

Media Release

The Hon Melissa Horne MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Minister for Ports and Freight
Minister for Fishing and Boating



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GET PREPARED TO STAY SAFE ON THE WATER THIS SUMMER

With summer upon us, recreational boaters and fishers across Victoria are encouraged to brush up on safety rules and prepare their vessels to stay safe and avoid fines on the water.

Marine incident rates are returning to pre-pandemic levels with 1,248 serious incidents in 2020-21, compared to 1,134 in 2019-20. These include boat fires, capsizes, structural failure, flooding, and a spear fisher struck by a vessel.

With many boats and equipment sitting idle in garages over winter, authorities are concerned that incident levels could continue rising if critical checks aren't done before people hit the water.

In 2020, Maritime Safety Victoria reported vessel maintenance was an issue, with dramatic spikes in disablements directly after pandemic restrictions were eased.

Victorians can stay safe on the water by following simple steps, starting with checking they hold a valid recreational boating and/or fishing licence.

Boat owners should check their vessel is stocked with charged batteries, flares, a torch, and a fire extinguisher, as well as replacing old fuel, checking trailer tyres, and starting the boat's engine before leaving home.

Keeping safety gear in working order is critical, including having lifejackets for every person on board. Checking the Boating Vic app for updated tide, weather, and boat ramp information is also important.

Lifejackets are a must for jet skiers, kayakers, and ocean ski paddlers – and importantly, these buy people time while raising the alarm if something does go wrong, particularly if exposed to cold water in Port Phillip Bay.

Keen fishers and divers should always tell a family member or friend before leaving for the water, and if rock fishing, a lifejacket is highly recommended. Fishers can download the VicFishing app to check bag and size limits for each species – it also includes a 'Can I Fish Here?' feature to help avoid fishing in a marine park.

Speed infringement rates are also returning to pre-pandemic levels, with 255 in 2020-21, just shy of 278 in 2018-19. Brushing up on water safety rules before a trip can help boaters avoid these fines, which can also relate to offences such as distance incursions.

Jet ski registrations have boomed from 21,000 five years ago to nearly 26,000 this year. This represents a large proportion of new vessel owners who may not have as much on-water experience as traditional boaters.

Victorians can familiarise themselves with waterway rules at transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways.

Quote attributable to Minister for Fishing and Boating Melissa Horne

"These steps make all the difference in ensuring Victorian boaters and fishers make it home safely after a day on the water, particularly as we head into the busy, summer months on the bay and across our rivers and lakes."

"We know most Victorians will do the right thing, but Fisheries Officers will be out across the state to answer questions, check licences and check catch limits, while MSV will be ensuring boaters are safe on our waterways."

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