

SAFER BOATING GUIDE

Prep your boat | Check your gear | Know the rules



Kia Mataara

Know the ways of the water
before you let go of the land

**SaferTM
Boating**



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THE BOATING SAFETY CODE



**WEAR YOUR
LIFEJACKET**



**TAKE TWO WATERPROOF
WAYS TO CALL FOR HELP**



**CHECK THE MARINE
WEATHER FORECAST**



AVOID ALCOHOL



**BE A RESPONSIBLE
SKIPPER**

NEARLY HALF OF ALL KIWIS GO BOATING

New Zealand is a boaties' paradise with over 15,000 km of coast, waterways and lakes.

Nearly half of all adult Kiwis go boating each year with their friends and families. Therefore, it's vital that if you own a boat, you know how to prepare your boat, check your gear and understand the rules.

If you're new to boating, learn the lingo and get expert advice on what type of vessel and equipment best suits your needs.

FREE APPS AND ONLINE ADVICE



saferboating.org.nz

Safe boating tips.



YouTube search
'boating safety in nz'

Videos on safer boating. Learn how to launch and safely cross a bar.



metservice.com

Marine forecasts and tide information.



MarineMate app

Local bylaws, boat ramps and boating info.



Coastguard app

The go-to app for every water user to have in their pocket. Check your local marine weather forecast, up-to-the-minute wind speeds and direction and log your trip at the touch of a button!



On average 16 boaties die each year on New Zealand's waters.

BOAT BUYING: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When buying a new boat, choose one with a Compliance Plate (CPC) – this is a safety certificate from Coastguard New Zealand and the Marine Industry Association.

If buying second hand, get the boat checked out by an expert first.

Keep in mind:

- It must be seaworthy.
- It should float if capsized.
- Know what sort of load it can take.
- Know what conditions it should be used in.
- Know what activities it's suitable for.



If you have a boat that's less than 6m you need to be particularly careful – most accidents and fatalities involve small craft.

THE BUCK STOPS WITH THE SKIPPER. THAT'S YOU!

No matter how big or small your boat is, the skipper is always responsible for the safety of the vessel and all the people on board. You need to know the rules and be aware of the risks because if something goes wrong, you can be prosecuted.

Skippers must:

- Have one lifejacket in the right size and type for everyone onboard; and ensure they're worn in times of heightened risk, such as crossing a bar.
- Check you have the right safety equipment for the trip, including two types of communication that are waterproof.
- Make sure everyone knows what safety gear is on board, where it's stowed and how it works.
- Check the marine weather forecast before going out to sea, or the mountain forecast if on inland waters. Get regular updates while on the water and check the tides.
- Be at least 15 years old.
- Keep a good lookout at all times, especially at speed.
- Avoid alcohol while boating.
- Coastguard Boating Education – Knowledge is Power. [Watch a video](#)

MAKE BETTER DECISIONS ON THE WATER

Coastguard Boating Education is the leading provider of boating courses throughout NZ, offering courses to suit all abilities, types of boating and training pathways.



BEGINNING BOATING
An exciting FREE online course for new boaters.



DAY SKIPPER
Gain essential boating knowledge relevant to all boat types.



MARITIME VHF OPERATOR'S CERTIFICATE
The minimum legal requirement for operating a Marine VHF radio.



BOATMASTER
Extend your knowledge with this comprehensive course.



Take a look at our website for the full range of specialty courses
0800 40 80 90 | www.boatingeducation.org.nz



Most fatal accidents happen suddenly, especially on small boats, and could have been avoided or managed.

CHOOSE LIFE: CHOOSE THE RIGHT LIFEJACKET

Over two-thirds of boating fatalities may have been prevented if lifejackets were worn.

Wear a lifejacket at all times – it could make the difference of a great day out with whanau and friends to being a preventable tragedy. Make sure you have the right life jacket for the activity you are planning.

To find out the right lifejacket for you go to www.maritimenz.govt.nz and search for lifejackets.



IPSOS suggests around 80% wear a lifejacket. A lot of people still die with a lifejacket on, they need to be the right one worn properly.

‘CHOOSE A LIFEJACKET WITH A CROTCH STRAP – ESPECIALLY WHEN IT’S ROUGH’

Inshore lifejackets may ride up in rough water, so wearing a crotch strap is recommended, especially for children.

Inflatable lifejackets are available in pull-to-inflate or water activated styles. They’re suitable for boating and fishing, and are very comfortable. Inspect the gas canisters in your inflatable lifejackets, to make sure they’re not corroded, before wearing each time.

Buoyancy vests are designed for activities like kayaking, sailing and water skiing. However, they won’t turn an unconscious person to a face-up floating position in the water.

Rescue buoys include things like life buoys, life belts and buoyant cushions. They should be brightly coloured and fitted with a light, whistle or flag for marking a person’s position in the water.



For more information on servicing your inflatable, search ‘boating safety in nz’ on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

OR click [here](#) for more information on lifejackets



Inshore lifejackets



Inflatable lifejackets



Buoyancy vests



Half of people who could have been saved by a lifejacket weren’t wearing one.

ARE YOU READY?

IF IN
DOUBT,
DON'T
GO OUT!

PREP YOUR BOAT

Maintain your boat and give it an annual check

- Ensure the **bung** is in good condition.
- Check the **hull** for damage.
- Ensure **bilges** are clean and dry.
- Test steering for stiffness.
- Clean the **fuel filter** and check **fuel lines** for leaks.
- Charge your **batteries**.
- Test your **electrical equipment** and lights are working.
- Check for fuel smells and **ventilate your boat** before starting your engine.
- Check the **outboard, pull cord, kill switch, throttle** and **gear shift** are all working.
- Start the **engine** and ensure cooling water is flowing.



CHECK YOUR GEAR

Essential safety equipment checklist

- **Lifejackets:** One suitable fitted lifejacket for everyone on board.
- **Communication equipment:** Two ways to call for help – VHF radio, distress beacons (EPIRB or PLB), cell phone in a waterproof bag and flares.
- **Navigation:** Charts, plotter, GPS, depth sounder and navigation lights.
- **Alternative power:** A spare outboard motor or oars.
- **Bailing system:** A bucket, bailer or bilge pump.
- **Anchor:** Suitable anchor with 3-6m chain. Attach to a non-floating rope and secure to the boat.
- **Fire extinguishers:** Store within reach of the deck or cockpit.
- **First aid kit:** Basic kit for minor accidents or injuries.
- **Torch:** Spare bulb and batteries.
- **Throwline:** For person overboard.
- **Fuel:** Take 1/3 to get there, 1/3 to return, 1/3 in reserve.

KNOW THE RULES

Know the rules of the sea

- **Skippers are responsible** for the safety of their boat and passengers. You can be prosecuted, so learn how to boat safely.
- Take an **online Day Skipper** course with Coastguard Boating Education.
- Drivers must be **15 years and over** to operate a power boat.
- Know the **give way rules** as they apply to your vessel.
- Keep a **good lookout** at all times, especially at speed.
- Go **less than 5 knots** 200m within the shore or near a dive boat and within 50m of swimmers and other boats. Observe the 5 knot rule.
- **If towing you need an observer** – that's three people when water skiing or wake boarding.
- Display the correct **lights at night** so you can be seen.
- If you can hear and see a **large ship** get out of its way fast.
- **Download MarineMate** free for local bylaws nationwide.

TAKING EXTRA CARE IN SMALL BOATS

Only some maritime rules cover rowing dinghies, small boats, paddleboats or stand-up paddle craft – so courtesy and good seamanship is expected.

- The boat in the best position to give way should do so (usually the fastest or more maneuverable boat).
- Signal your change early so the other boat can respond.
- Powerboats give way to rowing and sailing boats.
- Lifejackets should be worn at all times.
- Between sunset and sunrise display a light bright enough to be seen 2 nautical miles (about 4km) away.
- Fit buoyancy to all dinghies and small sail boats.



Most accidents in small boats (less than 4m) are people falling overboard and not being able to get back on. Have a plan for if you end up in the water – can you get back on or call for help?

WATCH THE WEATHER

Always use a marine weather forecast – land forecasts don't take into account wind speed over water or wave size.

If on inland waterways and lakes, a land or mountain weather forecast will be better.

- Download the free MetService Marine App.
- Visit metservice.co.nz
- Listen to NOWCASTING (weather information on VHF Channel 19, 20 and 79). Download the Coastguard NOWCASTING app for weather and tides.
- Tune into Maritime NZ Maritime Radio for forecasts on Channel 16.

SHARE YOUR PLANS

Make sure someone on shore knows your plans.

Tell a friend or family member and use your VHF radio to file a trip report with your local Coastguard.

Mention where you're going, how many people are on board and when you expect to return.

Don't forget to cancel your trip report when you return safely. Be aware that a search will NOT be made if you fail to cancel your trip report – you'll still need to send a signal if you're in distress.



Coastguard app

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MetService

ALL THE
**MARINE FORECASTS
AND TIDES**
– PLUS HEAPS MORE
IN ONE HANDY APP

SEARCH:
'METSERVICE MARINE'
IN YOUR APP STORE



Adverse weather (waves in particular) play a role in many fatal accidents.

YOUR COMMUNICATION TOOLS: TAKE TWO!

The ability to communicate from your boat or the water is vital. If you can't call for help, no one can rescue you. Always carry at least **TWO** reliable ways to call for help that will work when wet.

Marine VHF radio

A waterproof marine VHF radio is the most reliable way of calling for help. You can issue a Mayday on a distress channel – Channel 16. Or contact your local Coastguard Radio station.

Check the maritime radio frequency wheel and Coastguard radio frequencies so you know what channels to use.



**IF YOU
CAN'T CALL
FOR HELP
NO-ONE CAN
RESCUE
YOU.**

Distress beacons

Set your beacon off in emergencies – it's the most effective way of letting people know that you need urgent help and where to find you. EPIRBs are the preferred beacons for boats, but PLBs on your person are ideal for run-abouts and other small vessels.

You're required by law to register your EPIRB or PLB and keep the details up-to-date so your rescuers can find you quickly. It's also important to check its battery life.



EPIRB (emergency position indication radio beacon)



PLB (personal locator beacon)

Cell phone

Keep your cell phone in a sealed waterproof lanyard bag, around your neck or in a secure pocket of your clothing. Save the battery for essential communication. (Older cell phones can be used in a bag, but not smart phones). You can call 111 if in distress. Be aware that you may not get cell phone coverage so always take another form of communication.



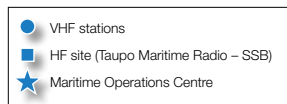
Flares and torches

Always carry torches and flares (we recommend red hand-held flares).



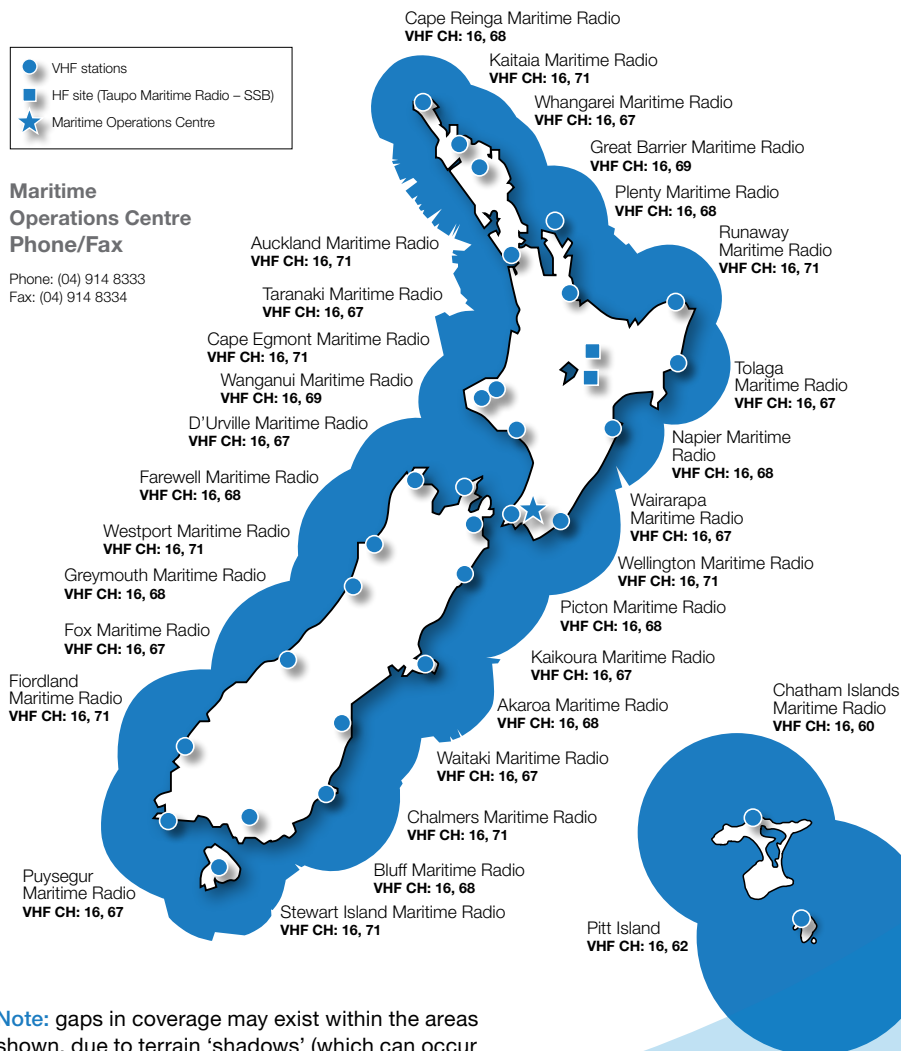
Most people die by ending up in the water unexpectedly with no way to call for help. You need a comms device on you if alone or in a small boat (<6m).

MARITIME RADIO VHF COVERAGE



Maritime Operations Centre Phone/Fax

Phone: (04) 914 8333
 Fax: (04) 914 8334



Note: gaps in coverage may exist within the areas shown, due to terrain 'shadows' (which can occur under cliffs close to the shore or in bays and fiords) and occasional system maintenance.

PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

Marine pollution laws are designed to keep our seas and waterways clean – and ensure that future generations get to experience what we enjoy today. Failing to respect these laws could see you fined, prosecuted and also lose the respect of your boating community.

Here are a few essentials:

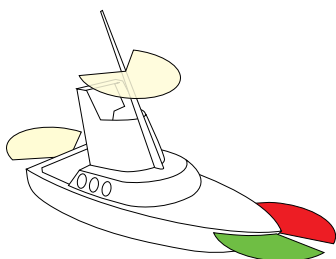
- Don't throw fishing gear overboard.
- Take all rubbish back to shore with you.
- Food scraps may be thrown overboard at least three miles from shore.
- Untreated sewage mustn't be discharged into the sea within 500m of the high water mark, within 500m of a marine farm, or in water less than 5m deep.
- Avoid spilling oil when refuelling your boat – use a sorbent pad around the fuel inlet.
- If you see an oil spill, immediately report it to the local authority or regional council.

LIGHTS

Your boat must display lights from sunset to sunrise and in rain and fog to help other boaties know which way you're heading. Not using lights could result in a fine.

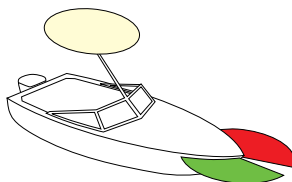
Powerboats over 12m

Need to display a masthead light, sidelights and sternlight.



Powerboats under 12m

May show all-round white light (instead of masthead light and sternlight) + sidelights.

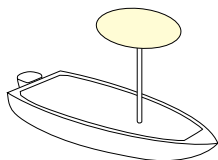


Anchor light

Every boat at anchor must show only a white light that is visible from all directions between sunset and sunrise.

Dinghies and kayaks under 7m in length

Must show a white light or torch.

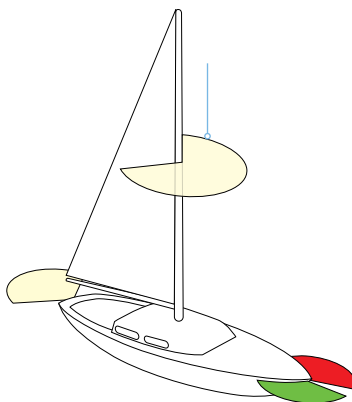


Sailing boats motoring or motor-sailing

Are considered to be powerboats and must display sidelights, a sternlight and a masthead light.

Masthead light

Masthead lights shine forward in a 225 degree arc and must be at least 1m above the sidelights.



LEARN THE LINGO

Get familiar with boating terminology:

1 Bow

The front end

2 Painter

A rope tied to the bow of a small boat

3 Port

The left side of the boat

4 Starboard

The right side

5 Freeboard

The height of a boat's deck above the water

6 Hull

The body of the boat

7 Cockpit

An open area with partial shelter

8 Stern

The back end

Cabin

Room

Bulkhead

An interior wall in a boat

Bilge

The lowest area inside a boat

Knot (Speed)

One nautical mile per hour (1.85 km/hr)

Windward

The upwind side of the vessel

Leeward

The downwind side of the vessel

Leeshore

A shore toward which the wind blows

Forward

Towards the bow of a boat

Aft

Towards the stern of a boat



WHO GIVES WAY?

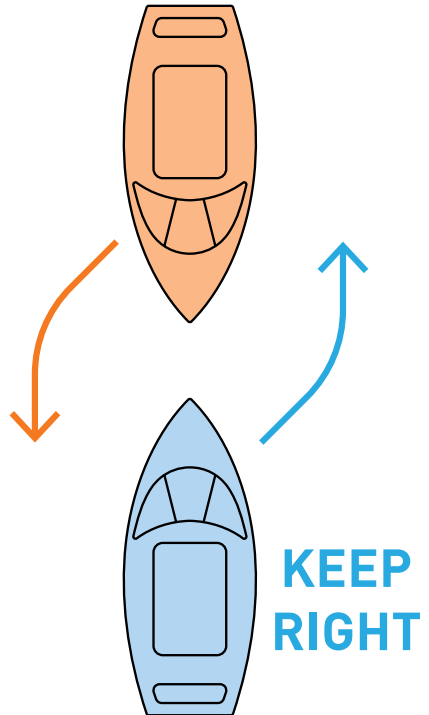
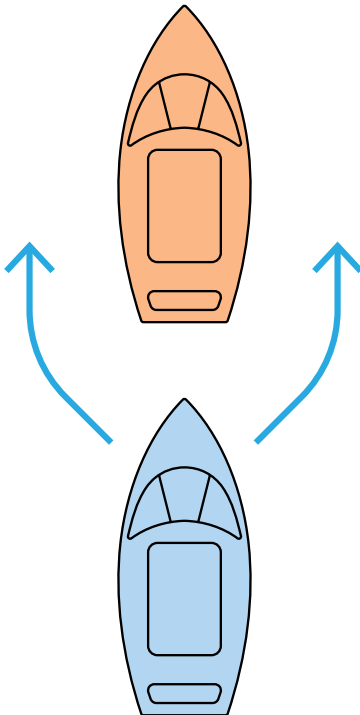
The 'give way' rules depend on what type of vessel you're on and the kind of boat you're approaching.

Overtaking – power and sail boats

All boats (sail or power) overtaking from astern need to keep clear until finally past the boat they are overtaking. Always remember that the boat in front might not be aware of your boat or your intentions.

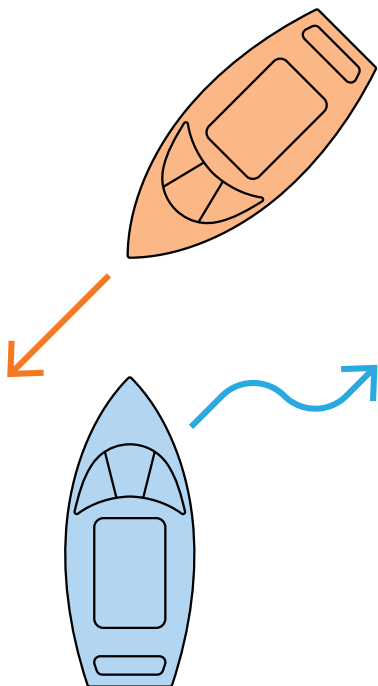
Powerboats vs powerboats

Powerboats meeting head on must each alter their course to starboard to pass on the port side of the other.



Crossing situation

When powerboats meet at an angle (crossing), the boat that has the other vessel to starboard (to the right) gives way. As on the road, give way to your right.



REMEMBER THE RULES

The 5 knot rule

All boats must travel at a safe speed and take into account boat traffic, weather and visibility.

Don't exceed 5 knots (a fast walking speed) if you're:

- Within 200m of the shore or a boat displaying a diver's flag.
- Within 50m of any other boat or swimmer.
- On a power boat if anyone has any part of their body outside the rails or over the edge of the deck.



IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE

Most boating accidents involve the skipper not having enough boating knowledge or experience.

Ignorance is no excuse – if you have an accident in breach of maritime rules, you may be liable for a heavy fine or prison sentence.

BUOYS AND BEACONS

These are the 'road signs' on the water. The meaning of each navigational buoy or beacon is found in its shape, symbol on the top (top mark), and its colours.

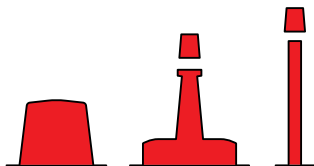
Channel markers

These show well-established channels and indicate port (left) and starboard (right) sides of the channels. One of the following may be used:

Lateral marks

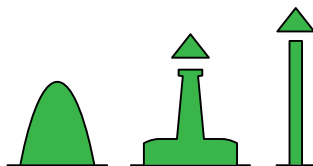
Port mark

A red can shape on a buoy or post. At night a red flashing light may be shown.



Starboard mark

A green conical shape on a buoy or post. At night a green flashing light may be shown.



Entering the harbour, channel or marina: The red mark should be kept on the boat's port (left) side, and the green mark on the boat's starboard (right) side. The red navigation light on your boat should be on the same side as the red channel marker.

When leaving the harbour, channel or marina: The red mark should be kept on the boat's starboard (right) side, and the green mark on the boat's port (left) side. Your boat's navigation lights should be opposite colours to the channel markers.

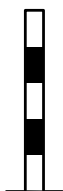
Water-ski access lanes

Black and orange bands.



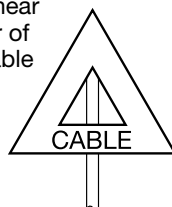
Reserved areas

Black and white bands.



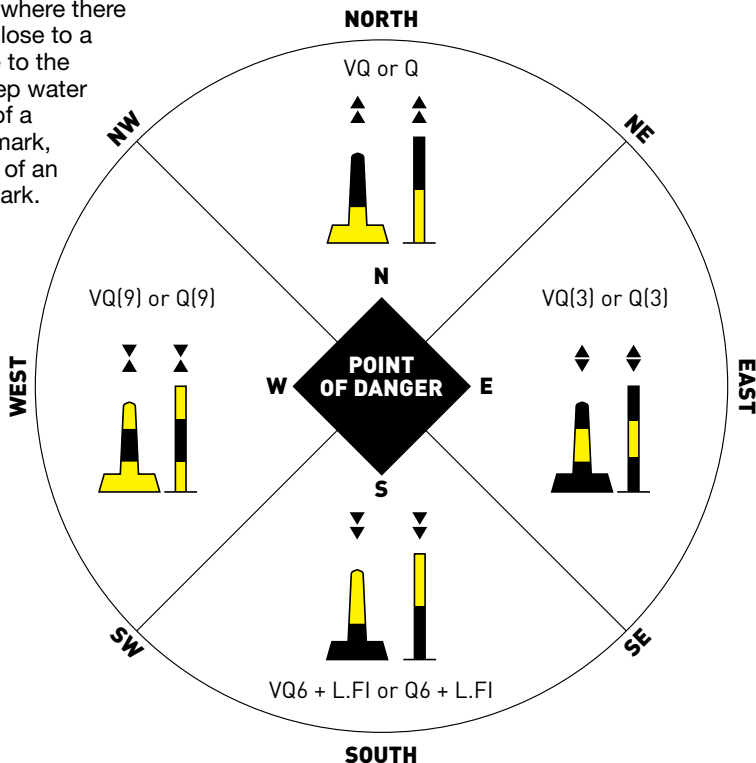
Underwater cable marks

When in pairs, these marks indicate the direction of a cable. Be careful not to anchor near these cables. The skipper of a boat that damages a cable will be held responsible.



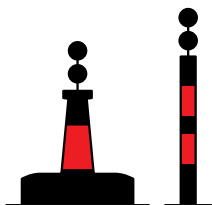
Cardinal marks

Each indicates where there is deep water close to a danger (relative to the compass) – deep water is to the north of a north cardinal mark, and to the east of an east cardinal mark.



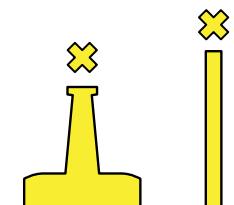
Isolated danger mark

Indicates an isolated danger, such as a submerged rock, and tells you not to pass too closely. If lit at night, it shows a group of two white flashes. The top mark has two black spheres.



Special marks

Indicate a special area and that you should use caution. If lit at night, they show a flashing yellow light. The top mark is a single yellow cross. Check your chart to identify what is special in that area.



IN AN EMERGENCY

- 1. Wear your lifejackets.**
- 2. Activate your distress beacon.**
- 3. Switch your radio to full power.**

- Radio a MAYDAY call and call 111.
- Use flares if boats or rescuers are close.
- Stay with your boat.
- A vessel is a lot easier to spot in the water than a person.
- Anchor your boat to maintain your position (if safe to do so).

Capsize

Most boating fatalities result after a small vessel is swamped or capsizes.

- Always wear your lifejacket. Many people don't survive the first few minutes without one, especially in cold water.
- Trigger your EPIRB or PLB beacon or call for help.
- Red hand-held flares are good visual distress signals and can be used day or night. Make sure yours are in date.

Sinking

If your boat starts taking in water, make sure everyone on board has their lifejacket on.

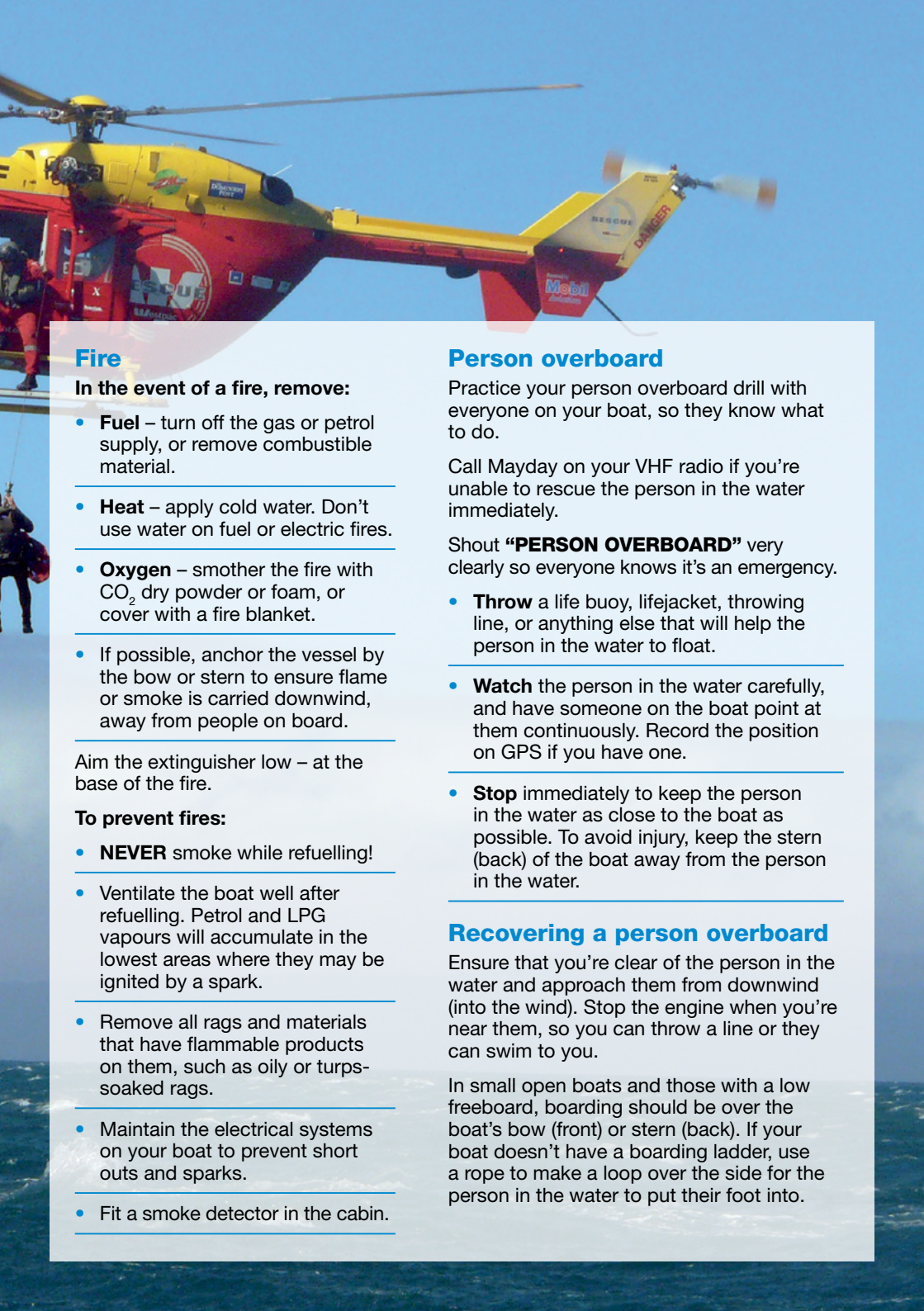
Find the leak and reduce the flow of water by pushing something into the hole. Make a distress call, trigger a beacon and head toward shallower water, bailing the water out as best you can.

Should the boat submerge or turn over, stay with the boat. This will give you a much greater chance of being found. Never attempt to swim to shore unless you're wearing a lifejacket.

If you can, keep warm by raising your body out of the water – e.g. onto an upturned boat.



People falling overboard is most common followed up capsize, then high speed groundings or collisions.



Fire

In the event of a fire, remove:

- **Fuel** – turn off the gas or petrol supply, or remove combustible material.
- **Heat** – apply cold water. Don't use water on fuel or electric fires.
- **Oxygen** – smother the fire with CO₂ dry powder or foam, or cover with a fire blanket.
- If possible, anchor the vessel by the bow or stern to ensure flame or smoke is carried downwind, away from people on board.

Aim the extinguisher low – at the base of the fire.

To prevent fires:

- **NEVER** smoke while refuelling!
- Ventilate the boat well after refuelling. Petrol and LPG vapours will accumulate in the lowest areas where they may be ignited by a spark.
- Remove all rags and materials that have flammable products on them, such as oily or turps-soaked rags.
- Maintain the electrical systems on your boat to prevent short outs and sparks.
- Fit a smoke detector in the cabin.

Person overboard

Practice your person overboard drill with everyone on your boat, so they know what to do.

Call Mayday on your VHF radio if you're unable to rescue the person in the water immediately.

Shout **"PERSON OVERBOARD"** very clearly so everyone knows it's an emergency.

- **Throw** a life buoy, lifejacket, throwing line, or anything else that will help the person in the water to float.
- **Watch** the person in the water carefully, and have someone on the boat point at them continuously. Record the position on GPS if you have one.
- **Stop** immediately to keep the person in the water as close to the boat as possible. To avoid injury, keep the stern (back) of the boat away from the person in the water.

Recovering a person overboard

Ensure that you're clear of the person in the water and approach them from downwind (into the wind). Stop the engine when you're near them, so you can throw a line or they can swim to you.

In small open boats and those with a low freeboard, boarding should be over the boat's bow (front) or stern (back). If your boat doesn't have a boarding ladder, use a rope to make a loop over the side for the person in the water to put their foot into.

CROSSING THE BAR

The skipper is responsible for deciding whether or not to cross a bar.

Before you leave:

- Talk to the locals.
- Check the weather and tides.
- Inspect the bar at low tide.
- Ensure that weight, including your passenger load, is kept low.
- Check that your engine and steering are working correctly.

Before crossing:

- Ensure that everyone is wearing a correctly fitted lifejacket.
- Warm up the motor.
- Observe the state of the bar.
- Secure all hatches and moveable objects.
- Study the sea to find the best route – the best time to cross a bar is at high water when the tide is coming in.
- Approach with caution.
- Log a Bar Crossing Report with Coastguard Radio on your local VHF channel or *500 from your mobile both before and after crossing the bar.



How to safely cross a bar



watch a video

REPORT ALL ACCIDENTS



Did you fall off your boat or did you see someone fall off a boat?

Did your craft capsize or did you see a craft capsize?

Did you collide with another craft or did you see someone collide?

Did you ground your boat or did you see another boat grounded?

Did your boat sink or get swamped?

Did you come too close to another boat or did you see a near miss?

Reporting accidents allows lessons to be shared with the boating community.

You must report any accident, incident or serious harm injury to Maritime New Zealand as soon as possible after it occurs.

You can report accidents online at maritimenz.govt.nz/report-online



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