

# Waterskiing

**Waterskiing involves towing people behind a boat on skis, bare feet, inflatable toys, boards and parasailing. All kinds of boats are used for waterskiing, mainly dinghies, skiboats and personal watercraft.**

## Know your responsibilities

The owner/driver of the boat is responsible for the safety of others and has a general safety obligation to:

- make sure the boat is safe and is capable of towing skiers
- take all the right safety equipment for the skiers and passengers
- operate the boat as safely as possible and check the area is safe for skiing by noting the depth of water, width to make turns safely and any hazards.

## Boat identification

All boats used for waterskiing must have clearly visible registration symbols at least 200mm high on both sides and legible from 30 metres. Personal watercraft registration symbols must be at least 100mm high. Registration labels must be placed on the exterior of the boat on the port (left) side adjacent to the registration symbols. Registration symbols must also be clearly visible in a contrasting colour to your craft and must be easily seen while your craft is underway.

On the  
spot fine  
**\$200**

## Licences

The boat driver must have a valid marine licence while towing a skier(s). An unlicensed person cannot operate a boat involved in skiing, even if they are accompanied by a licensed operator.

Valid marine licences include:

- recreational marine driver licence
- speed boat licence
- personal watercraft (for example jet ski)
- current commercial marine licences
- current interstate boating licences.

To obtain a recreational marine driver licence you must be:

- aged 16 years or older
- provide satisfactory proof of identity
- undertake an approved BoatSafe course.

BoatSafe is the competency-based, uniform licence training and assessment scheme for recreational boat licences. You must complete a Medical Fitness Disclosure Statement and present it to the BoatSafe training provider at enrolment for the BoatSafe course. If you are unable to complete the Medical Fitness Disclosure Statement due to concern about your medical fitness, you should contact Maritime Safety Queensland on (07) 3120 7354.

For more information or for a copy of the Medical Fitness Disclosure Statement go to the 'Licensing' link at [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au).

## Safety equipment

It is the responsibility of the owner/driver of the boat to carry safety equipment. These requirements are determined by the length of the boat, area of operation and the number of people on board.

On the  
spot fine  
**\$200**

All boats operating beyond smooth and partially smooth waters must carry a 406 MHz digital EPIRB if more than two nautical miles from land. You must register your 406 MHz beacon with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). You must also advise of any change of ownership and boat details. Registration is free and can result in a more efficient search and rescue effort.

Battery World, in an agreement with AMSA is providing a collection service of the redundant 121.5 MHz EPIRBs at no cost. By dropping your old EPIRB into a Battery World store you can be certain that the unit is decommissioned correctly and the harmful components recycled to reduce their environmental impact.

EPIRBs must be kept clean and in good condition. The battery must be replaced before the expiry date and, at this time, must be serviced by the manufacturer or an authorised agent. If the unit is unserviceable, dispose of it thoughtfully by returning it either to the manufacturer or the agent.

Flares must be regularly inspected (expiry date is three years from manufacture) and stowed in a readily accessible position in a watertight container away from heat.

Personal flotation devices (PFDs) are to be worn by all skiers:

- PFD type 2, 3 or a wetsuit with inbuilt flotation approved as a PFD type 3 in smooth water limits
- PFD type 2 in partially smooth water limits.

There must be a PFD of the appropriate size and type on board the boat for every person over 12 months.

For detailed information on safety equipment requirements, refer to Maritime Safety Queensland's *Licensing, Registration and Safety Equipment* fact sheet.

## Waterski restricted areas

Waterskiing is prohibited in certain areas usually designated by signs. These areas are known as restricted areas and are outlined in the Waterways section of the Maritime Safety Queensland website.

Waterskiing is also restricted:

- in all six knot zones including harbours and marinas
- within 30 metres of people in the water, anchored boats, jetties, pontoons or boat ramps

- if towing a skier with a personal watercraft, within 60 metres of people in the water, the boundary of a bathing reserve, anchored boats, jetties, pontoons or boat ramps.

Waterskiing is permitted in all other areas, however it is the responsibility of the driver to ensure the area is safe and suitable for skiing.

## Observers

A person must not operate a boat towing a skier unless the skier is wearing a PFD type 2 or 3 and there is another person (an observer) on board. The observer must be more than 12 years old and competent to watch the skier at all times.

They must immediately tell the operator if:

- there is a danger, or potential for danger, to the skier
- the skier signals the observer
- the skier has a fall or a mishap
- a vessel is approaching from behind.

## Direction of travel

When waterskiing in lakes, rivers and creeks, boats should travel in an anticlockwise pattern.

In a few locations local customs and conditions may dictate the direction of travel. Always check before skiing.

## Safety tips

- The tip of the ski must always be showing before the boat starts.
- After a fall, a skier should always clasp hands over head if unhurt until seen by the observer and boat driver.
- No signal from a fallen skier calls for immediate action by the observer and driver.
- A fallen skier getting into a boat should leave their skis in the water and swim towards the boat.
- The driver should always stop the engine(s) before picking up skiers in the water.
- Skiers should enter a boat over the stern whenever possible.

## Reporting marine incidents

Many minor and more serious accidents occur involving water skiers and people being towed behind boats on a variety of devices.

Research has found that many of these are attended to through a visit to hospital but never reported to Maritime Safety Queensland. It is essential marine incidents are reported so that problem safety areas can be identified.

It is the boat owner's or skipper's responsibility to report these accidents as a marine incident through the appropriate channels and forms. Failing to do so could result in prosecution.

Note: Fines are correct at time of printing, but may change without notice.



## Recognised waterski signals

The following signals are suggestions only. The observer and skiers should agree to the signals beforehand.



**Start:** Nod the head.



**Faster:** Open palm facing up – motion up-wards or nod head if both hands are in use.



**Slower:** Open palm facing down – motion down-wards or shake head if both hands are in use.



**Speed required:** Use the number of fingers for kilometres required. For example, 23 – first two fingers then three fingers.



**Speed OK:** Arm upraised with thumb and forefinger making an 'O' – OK signal.



**Turns:** Palm vertical, curving motion of hand in direction required.



**Whip off:** Point to direction and then give quick circular motions with hand.



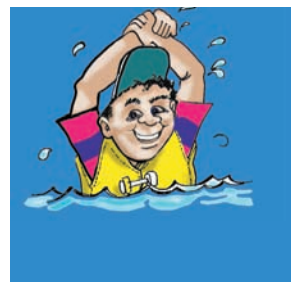
**Stop:** Hand up with fingers outstretched.



**Back to dock:** Point with downward swing of the arm.



**Cut motor:** Finger drawn across throat in cutting motion.



**OK after fall:** Skier should clasp hands over head if unhurt, until seen by the boat driver.