

Boating Safety Education

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Michael J. Petersen

Senate Sponsor:

LONG TITLE**Committee Note:**

The Transportation Interim Committee recommended this bill.

Legislative Vote: 12 voting for 0 voting against 6 absent

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; and
- prohibits the operation of a watercraft without evidence of completion of the course.

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

*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.
- (3) The course shall include:
 - (a) instruction on personal flotation devices as described in Subsection 73-18-8(1);

(b) instruction on driving under the influence, as described in Title 41, Chapter 6a, Part 5, Driving Under the Influence and Reckless Driving, in relation to the operation of a watercraft while under the influence of alcohol, any drug, or the combined influence of alcohol and any drug;

(c) instruction on best practices for safe operation and navigation of watercraft;

(d) information about aquatic invasive species necessary to fulfill the requirements described in Subsection 23A-10-304(4); and

(e) other safety information determined by the division.

(4) A watercraft operator shall complete the course once every calendar year.

(5) The division shall ensure that an individual may complete the course in less than 20 minutes on average.

(6)(a) The division shall issue proof of completion of the watercraft safety course to a watercraft operator upon completion of the watercraft operator safety course.

(b) The proof of completion expires the day after December 31 in the calendar year which the operator completes the watercraft operator safety course.

(7) An individual may not operate a watercraft unless the individual has in the individual's immediate possession proof that the individual completed the watercraft operator safety course described in this section within the current calendar year.

(8) Completion of the watercraft operator safety course does not satisfy the requirements of the personal watercraft safety course described in Section 73-18-15.2.

(9) A watercraft owner or livery may not rent a watercraft to an individual who does not provide to the watercraft owner or livery proof that the individual completed the watercraft operator safety course within the current calendar year.

(10) A person who violates Subsection (7) or (9) is guilty of an infraction.

Section 2. Effective Date.

This bill takes effect on January 1, 2027.