

## **PERSONAL WATERCRAFT AWARENESS**

### **34416, Guide to Safe Scouting, Unauthorized and Restricted Activities**

**Motorized personal watercraft, such as jet-skis, are not authorized for use in Scouting activities, and their use should not be permitted in or near BSA program areas.**

**Personal watercraft awareness is included in the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary's Boating Skills and Seamanship Course and the U. S. Power Squadron's The Squadron Boating Course. Personal watercraft awareness is included in the Marlinespike Conference for educational awareness purposes only.**

### **Learning Objectives:**

As a result of this session the participant should:

1. Become aware of the controls used to operate Personal Watercraft.
2. Become aware of Personal Watercraft underway and on-water operations.
3. Become aware of the Federal, State and Local regulations affecting Personal Watercraft operations.

### **Resources:**

Boating Skills & Seamanship, Eleventh Edition, U.S. Coast guard Auxiliary, Chapter 13  
The Squadron Boating Course 2001, The United States Power Squadrons, Section 16

### **Material and Equipment:**

Equipment Items

Overhead Projector, as required by instructor

1 Personal Watercraft on Trailer (**Static Display Only**)

Material Items

Provide one copy for each participant:

PWC Awareness Items Handout

### **Instructor Qualification:**

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Trainer presence required for USCGAUX Certificate Program

U.S. Power Squadron Instructor, Council Venturing Trainer or equivalent

**Time Allocation:** 1.5 Hours

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**Session Plan:**

**Classroom Session (45 Minutes)**

1. **Module Introduction.**
  - a. Introduce yourself and each member of the module staff.
  - b. Explain the objectives of this module.
  - c. Distribute the handout “PWC Awareness Items” for reference.
2. **Personal Watercraft Controls.**
  - a. Explain briefly the functions for the following controls.
    1. Start and Stop Controls
    2. Throttle Controls
    3. Fall-Off Controls
    4. Fuel Selector Switches
    5. Reverse Levers
3. **Government Regulations.**
  - a. Explain briefly the following government regulations for power-driven vessels are also applicable for personal watercraft.
    1. Federal Regulations
    2. State and Local Regulations
    3. The Navigation Rules
    4. Law Enforcement
    5. Vessel Safety Check Program
4. **Underway Preparation.**
  - a. Describe briefly the following operations in preparation for a safe departure.
    1. Fuel Safely
    2. Equipment and Systems Check
    3. Weather and Water Conditions Check
    4. Passenger Briefing
    5. Personal Equipment Check
5. **Safe On-Water Operations.**
  - a. Explain briefly the following normal departure operations.
    1. Fastening the lanyard cut-off switch to the operator’s wrist
    2. Check water depth prior to engine start
    3. Determine where to operate
    4. Determine a safe operating speed
    5. Turning
    6. Backing

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7. Stopping
6. **Other On-Water Operations.**
  - a. Explain briefly the following on-water operation.
    1. Jumping Wakes
    2. Falling Off
    3. Righting an Overturned PWC
    4. Re boarding
    5. Towing water skiers
    6. Fire Onboard
7. **Related Support Operations.**
  - a. Explain briefly the following operations in support of a safe on-water activity.
    1. Operator's being a Lookout
    2. Observing Aids to Navigation
    3. Meeting Large Vessels
    4. Restricted Visibility
    5. Monitor Fuel Supply
    6. Monitor the Weather
    7. Returning
8. **Operator Responsibility.**
  - a. Explain using good judgement and having consideration especially the following.
    1. Operator physical condition awareness
    2. Enforce a no drug or alcoholic beverage policy prior and during PWC operation
    3. Practice the protection of the aquatic environment
    4. Operate quietly as a consideration of others
9. **Personal Watercraft Maintenance.**
  - a. Explain briefly Breakdowns, Repairs and Security as it relates to PWC operations

**Outdoor Area Session (45 Minutes)**

1. **Personal Watercraft Nomenclature, Boarding, and Steering.**
  - a. Describe and show the controls and components of a Personal Watercraft
  - b. Describe and show steering on a Personal Watercraft and how it turns
  - c. Show the participants how to board a Personal Watercraft properly.

*[Note: If it can be done safely, participants should have the option of boarding and sitting (standing) on the Personal Watercraft while the it is on the trailer.]*

## **PERSONAL WATERCRAFT AWARENESS ITEMS HANDOUT**

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### **PERSONAL WATERCRAFT DEFINED**

The Coast Guard considers a PWC to be a Class A (less than 16 feet long) inboard boat. The Personal Watercraft Industry Association defines a PWC as an inboard vessel (less than 13 feet long) using an internal combustion engine to power a water-jet pump as its primary source of propulsion.

### **STEERING**

It is important to know that a PWC will turn only when the jet pump is pushing a stream of water (thrust) out the stern of the craft. When the throttle is released while operating, the PWC will not turn and will probably continue in the direction it was moving.

### **PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES (PFD)**

PFDs should have an impact rating of at least 50 mph – preferably in excess of the maximum speed of the PWC and should be brightly colored – orange or yellow preferred.

### **STATE AND LOCAL REGULATION AWARENESS**

1. Many states have regulations requiring operators and passengers to wear PFDs when the vessel is in use.
2. Some state and local authorities require Visual Distress Signals (VSD) be included as required equipment
3. In most cases, it is illegal to use a PWC at night because it is not equipped with lights for night operations. Many state laws specifically prohibit the use of PWCs in the dark.
4. Many states have local regulations governing diving and underwater operations.

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5. Since a PWC is a power-driven vessel, almost all other vessels have priority in movement over a PWC.
6. Many state and local governments often have stricter and more comprehensive regulations for the use of PWCs than the federal government
7. Many local regulations frequently have a minimum age limit for operating a PWC.
8. Many local authorities require successful completion of a special course in PWC operation.
9. Many area, especially on small lakes, have "Hours of Operation" regulations that may apply to all boats or specific vessels such a PWCs.
10. In many local jurisdictions, cutting close to the stern of another boat and jumping their wakes is illegal.
11. Before towing water skiers with a PWC, check with state and local suthorities to determine if it is authorized.

**YOUTH OPERATOR EDUCATION**

Parents should insist that youth operating person watercraft be of legal age, receive proper instruction in both boating safety and PWC operation. Most states proved guides and other documents describing their boating reguations and education courses. Some states require an examination prior to granting authorization to operate a PWC with their jurisdiction.

Resource: The Squadron Boating Course, U.S. Power Squadron, Chapter 16.