

DATE: October 24, 2008 10:50:42 EST

Document Number: 398

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Coast Guard

**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security
United States
Coast Guard**



News Release

Date: Oct. 24, 2008

Contact: Lt. j.g. Nadine Santiago
(202) 372-4644

Coast Guard classifies paddleboards as vessels

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Coast Guard in a decisional memo dated Oct. 3, classified paddleboards as vessels in accordance with Title 1 United States Code, Section 3.

This classification means that when used beyond the narrow limits of a swimming, surfing, or bathing area, no person may use a paddleboard unless in compliance with the Navigation Rules, and applicable carriage requirements for this type of vessel. This may include a Coast Guard approved life jacket for each person on board, a sound producing device, visual distress signals, and proper navigation lights. A police-type whistle and a flashlight comply with these requirements.

The Coast Guard has also exempted the hull identification number requirement from the manufacturing standards.

"In order to address safety issues and concerns the U.S. Coast Guard has researched the criteria, and has determined that the device known as a paddleboard is a vessel under Title 1, United States Code, Section 3," said Jeffrey Hoedt, chief of the Boating Safety Division, Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety.

Director of the Oregon Marine Board, Paul Donheffner, reported that paddleboarding has been gaining popularity. Traditionally they were used to surf in the ocean, but are now being used not only in the ocean beyond surfing areas but also in lakes and rivers. It is important to note that paddleboards in the surf-zone will not be affected by the decision and that the Coast Guard does not define the limits of surf-zones.

The U. S. Coast Guard asks all boat owners and operators to help reduce fatalities, injuries, property damage, and associated healthcare costs related to recreational

boating accidents by taking personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of their passengers. Essential steps include always wearing a life jacket; never boat under the influence; successfully complete a boating safety course; and get a vessel safety check annually from your local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or United States Power Squadrons.

The U. S. Coast Guard reminds all boater's to "Boat Responsibly!" For more information on boating responsibly, go to: www.uscgboating.org.

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