A PERSON(S) ON WATER-SKIS, OR A SIMILAR DEVICE MUST OBEY THESE MARYLAND LAWS:

- No one under 12 years of age may legally operate a vessel towing a person(s) on water-skis, or any other device.
- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water-skis, or any other device must have on board, in addition to the operator, an observer at least 12 years of age.
- All persons being towed behind a vessel on water-skis or any other device must **WEAR** a USCG approved type I, II, or III, life jacket.
- A vessel may tow a person(s) on water-skis or any other device only between the hours of sunrise to sunset.
- It is illegal to operate any vessel, or manipulate any water-skis or any similar device in a careless, reckless, or negligent manner that endangers the life, limb, or property of any person.
- Except for taking off from shore, the towing vessel must stay at least 100 feet from shore, piers, bridges, people in the water, or other vessels.
- Ski ropes may not be more than 75 feet in length, except when barefoot skiing, in which case a ski rope of 100 feet in length may be used.
- A PWC may not be used to tow a person on water-skis or any other device unless the PWC has the capacity to carry at least three (3) persons – the operator, a rear-facing observer that is at least 12 years of age, and the skier.

MARYLAND

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor

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MARYLAND BOATING EDUCATION LAW

Anyone operating a motorized vessel in the state of Maryland born on or after July 1, 1972, must possess a NASBLA approved certificate of boating safety education. To find a boating course in your area, call 410-643-8502 or check online at dnr.maryland.gov/boating

The facilities and services of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin or physical or mental disability. This document is available in alternative format upon request.

Photos courtesy of USA Waterskiing except tubing photo courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard.

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WATER SKIING REGULATIONS

SAFETY EDUCATION SECTION

MARYLAND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICE

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES