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**Boating Safety Education**  
2026 GENERAL SESSION  
STATE OF UTAH  
**Chief Sponsor: Michael J. Petersen**  
Senate Sponsor: Daniel McCay

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill creates an education requirement to operate a watercraft.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- ▶ creates a watercraft operator safety course;
- ▶ establishes guidelines for the course;
- ▶ prohibits the operation of a watercraft without evidence of completion of the course; and
- ▶ grants rulemaking authority to the Division of Outdoor Recreation to create and manage a safety briefing for liveries.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

This bill provides a special effective date.

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

ENACTS:

**73-18-15.6**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **73-18-15.6** is enacted to read:

**73-18-15.6 . Watercraft operator safety course.**

- (1) As used in this section, "watercraft" means a motorboat or sailboat.
- (2) The division shall create a watercraft operator safety course for the purpose of developing and instilling the knowledge, attitudes, habits, and skills necessary for the safe and ethical operation of a watercraft.

- 29 (3) The course shall include:
- 30 (a) instruction on personal flotation devices as described in Subsection 73-18-8(1);
- 31 (b) instruction on driving under the influence, as described in Title 41, Chapter 6a, Part 5,
- 32 Driving Under the Influence and Reckless Driving, in relation to the operation of a
- 33 watercraft while under the influence of alcohol, any drug, or the combined influence
- 34 of alcohol and any drug;
- 35 (c) instruction on best practices for safe operation and navigation of watercraft;
- 36 (d) information about aquatic invasive species necessary to fulfill the requirements
- 37 described in Subsection 23A-10-304(4); and
- 38 (e) other safety information determined by the division.
- 39 (4) A watercraft operator shall complete the course once every calendar year.
- 40 (5) The division shall ensure that an individual may complete the course in less than 20
- 41 minutes on average.
- 42 (6)(a) The division shall issue proof of completion of the watercraft safety course to a
- 43 watercraft operator upon completion of the watercraft operator safety course.
- 44 (b) The proof of completion expires the day after December 31 in the calendar year
- 45 which the operator completes the watercraft operator safety course.
- 46 (7) Except as provided in Subsection (9)(b), an individual may not operate a watercraft
- 47 unless the individual has in the individual's immediate possession proof that the
- 48 individual completed the watercraft operator safety course described in this section
- 49 within the current calendar year.
- 50 (8) Completion of the watercraft operator safety course does not satisfy the requirements of
- 51 the personal watercraft safety course described in Section 73-18-15.2.
- 52 (9) A livery may not rent a watercraft to an individual unless:
- 53 (a) the individual provides proof to the livery that the individual completed the
- 54 watercraft operator safety course within the current calendar year; or
- 55 (b) the livery provides the individual with a safety briefing as described in Subsection
- 56 (10).
- 57 (10)(a) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act,
- 58 the division, after notifying the commission, shall make rules to create and manage a
- 59 watercraft operator safety briefing.
- 60 (b) The watercraft operator safety briefing described in Subsection (10)(a) shall cover
- 61 topics contained in the safety course described in Subsection (2) appropriate for
- 62 liveries.

63           (c) If an individual attempts to rent a watercraft from a livery and the individual does not  
64                 have proof of completion of the watercraft operator safety course, the livery shall  
65                 provide a watercraft operator safety briefing before renting a watercraft to the  
66                 individual.

67           (11) An individual who violates Subsection (7) is guilty of an infraction.

68                 Section 2. **Effective Date.**

69                 This bill takes effect on January 1, 2027.