

Michael J. Petersen proposes the following substitute bill:

Boating Safety Education

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Michael J. Petersen

Senate Sponsor: Daniel McCay

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

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:

- 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
32 5, 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.