

## PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (PWC)

A PWC includes jet skis, wave runners and similar vessels that have an engine used for propulsion, fully enclosed hull, don't retain water and are operated by standing, kneeling or sitting astride.

It is important to remember that all these are just another type of powered vessel and must be operated within the rules relating to powerboats. PWCs are generally much more powerful and manoeuvrable than traditional powerboats. They can pose a danger to the operator and to other people if not ridden safely and responsibly.

Refer to the Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules for State and local regulations relevant to any waterway you intend to use. Always read signage placed at boat ramps and on shore. Some local rules may apply specifically to PWCs so be familiar with the area you intend to operate in. If you are unsure of local rules and conditions, ask the local waterway manager for information.

See [transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways)

## PWC OPERATOR CONDUCT

As a PWC operator, you have a legal duty to take reasonable care for your own safety and for the safety of anyone who may be affected by your actions.

Assess the risks associated with operating a PWC and be aware of the changing nature of the maritime environment.

PWCs can accelerate very quickly and can be noisy. Be mindful of this when others are on or in the water, or on the beach.

Understand your limitations in performance in varying conditions. Be aware that the operators of other vessels may not be familiar with PWCs and how quickly you can approach, pass, turn and move away. You may need to adjust your riding techniques so that you don't alarm other operators.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions and maintenance schedule. Joining a PWC riders club or similar organisation will improve your skills, knowledge and experience.

## SAFE SPEED

All vessels must travel at a safe speed at all times.

Obeys buoys, beacons and signs marking waterway zones, channels and speed limits. Be aware that at 5 knots, equivalent to 9 km/h or fast walking pace, it takes 20 seconds to travel 50 m and 80 seconds to travel 200 m.

The master of a PWC must constantly monitor the speed of the vessel to ensure that a safe and lawful speed is being maintained.

**Remember:** stunts and manoeuvres must be done well away from other people, other vessels and the shore. If you cannot maintain the minimum distance, you must not exceed 5 knots.

PWCs are subject to 'hoon' legislation which means owners and/or operators can be prosecuted for operating an unsafe vessel, or dangerously, and PWCs can be seized, impounded and embargoed.

See [transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/safe-operation](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/safe-operation)

## KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

The main complaint about the operation of PWCs relates to their use too close to other water users and/or the water's edge.

Speed and distance regulations must be observed on all waterways, unless a specific local rule says otherwise.

**Do not exceed 5 knots:**



- » within 50 m of a person, vessel, fixed or floating structure and the shore on inland waters
- » within 50 m of a person, vessel, wharf, jetty, slipway, diving platform or boat ramp on coastal and enclosed waters
- » within 100 m of a dive flag
- » within 200 m of the shore on enclosed and coastal waters
- » or as per the scheduled waterway rules.

**Remember:** 5 knots is equivalent to 8-9 km/h.

## AVOIDING ACCIDENTS

The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS), enshrined in Victorian maritime safety legislation, apply to operators of all vessels including PWCs. It is your responsibility when in charge of a PWC to correctly apply these rules in all circumstances.

Without power, a PWC has little or no steering control – simply releasing the throttle may not help you avoid a collision.

**A PWC operator must give way to:**

- » larger vessels operating in confined channels
- » sailing vessels
- » other vessels crossing from the right
- » vessels being overtaken.

**A very important rule is:** maintain a proper look out at all times.

**In particular, remember:**

- » in surf areas, swimmers may be hidden from view by waves and swell. Keep well away from areas where swimmers are likely to be present or slow to 5 knots or less
- » do not cut blind corners – slow down
- » if you have difficulty seeing properly because your vision is affected by the sun or spray – slow down or stop
- » keep well clear of anchored or moored vessels
- » in channels and narrow stretches of water, you must operate to the right of the centre of the channel
- » on inland waterways, powered vessels must travel in an anti-clockwise direction in relation to the approximate centre of the waterway, unless otherwise specified in a waterway rule
- » navigation lights are required if your PWC is used on the water between sunset and sunrise, and in times of restricted visibility
- » water does not 'give' when you hit it at speed – you will probably break bones and, if you are not wearing protective clothing, sustain serious internal injuries.

## LICENSING

The master of a PWC must hold a marine licence with a PWC endorsement. You must carry this licence at all times when you are the master of a PWC.

**Supervised operation**

An unlicensed person may operate a PWC under the direct supervision of a person who is:

- a)** over the age of 18 years
- b)** licensed with a PWC endorsement
- c)** on board the PWC in a position where they are able to take immediate control of the vessel.

**Children**

Persons under 16 will no longer be issued with a PWC endorsement on their restricted marine licence but can operate under supervision as per the conditions above.

Stay up to date on the rules at [transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/pwc](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/pwc)



- » Hold a marine licence with PWC endorsement.
- » Wear a lifejacket and attach engine kill switch.
- » Maintain a proper lookout at all times.
- » Carry a waterproof buoyant torch.
- » Obey all boating regulations and signs.

- » Know when to slow to 5 knots.
- » Wear protective clothing, e.g. a wetsuit (particularly on your lower body), footwear, goggles, helmet and gloves to suit the conditions and your activity.

- » Observe boating rules.
- » Don't operate a PWC under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Respect your waterways, surrounding environment and other waterway users - noise annoys.



5

Slow to  
5 KNOTS  
when  
within:

50 m of a person, vessel,  
fixed or floating structure and  
the shore on inland waters

50 m of a person, vessel,  
wharf, jetty, slipway, diving  
platform or boat ramp on  
coastal and enclosed waters

100 m of a dive flag

200 m of the shore on  
enclosed and coastal waters

or as per the scheduled  
waterway rules

## You must follow these rules



Carry your marine licence  
with PWC endorsement



Wear a lifejacket and  
attach engine kill switch



Maintain a proper lookout at all  
times and travel at a safe speed



Carry a waterproof  
buoyant torch



Carry an EPIRB if you're going  
more than 2 nm off shore



Respect the rules, others,  
wildlife, environment

## We also recommend

Carrying a phone and PLB so you can call  
for help, wearing protective clothing and  
letting someone know before you go.

[FOLD

## SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Any person on, or being towed by, a PWC must wear an approved lifejacket type 1, 2 or 3 while underway.

### On a PWC, you must:

- » carry a waterproof, buoyant torch at all times to signal the shore or other vessels if you encounter difficulties
- » show the same lights that are required of a powerboat when operating at night. Note that a mast may be required for an all-round white light to ensure the occupant does not obscure the beam.

Emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs) are required if going more than 2 nm offshore in coastal waters. All operators are advised to carry a means of raising the alarm. A personal locator beacon (PLB) should also be considered for those not heading as far out.



## TOWED WATERSPORTS

If you are participating in any towed watersports on a PWC, you must follow the relevant rules which include carrying an appropriate observer.

Your PWC must have seating for the master and observer. You should also consider having adequate seating for anyone who is being towed.

To determine the carrying capacity of your PWC, refer to the manufacturer's specifications.

[FOLD

## REGISTRATION

It is illegal in Victoria for a PWC operator or owner to allow or cause a PWC to be used unless it is registered.

Conditions of registration require that the PWC is in good working order and engine kill switches are operable, so maintain your PWC after each trip and have it regularly serviced.

The registration label must be in a prominent position on the outside or upper part of the vessel.



If you own a Victorian registered PWC, you must ensure that the identification mark assigned for your PWC is painted or displayed in appropriate characters:

- (a) on each side of the hull of the vessel
- (b) forward of the beam
- (c) so that the highest part of each digit commences at a point no more than 25 mm below the gunwale.

### 'Appropriate' means characters that are:

- (a) no less than 100 mm high
- (b) in proportionate breadth, and
- (c) coloured in contrast to the surface on which they are displayed.

It is illegal for you to act as the master of a registered vessel on Victorian waters unless an identification mark is painted or displayed on your PWC in accordance with the above.

These identification marks must be conspicuous and distinguishable from any decal or striping that you may have used to decorate or customise your PWC.

Interstate registered vessels must display registration numbers or marks as required by the relevant State or Territory.

## EDUCATION

PWC clubs and organisations can introduce you to the sport and assist with instruction and participation in recreational events.

If you are thinking about obtaining a marine licence, we strongly recommend that you do an approved boating safety training course.

See [transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/licence](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/licence)

[FOLD

# RIDE RIGHT



[transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/pwc](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/pwc)

MARITIME  
SAFETY  
VICTORIA



VICTORIA  
State  
Government