



101 Critical Days of Summer

Safety Tip #8 - Jet Ski Safety



Jet skiing may be fun. But just like any other motor vehicle on water, it can impose great danger if used improperly. So to assure that you will get a 100% fun while eliminating the possible danger. The best weapon against jet ski accidents and other personal watercraft accidents is knowledge. Indeed, most serious jet ski accidents occur when the rider is someone who has either borrowed or rented the jet ski. In other words, unfamiliarity with the technique and etiquette of riding a jet ski can endanger your health!

By staying informed about the risks associated with jet skis you can minimize your chances of being involved in an accident. For instance, it is important to know that the vast majority of jet ski accidents involve a collision with another vessel. This indicates that too few jet ski operators are remaining vigilant and alert while out on the water. Besides inattention, there are a few other common causes of jet ski accidents, each of which is avoidable with a little care and experience.

For one thing, too few jet ski operators know the limitations of their craft in terms of speed and stopping distance. Many riders assume that a jet ski can stop abruptly, when in fact it takes considerable time and distance to bring a personal watercraft to a complete halt. Another common cause of jet ski accidents is ignorance of the relation between power and steering in a jet ski. When the engine of a jet ski is off, the vessel will continue to travel in the same direction regardless of which way the handlebars are turned. In other words, a jet ski cannot be steered when the power is off.

There are also a number of common "tricks" that are forbidden by law because they increase the potential for danger. In almost every jurisdiction in the United States, it is illegal to do the following things on a jet ski: make sharp turns near another vessel; jump another vessel's wake within 100 feet of that or any other vessel; follow a boat too closely; and chase another jet ski in small circles. All of these activities, especially combined with inexperience and inattention, can result in serious or fatal accidents.

Here are some safety tips you should follow:

Learn how to operate the machine before hopping in...

It may be pretty basic but the simplicity of its look combined with your excitement to take the waters keep people from neglecting this. It may operate the same as a motorcycle or a snowmobile but it is still advisable to learn how to use the Jet Ski before you get on. Make sure your personal water craft (PWC) is properly maintained and functioning at a top level.

Learn how to swim...

Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. This includes anyone participating in any water sport or boating activity. The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability. To enroll in a swim course, contact your local Red Cross chapter.

Wear life preservers...

This is a must. Like helmets when you ride a motorcycle, the Law requires anyone who uses jet ski to wear life jackets. It doesn't matter if you know how to swim or not. If you are going to drive or ride a jet ski, you must wear life jacket. Aside from life jacket, you should be in proper attire when riding a jet ski. These are gloves, goggles, and a wet suit.

Never ride close to another watercraft...

Most jet ski accidents are caused by collisions, so in order to prevent this from happening, stay at least 100 feet away from another watercraft, divers, rafts, and swimmers. Most beaches and lakes have set of rules with regards to the use of jet skis so you should know them first.



Never use the jet ski at night...

You might wonder why riding at night should be avoided. Well, here is the main reason: open sea is dangerous at night. Never attempt ride on pitch-black waters. You will never know if there are other watercrafts on your way and you will never know the behavior of the water at night. And another thing: in case you get in the middle of the ocean, you have to wait for the sun to rise before anyone can see you.

Never ride a jet ski without lanyard...

What is a lanyard? A lanyard automatically cuts the engine in case you fall from the jet ski. It will spare you from swimming back at the shore and at the same time save your machine from going away alone.

Be conscious of the rights of others...

Never let your jet ski become annoying to others. In other words: be mindful that there are other people who don't want to be disturbed by the sound or the wave your jet ski is making. Follow the traffic pattern of the waterway. Obey no-wake and speed zones.

Use extreme caution around swimmers and surfers. Run your PWC at a slow speed until the craft is away from shore, swimming areas, and docks. Avoid passing close to other boats and jumping wakes. This behavior is dangerous and often illegal.

Laws and regulations...

Know your local laws and regulations. Some states have special laws governing the use of PWC which address operations, registration and licensing requirements, education, required safety equipment and minimum ages. No person under 16 years old may operate a personal watercraft (PWC), including jet-skis in Maine, Mass or New Hampshire: <http://www.mainerec.com/boating1.asp?Category=22&PageNum=22>
http://www.boat-ed.com/nh/course/p4-12_reqspectopwc.htm,
<http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dle/pwcsafety.htm>.

Never ride alone...

Ride with a buddy. PWCs should always travel in groups of two or three. You never know when an emergency might occur.

Never drink and drive...

Alcohol and operating a PWC doesn't mix. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination. For the same reasons it is dangerous to operate an automobile, people should not operate a boat or PWC while drinking alcohol.

Here is an excellent article on how to ride a jet ski:

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/28533/how_to_ride_a_jet_ski_safely.html

Here's a handbook with lots of information: <http://www.boat-ed.com/nh/handbook/>

On line safety school for Maine and Mass: <http://www.pwcsafetyschool.com/>

Another PWC Course: <http://www.boatus.org/onlinecourse/watercraftcourse.htm>

More information: <http://www.safetyforum.com/pwc/>

Be Safe Out There, You Aren't The Only One On The Water!!
- Your Risk Management Staff!!

This document was derived from multiple sources. Sources are available upon request in the 157 ARW/SE Office.

