

Carrying Proof of Boating Education by Out-of-State Boaters

By: Janet Kaminski Leduc, Chief Attorney
August 31, 2020 | 2020-R-0207

Issue

Describe (1) whether Connecticut law requires out-of-state boaters to carry proof of having completed boating education and (2) national data on other states' requirements for boaters to carry proof of having completed boating education.

Summary

According to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Connecticut law does not require out-of-state boaters to carry proof of successfully completing boating education. While [SB 453 \(2020\)](#) would have required out-of-state boaters to possess a valid vessel operator license from another state or proof of successfully completing boating safety education, the bill did not become law.

Forty-six states require boating education for state residents wanting to operate boats in state waters, according to the most recent data available from the [National Association of State Boating Law Administrators](#) (NASBLA). Of these states, all but Idaho appear to have some education requirements for out-of-state boaters. While requirements vary by state, most states accept proof that an out-of-state boater completed a NASBLA-approved boating education course.

Connecticut

Current Law

In order to operate a vessel on state waters, a Connecticut resident, person owning real property in the state, or person owning a vessel in the state generally must possess a:

1. safe boating certificate (SBC) to operate a recreational vessel, except a personal watercraft;
2. certificate of personal watercraft operation (CPWO) to operate a recreational vessel including personal watercraft; and
3. safe waterskiing endorsement, if appropriate ([CGS §§ 15-140e](#), [15-140g](#), and [15-140j](#)).

According to DEEP, boaters from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island, must carry an SBC from their home state when operating a boat in Connecticut waters. This requirement derives from reciprocal agreements that DEEP has with these states.

Other out-of-state boaters generally may operate a boat in Connecticut waters without possessing an SBC or CPWO and without showing proof they completed boating safety education, according to DEEP. However, nonresidents cannot operate a personal watercraft on Connecticut waters without a Connecticut-issued CPWO or temporary CPWO (or an equivalent from the four above listed reciprocal states).

2020 Legislation

As proposed in 2020, [SB 453](#) would have, among other things, required all out-of-state boaters to possess a valid vessel operator license from another state or proof of successfully completing boating safety education. The license or proof of education would have to contain the NASBLA mark or logo, or other DEEP-approved mark, to be deemed valid.

The Environment Committee scheduled the bill for a public hearing, but the hearing did not occur because the legislature closed due to COVID-19 concerns.

Other States

NASBLA tracks boating education requirements in all states, which it summarizes in this [table](#). The table, which provides the most recently available compilation of national data (as of January 2016), shows that all states except Alaska, Arizona, South Dakota, and Wyoming have some boating education requirement and there is a wide range of requirements.

Based on a review of data available on NASBLA's [website](#), states with boating education requirements generally require an out-of-state boater to show proof that he or she completed a NASBLA-approved boating education course, except for Idaho which limits its education requirements to those who rent personal watercraft and boating law violators, and California, Louisiana, and New Jersey, which accept or require other forms of proof.

In California, out-of-state boaters can use state waters for up to 60 days without obtaining a California boater card (i.e., education certificate) if they meet their home state's boating education requirements. Louisiana only accepts an out-of-state boater's education certificate that was issued by a state agency. New Jersey accepts any boating education course certificate from out-of-state boaters.

JKL:kl