

# Virgin Islands: The Legal Requirements Of Boating!

## Your Vessel's Certificate Of Number And Registration Decal

- ◆ Just as you must have a vehicle registration for your car, you must have a U.S. Virgin Islands Certificate of Number (registration) and registration decal to legally operate any vessel on the territorial waters of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The only exceptions are:
  - Vessels with valid registrations from other states or territories of the United States using U.S. Virgin Islands waters for 60 days or less
  - Vessels from a country other than the United States using U.S. Virgin Islands waters for 60 days or less
  - A ship's lifeboat or a vessel owned by a United States governmental agency.
- ◆ The Certificate of Number and registration decal are obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to:  
Dept. of Planning & Natural Resources, Boat Registration Office  
Cyril E. King Airport, Second Floor  
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802.
- ◆ *The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized registration card) must be onboard and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is operated.*
- ◆ The registration number and registration decal must be displayed as follows:
  - Number must be painted or applied as a sticker to both sides of the forward half of the vessel.
  - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the forward half of the vessel.
  - Number must be in at least three-inch-high, *block* letters in a color that contrasts with its background.
  - Letters should be separated from the numbers by spaces or hyphens. For example: "VI 3717 T" or "VI-3717-T."
  - Decal must be displayed on the port (left) side of the vessel within 6 inches to the left of the "VI" of the registration number.
  - No other number may be displayed on either side of the forward half of the vessel.
- ◆ If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

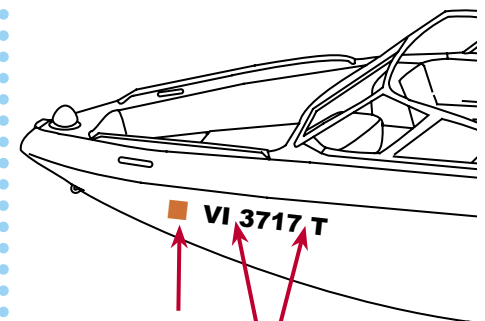
## Other Facts About Registering Your Vessel

- ◆ A Certificate of Number is valid for one year. Owners of registered vessels may renew the registration by mailing the proper application and fee to the Department of Planning & Natural Resources.
- ◆ If you change address or transfer ownership of your vessel you must notify the Department of Planning & Natural Resources, in writing, within 15 days of the change. If ownership changes, the number remains with the vessel, but the new owner must obtain a new Certificate of Number (registration card).
- ◆ If a numbered vessel is lost, stolen, destroyed or abandoned, the owner must report it to the local authorities and to the Department of Planning & Natural Resources within 15 days.
- ◆ If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or registration decal, you must apply for a duplicate and submit a processing fee.

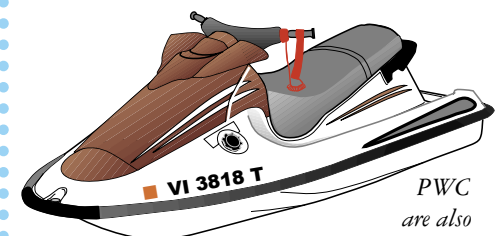
REGISTRATION NO.	NAME	CODE	EXPIRATION DATE	HULL ID NO.	MAKE OF BOAT
VI 3717 T					

## Certificate Of Registration

*The Certificate of Number (pocket-sized, plastic registration card) must be carried onboard the vessel whenever the vessel is operated.*



**Registration Decal**

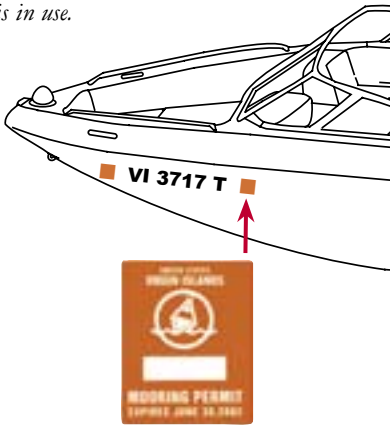


*PWC are also required to display the certificate's number and registration decals.*



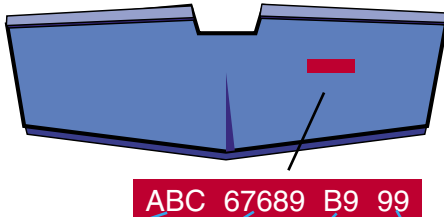
**Mooring Permit**

The Mooring Permit (pocket-sized plastic card) must be carried onboard the vessel whenever the vessel is in use.



**Mooring Decal**

**Hull Identification Number**



Manufacturer's Identification Code (MIC)    Hull Number    Serial    Date of Manufacture    Model Year

- ◆ Larger recreational vessels, owned by U.S. citizens, may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard. Call the USCG at 1-800-799-8362 for more information. Owners of documented vessels must obtain and display a U.S. Virgin Islands registration decal.

**Mooring Permit**

- ◆ You must obtain a mooring permit from the Department of Planning & Natural Resources before mooring a vessel in a designated mooring area.
- ◆ A mooring permit is obtained by submitting the proper application and fee to: Dept. of Planning & Natural Resources, Div. of Environmental Enforcement.
- ◆ The mooring permit (pocket-sized plastic card) must be onboard and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is in use.
- ◆ The mooring decal must be displayed on the port (left) side of the vessel within 6 inches to the right of the registration number.
- ◆ Mooring permits are valid for one year, expiring on June 30 of each year, and may be renewed annually by submitting the proper form and fee.

**Hull Identification Number**

- ◆ The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique, 12-digit number, assigned by the manufacturer, to vessels built after 1972.
- ◆ Hull Identification Numbers:
  - Identify one vessel from another.
  - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate attached to the transom.
  - Should be recorded by the owner and put in a place other than the vessel in case warranty problems arise or the vessel is lost or stolen.

**Who May Operate A PWC**

- ◆ A person 13 years of age or younger may *not* legally operate a PWC under any circumstances.
- ◆ A person 14 years of age or older but less than 18 years of age may legally operate a PWC *only if* he or she:
  - Has completed a safe boating course approved by the Department of Planning & Natural Resources *and...*
  - Has written parental approval and acknowledgment of liability.
- ◆ It is illegal for the owner or person in charge of a personal watercraft to knowingly allow a person to operate the PWC if that person does not meet the age and safety education restrictions above.
- ◆ *Note:* A person under 18 years of age must also have written parental or guardian consent to ride as a passenger on a personal watercraft.



**Registration or Mooring Permit Questions?**

Call the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources (DPNR), Boat Registration Office at 1-340-774-3320 ext. 5106. Also, you can visit the DPNR office on the 2nd floor of the Cyril E. King Airport.

## Unlawful Operation Of A Vessel

U.S. Virgin Islands law prohibits negligent or reckless operation of any vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, surfboard or similar device. Reckless operation or manipulation is defined as the failure to exercise the care necessary to protect the safety of persons or property.

- ◆ It is illegal to operate a vessel at greater than **no wake speed** within the restricted areas (such as mooring and anchoring areas) designated within the harbors and bays of the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- ◆ It is illegal to operate a vessel within marked swim areas or other exclusion areas.
- ◆ Operating a vessel within restricted areas is limited to traveling in as straight a line as is practicable under the circumstances to get to and from a designated area of operation. It is illegal to interfere with swimming and other non-motorized activities in restricted areas.
- ◆ Circular turns (360 degree turns) with the steering mechanism held to the extreme, also known as “doughnuts,” are prohibited, except in operation areas and only when conditions are such as to permit their safe execution. Circular turns may not be performed when close to other vessels or swimmers or when close to shore or a reef. You may not interfere with the safe use of territorial waters by other vessels.
- ◆ Wake jumping (crossing the wake of another vessel at high speeds) or zig-zagging at high speeds is prohibited within 100 feet of the vessel creating the wake.
- ◆ Beaching of any motorized vessel by driving onto shore is prohibited.
- ◆ Causing excessive wakes in restricted areas is prohibited.
- ◆ Operating at a speed in excess of no wake speed within 10 feet of an anchored or moored vessel is prohibited.
- ◆ Chasing, harassing or disturbing wildlife with your vessel is prohibited.

## Remember...

*As an owner of a vessel, you are responsible for any injury or damage caused by the negligent operation of your vessel by others you knowingly allow to operate it. It will be assumed that you have given consent if your vessel is operated by an immediate family member.*



### no wake speed

*A speed at which the vessel does not produce a wake, not to exceed 6 miles per hour*



### Stay up to date on new boating laws!

*Be sure to stay abreast of new boating laws and requirements.*

*For territorial boating law information, call the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources, Division of Environmental Enforcement:*

- 1-340-774-3320

*For federal boating laws, call the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Infoline:*

- 1-800-368-5647

*Information in this manual does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in the U.S. Virgin Islands, which is found in the U.S. Virgin Islands territorial law and federal laws.*

## Remember...

*Personal watercraft operators must obey all boating laws and also must obey additional laws that apply only to PWC. See page 11 for unlawful operation laws that apply specifically to PWC.*

*The best thing you can do for your safety and the safety of other boaters is simple...*

***Don't drink and boat!***



*Because you can drink faster than your system can burn the alcohol off, there is an increasing level of alcohol in your blood. This level is referred to as Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). Learn more about the effects and risks of consuming alcohol while boating in Chapter 5.*

**moor**

*To keep a vessel in place by setting anchor or tying the vessel to a fixed object or buoy*

**tender**

*A secondary vessel attached to or accompanying the primary vessel, which is used for transporting persons or supplies to and from shore or to another vessel*

**Alcohol And Drugs**

U.S. Virgin Islands law prohibits anyone from boating while under the influence (BUI) -- that is, operating any vessel while under the influence of intoxicating liquor (alcohol) or any controlled substance. Alcohol contributes to about one-third of all boating accidents in the U.S. Read about the effects and risks of consuming alcohol in Chapter 5.

- ◆ U.S. Virgin Islands law states that the following conditions determine if you are boating under the influence:
  - If your blood alcohol concentration is 0.08% or greater as measured by a breath, blood or urine test, that result is considered “prima facie” evidence that you are under the influence.
  - If your blood alcohol concentration is greater than 0.05% but less than 0.08% as measured by a breath, blood or urine test, that fact along with other evidence can be used to determine if you are under the influence.
- ◆ U.S. Virgin Islands law establishes the following penalties for BUI:
  - Upon a first violation, those convicted of boating while intoxicated may be fined up to \$1,000 and/or imprisoned for up to one year.
  - Upon subsequent violations, those convicted of boating while intoxicated may be fined up to \$2,000 and/or imprisoned for up to two years.
- ◆ By operating a vessel on the territorial waters of the U.S. Virgin Islands, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if requested by a law enforcement officer who has reason to believe that you are operating under the influence. Refusal to be tested can be used as evidence against you in court.

**Obstructing Navigation**

Vessel operators should always be considerate of other vessel operators even when stopping to anchor or **moor**. Keep in mind that:

- ◆ It is illegal to anchor or moor a vessel in any area other than a designated mooring or anchorage area. In an emergency, a vessel may anchor near the edge of a channel and in a position that will not interfere with the safe passage of other vessels in the channel, but the vessel must be moved immediately after the emergency is over.
- ◆ It is illegal to moor or attach a vessel to a buoy (other than a mooring buoy), beacon, light, or any other navigational aid placed on public waters by proper authorities. Also, it is illegal to move, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.
- ◆ It is illegal to moor a vessel in a designated mooring area unless a permit has been obtained from the Department of Planning & Natural Resources (DPNR). You may not move or shift a mooring without DPNR authorization.
- ◆ It is illegal to for moored vessel or its **tender(s)** to extend beyond the limits of its mooring area.
- ◆ Vessels in ferry harbors must moor or anchor only outside the marker buoys designating the restricted area for the ferry turning radius.
- ◆ Moored or anchored vessels must be maintained so that they may be removed under their own power within 60 minutes.
- ◆ Permanently mooring rafts and platforms for parasailing or other water sports activities is prohibited. Rafts and platforms must be removed daily from territorial waters or located in a designated anchorage or mooring area in accordance with a valid permit issued by DPNR.
- ◆ It is illegal to obstruct a pier, wharf, boat ramp or access to any facility.



## Personal Flotation Devices (Life Jackets)

All vessels must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets called personal flotation devices or PFDs. The quantity and type depends on the length of your vessel and the number of people onboard and/or being towed. Each PFD must be in good condition, the proper size for the intended wearer, and very importantly, must be readily accessible! Readily accessible means you must be able to put the PFD on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency (vessel sinking, on fire, etc.). PFDs should not be stowed in plastic bags, in locked or closed compartments or have other gear stowed on top of them.

Vessel operators should ask everyone on their vessel to wear a PFD (life jacket) whenever on the water. PFDs can save lives, but only if they are worn!

### PFD Requirements

- All vessels, except sailboards, must carry one wearable (Type I, II, III or V) U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD (life jacket) for each person onboard.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and readily accessible. The PFDs must be of the proper size for the intended wearer. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.
- In addition to the above requirements, vessels 16 feet in length or longer (except canoes and kayaks) must have one Type IV U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD onboard and readily accessible.
- Everyone onboard a PWC must wear a Type I, II, III or V U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD (life jacket).
- Anyone being towed behind a vessel must wear a Type I, II, III or V U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD (life jacket).

### PFD Descriptions

#### TYPE I: Offshore Life Jackets

These vests are geared for rough or remote waters where rescue may take awhile. They are excellent for flotation and will turn most unconscious persons face up in the water.

#### TYPE II: Near-Shore Vests

These vests are good for calm waters and fast rescues. Type II vests may lack the capacity to turn unconscious wearers face up.

#### TYPE III: Flotation Aids

These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters and fast rescues. They are not for rough waters since they will not turn a person face up. Some Type III PFDs are designed to inflate when you enter the water.

#### TYPE IV: Throwable Devices

These cushions or ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. They are not for long hours in rough waters, non-swimmers or the unconscious.

#### TYPE V: Special-Use Devices

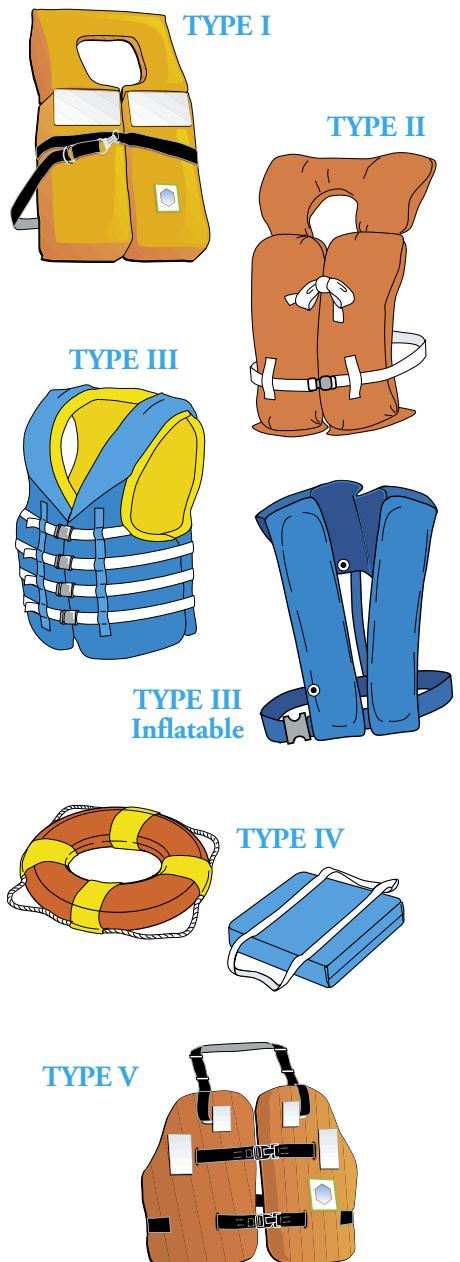
These windsurfing vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs and others are designed for specific activities, such as kayaking or water skiing. Some Type V PFDs are designed to inflate when you enter the water. *To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their label.*

## BOATER'S TIP!

Others who should wear PFDs (life jackets) include:

- Anyone boating at night
- All persons during rough weather
- Persons who cannot swim
- Persons boating in cold water
- Hunters and anglers.

### Types Of Personal Flotation Devices

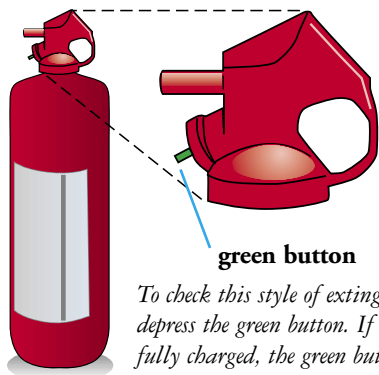




PWC operators need to take special steps in case of fire. Because their fire extinguisher may not be easily accessible, they should simply move away from the PWC quickly and use another operator's extinguisher.

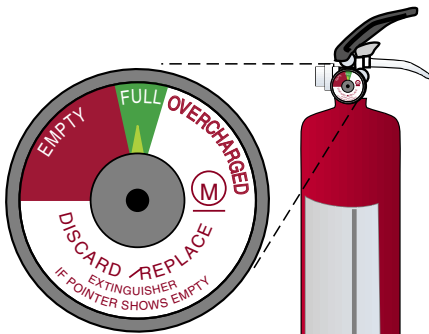
### Fire Extinguisher Charge Indicators

Check the charge level of your fire extinguishers regularly. Replace them immediately if they are not fully charged.



green button

To check this style of extinguisher, depress the green button. If it is fully charged, the green button should pop back out immediately.



On this style of fire extinguisher, the needle indicator should be in the "full" range.

## Fire Extinguishers

- ◆ Extinguishers are classified by a letter and number symbol. The number indicates the relative size of the extinguisher and the letter indicates the type of fire it will extinguish:
  - **Type A** fires are of combustible solids like wood.
  - **Type B** fires are of flammable liquids like gasoline or oil.
  - **Type C** fires are electrical fires.
- ◆ Type B fire extinguisher(s) are required onboard if one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - Inboard or I/O engine(s)
  - Closed compartments or compartments under seats where portable fuel tanks may be stored
  - Double bottoms not sealed to the hull or which are not completely filled with flotation materials
  - Closed living spaces
  - Closed storage compartments in which combustible or flammable materials are stored
  - Permanently installed fuel tanks.
- ◆ Approved types of fire extinguishers are identified by the following marking on the label -- "Marine Type USCG Approved," followed by the size and type symbols and the approval number.

Use this chart to determine the type and quantity required for your vessel:

Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*
Less than 26 feet	1 B-I	None
26 feet to less than 40 feet	2 B-I or 1 B-II	1 B-I
40 feet to less than 65 feet	3 B-I or 1 B-II and 1 B-I	2 B-I or 1 B-II

\* refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system

- ◆ Extinguishers should be placed in an accessible area -- not near the engine or in a compartment, but where they can be reached immediately. Be sure you know how to operate them and check all extinguishers regularly to make sure they are fully charged.

## Backfire Flame Arrestors

Because vessel engines may **backfire**, all powerboats (except outboards) fueled with gasoline must have an approved backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor. They are designed to prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

- ◆ Backfire flame arrestors must be:
  - In good and serviceable condition
  - U.S. Coast Guard–approved, or must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards.
- ◆ Periodically clean the flame arrestor and check for any damage.

## Ventilation Systems

The importance of ventilation is crucial. The purpose of ventilation systems is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases. Properly installed ventilation systems greatly reduce the chance of a life-threatening explosion.

- ◆ All vessels with gas-powered engines, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with **cowls** to remove the fumes.
- ◆ If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes after fueling, prior to starting your engine.

## Mufflers

All vessel engines must be equipped with an effective muffling device or under-water exhaust. Excessive noise can prevent a vessel operator from hearing signals and voices.

- ◆ Operation of loud or unmuffled vessel is prohibited.
- ◆ It is illegal to modify the muffling system of your vessel's engine if the result is increased noise.



### WARNING:

Gasoline vapors can explode. Before starting engine, operate blower for four minutes and check (using your nose) engine compartment for gasoline vapors.

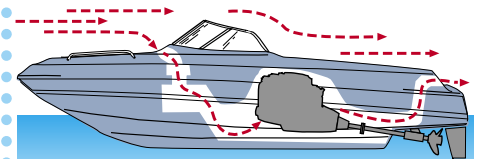
*Vessels built after July 31, 1980, which contain power exhaust blowers in gasoline engine compartments, must have the above warning sticker near the instrument panel.*

### backfire

*Explosion of prematurely ignited fuel or of unburned exhaust gases in an internal combustion engine*

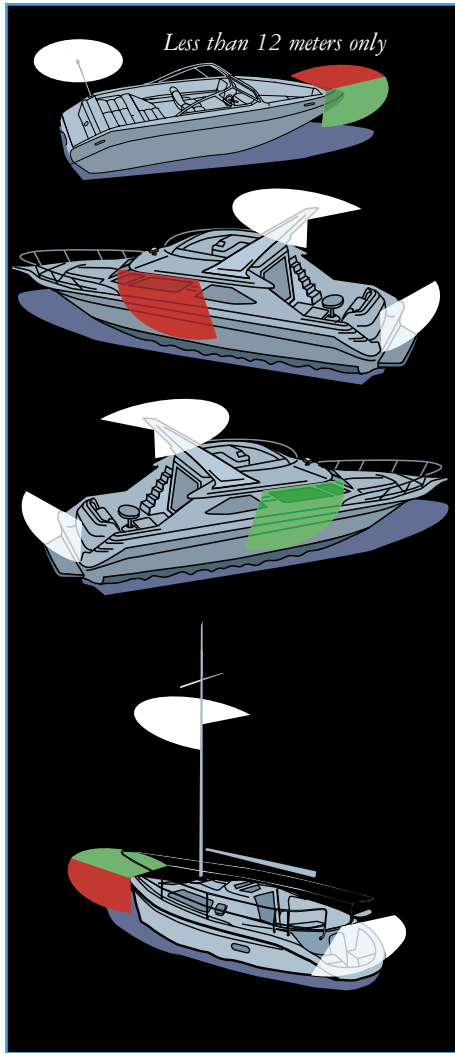
### cowl

*Hooded opening used for ventilation*



*Powerboats are built to ventilate the engine when underway. As the powerboat moves along, an air intake scoops up fresh air and forces it down the air duct into the engine compartment. The exhaust sucks out the explosive fumes from the lowest part of the engine and fuel compartments.*

## I. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 20 Meters



### Navigation Lights

- ◆ Vessel operators must make sure that their vessels are equipped with the proper navigation lights and use the lights during these conditions:
  - When away from the dock between sunset and sunrise
  - During periods of restricted visibility such as fog or heavy rain.
- ◆ The different types of navigation lights are described in “Night Navigation” in Chapter 3. No other lights that may be mistaken for required navigation lights may be exhibited. *Note: blue or red flashing lights are restricted to use by law enforcement vessels only.*
- ◆ The required navigation lights differ depending on the type and size of your vessel. The common lighting configurations for recreational vessels are shown below. For other configurations and requirements for larger vessels see the U.S. Coast Guard’s “Navigation Rules.”

### Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 20 Meters Long When Underway

If less than 20 meters (65.6 ft.) long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under power. The required lights are:

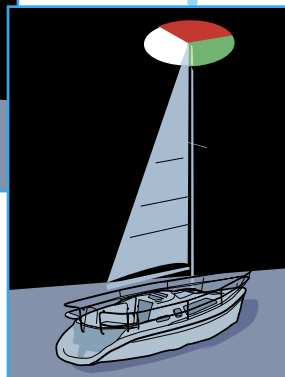
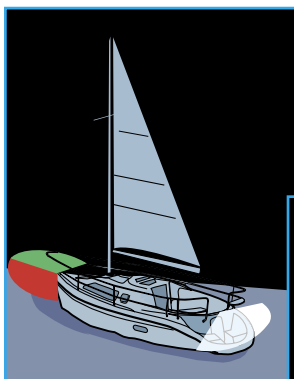
- ◆ Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles (or if less than 12 meters (39.4 ft.) long, at least one mile) on a dark clear night
- ◆ An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles on a dark clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least one meter (3.3 ft.) higher than the sidelights.

### Unpowered Vessels When Underway

Unpowered vessels are sailboats or those that are paddled, poled and rowed.

- ◆ If less than 20 meters (65.6 ft.) long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2:
  - Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles (or if less than 12 meters (39.4 ft.) long, at least one mile) on a dark clear night
  - A sternlight visible from a distance of at least two miles.
- ◆ If less than 7 meters (23.0 ft.) long, these vessels should:
  - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 20 meters (65.6 ft.) in length.
  - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight shining a white light as shown in illustration 3.

## 2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 20 Meters

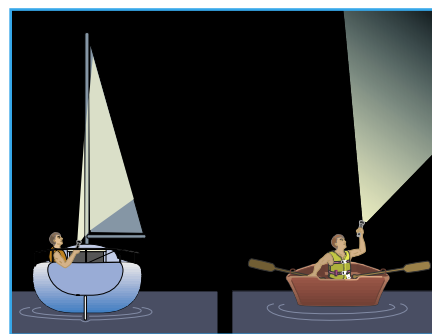


*An alternative to the sidelights and sternlight is a combination red, green and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.*

### All Vessels When Not Underway

All vessels are required to display a white light visible from all directions whenever they are moored or anchored away from dock between sunset and sunrise.

## 3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 7 Meters



*Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.*

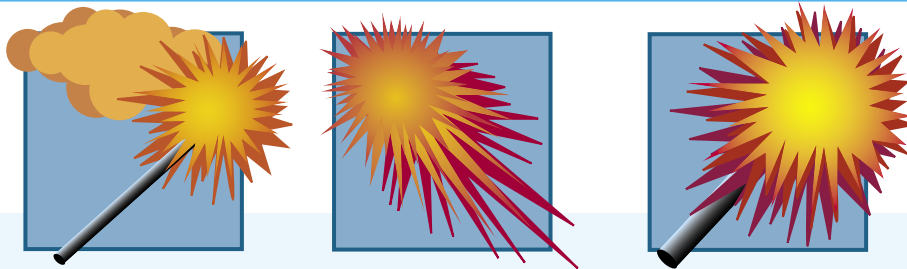


## Visual Distress Signals Required by Federal Law

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency. VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night) or both day and night signals. VDSs are either pyrotechnic (smoke and flames) or non-pyrotechnic (non-combustible). All VDSs must be in serviceable condition, readily accessible, and certified as complying with USCG requirements.

- ◆ All vessels used on **federally controlled waters** must be equipped with U.S. Coast Guard–approved visual distress signals.
- ◆ All vessels on federal waters are required to carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise. In addition, the following vessels must also carry day signals:
  - Recreational vessels 16 feet or longer
  - Non-motorized, open sailboats 26 feet or longer.
- ◆ If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, a minimum of three must be onboard.

### U.S. Coast Guard–Approved Visual Distress Signals

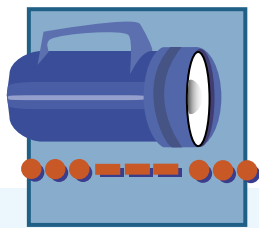


#### Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

**Orange Smoke**  
Day Signal

**Red Meteor**  
Day and Night Signal

**Red Flare**  
Day and Night Signal



#### Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals

**Electric Light**  
Night Signal



**Orange Flag**  
Day Signal

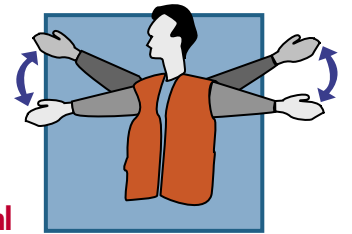
- ◆ The following combinations of signals are examples of VDSs that could be carried onboard to satisfy U.S. Coast Guard requirements:
  - Three hand-held red flares (day and night)
  - One hand-held red flare and two red meteors (day and night)
  - One hand-held orange smoke signal (day), two floating orange smoke signals (day) and one electric light (night only).
- ◆ It is prohibited to display visual distress signals on the water except when assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons onboard a vessel.

## Pyrotechnic Devices

- Pyrotechnics are excellent distress signals. However, there is potential for injury and property damage if not properly handled. These devices produce a very hot flame and the residue can cause burns and ignite flammable materials.
- Pistol launched and hand-held parachute flares and meteors have many characteristics of a firearm and must be handled with caution. In some states they are considered a firearm and are prohibited from use.
- Pyrotechnic devices should be stored in a cool, dry, and prominently marked location.

## Non-Pyrotechnic Devices

- The distress flag is a day signal only. It must be at least 3 x 3 feet with a black square and ball on an orange background.
- The electric distress light is accepted for night use only and must automatically flash the international SOS distress signal.



## Arm Signal

Although not a U.S. Coast Guard–approved VDS, use this arm action to summon help if you do not have other visual distress signals available.

## federally controlled waters

Waters on which vessels must observe federal requirements, including VDS requirements. These waters include:

- Coastal waters
- The Great Lakes
- Territorial seas
- Waters which are two miles wide or wider and are directly connected to one of the above.

## Common Sound Signals

Some common sound signals that you should be familiar with as a recreational boater are:

### Changing Direction

- One short blast tells other boaters “I intend to turn to my right.”
- Two short blasts tells other boaters “I intend to turn to my left.”
- Three short blasts tells other boaters “I am backing up.”

### Restricted Visibility

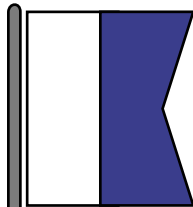
- One prolonged blast at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by powerboats when underway.
- One prolonged plus two short blasts at intervals of not more than two minutes is the signal used by sailboats under sail alone.

### Warning

- One prolonged blast is a warning signal (for example, used when coming around a blind bend or exiting a slip)
- Five (or more) short, rapid blasts are used to signal danger or to signal that you do not understand the other boater's intentions.



**Divers Flag**



**Alpha Flag**

Scuba divers and snorkelers should not place a flag in an area already occupied by other boaters or where their diving operation will impede the normal flow of waterway traffic. Divers should also follow all of the water safety rules themselves.



## For FCC information...

- Call the FCC for a recorded message at:  
**1-800-322-1117**
- On the Internet, go to the FCC website:  
**<http://wireless.fcc.gov/marine/>**

## Sound Producing Devices

In periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position, a sound producing device is essential. Navigation rules for meeting head-on, crossing and overtaking situations described in Chapter 3 are examples of when sound signals are required. The sound producing device may be a whistle, horn or bell that is audible for one-half mile.

- ◆ Vessels less than 12 meters (39.4 ft.) in length, which includes PWC, are required to carry a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal to signal intentions or positions.
- ◆ Vessels that are 12 meters (39.4 ft.) or more in length are required to carry onboard a whistle or horn, *and* a bell.

## Other Equipment and Regulations

- ◆ **Diver Down Flag** The U.S. Coast Guard's Navigation Rules require that a recreational vessel engaged in diving activities, scuba or snorkeling, during the day exhibit a rigid replica of the International Code Flag “Alpha” not less than one meter (3.3 feet) high to indicate that it is restricted in its ability to maneuver. In addition, a red and white divers flag may be displayed on the water to mark a diver's location. At night, red over white over red 360° lights must be displayed. The divers flag is a rectangular red flag, at least 12 x 15 inches, with a white diagonal stripe. Vessels not engaged in diving activities should stay clear of areas marked by a “diver down” flag, staying as far away from the flag as is reasonable and prudent for the circumstances. The suggested safe distance from a diver down flag is 100 yards.
- ◆ **Marine Events** You must obtain authorization from the Commissioner of Planning and Natural Resources to hold a marine parade, regatta, race, tournament, exhibition or any other event on U.S. Virgin Islands waters. The person in charge of the event must apply to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources for a permit at least 15 days prior to the event.
- ◆ **VHF Radio** Some vessels equipped with VHF radios are required to have a Ship Station License by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
  - As of 1996, most recreational vessels no longer need an FCC license if operating domestically. “Domestically” means not traveling to foreign ports or transmitting to foreign stations, including Canada.
  - Recreational vessels still required to carry an FCC Ship Station License are powerboats over 20 meters (65.6 feet) in length and any vessel on an international voyage.

## Requirements Specific To PWC

PWC operators must obey all boating laws (especially the operation laws on page 3). In addition, PWC operators have requirements specific to their watercraft.

- ◆ Everyone onboard or being towed behind a PWC must *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device (life jacket).
- ◆ An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type ignition safety switch must attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing or PFD.
- ◆ PWC may be operated only during the hours between one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset unless the PWC properly displays U.S. Coast Guard–approved navigation lights installed by the manufacturer or specifically approved by the U.S. Coast Guard or DPNR.

- ◆ PWC must be operated in a safe and responsible manner. Maneuvers which unreasonably or unnecessarily endanger life, limb, or property are illegal.

Examples of illegal operation are:

- Weaving your PWC through congested waterway traffic
- Jumping the wake of another vessel unreasonably or unnecessarily close to the other vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is obstructed
- Swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision.
- ◆ PWC operators must meet the age/education requirements (see page 2).
- ◆ It is illegal to operate a PWC at greater than no wake speed within 100 feet of another PWC.
- ◆ Except for travel to and from **operation areas**, all operation of personal watercraft must be in operation areas. Travel to and from operation areas must be by the most direct route that can be navigated safely.

## Towing A Person Legally With A Vessel

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis, surfboard or similar device must also obey these laws:

- ◆ All persons being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device must *wear* a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device (life jacket). Ski belts are not approved PFDs.
- ◆ It is illegal to tow a person(s) on water skis or any other device during the hours of one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.
- ◆ Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis or any other device must have onboard a person, in addition to the vessel operator, in a position to observe the towed person(s).
- ◆ It is illegal to operate the towing vessel or to manipulate a tow rope in such a way as to cause the water skis or other device, or person(s) being towed, to collide with or strike any object or person.
- ◆ It is illegal to tow a person(s) on water skis or any other device behind a vessel in any area designated as a yacht anchorage or within 500 feet of any shoreline where swimming takes place or where vessels are anchored/moored.
- ◆ Personal watercraft must be designed by the manufacturer to specifically allow for the towing of a person on water skis or other device to legally do so. When the PWC is towing a person, a passenger must face the person being towed.
- ◆ Parasailing activities in territorial waters must be conducted in compliance with rules and regulations promulgated by the U.S. Coast Guard. Commercial parasailing activities may be conducted only by licensed personnel.



## Remember...

*As an owner of a PWC, you may be held responsible if you knowingly allow anyone else to operate your PWC in violation of U.S. Virgin Islands law.*

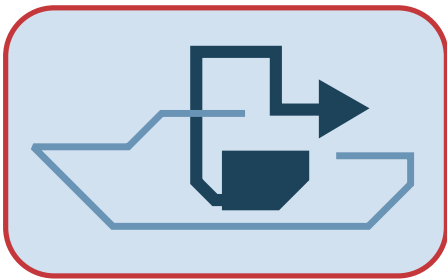
## operation areas

*St. Thomas and St. John: an area seaward 200 feet of any fringing or shallow reef, but in no case less than 500 feet from the shoreline (including offshore cays and islands); and an area 500 feet from any designated non-motorized recreational watersports activity area, such as swimming, snorkeling, diving, surfing and sailboarding (windsurfing)*

*St. Croix: an area seaward 200 feet of any fringing or shallow reef, but in no case less than 400 feet from the shoreline (including offshore cays and islands); and an area 500 feet from any designated non-motorized recreational watersports activity area, such as swimming, snorkeling, diving, surfing and sailboarding (windsurfing)*



*When a PWC is towing a person, a passenger must face the person being towed. Also, the PWC should be rated to carry at least three people -- the operator, the observer and the retrieved skier.*

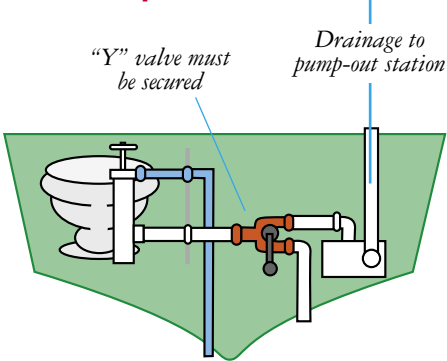


### Pump-Out Station Sign

Signs like these are posted at pump-out stations in the U.S. Virgin Islands.



### Pump-Out Station



### Typical Marine Sanitation Device

It is illegal for any vessel to dump plastic trash anywhere in the ocean or navigable waters of the United States. Annex V of the MARPOL TREATY is a new International Law for a cleaner, safer marine environment. Each violation of these requirements may result in civil penalty up to \$25,000, a fine up to \$50,000, and imprisonment up to 5 years.

**U.S. lakes, rivers, bays, sounds, and 3 miles from shore**

<b>ILLEGAL TO DUMP:</b>	Plastic	Garbage	3 to 12 miles
	Paper	Metal	<b>ILLEGAL TO DUMP:</b>
	Rags	Crockery	Plastic
	Glass	Dunnage	Dunnage (lining & packing materials that float)
	Food		Also, if not ground to less than one inch:
			Garbage Metal
			Paper Crockery
			Food
			Glass

**12 to 25 miles**

**ILLEGAL TO DUMP:**

Plastic  
Dunnage (lining & packing materials that float)

**Outside 25 miles**

**ILLEGAL TO DUMP:**

Plastic

State and local regulations may further restrict the disposal of garbage

**Working together we can all make a difference!**

### Trash Placard

## Waste, Oil, And Trash Disposal In U.S. Virgin Islands And Federal Waters

It is illegal to discharge waste, oil or trash into any federally controlled or U.S. Virgin Islands territorial waters and for very good reasons.

- ◆ Sewage carries disease and is harmful to people, aquatic plants and animals.
- ◆ Trash thrown into the water can injure swimmers and wildlife alike. It can also plug engine cooling water intakes.
- ◆ Pollution is unsightly and takes away from your enjoyment of the water.

Vessel operators need to be aware of the following regulations for waste, oil and trash disposal that apply to both federally controlled and state waters. The Refuse Act prohibits throwing, discharging or depositing any refuse matter of any kind (including trash, garbage, oil, and other liquid pollutants) into the waters of the United States. The territorial waters of the U. S. Virgin Islands have been designated a “No Discharge” zone.

### The Discharge Of Sewage And Waste

- ◆ It is illegal for a vessel to discharge raw sewage within the 3 nautical mile limit of the territorial waters of the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- ◆ If you have a recreational vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD) onboard.
- ◆ The types of MSDs are:
  - Type III MSD, the simplest and most common, consists of holding tanks. It requires only a small storage space and is simple to operate. Treated waste may be discharged in U.S. waters except in “No Discharge” zones. “Y” valves on any MSD that allow untreated waste to be discharged must be secured up to 3 miles from shore.
  - Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large vessels. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria before the waste is discharged. Types I and II MSDs with “Y” valves that direct the waste overboard must be secured so that the valve cannot be opened. This can be done by placing a lock or non-reusable seal on the “Y” valve or by taking the handle off the “Y” valve.
- ◆ Vessels 65 feet and under may use a Type I, II or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must install a Type II or III MSD.
- ◆ All installed devices must be U.S. Coast Guard–certified.

### The Discharge Of Trash

The Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships places limitations on the discharge of garbage from vessels. It is illegal to dump garbage, plastics or refuse of any kind into the shoreline areas or territorial waters of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- ◆ You must store trash in a container onboard, and place it in a proper receptacle after returning to shore.
- ◆ You must display, in a prominent location, a durable placard (sign) at least 4 x 9 inches on any vessel 26 feet or longer. It must notify passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.
- ◆ Some types of garbage can be dumped more than 3 miles from shore (see Trash Placard).



## The Discharge Of Oil And Other Hazardous Substances

Regulations issued under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act require all vessels with propulsion machinery to have a capacity to retain oil mixtures onboard.

- ◆ You are not allowed to discharge oil or hazardous substances.
- ◆ You are not allowed to dump oil into the bilge of the vessel without means for proper disposal.
- ◆ You must discharge oil waste to a reception facility. On recreational vessels, a bucket or bailer is adequate.
- ◆ You must immediately notify the U.S. Coast Guard if your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water. Call toll-free 1-800-424-8802. Report the discharge's location, color, source, substances, size, and time observed.
- ◆ If boating on federal waters and your vessel is 26 feet or longer you must display a 5 x 8 inch placard made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery spaces, or at the bilge pump control station, stating the following:

### Discharge of Oil Prohibited

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act prohibits the discharge of oil or oily waste upon or into any navigable waters of the U.S. The prohibition includes any discharge which causes a film or discoloration of the surface of the water or causes a sludge or emulsion beneath the surface of the water. Violators are subject to substantial civil and/or criminal sanctions including fines and imprisonment.

## Waste Management Plan

- ◆ Ocean going vessels of 40 feet or longer with a galley and berth must have a written Waste Management Plan.
- ◆ The captain of the vessel is responsible for implementing the Waste Management Plan.
- ◆ The Waste Management Plan, identifying the vessel's name and home port, should be posted and include directives to all passengers and/or crew about:
  - Discharge of sewage and hazardous substances
  - Discharge of garbage and other food waste
  - Disposal of plastics, bottles, and cans
  - Applicable placards for additional information
  - Advising the captain in case of oily discharges or diesel spills.



### Oil Discharge Placard

A 5 x 8 inch sign that states the law pertaining to oil discharge



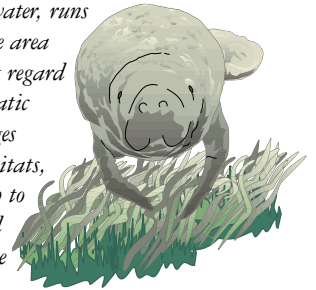
### What to do in case of discharge:

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water, notify the U.S. Coast Guard (National Response Center) by calling:

- 1-800-424-8802.

### Protect the aquatic environment!

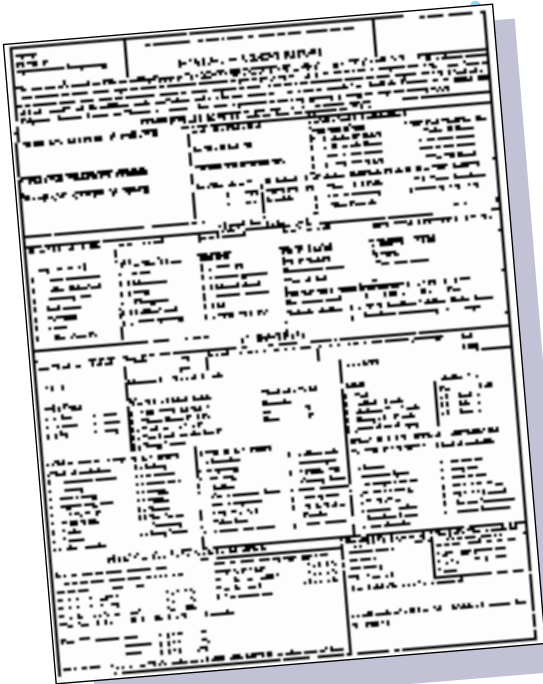
Vessel operation damage occurs when a vessel is operated in shallow water, runs aground in a sensitive area or is operated without regard to the location of aquatic animals. This damages important bottom habitats, causes injury or death to aquatic animals, and wreaks havoc with the environment.



- Improperly laid anchors and chains can damage a sensitive coral reef – the home of many marine creatures. Remember “millenniums to grow, seconds to destroy” when talking about coral reefs. Anchors can also destroy seagrass beds.
- Navigating in shallow water and running aground can:
  - stir up sediments and scar seagrass beds
  - cause damage to your propeller, hull and engine.
- Operating at high speed on mangrove areas:
  - disturbs wildlife
  - affects marine organisms nursery grounds.
- Excessive wake in sensitive areas can cause damage and erosion to shorelines and habitats.
- Animals such as manatees and sea turtles can be scarred or killed by inattentive boaters. They can also be put under a great deal of stress by observers who do not respect the animals' need for space.



### Boating Accident Report Form



### Vessel Accidents And Casualties...What The Law Requires You To Do!

- ◆ An operator involved in a boating accident must stop his or her vessel immediately at the scene of the accident and:
  - Give assistance to anyone injured in the accident or minimize any danger caused by the accident, unless doing so would seriously endanger his or her vessel or passengers.
  - Give his or her name, address and identifying number of his or her vessel in writing to anyone injured from the accident and to the owner of any damaged property.
- ◆ The operator must also file an accident report with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources if as a result of the accident:
  - A person dies or disappears or...
  - A person is injured or...
  - Damage to the vessel and other property exceeds \$100.
- ◆ Accident report forms are available from the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources.

### Enforcement

The boating laws of the U.S. Virgin Islands are enforced by all peace officers of the U.S. Virgin Islands, employees of the Department of Planning & Natural Resources, U.S. Coast Guard officers, and any other law enforcement officers.

- ◆ An operator must stop his or her vessel when signaled to do so by an officer. It is illegal to fail to stop or to try to elude the officer.
- ◆ The officer has the authority to stop and board your vessel in order to check for compliance with U.S. Virgin Islands territorial laws and federal laws.



All peace officers of the U.S. Virgin Islands, employees of the Department of Planning & Natural Resources, U.S. Coast Guard officers, and any other law enforcement officers have the right to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with territorial and federal laws.

### Homeland Security Restrictions

Recreational boaters have a role in keeping our waterways safe and secure.

- ◆ Violators of the restrictions below can expect a quick and severe response.
  - Do not approach within 100 yards, and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Naval vessel. If you need to pass within 100 yards of a U.S. Naval vessel for safe passage, you must contact the U.S. Naval vessel or the Coast Guard escort vessel on VHF-FM channel 16.
  - Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise-line or petroleum facilities. Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc.
  - Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel.
- ◆ Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary. Report all activities that seem suspicious to the local authorities, the Coast Guard, or the port or marina security.