

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

**2018 REGULAR SESSION**

**Enrolled**

**Committee Substitute**

**for**

**Committee Substitute**

**for**

**Senate Bill 347**

SENATOR MAYNARD, *original sponsor*

[Passed March 8, 2018; in effect 90 days from passage]



1 AN ACT to amend and reenact §20-7-11, §20-7-12, §20-7-13, §20-7-14, §20-7-18, §20-7-18d,  
2 and §20-7-19 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, all relating to the operation  
3 of motorboats; defining the term “state of principal operation”; establishing a fee schedule  
4 for motorboat registration; establishing motorboat numbering, lighting, fire extinguishers,  
5 engine bilges, and flotation device requirements; increasing the financial amount of  
6 property damage before certain accidents need to be reported; clarifying the requirements  
7 for the operation of personal watercrafts; limiting the hours during the day water skiing and  
8 surfboarding are permitted; and authorizing rulemaking.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

**ARTICLE 7. LAW ENFORCEMENT, MOTORBOATING, LITTER.**

**§20-7-11. Motorboats and other terms defined.**

1 As used in this section and subsequent sections of this article, unless the context clearly  
2 requires a different meaning:

3 (1) “Vessel” means every description of watercraft, other than a seaplane on the water,  
4 used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water;

5 (2) “Motorboat” means any vessel propelled by an electrical, steam, gas, diesel, or other  
6 fuel propelled or driven motor, whether or not the motor is the principal source of propulsion, but  
7 does not include a vessel which has a valid marine document issued by the Bureau of Customs  
8 of the United States government or any federal agency successor thereto;

9 (3) “Owner” means a person, other than a lienholder, having the property in or title to a  
10 motorboat. The term includes a person entitled to the use or possession of a motorboat subject  
11 to an interest in another person, reserved or created by agreement and securing payment or  
12 performance of an obligation, but the term excludes a lessee under a lease not intended as  
13 security;

14 (4) “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles;

15 (5) “Director” means the Director of the Division of Natural Resources;

16 (6) "Personal watercraft" means a small vessel of less than 16 feet in length which uses  
17 an inboard motor powering a water jet pump as its primary source of motive power and which is  
18 designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the  
19 conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel. For purposes of this article, the term  
20 "personal watercraft" also includes "specialty prop-crafts" which are vessels similar in appearance  
21 and operation to a personal watercraft but which are powered by an outboard motor or propeller  
22 driven motor; and

23 (7) "State of principal operation" means the state in whose waters a vessel is or will be  
24 used, operated, navigated, or employed more than on the waters of any other state during a  
25 calendar year.

**§20-7-12. Motorboat identification numbers required; application for numbers; fee; displaying; reciprocity; change of ownership; conformity with United States regulations; records; renewal of certificate; transfer of interest, abandonment, etc.; change of address; unauthorized numbers; information to be furnished assessors.**

1 Every motorboat, as defined in this section, operating upon public waters whose principal  
2 operation is within the territorial limits of this state shall be numbered as provided in this section:

3 (a) The owner of each motorboat requiring numbering by this state shall file an application  
4 for a number with the commissioner on forms approved by the Division of Motor Vehicles. The  
5 application shall be signed by the owner of the motorboat and shall be accompanied by the  
6 appropriate fee for a three-year registration period if the motorboat is propelled by a motor of three  
7 or more horsepower or 70 or more pounds of thrust. There is no fee for motorboats propelled by  
8 motors of less than three horsepower or less than 70 pounds of thrust. The fee schedule for a  
9 three-year registration period is as follows, and may be prorated by the commissioner for periods  
10 of less than three years:

11 (1) Class A motorboats less than 16 feet in length, \$30;

12 (2) Class 1 motorboats 16 feet or over and less than 26 feet in length, \$45;

13 (3) Class 2 motorboats 26 feet or over and less than 40 feet in length, \$60; and

14 (4) Class 3 motorboats 40 feet in length or over, \$75.

15 All fees, including those received under §20-7-12(b) of this code, shall be deposited in the  
16 State Treasury. All moneys deposited pursuant to this section and credited to the Division of Motor  
17 Vehicles and 50 percent of all fees collected thereafter shall be credited to the State Road Fund.  
18 The remaining 50 percent shall be credited to the Division of Natural Resources and shall be used  
19 and paid out upon order of the director solely for the enforcement and safety education of the  
20 state boating system.

21 Upon receipt of the application in approved form, the commissioner shall enter the  
22 application upon the records of the division and issue to the applicant a number awarded to the  
23 motorboat and the name and address of the owner. The owner shall paint on or attach to each  
24 side of the bow of the motorboat the identification number in the manner prescribed by rules of  
25 the commissioner in order that it is clearly visible. The owner shall maintain the number in legible  
26 condition. The certificate of number shall be pocket size and shall be available at all times for  
27 inspection on the motorboat for which it is issued, whenever the motorboat is in operation.

28 (b) To permit a motorboat sold to a purchaser by a dealer to be operated pending receipt  
29 of the certificate of number from the commissioner, the commissioner may deliver to dealers  
30 temporary certificates of number to in turn be issued to purchasers of motorboats, upon  
31 application by the dealer and payment of \$1 for each temporary certificate. Every person who is  
32 issued a temporary certificate by a dealer shall, under the provisions of §20-7-12(a) of this code,  
33 apply for a certificate of number no later than 10 days from the date of issuance of the temporary  
34 certificate. A temporary certificate expires upon receipt of the certificate, upon rescission of the  
35 contract to buy the motorboat in question, or upon the expiration of 40 days from the date of  
36 issuance, whichever occurs first. It is unlawful for any dealer to issue any temporary certificate  
37 knowingly containing any misstatement of fact or knowingly to insert any false information on the  
38 face of the temporary certificate. The commissioner may by rule prescribe additional requirements

39 upon the dealers and purchasers that are consistent with the effective administration of this  
40 section.

41 (c) The owner of any motorboat already covered by a number in full force and effect which  
42 has been awarded to it pursuant to then operative federal law or a federally approved numbering  
43 system of another state shall record the number prior to operating the motorboat on the waters of  
44 this state in excess of the 60-day reciprocity period provided for in 33 C.F.R. § 173.17 *et seq.*  
45 once its state of principal operation changes to the State of West Virginia. The recordation shall  
46 be in the manner and pursuant to procedure required for the award of a number under §20-7-  
47 12(a) of this code, except that the commissioner shall not issue an additional or substitute number.

48 (d) If the ownership of a motorboat changes, the new owner shall file a new application  
49 form with the required fee with the commissioner who shall award a new certificate of number in  
50 the same manner as provided for in an original award of number.

51 (e) If an agency of the United States government has in force an overall system of  
52 identification numbering for motorboats within the United States, the numbering system employed  
53 pursuant to this article by the Division of Motor Vehicles shall be in conformity with the federal  
54 system.

55 (f) The license is valid for a maximum period of three years. If at the expiration of that  
56 period ownership has remained unchanged, the commissioner shall, upon application and  
57 payment of the proper fee, grant the owner a renewal of the certificate of number for an additional  
58 three-year period.

59 (g) The owner shall furnish the commissioner notice of the transfer of any part of an  
60 interest, other than the creation of a security interest, in a motorboat numbered in this state  
61 pursuant to §20-7-12(a) and §20-7-12(b) of this code or of the destruction or abandonment of the  
62 motorboat within 15 days of the transfer of interest, destruction, or abandonment. The transfer,  
63 destruction, or abandonment shall terminate the certificate of number for the motorboat, except  
64 that in the case of a transfer of a part interest which does not affect the owner's right to operate  
65 the motorboat, the transfer shall not terminate the certificate of number.

66 (h) Any holder of a certificate of number shall notify the commissioner within 15 days if his  
67 or her address no longer conforms to the address appearing on the certificate and shall, as a part  
68 of the notification, furnish the commissioner with his or her new address. The commissioner may  
69 provide by rule for the surrender of the certificate bearing the former address and its replacement  
70 with a certificate bearing the new address or for the alteration of an outstanding certificate to show  
71 the new address of the holder.

72 (i) An owner shall not paint, attach or otherwise display a number other than the number  
73 awarded to a motorboat or granted reciprocity pursuant to this article on either side of the bow of  
74 the motorboat.

75 (j) The commissioner shall on or before August 30 of each year forward to the assessor  
76 of each county a list of the names and addresses of all persons, firms, and corporations owning  
77 vessels and operating the vessels or other boats registered with the commissioner under the  
78 provisions of this article. In furnishing this information to each county assessor, the commissioner  
79 shall include information on the make and model of the vessels and other equipment required to  
80 be registered for use by the owner or operator of the boats under the provisions of this article:  
81 *Provided*, That the commissioner is not required to furnish the information to the assessor if the  
82 true and actual value of the vessel does not exceed \$500 or the cost of the motor does not exceed  
83 \$250.

84 (k) No person may operate an unlicensed motorboat upon any waters of this state without  
85 first acquiring a certificate of number or license as required by law.

**§20-7-13. Motorboat classification; required lights and equipment; rules and regulations;  
pilot rules.**

1 (a) Motorboats subject to the provisions of this article shall be divided into four classes.

2 (1) Class A includes motorboats less than 16 feet in length;

3 (2) Class 1 includes motorboats 16 feet or over and less than 26 feet in length;

4 (3) Class 2 includes motorboats 26 feet or over and less than 40 feet in length;

5 (4) Class 3 includes motorboats 40 feet or over.

6 (b) Except as provided in §20-7-18d of this code, Class A, Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3  
7 motorboats in all weathers from sunset to sunrise shall carry and exhibit the following lights when  
8 under way, no other lights which may be mistaken for those prescribed shall be exhibited.

9 (1) Every motorboat of Class A and Class 1 shall carry the following lights:

10 (A) A bright white light aft to show all around the horizon;

11 (B) A combined lantern in the fore part of the vessel and lower than the white light aft,  
12 showing green to starboard and red to port, so fixed as to throw the light from right ahead to two  
13 points abaft the beam on their respective sides.

14 (2) Every motorboat of Class 2 and Class 3 shall carry the following lights:

15 (A) A bright white light in the fore part of the vessel as near the stem as practicable, so  
16 constructed as to show an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 20 points of the compass,  
17 so fixed as to throw the light 10 points on each side of the vessel; namely, from right ahead to two  
18 points abaft the beam on either side;

19 (B) A bright white light aft to show all around the horizon and higher than the white light  
20 forward;

21 (C) On the starboard side a green light so constructed as to show an unbroken light over  
22 an arc of the horizon of 10 points of the compass, so fixed as to throw the light from right ahead  
23 to two points abaft the beam on the starboard side. On the port side a red light so constructed as  
24 to show an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 10 points of the compass, so fixed as to  
25 throw the light from right ahead to two points abaft the beam on the port side. The said side lights  
26 shall be fitted with inboard screens of sufficient height so set as to prevent these lights from being  
27 seen across the bow.

28 (3) When propelled by sail alone, motorboats of Class A and Class 1 shall exhibit the  
29 combined lantern but not the white light aft. When propelled by sail alone, motorboats of Class 2  
30 and Class 3 shall exhibit the colored side lights, suitably screened, but not the white lights.



31 Motorboats of all classes when propelled by sail alone, or manually propelled vessels, shall carry,  
32 ready at hand, a lantern or flashlight showing a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient  
33 time to avert collision.

34 (4) Every white light prescribed by this section shall be of such character as to be visible  
35 at a distance of at least two miles. Every colored light prescribed by this section shall be of such  
36 character as to be visible at a distance of at least one mile. The word "visible" in this subdivision,  
37 when applied to lights, shall mean visible on a dark night with clear atmosphere.

38 (5) When propelled by sail and machinery any motorboat shall carry the lights required by  
39 this section for a motorboat propelled by machinery only.

40 (c) Any vessel may carry and exhibit the lights as contained in the federal navigation laws  
41 and rules promulgated by the United States Coast Guard pursuant to 33 C.F.R. Chapter I. as  
42 authorized by 46 U.S.C. §4302, in lieu of the lights required by §20-7-13(b) of this code.

43 (d) Every motorboat of Class A, Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3 shall be provided with an  
44 efficient whistle or other sound-producing mechanical appliance.

45 (e) Every motorboat of Class 2 or Class 3 shall be provided with an efficient bell.

46 (f) Every vessel shall have on board the following personal flotation devices as defined  
47 and approved by the United States Coast Guard pursuant to 33 C.F.R. §175.13 2014 *et seq.* as  
48 authorized by 46 U.S.C. §4302: (1) At least one immediately accessible throwable personal  
49 flotation device, except motorboats or vessels less than 16 feet and except as provided in 33  
50 C.F.R §175.17 2017 as authorized by 46 U.S.C §4302; (2) At least one readily accessible  
51 wearable personal flotation device per person on board; and (3) Except, that every motorboat  
52 carrying passengers for hire shall have on board readily accessible wearable personal flotation  
53 devices according to rules that may be promulgated by the director in accordance with the  
54 provisions of §29A-3-1 *et. seq.* of this code.

55 (g) Every motorboat shall be equipped with the number, size, and type of fire extinguishers  
56 capable of promptly and effectually extinguishing burning gasoline, according to rules that may

57 be promulgated by the director in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code.  
58 The fire extinguishers shall be readily accessible and in condition for immediate and effective use.

59 (h) The provisions of §20-7-13(d), §20-7-13(e), §20-7-13(g) and §20-7-13(f)(1) of this code  
60 shall not apply to motorboats while competing in any race conducted pursuant to §20-7-20 of this  
61 code or, if such boats be designed and intended solely for racing while engaged in such navigation  
62 as is incidental to the tuning up of the boats and engines for the race.

63 (i) Every motorboat shall have the carburetor or carburetors of every engine therein  
64 (except outboard motors) using gasoline as fuel, equipped with such efficient flame arrester,  
65 backfire trap, or other similar device according to rules that may be promulgated by the director  
66 in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code.

67 (j) Every motorboat and every vessel shall be equipped with the means to properly and  
68 efficiently ventilate the bilges of the engine and fuel tank compartments, except open boats,  
69 according to rules that may be promulgated by the director in accordance with the provisions of  
70 §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code.

71 (k) The director may promulgate rules in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et*  
72 *seq.* of this code modifying the equipment requirements contained in this section to the extent  
73 necessary to keep these requirements in conformity with the provisions of the federal navigation  
74 laws or with the navigation rules promulgated by the United States Coast Guard.

75 (l) The director may promulgate rules in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et*  
76 *seq.* of this code, pilot rules in conformity with the pilot rules contained in the federal navigation  
77 laws, or the navigation rules promulgated by the United States Coast Guard for the operation of  
78 vessels on the waters of this state.

79 (m) No person shall operate or give permission for the operation of a vessel which is not  
80 equipped as required by this section or modification thereof.

**§20-7-14. Motorboats exempt from numbering.**

1 A motorboat shall not be required to be numbered under this article if it is:

2 (1) Already covered by a number in full force and effect which has been awarded to it  
3 pursuant to federal law or a federally approved numbering system of another state: *Provided*,  
4 That the boat shall be registered in the state of principal operation;

5 (2) A motorboat from a country other than the United States temporarily using the waters  
6 of this state; or

7 (3) A motorboat used exclusively for racing while participating in races, and the  
8 preparation therefor, which have been authorized pursuant to the provisions of §20-7-20 of this  
9 code.

**§20-7-18. Care in handling watercraft; duty to render aid after a collision, accident, or  
casualty; accident reports.**

1 (a) No person shall operate a motorboat, jet ski, or other motorized vessel or manipulate  
2 any water skis, surfboard, or similar device in a reckless or negligent manner so as to endanger  
3 the life, limb, or property of any person.

4 (b) No person shall operate any motorboat, jet ski, or other motorized vessel, or  
5 manipulate any water skis, surfboard, or similar device while under the influence of alcohol or a  
6 controlled substance or drug, under the combined influence of alcohol and any controlled  
7 substance or any other drug, or while having an alcohol concentration in his or her blood of eight  
8 hundredths of one percent or more, by weight.

9 (c) The operator of a vessel involved in a collision, accident, or other casualty, so far as  
10 he or she can do so without serious danger to his or her own vessel, crew, and any passengers,  
11 to render to other persons affected by the collision, accident, or other casualty such assistance  
12 as may be practicable and as may be necessary in order to save them from or minimize any  
13 danger caused by the collision, accident, or other casualty. The operator shall also give his or her  
14 name, address, and identification of his or her vessel in writing to any person injured and to the  
15 owner of any property damaged in the collision, accident, or other casualty.

16 (d) The operator of a vessel involved in a collision, accident, or other casualty shall file an  
17 accident report with the director if the incident results in a loss of life, in a personal injury that  
18 requires medical treatment beyond first aid or in excess of \$2,000 damage to a vessel or other  
19 property. The report shall be made on such forms and contain information as prescribed by the  
20 director. Upon a request duly made by an authorized official or agency of the United States, any  
21 information compiled or otherwise available to the director pursuant to this subsection shall be  
22 transmitted to the official or agency.

**§20-7-18d. Operation of personal watercrafts.**

1 (a) No person under the age of 15 may operate a personal watercraft on the waters of this  
2 state: *Provided*, That a person that has attained the age of 12 may operate a personal watercraft  
3 if a person 18 years of age or older is aboard the personal watercraft.

4 (b) A person may not operate a personal watercraft unless each person on board or being  
5 towed behind is wearing a personal flotation device defined and approved by the United States  
6 Coast Guard pursuant to 33 C.F.R. §175.13 2014 *et seq.* as authorized by 46 U.S.C. §4302.  
7 Inflatable personal flotation devices do not meet the requirements of this section.

8 (c) A person operating a personal watercraft equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-  
9 type engine cutoff switch must attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or personal  
10 flotation device as appropriate for the specific vessel.

11 (d) A person may not operate a personal watercraft at any time between the hours of  
12 sunset and sunrise. However, an agent or employee of a fire rescue, emergency rescue unit, or  
13 law-enforcement division is exempt from this subsection while performing his or her official duties.

14 (e) A personal watercraft must at all times be operated in a reasonable and prudent  
15 manner. Maneuvers which unreasonably or unnecessarily endanger life, limb, or property  
16 constitute reckless operation of a vessel and include, but are not limited to:

17 (1) Weaving through congested traffic;

18 (2) Jumping the wake of another vessel unreasonably or unnecessarily close to the other  
19 vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is obstructed or restricted;

20 (3) Becoming airborne or completely leaving the water while crossing the wake of another  
21 vessel within 100 feet of the vessel creating the wake;

22 (4) Operating at a greater than slow or no-wake speed within 100 feet of an anchored or  
23 moored vessel, shoreline, dock, pier, swim float, marked swim areas, swimmers, surfers, persons  
24 engaged in angling, or any manually powered vessel;

25 (5) Operating contrary to navigation rules including following too closely to another vessel,  
26 including another personal watercraft. For the purpose of this subdivision, "following too closely"  
27 is construed as a proceeding in the same direction and operating at a speed in excess of 10 miles  
28 per hour within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another vessel which is underway,  
29 unless said vessels are operating in a narrow channel, in which case the personal watercraft may  
30 operate at the speed and flow of the other vessel traffic within the channel.

**§20-7-19. Water skiing and surfboarding.**

1 (a) No person shall operate a vessel on any waters of this state towing a person or persons  
2 on water skis, surfboard, or similar device, nor shall any person engage in water skiing,  
3 surfboarding, or similar activity between sunset and sunrise.

4 (b) The provisions of §20-7-19(a) of this code do not apply to a performer engaged in a  
5 professional exhibition or a person or persons engaged in an activity authorized under §20-7-20  
6 of this code.

7 (c) No person shall operate or manipulate any vessel, tow rope, or other device by which  
8 the direction or location of water skis, surfboard, or similar device may be affected or controlled  
9 in such a way as to cause water skis, surfboard, or similar device, or any person thereon, to collide  
10 with or strike against any object or person.



The Joint Committee on Enrolled Bills hereby certifies that the foregoing bill is correctly enrolled.

.....  
*Chairman, Senate Committee*

.....  
*Chairman, House Committee*

Originated in the Senate.

In effect 90 days from passage.

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*Clerk of the Senate*

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*Clerk of the House of Delegates*

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*President of the Senate*

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*Speaker of the House of Delegates*

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The within ..... this the.....  
Day of ....., 2018.

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*Governor*