



Key rules for  
**Boating in  
the Waikato**



0800 800 401

[waikatoregion.govt.nz/navbylaw](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/navbylaw)

# Boating in the Waikato

Waikato waterways can be a busy place with various water activities going on at one spot.

To help keep our waterways safe, make sure you are familiar with the boating safety code and the regional bylaws that are in place in your area before heading out on the water.

## ***Be a responsible skipper***

Every skipper is responsible for the safety of those on board, no matter how big or small the boat is. This means managing the risks of being on the water at all times.

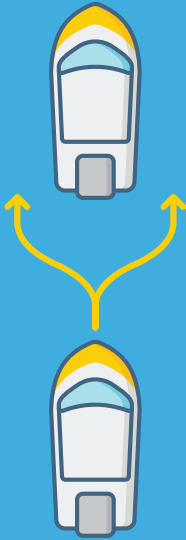
- Ensure you have enough correctly fitting lifejackets for everyone on board
- Have the right safety equipment on board and make sure everyone knows where it is stowed and how it works
- Check the marine weather forecast and tides before going out and get regular updates while on the water
- Know the rules
- Keep a good lookout at all times
- Avoid alcohol while boating
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to be back

To view a full version of the Waikato Regional Council Navigation Safety Bylaw, please visit [waikatoregion.govt.nz/navbylaw](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/navbylaw) or contact us on 0800 800 401.



# Collision prevention

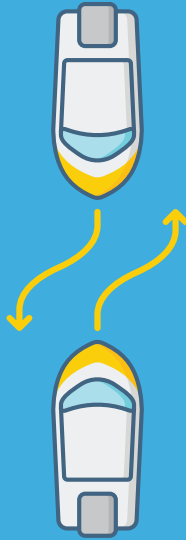
Always **keep to your right** when head on in a narrow channel or river.



## Overtaking situations

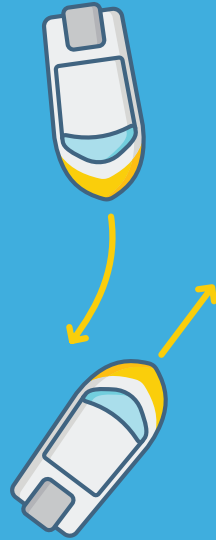
All boats overtaking from astern (behind) are responsible for keeping clear until well past the vessel being overtaken.

Assume that the boat in front is not aware of your presence or intention.



## Head on situations

Powerboats meeting head on must each alter course to starboard (to the right) and pass port side (left side) of the other.



## Crossing situations

When powerboats meet at an angle, the boat having the other to starboard (right) gives way. As on the road, always give way to your right.

Make sure your actions are clear, taken in good time, and do not take you close to other vessels.



## Lifejackets

### Vessels 6m or less

Correctly fitted and well fastened lifejackets must be worn while moving.

### Vessels over 6m

Enough correctly fitting lifejackets for everyone on board must be carried in a readily accessible location.

Lifejackets must be worn in times of high risk including:

- When crossing a bar and 200m either side of a bar
- In rough weather or sea conditions
- When boating at night
- In an emergency

**More than two-thirds of boating fatalities may have been prevented if lifejackets were worn.**



## Vessel wake

Your vessel's wake must not cause unnecessary danger or risk. Keep your wake to a minimum if it could affect other boats, people and structures.



## Waterproof

## Communications

Always carry at least one form of waterproof communication that will work where you are going. This could be cellphone in a waterproof bag, VHF radio, flare or personal locator beacon.

If you're carrying a cellphone, ensure that it will have reception and enough battery charge throughout your entire trip.

Any person using a maritime VHF radio must hold a [Maritime VHF Radio Operator Certificate](#) (unless transmitting in an emergency or a distress situation).

Certification is available through Coastguard Boating Education:

- [boatingeducation.org.nz](http://boatingeducation.org.nz)
- 0800 40 80 90



## No power loading

Power loading is not allowed at any public ramp in a way that may damage property, scour the river or sea bed or cause injury.



## When towing:

### It takes three to ski

- You must have an observer on board who is 10 years of age or older
- Travel in anticlockwise direction
- Always wear a lifejacket (including person being towed)
- Keep your wake to a minimum if it could affect other boats, people and structures.



## Speed

### Coastal and harbour waters

Your boat must not exceed 5 knots within 50m of people and other vessels, and within 200m of the shore, structures or vessels displaying a dive flag.

### Inland waters (rivers and lakes)

Your boat must not exceed 5 knots within 50m of people, structures and other vessels, and within 30m of the shore.



## Boat naming rules

To help with identification, powerboats 4m and over, and non-powered boats 6m and over, must display a name on both sides of the hull.

### The name must be:

- Displayed above the waterline on both sides of the hull.
- Clearly marked with a minimum of two letters or numbers.
- All characters must be at least 90mm high.
- Clearly visible at a distance of no less than 50m.

Smaller vessels that do not fit the above criteria must be marked with emergency contact details including a name and number.



## River safety rules

- Keep starboard (to the right) of the river
- Give way to vessels coming downstream
- Do not operate within 200m of a hydro dam or structure.



## Jet skis/ personal watercraft (PWC)

All jet skis operating in the Waikato Region must be registered. You can register your jet ski online at [waikatoregion.govt.nz/jetskis](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/jetskis). Registration numbers must be clearly displayed on each side of the craft above the water.

Jet skis are considered 'power-driven vessels' by law, so the same rules apply to both your jet ski as other power-driven vessels.

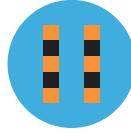
Anyone operating your jet ski is considered to be the skipper, so it's their responsibility to know the rules and make sure everyone stays safe.



## Diving: Fly the flag

If you have divers, snorkelers, or spearfishers in the water you must have a dive flag displayed that is visible for at least 200m in all directions.

If you are within 200m of a vessel or float displaying a dive flag, you must keep to 5 knots or less and keep watch for bubbles or people in the water.



## Towing access lanes

You may only ski from shore in a towing access lane or reserved area, otherwise the 5 knot rule applies. You must keep to starboard (to the right) side of an access lane at all times.

Swimming, diving and playing are prohibited in these areas.



## Minimum age

You must be 15 years or older to operate a power-driven vessel capable of going faster than 10 knots.



## Swimming/diving

Avoid swimming, playing or diving in a boat channel, off a commercial wharf or jetty, and within 200m of a hydro dam structure.

# Vessel lights: *Be safe be seen*

Lights must be **switched on** from sunset to sunrise and in rain and fog while moving. Not using lights is dangerous and could result in a fine.



## **Vessels over 12m**

Must display red and green side lights and stern and masthead lights.



## **Vessels 12m or less**

Must display red and green side lights and either stern and masthead lights or one all round white light.



## **Vessels 7m or less with max speed 7 knots**

Must either display a white light visible for 2 nautical miles or carry a wide lens torch which can be displayed in sufficient time to signal another vessel to prevent collision.

**All vessels at anchor must have top white light.**

# **Accidents and Incidents**

All maritime incidents/accidents must be reported to the Harbourmaster's Office and Maritime New Zealand immediately.

To report maritime incidents, phone the Waikato Regional Council Harbourmaster's Office on 0800 800 401 or notify Maritime NZ at [services.maritimenz.govt.nz/incident](https://services.maritimenz.govt.nz/incident)

Additionally, if you see boaties acting inappropriately, you can report it to the Harbourmaster's Office by phoning 0800 800 401.



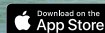
**OCEANS, RIVERS & LAKES  
ALWAYS BRING  
YOUR MATE!**

**BOAT RAMP LOCATIONS  
LOCAL BOATING INFO  
SAFETY CHECKLIST  
MARINE RESERVES  
VHF CHANNELS  
TIDE INFO**



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INFORMATION**

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For more information on Navigation Safety in the Waikato, visit our website [waikatoregion.govt.nz/boatsafety](https://waikatoregion.govt.nz/boatsafety) or phone 0800 800 401.

