

SUMMARY OF FEDERAL EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR RECREATIONAL BOATS

Federal Motorboat Requirements as of Dec 2024		Vessel Length (in feet)			
Specific requirements determined by Institution's Boat Safety Program. (page 1 of 2)		<16	16<26	26<40	40<65
Equipment					
Certificate of Number (State Registration)	All undocumented vessels equipped with propulsion machinery must be state registered. Certificate of Number must be on board when the vessel is in use. Note that some states require all vessels to be registered.	X	X	X	X
State Numbering	(a) Plain block letters/numbers, not less than 3 inches in height, must be affixed on each side of the forward half of the vessel, in a contrasting color to the background, and read from left to right.	X	X	X	X
	(b) State validation sticker(s) must be affixed within 6 inches of the registration number. Note: check with your local boating agency for specific state requirements.	X	X	X	X
Certificate of Documentation	Applies only to "Documented" vessels:				
	(a) Original and current certificate must be on board.		X	X	X
	(b) Vessel name/hailing port must be marked on exterior part of hull in letters not less than 4 inches in height.		X	X	X
Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)	(c) Official Number must be permanently affixed on interior structure in numbers not less than 3 inches in height.		X	X	X
	(a) One USCG approved wearable PFD per person on board. Wearable PFDs must be readily accessible. *If using a Type V PFD, it must be worn at all times and used for the activity specified on the label.	X	X	X	X
Visual Distress Signals (VDS)	(b) In addition, must carry one throwable PFD. Throwable PFDs must be immediately available for use.		X	X	X
	(a) Visual distress signals are only required to be carried on board when the vessel is operating between sunset and sunrise. If operating at night, one electric distress light or three combination day/night red flares are required.	X			
Fire Extinguishers	(b) Boats are required to carry: One orange distress flag and one electric distress light Or, three hand-held or floating orange smoke signals and one electric distress light Or, three combination day/night red flares; hand-held, meteor, or parachute type.		X	X	X
	If your boat is less than 26' feet in length, uses an outboard engine, fuel is in a portable fuel tank, and there are no areas within the boat where fuel vapors can be trapped, the boat is not required to have a fire extinguisher.				
	(a) One 5-B or One 10-B. Note: fixed system equals one 5-B or one 10-B.	X	X		
Ventilation	(b) Two 5-B, or two 10-B, or one 20-B. Note: fixed system equals one 5-B or one 10-B.			X	
	(c) Three 5-B, or three 10-B, or one 20-B and one 5-B or one 10-B. Note: fixed system equals one 5-B or one 10-B.				X
	*B-I and B-II extinguishers are acceptable if boat model is 1953-2017, and extinguisher is <12 years old.				
Backfire Flame Arrestor	(a) All vessels built after April 25, 1940 that are gasoline-fueled with enclosed engine and/or fuel tank compartments must have natural ventilation (at least two ducts fitted with cowls).	X	X	X	X
	(b) In addition, a vessel built after July 31, 1980 must have a rated power exhaust blower.	X	X	X	X
Engine Cut-Off Switch	Required on gasoline engines installed after April 25, 1940, except outboard motors.	X	X		
	Required to be worn anytime the motorboat is operating on plane or greater than displacement speed. Vessels whose main helms are inside an enclosed cabin are exempt.	X	X		

**Federal Motorboat Requirements as of Dec 2024.
Specific requirements determined by Institution's
Boat Safety Program. (page 2 of 2)**

Vessel Length (in feet)

Equipment		Vessel Length (in feet)			
		<16	16<26	26<40	40<65
Sound Producing Devices	(a) A vessel of less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) must, at a minimum, have some means of making an efficient sound signal – i.e. handheld air horn or athletic whistle. A human voice/sound is not acceptable.	X	X	X	X
	(b) A vessel 39.4 feet (12 meters) or greater, must have a sound-signaling appliance capable of producing an efficient sound signal, audible for 1/2 mile, with a 4- to 6-second duration.			>40'	X
Navigational Lights	Required to be displayed from sunset to sunrise and in areas of restricted visibility.	X	X	X	X
Oil Pollution Placard	(a) Placard must be at least 5 by 8 inches and made of durable material.			X	X
	(b) Placard must be posted in each machinery space or at the bilge control station.			X	X
Garbage Placard	(a) Placard must be at least 4 by 9 inches and made of durable material			X	X
	(b) Displayed in a conspicuous place notifying all on board of the discharge restrictions.			X	X
Marine Sanitation Devices	If there is an installed toilet, the vessel must have an operable MSD Type I, II, or III.	X	X	X	X
Capacity Plate	Boats <20' must display a capacity plate defining the safe load limits.	X	<20'		
Navigation Rules (Inland Only)	The operator of a vessel 39.4 feet (12 meters) or greater while operating on U.S. inland waters must have on board a copy of these rules.			>40'	X