



MARINE SAFETY HANDBOOK

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Welcome to the Marine Safety Handbook for the Port of Halifax.

This handbook provides essential information, requirements, and guidelines to promote safe, secure, and responsible boating in Halifax Harbour.

Transport Canada's Office of Boating Safety is responsible for overseeing regulations, standards and policies, enforcement and technical services for recreational vessels. It encourages safe boating practices and compliance with regulations.

General

No person(s) shall, by act or omission, do anything, or permit anything to be done in Halifax Harbour that has, or is likely to have, any of the following results:

1. **Jeopardize the safety or health of themselves or others.**
2. **Cause damage to property.**
3. **Adversely affect the environment (e.g., sediment, soil, air, or water quality).**
4. **Interfere with navigation.**
5. **Adversely affect harbour operations.**
6. **Obstruct or threaten any part of the harbour.**
7. **Interfere with an authorized activity.**
8. **Cause a nuisance.**

9. **Cause damage to ships.**
10. **Cause damage to privately owned boats and/or watercraft.**
11. **Divert the flow of a river or stream, cause or affect currents, cause silting or the accumulation of material or otherwise reduce the depth of the waters.**

Under the Canada Marine Act, Section 59, Subsection (1)(a), it is an offence, subject to financial penalty, if a person or ship does not adhere to these Port Practices and Procedures.

The Halifax Port Authority (HPA) holds the power to regulate and enforce rules for all vessels, including commercial and recreational ones that are either operating or moored within the designated regions of the Port of Halifax, and over all vessels moored

at HPA operated and/or leased facilities. Vessels moored at marine facilities within the port limits, other than those facilities operated and/or leased by HPA, shall adhere to the rules and guidelines set forth by the management of that facility.

Pleasure craft over 500 gross tonnes must have an Atlantic Pilotage Authority marine pilot on board to sail within the compulsory areas. All pleasure craft over 500 gross tonnes that are proceeding to any terminal directly administered by HPA must provide the documentation through PortControl, the digital operating system for the Port of Halifax.

Access can be found on the main Port of Halifax website at:
<https://portcontrol.portofhalifax.ca/>

All small craft and pleasure craft operating in the port waters are required to comply with

the Small Vessels Regulations made under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

Pleasure craft, whether power-driven or sail powered, shall not impede the passage of large commercial vessels or naval vessels within the waters of the port. These vessels are considered constricted in the ability to maneuver and shall be given ample clearance.

HPA may issue restrictions in respect to the movement, location, and speed of such vessels as required. HPA recognizes an individual operator's right to navigation but will take the steps necessary to create conditions for safe navigation for all.

Pre-season vessel inspection and pre-departure vessel checks will help identify issues and minimize risk. Recreational boaters are encouraged to file a sail plan with local yacht clubs or someone not onboard the vessel.



All pleasure craft shall always activate their AIS transponders within the Port of Halifax area, as per Transport Canada Ship Safety Regulations.

Restricted Activity

- For safety and security reasons, engaging in any type of recreational activity is prohibited in the following areas:
 - » Within 20 metres (65 feet) of a commercial berth and/or vessel
 - » Within 100 metres (328 feet) of a Halifax Transit ferry terminal
 - » Within 175 metres (574 feet) of a commercial container terminal (PSA Halifax Atlantic Hub, PSA Halifax Fairview Cove)

- Secured cargo or cruise vessels may be engaged in provisioning activities or underwater work may be taking place at the commercial berths and a safe distance is required.
- For safety and security reasons, engaging in any type of recreational water activity within 175 metres (574 feet) of a commercial container terminal (e.g., PSA Halifax Atlantic Hub, PSA Halifax Fairview Cove) is prohibited.
- Fishing with nets or trap fishing within 300 metres (985 feet) of any berth, designated anchorage, jetty, float, or other structure used by watercraft without written permission from HPA is not permitted in Halifax Harbour. Fishing is conducted in specific areas to minimize impact on marine traffic and harbour use. Contact HPA for clarification if required.

- The use of commercial and/or recreational Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS or drones) over port lands and/or waters is strictly prohibited without the express permission from HPA Port Security. Ph. 902-334-7493
- Operating seaplanes anywhere on Halifax Harbour is prohibited.



Swimming in Halifax Harbour is permitted in designated areas only. Events require permission with an application from HPA.

For detailed information on safety requirements please reference the Transport Canada Safe Boating Guide <https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/boating-safety/boating-safety-resources>

Licensing

No person shall operate or permit another person to operate a pleasure craft unless:

- A copy of the licence and pleasure craft operator card is carried on board.
- Appropriate registration with name or ID.
- Proof of insurance if required.

While consideration will be given to allow the operation of non-conventional craft in the Port of Halifax, HPA may restrict areas of operation for these craft within the harbour limits. This is to ensure that such craft do not cause safety concerns for other users of the port or the adjacent uplands. Criteria such as risks to the operator and the requirements of emergency services providers will also be considered. Owners and operators of such craft will be required to work with the

appropriate governing body to ensure safety and operator awareness.

Owners will be required to provide proof of insurance and operate within the guidelines outlined by Transport Canada in addition to any requirements included in agreements with landowners within the Port of Halifax. Conditions set for the operations of such craft may vary dependent on the risk and the proficiency of the operator.

Safety Equipment Requirements

In the event of a water-related incident, having the appropriate safety equipment in place, ensuring its functionality, and making it accessible and usable by all will improve preparedness and ability to deal with emergency situations. Ensure your vessel is equipped with mandatory safety equipment including life jackets, fire extinguishers, distress signals, and navigation lights.

All safety equipment onboard must:

- Be in good condition.
- Be easily accessible (for emergency use).
- Undergo regular maintenance and replacement according to manufacturer's instructions.

Lifejackets

Lifejackets should be red, orange, or yellow as they are much more visible in water. Compared to Personal Flotation Devices, lifejackets offer a higher level of protection.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

PFDs do not offer the same level of protection as lifejackets for staying afloat. However, they are designed for constant wear and are more comfortable than lifejackets.

A lifejacket or PFD is the best insurance you can have on or near the water. All vessel operators are required to carry a PFD or lifejacket of appropriate size for each person on board.

Fire Fighting Equipment

Check your fire extinguishers often for correct operating pressure and ensure all passengers on board know how to use them. Have a qualified person maintain, service and resupply your extinguishers as per the manufacturer's instructions.

Cold Water Shock

Cold water can be especially dangerous. The shock can cause dramatic changes in breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. Your life jacket or PFD is designed to keep you afloat if you experience loss of muscle control.

First Aid

When boating, you may find yourself far from medical help and a first aid kit should always

be kept on board. Keep it stored in a cool, dry place, and replace used or expired supplies frequently.



Do you know the symptoms of cold shock, hypothermia, heat exhaustion and allergic reactions?

Do you know how to stop bleeding, perform CPR, or treat hypothermia?



If not, take a first aid course as soon as possible.



First aid knowledge can make a life-saving difference.

Rules and Safety on Water

Pay attention to your surroundings and avoid commercial shipping lanes.

- Always watch out for others on the water and be ready to yield to large vessels in a safe manner.
- Stay off the water in fog, lightning storms, or high winds.
- Stay clear of docked ferries, or ferries in transit.
- Contact the OPCEN at 902-334-7493 if you encounter deadheads, debris, broken navigational aids or pollution.
- Always keep a supply of food and fresh water onboard for emergencies.

To report stranded, injured, entangled or dead marine animals call the **Marine Animal Response Society at 1-866-567-6277.**

Vessels less than 20 metres (65 feet) must stay out of the way of larger vessels. A large vessel will remind you to give way by giving five or more short blasts of its horn.



Most times large vessels cannot see smaller vessels and it takes longer for a larger vessel to stop or turn. Stay clear of large vessels to avoid any accidents.

Avoid Dangerous Behaviours

- Always operate at a safe speed.
- Never operate any type of marine vessel or pleasure craft under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Impaired operation of a vessel is illegal.
- If you see or suspect illegal activity in progress including impaired operation of a vessel or pleasure craft call 9-1-1.
- Vessels navigating under or near the bridges have limited ability to maneuver so provide safe distance.
- Tugs often utilize lines to maneuver/control vessels. These lines are difficult to see. Never attempt to cut in between a tug operation.

Charts

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All vessels in Canadian waters must carry and use nautical charts and related publications pursuant to the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, Charts and Nautical Publications Regulations, that are issued by, or on the authority of, the Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS).



Most paper charts can be purchased locally in Halifax, and some are available to download online.

The documents, charts and publications may not be necessary if your boat is less than 100 tonnes, and you have sufficient knowledge of the waterways including:

- Shipping routes.
- Lights, buoys, and marks.

- Boating hazards.
- Boating conditions, such as tides, currents, ice, and weather patterns.

Read nautical charts with publications like Sailing Directions. Looking at tide tables and current atlases will help you learn about water levels, times of low, slack, and high tides, and the direction of water flow.

CHS CHARTS 4201 -

Halifax Harbour: Bedford Basin

4202 -

Halifax Harbour:

Point Pleasant to Bedford Basin

4203 -

Halifax Harbour:

Black Point to Point Pleasant

An online tide table can be found at

<https://tides.gc.ca/en/stations/00490/predictions/annual>

Radio

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All vessels required under the Vessel Traffic Regulations to report their movements are to keep a listening watch on channel 12 VHF. This is also true for commercially operated small vessels working under the conditions of operations set by HPA.

Marine VHF radio is generally the best way to send a distress alert. If you have a VHF radio, keep it tuned to channel 16. Know where you are always and be prepared to describe your specific location.

Radio channels to look for are:

- MCTS which can be contacted through VHF 12/14/16.

Collision Regulations

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Vessel operators are reminded that, in accordance with **COLLISION REGULATIONS RULE 6**, vessels must proceed at a safe speed.

A speed limit of 6 knots shall be observed in the following areas:

- The Northwest Arm (all areas northwest of Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron): Take note of the charted “No Wake” zone buoys.
- The Bedford Basin: within 100 metres (328 feet) of any fixed or floating docks, beaches, mooring areas, and small craft.
- The Halifax Harbour walk: the boardwalk area between Purdy’s Wharf and Tall Ships Quay, within 100 metres (328 feet) of any fixed or floating docks, mooring areas and/or small craft or pleasure craft that may be moored.

In HPA waters, safe speed also includes a speed in which the wash and wake from the vessel will not cause risk of damage to property or to safety of life. Where necessary, safe speed will be defined by HPA and passed to vessels via MCTS. Vessels must operate at the appropriate speed provided by MCTS.

Vessels less than 20 metres (65 feet) length overall and fishing vessels shall not impede the passage of larger vessels within a narrow channel, as stated in Rule 9 of Collision Regulations, or hamper the movement of commercial traffic vessels, which due to their size and/or prevailing weather conditions require additional space when moving inside port limits.

In conjunction with HPA, the Canadian Coast Guard Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre (Halifax Traffic) provide all the necessary information regarding positions of ships and traffic movements on VHF Ch. 12/14.

Monitor the Weather

Weather and water conditions play a significant role in safety on the water. Before heading out, get the latest forecast for your area, and ensure you understand the risks. Be aware that other factors (such as topography) may cause weather conditions to differ from the forecasts.

Environment Canada issues marine forecasts several times a day. If you have a marine radio, you can get weather updates on the water. These forecasts provide valuable information on wind speed and direction, weather, visibility, and freezing spray (if applicable). Marine forecasts are also available online.

<https://www.smartatlantic.ca/>
is another excellent resource.

Environment & Sustainability Considerations

Sustainability is built into every aspect of HPA's business and operations, to balance economic vitality, community impacts, and environmental stewardship. To support these efforts, HPA requests that all activities respect and adhere to the following:

- **Prevent Pollution:** Dispose of waste properly and avoid littering. Use bilge oil absorbents to prevent oil discharges and maintain a spill kit onboard for emergencies. Report any marine pollution incidents to 1-800-563-9089.
- **Minimize Noise Impacts:** Plan operations to limit noise and reduce disruptions to the local community and marine habitats while in port.
- **Limit the Spread of Invasive Species:** Reduce the risk of introducing and

spreading invasive aquatic species through biofouling by implementing best practices such as applying antifouling coatings and regularly cleaning vessels. Refer to the IMO Biofouling Management Guidelines for Recreational Boating.

HPA has been a member of Green Marine since 2011. <https://green-marine.org>

Diving Operations

All diving operations within HPA's jurisdiction, commercial or recreational, must be pre-approved by HPA's Port Operations Centre (OPCEN). Diving authorization is to be obtained from OPCEN via PortControl, our digital online port operating system.

If you do not have access to PortControl, you can send a general inquiry email to opcen@porthalifax.ca



Operations requests should be sent during regular working hours Monday – Friday with a minimum of 24 hours advance notice. Exceptions may be granted during an emergency.



Diver's Flag

The diver down flag is the main diving flag used in North America.

It is a red flag with a white diagonal stripe that extends from the top of the hoist to the bottom of the fly. This diving flag is usually flown from a buoy in the water to indicate an area where diving is underway. It can also be attached to a diver so that it follows them through the water.

A diver down flag flown from a buoy should be at least 50 cm (20 inches) in length. It



needs to be set high enough above the water that approaching vessels can see it even in choppy conditions, and the buoy must be stable enough to ensure that the flag doesn't topple over.



Alpha Flag

The Alpha flag, officially known as International Code flag “A”, is a blue and white pennant flag that is flown on a diving vessel.

This internationally-recognized flag indicates to other boaters that the vessel is engaged in diving activities and therefore has reduced maneuverability, meaning that other boats must cede the right of way.

The Alpha flag should be a rigid replica at least 1 metre (39 inches) in height, displayed prominently near the highest point of the vessel for optimal visibility.



Maintaining a safe distance

Diving flags are intended to ensure that other vessels maintain a safe distance from divers and their boats in order to prevent collisions and other accidents.



Transport Canada recommends that vessels stay at least 100 m (328 ft) away from a diving flag wherever possible. Similarly, divers should do their best to stay within 100 m (328 ft) of their flag.

In the event that a vessel cannot maintain such a distance, it should slow down, move cautiously and stay as far away from the diving area as possible.

Unmanned Vessels

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Clearance will only be given to position an unmanned vessel within the limits of the Port of Halifax or alongside a HPA berth or leased facility if Port officials are satisfied with the following conditions:

- The master of the vessel has adequate securing arrangements between the vessel and port facility.
- Mooring lines are tended.
- Arrangements are in place to reposition or remove the vessel from the Port if instructed to do so. Since it is understood that the time required for preparing to move an unmanned vessel may be longer than that required for a fully crewed vessel, the length of the notification period will be agreed upon before this clearance is granted.

- If the situation requires, arrangements should be made to have a fire-watch complete routine rounds of the vessel.

Barges or other unmanned vessels must have lines with sufficient scope to remain properly secured at all stages of the tide. Such vessels must have a person or company responsible for the security arrangements, and this person or company must be available at short notice. Contact phone numbers are to be left with HPA's Operations Department and with the security service for the terminal at which the vessel is secured.



Any vessel which is to be laid up for an extended period shall have a security inspection completed and enter a Declaration of Security with the facility operator for the duration of the layover.

Contact Information

EMERGENCY (Fire, Police, Ambulance): 9-1-1

Halifax Regional Police Non-Emergency
902-490-5020 or 902-490-7252 (TTY)

PORT OPERATIONS CENTRE

For questions relating to HPA Port Security, incident reports environmental spills, emergencies, etc., please contact the Port Operations Centre (OPCEN).

902-334-7493 • opcen@porthalifax.ca

Port Security and the OPCEN operate every day of the year, 24 hours a day.

VHF: Ch. 12

Marine Distress emergencies shall be indicated on Marine VHF 16, Cellular *16 and/or 9-1-1.

Port control website:
<https://portcontrol.portofhalifax.ca/>

MCTS (Halifax Traffic) can be contacted
via VHF 12/14/16 and by phone at 902-426-9750

Annual Tide Table
<https://tides.gc.ca/en/stations/00490/predictions/annual>

Transport Canada Boating Safety
<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/boating-safety>

Halifax Port Authority: <https://www.porthalifax.ca/>