

# **NSW Maritime Authority**

## **Waterskiing, Aquaplaning and Paraflying**

### **The Vessel**

Must have current registration  
Must have a minimum crew of two - the driver and an observer  
Must have a capacity plate  
Must carry appropriate safety equipment

### **The Driver**

Must hold a General Boat Licence  
Is responsible for the safety of the boat and towed persons and for maintaining the minimum distances off required by both the boat and the skier(s)

### **The Observer**

Must be at least 16 years of age or the holder of a Young Adult Licence  
Must suffer no hearing or sight disabilities which will affect the performance of observation duties  
Has the prime responsibility of observing the towed person(s) and reporting all matters affecting them to the driver. Tells the driver about other vessels approaching from behind. Should be familiar with the standard hand signals

### **The Skier**

No more than 3 skiers can be towed at once  
Must maintain the minimum distances off, and when returning to shore must do so safely

### **Blood/Alcohol Limits**

The operator of a vessel includes anyone steering or exercising control over the course or direction of a vessel and may include a waterskier or aquaplaner.

Permissible concentration of alcohol limits for an operator are as follows:  
commercial vessel operators less than 0.02  
recreational vessel operators under 18 Y/O less than 0.02  
recreational vessel operators 18 Y/O or over less than 0.05

### **Distances Off**

When towing keep both the vessel and the towed person at least:

30 metres from vessels not towing skiers, the shore, jetties, moorings, pump inlets, bridges

60 metres from persons in the water (fallen skiers and aquaplaners, swimmers)

If towing aerial equipment (e.g. paraflaying) keep both the vessel, towed person and equipment at least:

300 metres from any bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure

60 metres from the shore, structures or persons

When not towing, and travelling at over 10 knots (i.e. planing) keep at least 30 metres from other vessels, persons, structures or objects.

[View the Queensland Transport parasailing code](#)

## **Personal Watercraft Code of Conduct**

Personal watercraft (PWC) is the term used to describe craft with trade names such as Jet Skis, Waverunners and Sea Doos. Regardless of the type of PWC, it is important for operators to remember that PWC are a type of power boat, and are subject to regulations and laws. PWC differ from other vessels in that they are highly manoeuvrable. If used in a careless manner, PWC can present a danger to the rider, other people using our waterways and the environment.

If you are a PWC licence holder or owner, or are planning to purchase a PWC or obtain a PWC licence, it is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the PWC Regulations.

### **PWC Drivers Licence**

To operate a PWC you must have a PWC licence. To obtain a PWC licence, or to upgrade an existing General Boating Licence, you must attend a NSW Maritime Office or complete a seminar and successfully answer PWC licence test questions (a fee applies).

On 1 January 2000, the Government introduced a number of changes to the Water Traffic Regulations - NSW, in relation to the management and operation of personal watercraft (PWC) on NSW navigable waters.

## Registration

All PWC MUST be registered if used on NSW waterways.

Registration numbers, not less than 100mm high, must be displayed on both sides of the craft (not on the central control arm).

Registration numbers must stand out against any decals and striping on the PWC and be clearly visible when the vessel is underway.

## PWC Operating Restrictions

PWC may be prohibited or have restrictions placed on their speed and/or driving pattern as follows:

### PWC Exclusion Zones

The operation of PWC is prohibited in certain areas such as:

Sydney harbour, including the waters of all tidal bays, river and their tributaries (includes Parramatta River, Middle Harbour and Lane Cove River)

Darook Park at Port Hacking

La Perouse at Botany Bay.

Check with your local NSW Maritime office.

## PWC Restriction Zones

This zone encompasses the bays, rivers and other waterways within the Sydney basin area which lies between Port Hacking, Wamberal and the Blue Mountains but does not include water off the coast.

PWC are not permitted to be used for 'irregular driving' within 200m of the shoreline of the above. Examples of 'irregular driving' are:

driving in a circle or other pattern

weaving or diverting

surfing down or jumping over or across any swell, wave or wash.

This means that PWC are required to be operated generally in a straight line within 200m of the shoreline.



## **All Other Navigable Waters**

In all other navigable waters, other than (1) and (2), and including all of the NSW coast, 'irregular driving' is not permitted within 200m of the shoreline where one or more dwellings are visible within 200m of that shore.

**Note:** Re (2) and (3) above, 'irregular driving' does not apply when a PWC is towing a waterskier or aquaplaner. However, as soon as towing activity is finished the no irregular driving rule comes into effect.

After Sunset

Riding a PWC between sunset and sunrise is prohibited regardless of whether navigation lights are fitted.

## **Behaviour Stickers**

PWC operators are required to display a "behaviour sticker" on their craft. This sticker summarises the key safety issues that must be followed by PWC operators when on the water.

The sticker must be affixed to the PWC near the controls where it can be easily seen by the driver.

## **Obey The Signs**

In some areas, PWC may be prohibited from activity or have restrictions placed on the speed at which they may operate. These areas may be appropriately marked by signs or notices (see right), either in, or in the vicinity of the area concerned.

Penalties

There are on-the-spot fines of up to \$1500 for the offence of navigating a PWC in an exclusion zone. These fines are distinct from the one applying to the irregular driving prohibition within 200 metre zone, which will attract a fine of \$160.

The other regulations are:

a \$320 on-the-spot fine for not observing the correct distance from people in the water

licence cancellation for one year after two safety offences in any two year period

in addition to the current fine of \$800 for a first offence of riding a PWC without a licence, the offender will be disqualified from holding any form of NSW boat licence for two years

a \$1200 on-the-spot penalty and disqualification for four years for a second offence of riding a PWC without a licence, with a third offence costing \$1500 and disqualification for life from any form of NSW boat licence, and any subsequent offences attracting a fine of \$1500

a \$320 on-the-spot penalty applies to the owner or driver of any PWC vessel between sunset and sunrise.

### **Distance Off Keep Your Distance**

When driving a PWC at 10 knots or more, you must keep 60 metres away from:

a person in the water; and

small, non-powered vessels such as sailing craft (4 metres or less in length).

A PWC being operated at 10 knots or more must be kept 30 metres from:

any power driven vessel (including other PWC);

any river bank or shore and structures such as jetties or moorings; and

any sailing vessel over 4 metres in length

**Note:** When operating a PWC at any speed, you must keep a distance of 60 metres from all boundaries of a designated surf zone/swimming area.

A designated surf zone is defined as the area extending 500 metres out from shore between surf patrol flags or signs. A swimming area is defined as the area extending 60 metres out from shore between signs for swimmers.

PWC must not operate in these zones or within 60 metres on either side of the flags or signs marking such zones. The only time you can enter a surf or swimming zone whilst operating a PWC is when you use your PWC to rescue a person from danger.

### **Distances to be kept when Towing**

When towing a water skier or aquaplaner at any speed, you must keep the PWC and the person

being towed a distance of 60 metres from:

all boundaries of a designated surf zone/swimming area;

a person in the water; and

small, non-powered vessels such as sailing craft (4 metres or less in length).

When towing a water skier or aquaplaner at any speed, you must also keep the PWC and the person being towed a distance of 30 metres away from:

any powered vessel (including other PWC);

any river bank or shore and any structures such as jetties or moorings;  
and

any sailing vessel over 4 metres in length.

### **Safety Equipment**

It is compulsory for the operator and passenger of a PWC to wear a suitable personal flotation device (PFD).

On enclosed waters an approved PFD 1, 2 or PFD 3 are compulsory.

On offshore waters an approved PFD 1 or 2 are compulsory.

The PFDs must have the stamp of approval of Standards Australia on the inside.

### **Noise Annoys**

One of the most common complaints received about PWC is NOISE.

Be considerate, particularly at these times:

early in the morning (noise travels further in calm conditions); and  
when winds are blowing towards residential areas.

Respect the peace of other people and wildlife. Even if your craft is relatively quiet, it becomes offensive noise if you run it early in the morning or stay too long in the same area. The less number of complaints, the greater the chance to enjoy the sport.

#### **Behaviour at Boat Ramps**

Like other craft, people operating PWC should observe some basic rules when near boat ramps. It is important to keep to a speed of less than 10 knots when within 30m of the shore or ramp. This will avoid causing a nuisance, annoyance and danger to others.

High wash created near a ramp can lead to injuries to people attempting to launch and retrieve their craft.

It is also important to be patient if there is a queue or others waiting at the ramp. Queue jumping causes frustration and annoyance.

So, when using a ramp consider the following:  
slow down  
minimise wash  
be aware if your noise could annoy others, if so, idle away until well clear before accelerating  
wait your turn to either launch or retrieve your craft  
use care, courtesy and common sense.

### **PWC Operation on Sydney Harbour**

Effective from 1 October 2001, is a prohibition on PWC from being operated in the entire area of Sydney Harbour. Sydney Harbour includes the waters of all tidal bays, rivers and their tributaries (including Parramatta River, Middle Harbour and Lane Cove River). Penalties for a breach of the PWC exclusion zone in Sydney Harbour apply and are as follows:

First Offence - \$800 'on-the-spot' fine and disqualification from holding any NSW boat licence for two years.

Second Offence - \$1200 'on-the-spot' fine and disqualification for four years.

Third and subsequent Offences - \$1500 fine and disqualification from holding any NSW boat licence for life.

From 1 October 2001 PWC will also be prohibited from operating between the hours of sunset and sunrise, regardless if navigation lights are fitted. A \$320 'on-the-spot' fine applies.

Penalties associated with riding a PWC whilst unlicensed have also increased and are now in line with the penalties for operating a PWC in Sydney Harbour.