TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
(Amendment)

301 KAR 6:020. Boating safety equipment.

RELATES TO: KRS 235.205, 33 C.F.R. 83, 46 C.F.R. 25
STATUTORY AUTHORITY: KRS 235.200, 235.280
CERTIFICATION STATEMENT: The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, pursuant to statutory authority to promulgate administrative regulations to carry out the provisions of KRS Chapter 150 and KRS Chapter 235 as established in KRS 150.025, KRS 235.280 and KRS 235.290 and as an independent department of state government within the meaning of KRS Chapter 12 as established in KRS 150.021(1) and KRS 235.030, promulgated by the Commissioner with approval of the Commission in accordance with KRS 235.280 and KRS 150.010(1), does hereby certify this administrative regulation is promulgated in compliance with Section 8 of 2025 RS HB6.
NECESSITY, FUNCTION, AND CONFORMITY: KRS 235.280 requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to promulgate administrative regulations to govern the fair, reasonable, equitable, and safe use of all waters of Kentucky and to carry out the purposes of KRS Chapter 235. KRS 235.200 authorizes the department to promulgate administrative regulations relating to safety equipment for vessels. This administrative regulation establishes the requirements for legal boating safety equipment in Kentucky.

Section 1. Engine Safety Equipment Requirements.
(1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, a person shall not operate a vessel with an enclosed engine without effective U.S. Coast Guard-approved flame arresters on carburetors pursuant to 46 C.F.R. 25.
(2) A person may operate the following without flame arresters:
(a) An outboard engine; or
(b) A vessel with an engine completely open by design and not originally equipped with Underwriters Laboratory or U.S. Coast Guard-approved flame arresters pursuant to 46 C.F.R. 25.
(3) A person shall not operate a vessel without adequate ventilation of bilges, engine compartments, fuel compartments or other enclosures.
(4) A person shall not operate a vessel originally equipped with a carburetor drip pan without the drip pan in place and maintained in a functioning condition.
(5) A person shall not operate vessels whose bilges are not maintained free from oil or grease.
(6) A person shall not operate a motorboat equipped with an engine cut-off switch, while the engine is running and the motorboat is underway, without:
(a) Maintaining the switch in an operable, fully functional condition; and
(b) Attaching the engine cut-off switch link or wireless cut-off device to the operator, the operator's clothing, or if worn, the operator's personal flotation device; or
(c) Activating the wireless cut-off system.

Section 2. Lighting Equipment.
(1) Between actual sunset and sunrise:
(a) Power driven boats less than sixty-five and six-tenths (65.6) feet in length whether operating or adrift, including sailboats operating under engine power, shall have:
1. Red and green sidelights. The red and green sidelights shall:
a. Have a red light indicating the port, or left side of the boat, and a green light indicating the starboard, or right side of the boat;

b. Be visible to another boat approaching from the side or head on;

c. Be visible from at least one (1) mile on a clear, dark night if the boat is less than thirty-nine and four tenths (39.4) feet in length; and

2. Either:

a. An all-around white light which shall be higher than the sidelights; or

b.

(i) A white masthead light that shines forward; and

(ii) A white stern light visible from the rear of the boat.

(b) An operator of a manually-powered vessel or sailboat less than twenty-two (22) feet, nine (9) inches in length shall:

1. Carry aboard and have immediately available for use a white light of sufficient intensity to illuminate the vessel and its occupants; and

2. Display the white light in time to prevent a collision from an approaching vessel.

(c) A person operating or responsible for a vessel anchored in a normal navigation channel or passageway shall display a white light visible in a 360 degree arc.

(2) Combination or separate red and green lights shall:

(a) Have an arc of visibility extending from dead ahead to 112.5 degrees on either side of the vessel;

(b) Show the red light on the port side, and the green light on the starboard side, of the vessel; and

(c) Be visible at a distance of at least one (1) mile on a dark night with clear atmosphere.

(3) White lights required by this section shall be visible at a distance of at least two (2) miles on a dark night with clear atmosphere.

(4) On a vessel under way between sunset and sunrise, an operator shall not display other lights which could be mistaken for the lights specified in this section.

Section 3. Signaling Devices.

(1) An operator of a Class 1 or larger vessel shall have on board a hand-, mouth-, or power-operated signaling device:

(a) Capable of producing a blast of two (2) seconds duration; and

(b) Audible for:

1. One-half (1/2) mile for Class 1 vessels.

2. One (1) mile for Class 2 vessels.

3. One and one-half (1-1/2) miles for Class 3 vessels.

(2) Nothing in this administrative regulation shall exempt a vessel from additional sound devices required by the U.S. Coast Guard pursuant to 33 C.F.R. 83.

Section 4. Personal Flotation Devices.

(1) Pursuant to 46 C.F.R. 25, an operator of a Class 1, 2, or 3 recreational vessel shall have on board a minimum of:

(a) One (1) wearable personal flotation device for each person on board the vessel; and

(b) Except for canoes or kayaks, one (1) throwable personal flotation device per vessel.

(2) An operator of a Class A recreational vessel shall have on board for each person a minimum of one (1) wearable personal flotation device.

(3) Each wearable personal flotation device shall be:

(a) Approved by the U.S. Coast Guard pursuant to 46 C.F.R. 25;

(b) In good and serviceable condition;

(c) Of appropriate size for the wearer;

(d) Readily accessible;

(e) Used in accordance with any requirements on the approval label; and

(f) Used in accordance with any requirements in its owner's manual if the approval label refers to the manual.

(4) A throwable personal flotation device shall be immediately available for use.

(5) The following shall be exempt from the personal flotation device requirements of this section:

(a) Manually propelled racing vessels; or

(b) Sailboards.

Section 5. Fire Extinguishers.

(1) Pursuant to 46 C.F.R. 25, an operator of a vessel which contains either butane gas, propane gas, kerosene, gasoline, or a petroleum-consuming device shall have the following on board:

(a) For a Class A or Class 1 vessel, one (1) B-1 fire extinguisher;

(b) For a Class 2 vessel:

1. With fixed systems, one (1) B-1 fire extinguisher;

2. Without fixed systems, two (2) B-1 fire extinguishers;

(c) For a Class 3 vessel with fixed systems:

1. Two (2) B-1 fire extinguishers; or

2. One (1) B-2 fire extinguisher; or

(d) For a Class 3 vessel without fixed systems:

1. Three (3) B-1 fire extinguishers; or

2. One (1) B-1 and one (1) B-2 fire extinguisher.

(2) An operator shall:

(a) Maintain fire extinguishers in workable condition; and

(b) Have fire extinguishers available for immediate and effective use.

Section 6. An operator shall not display flashing, rotating, or oscillating red lights on a vessel except for a vessel operated:

(1) For the purpose of firefighting or rescue by the U.S. Coast Guard;

(2) By the Commonwealth of Kentucky;

(3) By a county government;

(4) By a city government; or

(5) By another government agency.

Section 7. Vessels Without Required Safety Equipment.

(1) If a department conservation officer observes a vessel operating without the safety equipment established in this administrative regulation, the operator shall be directed to take whatever immediate and reasonable steps are necessary to correct the deficiency, including returning to a mooring until the situation creating the unsafe condition is corrected.

(2) If a vessel is directed to return to a mooring, the officer shall affix a notice to the vessel:

(a) Indicating the nature of the unsafe condition; and

(b) Requiring its correction before the vessel is further operated.

(301 KAR 006:020. 21 Ky.R. 3093; eff. 7-12-95; Am. 22 Ky.R. 1684; eff. 5-16-96; 33 Ky.R. 1120; 1525; eff. 12-7-2006; 39 Ky.R. 1947; eff. 5-31-2013; Cert eff. 2-5-2020; 49 Ky.R. 2130; 50 Ky.R. 650; eff. 9-21-2023; 52 Ky.R. 1046; eff. 6-2-2026.)

APPROVED by the Fish and Wildlife Commission
RICH STORM, Commissioner

APPROVED BY AGENCY: November 10, 2025

FILED WITH LRC: November 13, 2025 at 12:38 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PERIOD: A public hearing on this administrative regulation shall be held on January 29, 2026, at 10:30 a.m., at KDFWR

Administration Building, 1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601. Individuals interested in being heard at this hearing shall notify this agency in writing by five workdays prior to the hearing, of their intent to attend. If no notification of intent to attend the hearing was received by that date, the hearing may be cancelled. A transcript of the public hearing will not be made unless a written request for a transcript is made. If you do not wish to be heard at the public hearing, you may submit written comments on the proposed administrative regulation. Written comments shall be accepted through January 31, 2026. Send written notification of intent to be heard at the public hearing or written comments on the proposed administrative regulation to the contact person.

CONTACT PERSON: Jenny Gilbert, Legislative Liaison, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, 1 Sportsman's Lane, (502) 564-3400, fax: (502) 564-0506, email: fwpubliccomments@ky.gov