

PARKS AND WILDLIFE CODE

TITLE 4. WATER SAFETY

CHAPTER 31. WATER SAFETY

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 31.001. TITLE. This chapter may be cited as the Water Safety Act.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.002. STATE POLICY. It is the duty of this state to promote recreational water safety for persons and property in and connected with the use of all recreational water facilities in the state, to promote safety in the operation and equipment of facilities, and to promote uniformity of laws relating to water safety.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.003. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Boat" means a vessel not more than 65 feet in length, measured from the tip of the bow in a straight line to the stern.

(2) "Vessel" means any watercraft, other than a seaplane on water, used or capable of being used for transportation on water.

(3) "Motorboat" means any vessel propelled or designed to be propelled by machinery, whether or not the machinery is permanently or temporarily affixed or is the principal source of propulsion.

(4) "Owner" means the person who rightfully claims lawful possession of a vessel by virtue of the legal title or an equitable interest.

(5) "Water of this state" means any public water within the territorial limits of this state.

(6) "Operate" means to navigate or otherwise use a motorboat or a vessel.

(7) "Dealer" means a person engaged in the business of

buying, selling, selling on consignment, displaying for sale, or exchanging at least five vessels, motorboats, or outboard motors during a calendar year.

(8) "Vessel livery" means a business establishment engaged in renting or hiring out vessels for profit.

(9) Repealed by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

(10) "Reasonable time" means 15 days.

(11) "Manufacturer" means a person engaged in the business of manufacturing new and unused vessels and outboard motors for the purpose of sale or trade.

(12) "New" means every vessel or outboard motor after its manufacture and before its sale or other transfer to a person not a manufacturer or dealer.

(13) "Outboard motor" means any self-contained internal combustion propulsion system, excluding fuel supply, which is used to propel a vessel and which is detachable as a unit from the vessel.

(14) "Personal watercraft" means a type of motorboat that is specifically designed to be operated by a person or persons sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.

(15) "Authorized agent" means a dealer who is authorized by the department under Section 31.006 of this code to collect taxes and fees and issue certificates of number.

(16) "Distributor" means a person who offers for sale, sells, or processes for distribution new vessels or outboard motors to dealers in this state.

(17) "Coast Guard" means the United States Coast Guard.

(18) "Abandoned vessel or outboard motor" means a vessel or outboard motor that has remained on private property without the consent of the owner or person in charge of the property for more than seven consecutive days.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1252, ch. 484, Sec. 1(a), (b), eff. Sept. 1, 1977; Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 571, Sec. 1, eff.

Sept. 1, 1989; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 718, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 739, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 26.01, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1256, Sec. 21, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(a), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 108 (S.B. 489), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 720 (H.B. 787), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1127 (H.B. 308), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 161 (S.B. 1093), Sec. 22.001(36), eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. 1106), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. 4032), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 31.004. APPLICATION OF CHAPTER. The provisions of this chapter apply to all public water of this state and to all vessels on public water. Privately owned water is not subject to the provisions of this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1256, Sec. 22, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 31.005. CONTRACTS WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (a) The department may apply to any appropriate agency or officer of the United States for participation in or the receipt of aid from any federal program relating to water safety, including:

- (1) the acquisition, maintenance, and operating costs of facilities;
- (2) purchase of equipment and supplies;

(3) personnel salaries; and

(4) other federally approved reimbursable expenses, including personnel training costs, public boat safety and education costs, and general administrative and enforcement costs.

(b) The department may contract with the United States in order to comply with all necessary requirements for the receipt of funds made available under any federal legislation.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.006. APPOINTMENT OF AUTHORIZED AGENT. (a) The department may authorize a dealer who holds a dealer's or manufacturer's number to act as the agent of the department under Subchapter B and under Chapter 160, Tax Code, for the issuance of certificates of number and the collection of fees and taxes for vessels and outboard motors sold by that dealer.

(b) An authorized agent must follow the rules of the commission and the rules of the comptroller.

(c) An authorized agent shall send the applications required by Sections 31.024 and 31.047 of this code, the fees required by Sections 31.026 and 31.048 of this code, and the tax paid under Chapter 160, Tax Code, to the department not later than 20 days after the date a certificate of number is issued and a fee or tax collected.

(d) An authorized agent shall execute a surety bond in an amount set by the department to insure against loss to the department of fees and taxes. The bond shall be in favor of the department.

(e) The department may cancel the authorization of an agent on 30 days' written notice of the agent's violation of this chapter, a department rule adopted under this chapter, Chapter 160, Tax Code, or a rule adopted by the comptroller under that chapter.

(f) The commission may adopt rules for the creation of a program for the continuing identification and classification of participants in the vessel and outboard motor industries doing business in this state. The commission may set fees to administer this subsection. The department shall use information from the program to appoint agents under this section or for any other

purpose required by the commission's rules or this chapter.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 718, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 968, Sec. 35, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. [4032](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2019.

SUBCHAPTER B. IDENTIFICATION OF VESSELS; REQUIRED NUMBERING

Sec. 31.021. REQUIRED NUMBERING. (a) Each vessel on the water of this state shall be numbered in accordance with the provisions of this chapter unless specifically exempted. The numbering system shall be in accord with the Federal Boating Act of 1958 and subsequent federal legislation.

(b) No person may operate or give permission for the operation of any vessel or may dock, moor, or store a vessel owned by the person on the water of this state unless:

(1) the vessel is numbered as required by this chapter;

(2) the certificate of number awarded to the vessel is in full force and effect; and

(3) the identifying number set forth in the certificate is properly displayed on the vessel as required by this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1993;

Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1256, Sec. 23, eff. Sept. 1, 1997;

Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts

2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(c), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003,

78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1388 (H.B. [115](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.022. EXEMPTIONS FROM REQUIRED NUMBERING. (a) A vessel is not required to be numbered under the provisions of this

chapter if it is:

(1) operated within this state for a period not exceeding 90 consecutive days and is covered by a number in full force and effect which has been awarded under federal law or a federally approved numbering system of another state;

(2) from a country other than the United States temporarily using the water of this state;

(3) owned by the United States, a state, or a subdivision of a state; or

(4) a ship's lifeboat.

(b) The department may exempt from numbering a class of vessels if it finds that the numbering of the vessels of that class will not materially aid in their identification. The department may also exempt a vessel if it finds that it belongs to a class of vessels that would be exempt from numbering under a numbering system of an agency of the federal government if it were subject to federal law.

(c) All canoes, kayaks, punts, rowboats, rubber rafts, or other vessels under 14 feet in length when paddled, poled, oared, or windblown are exempt from the numbering provisions of this chapter.

(d) A vessel in use at a water ski tournament, competition, or exhibition sanctioned in writing by the governing board of the governmental entity that has jurisdiction over the body of water on which the tournament, competition, or exhibition occurs is exempt from the numbering provisions of this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 543, Sec. 1, eff. June 14, 1989; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.023. VESSELS NUMBERED UNDER FEDERAL OR OTHER STATE LAW. The owner of any vessel for which a current certificate of number has been awarded under any federal law or a federally approved numbering system of another state shall, if the vessel is operated on the water of this state in excess of 90 consecutive days, make application for a certificate of number in the manner prescribed in this chapter for residents of this state.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.024. APPLICATION FOR NUMBER. (a) The owner of each vessel requiring numbering by this state shall file an application for a number with the department, an authorized agent, or a county tax assessor-collector.

(b) The application shall be signed by the owner of the vessel and shall be accompanied by the fee prescribed in Section 31.026 of this code. If the application is received by a county tax assessor-collector, the application and the portion of the fee not retained by the tax assessor-collector as a collection fee shall be sent to the department. If the application is received by an authorized agent, the application and the fee shall be sent to the department as required by Section 31.006 of this code.

(c) On receipt of the application in approved form, the department shall enter it on the records of its office and issue to the applicant a certificate of number stating the number awarded to the vessel and the name and address of the owner.

(d) The application form, the form of the certificate of number, and the manner of renewal shall be prescribed by the department.

(e) The department, an authorized agent, or a county tax assessor-collector may not issue a certificate of number unless the tax due on the vessel under Chapter 160, Tax Code, is paid.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1979, 66th Leg., p. 1352, ch. 607, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 27, 1979; Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., 1st C.S., ch. 5, Sec. 7.04, eff. Oct. 1, 1991; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 718, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.025. RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATES OF NUMBER. (a) An application for the renewal of each certificate of number shall be prepared by the department and mailed to the owner of the vessel, or sent electronically to the owner if the owner has agreed to receive department communications electronically, during the period of the last 90 days before the expiration date of the certificate. The same

number shall be issued on renewal.

(b) The completed application for renewal may be returned to the department, to any county tax assessor-collector, or if permitted by the department, to an agent of the department.

(c) A completed application not received during the 90-day period shall be treated in the same manner as an original application.

(d) The department, an authorized agent, or a county tax assessor-collector may not issue a renewal certificate of number unless the tax due on the vessel under Chapter 160, Tax Code, is paid.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1979, 66th Leg., p. 1353, ch. 607, Sec. 2, eff. Aug. 27, 1979.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (H.B. 1466), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 31.026. FEES. (a) Each application for an original or renewal certificate of number for a vessel shall be accompanied by a two-year fee determined by the following classification schedule or determined in the same classifications by the commission, whichever amount is more:

Class	Description of Vessel	Fee
Class A	less than 16 feet in length	\$12
Class 1	16 feet or over and less than 26 feet in length	\$18
Class 2	26 feet or over and less than 40 feet in length	\$24
Class 3	40 feet or more in length	\$30

(b) The fee for a vessel less than 16 feet in length owned by a vessel livery and used for rental purposes is \$6 for each original and renewal application for a certificate of number or an amount set by the commission, whichever amount is more.

(c) Owners of newly purchased vessels or other vessels not previously operated in this state shall pay the full registration

fee.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 1326, ch. 277, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1983; Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 2, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.028. CERTIFICATE OF NUMBER. The certificate of number shall be pocket-size. The certificate or a facsimile of it shall be carried on board the vessel at all times. It does not have to be on the person of the operator if prior to trial the operator can produce for examination a valid certificate of number.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.029. TERM OF CERTIFICATE OF NUMBER. Every certificate of number awarded pursuant to this chapter shall continue in full force and effect for a period of two years unless sooner terminated or discontinued in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.030. DUPLICATE CERTIFICATES AND DECALS. (a) If a certificate of number becomes lost, mutilated, or illegible, the owner of the vessel for which the certificate was issued may obtain a duplicate on application to the department and the payment of a fee of \$2 or an amount set by the commission, whichever amount is more.

(b) If a registration decal becomes lost, mutilated, or illegible, the owner of the vessel for which the decal was issued may obtain a replacement decal on application to the department and the payment of a fee of \$2 or an amount set by the commission, whichever amount is more.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1275, ch. 497, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 29, 1977; Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 1327, ch. 277, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1983; Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 2, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.031. NUMBERING PATTERN. (a) The numbering pattern used consists of the prefix "TX" followed by a combination of exactly four numerals and further followed by a suffix of two letters. The group of numerals appearing between the letters shall be separated from the letters by hyphens or equivalent spaces.

(b) All basic numbers of each series shall begin with 1000. TX-1000-AA through TX-9999-AA will be allotted to dealers and manufacturers. TX-1000-AB through TX-9999-ZZ will be allotted to all other vessel owners and livery operators.

(c) The letters "G", "I", "O", and "Q" shall be omitted from all letter sequences.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.032. NUMBERING LOCATION AND VISIBILITY; EXEMPTION; DECAL. (a) The owner of a vessel shall paint on or attach to each side of the forward half of the vessel the identification number and a registration decal in the manner prescribed by the department. The number shall read from left to right and shall be of block characters of good proportion of not less than three inches in height. The numbers shall be of a color which will contrast with the hull material of the vessel and so maintained as to be clearly visible and legible.

(a-1) On a vessel configured so that a number on the hull or superstructure is not easily visible, the number must be painted on or attached to a backing plate that is attached to the forward half of the vessel so that the number is visible from each side of the vessel.

(b) The owner of a vessel required to be numbered under this subchapter and documented by the United States Coast Guard is not required to attach an identification number as required by Subsection (a).

(c) The commission shall adopt rules for the placement of the registration decal in an alternate location for antique boats. In this subsection, "antique boat" means a boat that:

(1) is used primarily for recreational purposes; and

(2) was manufactured 35 or more years before the date the registration decal is issued.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(d), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 193 (H.B. 942), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1388 (H.B. 115), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1388 (H.B. 115), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.033. UNAUTHORIZED NUMBERS PROHIBITED. (a) No person may paint, attach, or otherwise display on the forward half of a vessel a number other than the number awarded to the vessel or granted reciprocity under this chapter.

(b) No person may deface or alter the certificate of number or the number assigned to and appearing on a vessel.

(c) No person may display on a vessel a registration decal that is altered, fraudulent, or issued under a certificate of number assigned to another vessel.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 695 (H.B. 384), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1388 (H.B. 115), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.034. ISSUANCE OF NUMBERS BY DEPARTMENT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT. (a) The department may award a certificate of number.

(b) A certificate of number issued and delivered by an

authorized agent in conformity with this chapter and the rules of the commission adopted under this chapter is valid as if awarded by the department directly.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., 1st C.S., ch. 5, Sec. 7.05, eff. Oct. 1, 1991; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 718, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.0341. ISSUANCE OF NUMBERS: COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR-COLLECTOR. (a) Each county tax assessor-collector shall award certificates of number under this chapter in the manner prescribed by this chapter and the regulations of the department.

(b) The county tax assessor-collector is entitled to a fee of 10 percent of the amount of the fee for each certificate. The amount retained by the tax assessor-collector shall be deposited to the credit of the officers salary fund of the county to be used for the sole purpose of paying the salaries of persons issuing vessel certificates of number.

Added by Acts 1979, 66th Leg., p. 1353, ch. 607, Sec. 3, eff. Aug. 27, 1979. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. [1106](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.035. RULES AND REGULATIONS; COPIES. Copies of all rules and regulations formulated under this chapter shall be furnished without cost with each certificate of number issued.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.036. PROOF OF OWNERSHIP. (a) A certificate of title is required as proof of ownership of a vessel for which a certificate of number is sought.

(b) A certified statement of ownership is sufficient proof of ownership for a vessel of a type for which a certificate of title is not required.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(c), eff. Sept. 1, 1977; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.037. CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP INTEREST; NOTICE TO DEPARTMENT. (a) The recorded owner of a vessel numbered in this state shall notify the department not later than the 20th day after the date:

(1) of the transfer by sale, donation, gift, or other means of all or any part of the owner's interest in the vessel, other than the creation of a security interest in the vessel;

(2) of the destruction or disposal of the vessel; or

(3) of the permanent removal of the vessel from this state to another state or country.

(a-1) The notification under Subsection (a) must be on a form prescribed by the department that includes:

(1) the name and address of the new owner, as applicable; and

(2) the vessel's certificate of number.

(b) If the vessel is destroyed, disposed of, or permanently moved to another state or country, the department shall cancel the certificate of number and enter the cancellation in its records.

(c) The new owner of a vessel shall, not later than the 45th day after the date ownership was transferred, submit an application to the department with:

(1) evidence of ownership;

(2) the new owner's name and address;

(3) the number of the vessel; and

(4) a fee of \$2 or an amount set by the commission, whichever amount is more.

(d) On receipt of the new owner's application and fee the department shall transfer the certificate of number issued for the vessel to the new owner. Unless the application is made and the fee is paid on time, the vessel is without a certificate of number, and it is unlawful for any person to operate the vessel until the certificate is issued.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 1327, ch. 277, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1983; Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 2, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (H.B. [1466](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. [4032](#)), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 31.038. CHANGE OF ADDRESS; NOTICE TO DEPARTMENT. (a) The holder of a certificate of number shall notify the department within a reasonable time if his address no longer conforms to the address appearing on the certificate and shall inform the department of his new address.

(b) The department may provide in its regulations for the surrender of the certificate bearing the former address and its replacement with a certificate bearing the new address or for the alteration of the outstanding certificate to show the new address of the holder. Changes of address shall be noted on the records of the department.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.039. PUBLIC RECORDS; FEES. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (c), all ownership records of the department made or kept under this chapter are public records.

(b) The commission may by rule charge a fee for access to ownership records and other records made or kept under this chapter.

(c) An owner identifier as prescribed by 33 C.F.R. Section 174.17 is not a public record.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(e), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. [1106](#)), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.0391. RELEASE OF INFORMATION. (a) The department or a county may not release the name or address of a person recorded in the department vessel and outboard motor ownership records unless the department or county receives a written request that:

- (1) contains the requestor's name and address; and
- (2) states that the use of the information is for a lawful purpose.

Text of subsection effective until January 01, 2025

(b) This section does not apply to the release of information to:

- (1) a peace officer as defined by Article [2.12](#), Code of Criminal Procedure, who is acting in an official capacity; or
- (2) a state official or an official of a political subdivision of this state who requests the information for tax purposes.

Text of subsection effective on January 01, 2025

(b) This section does not apply to the release of information to:

- (1) a peace officer as defined by Article [2A.001](#), Code of Criminal Procedure, who is acting in an official capacity; or
- (2) a state official or an official of a political subdivision of this state who requests the information for tax purposes.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 845, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 765 (H.B. [4504](#)), Sec. 2.159, eff. January 1, 2025.

Sec. 31.040. VESSEL LIVERIES. (a) Before the vessel is rented or let for hire, the owner or operator of a vessel livery shall obtain a certificate of number for a vessel being used as a motorboat prior to being rented.

(b) The application for the certificate of number under Section [31.024](#) or for a certificate of title under Section [31.046](#) must state that the applicant is a vessel livery within the meaning

of this chapter.

(c) The owner of a vessel livery shall keep a record of the name and address of the persons hiring any vessel operated as a motorboat, the vessel's certificate of number, the time and date of departure, and the expected time of return. The record shall be kept for six months.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.
Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. [1106](#)), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.041. DUTIES OF DEALERS, DISTRIBUTORS, AND MANUFACTURERS; LICENSE REQUIRED. (a) A person may not engage in business in this state as a dealer, distributor, or manufacturer unless the person holds a license issued under this section and enters into a license agreement with the department. A dealer must have a license for each place of business owned and operated by the person.

(b) The commission shall establish the form and manner for display of a license issued under this section.

(c) The department shall issue a dealer, distributor, or manufacturer number to each dealer, distributor, or manufacturer licensed under this section in the manner provided by Section [31.031\(b\)](#).

(d) A dealer, distributor, or manufacturer of vessels in this state may use the dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's number for vessels the dealer, distributor, or manufacturer wishes to show, demonstrate, or test on the water of this state instead of securing a certificate of number for each vessel. The number shall be attached to any vessel that the dealer, distributor, or manufacturer sends temporarily on the water. For purposes of this subsection, "show, demonstrate, or test" does not include the use of a vessel for recreational purposes or for participation in a contest or event. The commission, however, may establish rules concerning the issuance and price of validation cards permitting

the limited and temporary use of vessels for recreational purposes or participation in contests or events. Any fees collected by the department under this subsection shall be deposited in the game, fish, and water safety account established under Section [11.032](#).

(e) The application for a license under this section must state that the applicant is a dealer, distributor, or manufacturer within the meaning of this chapter, and the facts stated on the application must be sworn before an officer authorized to administer oaths. An application submitted by a dealer must be accompanied by photographs of the business sufficient to show any sign the business is required to display and the extent of the space the business is required to maintain. The application must also be accompanied by a copy of the tax permit of the dealer, distributor, or manufacturer issued by the comptroller under Chapter [151](#), Tax Code, if the dealer, distributor, or manufacturer has a tax permit. The two-year fee for a dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's number is \$500. A license may not be issued until the provisions of this section have been satisfied.

(f) A dealer, distributor, or manufacturer holding a dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's license may issue a reasonable temporary facsimile of the number issued under Subsection (c), which may be used by any authorized person. The form of the facsimile and the manner of display of the number shall be prescribed by the department.

(g) A dealer, distributor, or manufacturer holding a dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's license may transfer a certificate of number or a certificate of title to a vessel or outboard motor without securing a certificate of number or certificate of title in the dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's name if the vessel or outboard motor is sold in the normal course of the dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's business.

(h) Not later than the 45th day after a dealer, distributor, or manufacturer holding a dealer's, distributor's, or manufacturer's license sells at the first or a subsequent sale a vessel or outboard motor, the dealer, distributor, or manufacturer shall apply, in the name of the purchaser of the vessel or outboard

motor, for a certificate of number or a certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor, as applicable, and file with the department each document necessary to transfer the certificate of number or certificate of title.

(i) A person purchasing a vessel may use the temporary facsimile number issued under Subsection (f) for a period not to exceed 45 days from the date the dealer, distributor, or manufacturer applies for a certificate of number or a certificate of title under Subsection (h). The person shall retain the facsimile number on the vessel for the period described by this subsection.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 1328, ch. 277, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1983; Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 2, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 587, Sec. 36, eff. Oct. 1, 1993; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 13.01, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(f), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 108 (S.B. [489](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 776 (H.B. [3764](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. [4032](#)), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. [4032](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 31.0411. TERM OF LICENSE; TRANSFER. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a license issued under Section [31.041](#):

(1) is valid for two years from the date of issuance; and

(2) may not be transferred to another person.

(b) A license issued under Section [31.041](#) in the name of a business remains valid for the business location specified on the license if a change of ownership or business name occurs.

(c) A license issued under Section 31.041 may be transferred to a new address if:

- (1) a business moves to another location; and
- (2) a change of ownership has not occurred.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(g), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 31.0412. LICENSING RULES. The commission may adopt rules regarding licenses issued under Section 31.041, including rules:

- (1) regarding license transfer procedures;
- (2) prescribing application and license agreement forms;
- (3) regarding application and renewal procedures;
- (4) prescribing reporting and recordkeeping requirements for license holders;
- (5) setting fees to be charged for:
 - (A) a transferred license; or
 - (B) a replacement license;
- (6) prescribing license requirements; and
- (7) establishing license revocation and suspension procedures.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(g), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 108 (S.B. 489), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 31.0413. EXEMPTION FROM DEALER LICENSING REQUIREMENTS. The dealer licensing provisions of this subchapter do not apply to the sale of a canoe, kayak, punt, rowboat, rubber raft, paddleboat, or other vessel that is less than 12 feet in length and has a horsepower rating of five horsepower or less or to the sale of an outboard motor with a manufacturer's rating of five horsepower or less.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(g), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 31.042. CANCELLATION OF CERTIFICATES OF NUMBER; GROUNDS. (a) A certificate of number may be cancelled and the identification number voided by the department even though the action occurs before the expiration date on the certificate and even though the certificate is not surrendered to the department.

(b) Causes for cancellation of certificates and voiding of numbers include:

- (1) surrender of the certificate for cancellation;
- (2) issuance of a new number for the same vessel;
- (3) false or fraudulent certification in an application for number;
- (4) failure to pay the prescribed fee; and
- (5) dismantling, destruction, or other change in the form or character of the vessel or outboard motor so that it is no longer correctly described in the certificate or it no longer meets the definition of a vessel or outboard motor.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(d), eff. Sept. 1, 1977; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 13, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(h), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 31.043. MANUFACTURER'S IDENTIFICATION NUMBER. (a) All vessels manufactured in Texas for sale and all vessels sold, numbered, or titled in Texas shall carry a manufacturer's hull identification number clearly imprinted on the structure of the vessel or displayed on a plate permanently attached to the vessel. Except as required to comply with Section [31.024](#) or [31.047](#), this subsection does not apply to a vessel that is not required by the United States Coast Guard to have a hull identification number.

(b) The owner of a vessel that does not have a manufacturer's hull identification number may file an application for a hull identification number with the department on forms approved by it. The application must include a sworn statement describing the vessel, proving legal ownership, and, if known, stating the reason for the lack of hull identification number. The

application must be signed by the owner of the vessel and must be accompanied by a fee of \$25 and a certificate from a game warden commissioned by the department stating that the vessel has been inspected by the officer and appears to be as applied for. On receipt of the application in approved form, the department shall enter the information on the records of its office and shall issue to the applicant a hull identification number.

(c) No person may intentionally or knowingly destroy, remove, alter, cover, or deface an outboard motor serial number, the manufacturer's hull identification number or plate bearing the hull identification number, or the hull identification number or serial number issued by the department. No person may possess a vessel with a hull identification number or an outboard motor with a serial number that has been altered, defaced, mutilated, or removed.

(c-1) No person may intentionally sell, offer to sell, or purchase a vessel with a hull identification number, or an outboard motor with a serial number, that has been altered, defaced, mutilated, or removed.

(d) A person who has a vessel with an altered, defaced, mutilated, or removed hull identification number or an outboard motor with an altered, defaced, mutilated, or removed serial number shall file a sworn statement with the department describing the vessel or outboard motor, proving legal ownership, and, if known, stating the reason for the destruction, removal, or defacement of the number. The statement must be accompanied by a fee of \$25 and a certificate from a game warden commissioned by the department that the vessel or outboard motor has been inspected by the officer and appears to be as applied for. On receipt of the statement in approved form, the department shall enter the information on records of its office and shall issue to the applicant a hull identification number or outboard motor serial number.

(e) This section does not apply to vessels with a valid marine document issued by the United States Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center or a federal agency that is a successor to the National Vessel Documentation Center.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 1328, ch. 277, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 1983; Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 2, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 14, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1099, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 695 (H.B. 384), Sec. 2, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.044. INSPECTIONS. (a) A dealer, distributor, or manufacturer may not refuse to allow the department or a peace officer to inspect a vessel, outboard motor, or records relating to the possession, origination, ownership, or transfer of a vessel or outboard motor at a dealership or distributor's or manufacturer's place of business during normal business hours.

(b) The commission by rule shall adopt a policy to guide the prioritization of inspections of license holders holding a license issued under Section 31.041 based on risk to water safety.

(c) The policy adopted under this section must require that the department:

(1) determine the conditions under which an on-site inspection of a license holder by the department is appropriate;

(2) develop an assessment tool for determining the appropriate frequency and intensity of department inspections of license holders, based on key risk factors and indications of increased or decreased risk, such as repeated or remedied violations and failed or passed inspections; and

(3) document all license holder inspections and the results of those inspections and make the documentation available to all employees whose job descriptions include the regulation of license holders.

(d) The policy adopted under this section may be combined with a policy adopted under Section 12.1025.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(i), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 182 (S.B. 700), Sec. 9, eff.

September 1, 2021.

SUBCHAPTER B-1. CERTIFICATES OF TITLE FOR VESSELS AND OUTBOARD
MOTORS

Sec. 31.045. OWNERSHIP OF VESSELS AND OUTBOARD MOTORS;
CERTIFICATES OF TITLE. (a) The ownership of a vessel or of an
outboard motor is evidenced by a certificate of title issued by the
department, unless the vessel or the outboard motor is new.

(b) The ownership of a new vessel or a new outboard motor is
evidenced by a manufacturer's or an importer's certificate executed
on a form prescribed by the department.

(c) Separate certificates are required for vessels and for
outboard motors.

(d) The ownership of a vessel exempted from numbering under
Section 31.022(c) of this code is not required to be evidenced by a
certificate of title issued by the department.

(e) The recorded owner of a vessel or outboard motor shall
notify the department not later than the 20th day after the date:

(1) of the transfer by sale, donation, gift, or other
means of all or any part of the owner's interest in the vessel or
outboard motor; or

(2) of the permanent removal of the vessel or outboard
motor from this state to another state or country.

(f) Notification of a transfer of interest or move to
another state or country under Subsection (e) must be on a form
prescribed by the department that includes the name and address of
the new owner and, as applicable:

(1) the vessel's certificate of number; and

(2) the serial number of the outboard motor.

(g) If a vessel or outboard motor for which the department
has issued a certificate of title is destroyed or disposed of in a
manner not described by Subsection (e), the recorded owner shall
notify the department not later than the 20th day after the date of
the destruction or disposal and shall surrender to the department
the certificate of title.

(h) On receipt of notice under Subsection (e) or (g), the

department shall cancel the title and enter the cancellation in the department's records.

(i) A recorded owner who fails to file notification in accordance with Section 31.037 or this section:

(1) is subject to the penalties under Section 31.127; and

(2) is subject to the removal costs under Section 40.108, Natural Resources Code, and penalties under Chapter 40, Natural Resources Code, as the person considered responsible for an abandoned vessel or outboard motor.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 16, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (H.B. 1466), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 31.046. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF TITLE.

(a) Except as provided in Subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the purchaser of a vessel or an outboard motor shall apply to the department or to a county tax assessor-collector for a certificate of title not later than the 45th day after the date of the sale of the vessel or outboard motor.

(b) A manufacturer or a dealer who sells a vessel or an outboard motor to a person other than a manufacturer or a dealer shall apply to the department or to a county tax assessor-collector for a certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor in the name of the purchaser not later than the 45th day after the date of the sale.

(c) A dealer who acquires a vessel or an outboard motor, other than a new vessel or outboard motor, is not required to apply for a certificate of title in the name of the dealer, but on resale of the vessel or outboard motor shall apply for the subsequent purchaser under Subsection (b) of this section and shall submit to the department or to a county tax assessor-collector the endorsed certificate of title acquired by the dealer.

(d) The department or county tax assessor-collector may not

issue a certificate of title unless the tax due on the vessel or outboard motor under Chapter 160, Tax Code, is paid.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1979, 66th Leg., p. 1353, ch. 607, Sec. 4, eff. Aug. 27, 1979; Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., 1st C.S., ch. 5, Sec. 7.06, eff. Oct. 1, 1991; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 16, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. 4032), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 31.0465. APPEAL REGARDING CERTIFICATE OF TITLE; BOND; RULES. (a) An applicant for a certificate of title under Section 31.046 may appeal the department's refusal to issue the title by filing a bond with the department as provided by this section.

(b) A bond filed under this section must be:

(1) in the form prescribed by the department;

(2) executed by the applicant;

(3) issued by a person authorized to act as a surety business in this state;

(4) in an amount equal to 1-1/2 times the value of the vessel or outboard motor as determined by the department; and

(5) conditioned to indemnify all prior owners and lienholders and all subsequent purchasers of the vessel or outboard motor or persons who acquire a security interest in the vessel or outboard motor, and their successors in interest, against any expense, loss, or damage, including reasonable attorney's fees, resulting from:

(A) the issuance of the certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor; or

(B) a defect in or undisclosed security interest in the right, title, or interest of the applicant to or in the vessel or outboard motor.

(c) The department may issue the certificate of title to the person filing the bond if the applicant proves to the satisfaction of the department that:

(1) the vessel or outboard motor is not stolen; and

(2) issuance of a certificate of title would not defraud the owner or a lienholder of the vessel or outboard motor.

(d) A person described by Subsection (b)(5) has a right of action to recover on the bond for a breach of a condition of the bond described by Subsection (b)(5). The aggregate liability of the surety to all persons may not exceed the amount of the bond.

(e) A bond filed under this section expires on the third anniversary of the date the bond became effective. The department shall return an expired bond to the person who filed the bond unless the department has been notified of a pending action to recover on the bond.

(f) On return of a bond under Subsection (e), the department shall issue a certificate of title to the person to whom the bond is returned.

(g) In addition to the situation described by Subsection (c), the commission by rule may define acceptable situations in which certificates of title may be issued after the filing of a bond under this section.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(j), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 31.0466. TITLE FOR ABANDONED VESSEL; BOND. (a) A person may apply for a certificate of title for an abandoned vessel or outboard motor found on the person's property.

(b) The department may cancel the certificate for the abandoned vessel or outboard motor and issue a new certificate to the applicant if the applicant:

(1) executes and files a bond with the department:

(A) in the form prescribed by the department;

(B) issued by a person authorized to act as a surety business in this state;

(C) in an amount equal to 1-1/2 times the value of the abandoned vessel or outboard motor as determined by the department; and

(D) conditioned to indemnify all prior owners and lienholders and all subsequent purchasers of the abandoned vessel or outboard motor or persons who acquire a security interest in the

vessel or outboard motor, and their successors in interest, against any expense, loss, or damage, including reasonable attorney's fees, resulting from:

(i) the issuance of the certificate of title for the abandoned vessel or outboard motor; or

(ii) a defect in or undisclosed security interest in the right, title, or interest of the applicant to or in the abandoned vessel or outboard motor;

(2) proves to the satisfaction of the department that:

(A) the abandoned vessel or outboard motor is not stolen;

(B) issuance of a certificate of title would not defraud the owner or a lienholder of the abandoned vessel or outboard motor;

(C) at least 30 days before the applicant applied for the certificate, the applicant contacted the applicant's local law enforcement agency through certified mail to report that the vessel or outboard motor is abandoned; and

(D) the local law enforcement agency has not taken the abandoned vessel or outboard motor into custody or informed the applicant of the agency's intent to take the abandoned vessel or outboard motor into custody; and

(3) posts notice of the certificate of title application in the manner and for a period of time designated by rule by the department.

(c) A person described by Subsection (b)(1)(D) has a right of action to recover on the bond for a breach of a condition of the bond described by Subsection (b)(1)(D). The aggregate liability of the surety to all persons may not exceed the amount of the bond.

(d) A bond filed under this section expires on the third anniversary of the date the bond became effective. The department shall return an expired bond to the person who filed the bond unless the department has been notified of a pending action to recover on the bond.

(e) On return of a bond under Subsection (d), the department shall issue a certificate of title to the person to whom the bond is returned.

(f) If an abandoned vessel or outboard motor is not claimed before the department issues a certificate of title under this section, the owner or lienholder waives all rights and interests in the abandoned vessel or outboard motor and consents to the cancellation of the certificate for the abandoned vessel or outboard motor.

(g) The applicant for the certificate of title for the abandoned vessel or outboard motor takes title free and clear of all liens and claims of ownership.

(h) In addition to the situation described by Subsection (b)(2), the commission by rule may define acceptable situations in which certificates of title may be issued after the filing of a bond under this section.

(i) This section does not apply to a vessel or outboard motor that is subject to a contract or lien under Chapter 59 or 70, Property Code.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 720 (H.B. 787), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 31.047. APPLICATION; FORM AND CONTENT; FEE. (a) A person may apply for a certificate of title on a form prescribed by the department.

(b) The form must contain:

(1) the owner's name, address, and owner identifier as prescribed by 33 C.F.R. Section 174.17;

(2) a description of the vessel or outboard motor, including, as appropriate, the manufacturer, make, model, year, length, construction material, manufacturer's or builder's number, hull identification number (HIN), motor number, outdrive number, primary operation purpose, vessel type, propulsion type, engine drive type, fuel, and horsepower;

(3) name and address of purchaser;

(4) date of purchase;

(5) name and address of any security interest owner;

(6) the appropriate affidavit as required by Section 160.042, Tax Code; and

(7) other information required by the department to

show the ownership of the vessel or outboard motor, a security interest in the vessel or outboard motor, or a further description of items listed in the subdivision.

(c) The application must be accompanied by other evidence reasonably required by the department to establish that the applicant or other person is entitled to a certificate of title or a noted security interest. The evidence may include:

- (1) a certificate of title issued by another state or jurisdiction;
- (2) a manufacturer's or importer's certificate;
- (3) a bill of sale, assignment, or contract;
- (4) a promissory note;
- (5) a security agreement;
- (6) an invoice;
- (7) a bill of lading;
- (8) an affidavit;
- (9) a probate or heirship proceeding or information;
- (10) a judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction;
- (11) evidence of an involuntary transfer as defined in Subdivision (5) of Subsection (a) of Section 31.053, as amended, which may be in affidavit form attaching copies of any pertinent underlying documents; or
- (12) other documents.

(d) An application for a certificate of title must be accompanied by the fee required by Section 31.048 of this code.

(e) The department shall be authorized to issue certificates of title on an accelerated basis upon the payment of a fee in addition to the fees provided in Section 31.048 of this code as determined periodically by the department based on regulations the department shall establish.

(f) An application for a certificate of title on a homemade vessel, the origin of which is based on the affidavit of the person building the vessel, proof of materials incorporated into the vessel, and the like, must be accompanied by a certificate from a game warden commissioned by the department that the vessel has been inspected by such officer and appears to be as applied for. The applicant shall pay a fee of \$25 to the department for this

inspection.

(g) If administration of an estate is not required by law, an affidavit submitted under Subsection (c) must include:

- (1) a showing that the administration is not required;
- (2) identification of all heirs; and
- (3) a statement by the heirs of the name in which to issue the certificate.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 4060, ch. 636, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 29, 1983; Acts 1987, 70th Leg., ch. 1013, Sec. 1, eff. June 19, 1987; Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 498, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989; Acts 1990, 71st Leg., 6th C.S., ch. 12, Sec. 2(22), eff. Sept. 6, 1990; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 17, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1099, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 529 (H.B. [943](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2005.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. [1106](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.048. FEE. (a) The fee for the issuance of a certificate of title or for the notation of a security interest, lien, or other encumbrance is \$5 or an amount set by the commission, whichever amount is more, and is treated as fees collected under Section [31.026](#) of this code.

(b) If the fee is collected by a county tax assessor-collector, the tax assessor-collector shall retain 10 percent of the fee collected and send the remainder to the department. The amount retained by the tax assessor-collector shall be deposited to the credit of the officers salary fund of the county to be used for the sole purpose of paying the salaries of persons issuing vessel and outboard motor certificates of title.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1259, ch. 484, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1977; Acts 1979, 66th Leg., p. 1353, ch. 607, Sec. 5, eff. Aug. 27, 1979; Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 1328, ch. 277,

Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 1983.; Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 2, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 18, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.049. FORM OF CERTIFICATE OF TITLE. (a) A certificate of title must be on a form prescribed by the department and must contain:

(1) the name and address of the owner of the vessel or outboard motor;

(2) the name of the owner of a security interest in the vessel or outboard motor; and

(3) a description of the vessel or outboard motor.

(b) If there is no lien on the vessel or outboard motor, the original certificate of title shall be delivered to the owner and a copy retained by the department.

(c) If there is a lien on the vessel or outboard motor, the original certificate of title shall be sent to the first lienholder and a copy shall be retained by the department.

(d) An original certificate of title bears an assigned title number. A replacement certificate of title consists of a new, printed title that bears a new title number. The previous title number is void when the replacement certificate of title is issued.

(e) Title may be transferred by surrender of the original certificate of title properly endorsed to show the transfer, by evidence of an involuntary transfer as defined in Subdivision (5) of Subsection (a) of Section 31.053, or by following the provisions of Subsection (c) of Section 31.053 of this code.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 4061, ch. 636, Sec. 2, eff. Aug. 29, 1983; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 19, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(k), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. 1106), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.050. FORM OF MANUFACTURER'S AND IMPORTER'S CERTIFICATE. (a) A manufacturer's certificate or an importer's certificate must include:

(1) a description of the vessel or outboard motor as required by Subdivision (2) of Subsection (b) of Section 31.047 of this code;

(2) the name and place of construction or other origin;

(3) the signature of the manufacturer or an equivalent of the signature of the manufacturer; and

(4) the endorsement of the original and each subsequent transferee, including the applicant for the original certificate of title.

(b) A lien, security interest, or other encumbrance may not be shown on a manufacturer's or importer's certificate.

(c) A security interest in a vessel or outboard motor held as inventory by a person who is in the business of selling or leasing goods of that kind may be perfected only by complying with Chapter 9, Business & Commerce Code.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 668, ch. 152, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 29, 1983; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 20, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.051. REPLACEMENT CERTIFICATES. The department shall provide by regulation for the replacement of lost, mutilated, or stolen certificates.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977.

Sec. 31.052. SECURITY INTEREST LIENS. (a) Except as provided by this section and Section 31.050(c), and except for statutory liens, security interests in a vessel or outboard motor shall be noted on the certificate of title of the vessel or outboard motor to which the security interest applies. On recordation of a security interest on the certificate of title, the recorded security interest owner and assignees under Subsection (c) obtain

priority over the rights of a lien creditor, as defined by Section 9.102, Business & Commerce Code, for so long as the security interest is recorded on the certificate of title.

(b) In case of any conflict between this code and Chapters 1 through 9 of the Business & Commerce Code, the provisions of the Business & Commerce Code control.

(c) A security interest owner may assign a security interest recorded under this chapter without making any filing or giving any notice under this chapter. The security interest assigned remains valid and perfected and retains its priority, securing the obligation assigned to the assignee, against transferees from and creditors of the debtor, including lien creditors, as defined by Section 9.102, Business & Commerce Code.

(d) An assignee or assignor may, but need not to retain the validity, perfection, and priority of the security interest assigned, as evidence of the assignment of the security interest recorded under this chapter, apply to the department or a county assessor-collector for the assignee to be named as security interest owner on the certificate of title and notify the debtor of the assignment. Failure to make application under this subsection or notify a debtor of an assignment does not create a cause of action against the recorded security interest owner, the assignor, or the assignee or affect the continuation of the perfected status of the assigned security interest in favor of the assignee against transferees from and creditors of the debtor, including lien creditors, as defined by Section 9.102, Business & Commerce Code.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1255, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 669, ch. 152, Sec. 2, eff. Aug. 29, 1983; Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 4062, ch. 636, Sec. 3, eff. Aug. 29, 1983; Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 16, Sec. 15.01, eff. Aug. 26, 1991; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 21, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 814 (S.B. 1592), Sec. 3, eff. June 19, 2009.

Sec. 31.053. TRANSFERS OF VESSELS AND OUTBOARD MOTORS. (a)

No person may sell, assign, transfer, or otherwise dispose of an interest in a vessel or an outboard motor without:

(1) if the transferee is not a manufacturer or a dealer and the vessel or outboard motor is new, delivering to the department a manufacturer's or importer's certificate showing the endorsement of the manufacturer and all intervening owners;

(2) if the transferee is a manufacturer or a dealer and the vessel or outboard motor is new, delivering to the transferee a manufacturer's or importer's certificate showing the endorsement of the manufacturer and all intervening owners;

(3) if the vessel or outboard motor is not covered by a certificate of title or a manufacturer's or importer's certificate and if the transferor is a manufacturer or dealer, delivering to the department sufficient evidence of title or other information to permit the issuance of a certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor in the name of the transferee;

(4) if the vessel or outboard motor is not covered by a certificate of title or a manufacturer's or importer's certificate and if the transferor is not a manufacturer or dealer, delivering to the transferee sufficient evidence of title or other information to permit the transferee to apply for and receive a certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor in the name of the transferee; or

(5) delivering to the transferee a certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor in the name of the transferor and properly endorsed to show the transfer or evidence of an involuntary transfer.

(b) For the purposes of Subsection (a)(5) of this section an involuntary transfer shall mean the transfer of ownership pursuant to a contractual or statutory lien which confers the power or right to the transfer. The evidence shall reflect the proper exercise of the right conferred pursuant to the lien.

(c) The transferor shall provide the documents or evidence required by Subsection (a) of this section to the department or the transferee, as appropriate, in sufficient time to allow the transferee to register and obtain a certificate of title for the vessel or outboard motor not later than the 45th day after the date

of the sale.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection (a) of this section, a buyer of a new vessel or a new outboard motor in the ordinary course of business as provided in Section 9.320(a), Business & Commerce Code, takes the interest free of security interests as provided in that section. A buyer of a vessel or outboard motor that is not new shall be governed by Subsection (a) of this section.

(e) The transferee shall provide the department with sufficient evidence of ownership for transfer of a vessel or outboard motor if the transferee:

(1) failed to obtain the title from the transferor or the title was lost, stolen, or mutilated before the transfer was made; and

(2) has made reasonable efforts to contact the transferor to obtain the required documentation.

(f) A person who is not licensed as a dealer, distributor, or manufacturer under this chapter must obtain a certificate of number or certificate of title to a vessel or outboard motor in the person's name before transferring the certificate of number or certificate of title.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 4063, ch. 636, Sec. 4, eff. Aug. 29, 1983; Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 283, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 22, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 414, Sec. 2.33, eff. July 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(1), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1249 (H.B. 4032), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 31.055. EXCEPTIONS. This subchapter does not apply to vessels with a valid marine document issued by the United States Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center or a federal agency that is a successor to the National Vessel Documentation Center.

Added by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1253, ch. 484, Sec. 1(e), eff. Sept. 1, 1977. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 450, Sec. 23, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1099, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Sec. 31.056. FEE EXEMPTION FOR GOVERNMENT VESSELS AND OUTBOARD MOTORS. A fee imposed by this chapter does not apply to a vessel or outboard motor purchased by, owned by, or used exclusively in the service of this state, a political subdivision of this state, or the federal government.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 410 (S.B. 969), Sec. 1, eff. June 15, 2007.

SUBCHAPTER C. REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Sec. 31.061. UNIFORMITY OF EQUIPMENT REGULATIONS; STATE POLICY. It is the policy of the state that all equipment rules and regulations enacted under the authority granted in this chapter be uniform and consistent with the equipment provisions of this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.062. OPERATION OF VESSELS WITHOUT REQUIRED EQUIPMENT PROHIBITED. No person may operate or give permission for the operation of a vessel that is not provided with the equipment required by this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.063. CLASSES OF MOTORBOATS. Motorboats subject to the provisions of this chapter are divided into four classes according to length as follows:

Class A. Less than 16 feet in length.

Class 1. 16 feet or over and less than 26 feet in length.

Class 2. 26 feet or over and less than 40 feet in length.

Class 3. 40 feet in length or over.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.064. LIGHTS. A vessel or motorboat when not at dock must have and exhibit at least one bright light, lantern, or flashlight from sunset to sunrise in all weather. A vessel or motorboat when underway between sunset and sunrise in all weather must have and exhibit the lights prescribed by the commandant of the Coast Guard for boats of its class. No other lights that may be mistaken for those prescribed may be exhibited.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 422, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.065. SOUND-PRODUCING DEVICES. A motorboat must have an efficient whistle or other sound-producing device if one is required by the commandant of the Coast Guard.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 422, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.066. LIFE PRESERVING DEVICES. (a) A motorboat, including a motorboat carrying passengers for hire, must carry at least one wearable personal flotation device of the sort prescribed by the regulations of the commandant of the Coast Guard for each person on board, so placed as to be readily accessible.

(b) The operator of a motorboat less than 26 feet in length, while underway, shall require every passenger under 13 years of age to wear a wearable personal flotation device of the sort prescribed by the regulations of the commandant of the Coast Guard. A life belt or ring buoy does not satisfy this requirement.

(c) A person may not operate a recreational vessel 16 feet or more in length unless the vessel is equipped with:

(1) the number of wearable personal flotation devices required under Subsection (a); and

(2) additionally, at least one immediately accessible Type IV throwable flotation device of the sort prescribed by the regulations of the commandant of the Coast Guard.

(d) A person under 13 years of age on board a vessel described by Section [31.073](#)(a) or (b) must wear a wearable personal

flotation device of the sort prescribed by the commandant of the Coast Guard while the vessel is under way.

(e) An adult operator of a vessel described by Section 31.073 may not permit a person under 13 years of age to be on board the vessel while the vessel is under way if the person under 13 years of age is not wearing a wearable personal flotation device required by Subsection (d).

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.
Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 543, Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 1989.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1127 (H.B. 308), Sec. 2, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.067. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS. (a) A motorboat must have the number, size, and type of fire extinguishers prescribed by the commandant of the Coast Guard.

(b) The fire extinguishers must be capable of promptly and effectively extinguishing burning gasoline. They must be kept in condition for immediate and effective use at all times and must be placed so as to be readily accessible.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.068. FLAME ARRESTORS; BACKFIRE TRAPS. A motorboat must have the carburetor or carburetors of every engine using gasoline as fuel, except outboard motors, equipped with an efficient flame arrestor, backfire trap, or other similar device prescribed by the regulations of the commandant of the Coast Guard.
Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.069. VENTILATORS. Each motorboat and vessel, except an open boat, using as fuel any liquid of a volatile nature must have the equipment prescribed by the commandant of the Coast Guard designed to ventilate properly and efficiently the bilges of the engine and fuel tank compartments so as to remove any explosive or inflammable gases.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.070. EXHAUST WATER MANIFOLD; MUFFLER. A motorboat operating on the water of this state must have an exhaust water manifold or a factory-type muffler installed on the engine.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.071. REARVIEW MIRRORS. (a) A vessel used to tow a person or persons on water skis or an aquaplane or similar device on the water of this state must have a rearview mirror of a size no less than four inches from bottom to top and across from one side to the other. The mirror must be mounted firmly so as to give the boat operator a full and complete view beyond the rear of the boat at all times.

(b) Subsection (a) of this section does not apply to vessels used in water ski tournaments, competitions, or exhibitions, or to a vessel that, in addition to its operator, has on board a person 13 years of age or older observing the progress of the person being towed.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 543, Sec. 3, eff. June 14, 1989.

Sec. 31.072. RACING BOATS; EQUIPMENT EXEMPTIONS. (a) A motorboat designed and intended solely for racing need not have a whistle or other sound-producing mechanical appliance or a bell as required by Section 31.065 of this code or a fire extinguisher as required by Section 31.067 of this code while competing in a race or while engaged in navigation that is incidental to tuning up for a race conducted in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(b) A racing craft engaged in a race sanctioned by the governing board of any public water of this state need not have an exhaust water manifold or factory-type muffler installed on the engine as required by Section 31.070 of this code if written permission is granted by the governing board of the water body.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.073. CANOES, PUNTS, ROWBOATS, SAILBOATS, RUBBER

RAFTS, RACING SHELLS, ROWING SCULLS, KAYAKS, AND OTHER PADDLE CRAFT; EQUIPMENT EXEMPTIONS. (a) All canoes, kayaks, punts, rowboats, sailboats, rubber rafts, and other paddle craft when paddled, poled, oared, or windblown are exempt from all safety equipment requirements except each vessel must have the following:

(1) one Coast Guard approved wearable personal flotation device for each person aboard; and

(2) the lights prescribed by the commandant of the Coast Guard for vessels and required under Section 31.064.

(a-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a vessel described by that subsection, except a canoe or kayak, that is 16 feet or more in length must be equipped with at least one Type IV personal flotation device of the sort prescribed by the regulations of the commandant of the Coast Guard.

(b) Racing shells, rowing sculls, and racing kayaks while participating in or practicing for an officially sanctioned race are exempt from all safety equipment requirements except the lights prescribed by the commandant of the Coast Guard for vessels and required under Section 31.064.

(c) In this section, "racing shell," "rowing scull," or "racing kayak" means a manually propelled boat:

(1) recognized by a national or international racing association for use in competitive racing;

(2) not designed or used to carry equipment serving any purpose other than competitive racing; and

(3) in which each occupant, except a coxswain, rows, sculls, or paddles.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 236, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1127 (H.B. 308), Sec. 3, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1127 (H.B. 308), Sec. 4, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.074. VISUAL DISTRESS SIGNAL. (a) In this section:

(1) "Coastal waters" means the water that lies within nine nautical miles from the coastline of this state.

(2) "Uninspected passenger vessel" has the meaning assigned by 46 C.F.R. Section 24.10-1.

(3) "Visual distress signal" means a device that is approved and required by the commandant of the United States Coast Guard for the purpose of indicating a vessel in distress, including flares, smoke signals, and non-pyrotechnic signals.

(b) No person may operate on the coastal waters a vessel that is 16 feet or more in length, or any vessel operating as an uninspected passenger vessel, unless the vessel is equipped with readily accessible visual distress signals approved for day and night use in the number required by the commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

(c) Between sunset and sunrise, no person may operate on the coastal waters a vessel less than 16 feet in length unless the vessel is equipped with readily accessible visual distress signals approved for night use in the number required by the commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

(d) No person may operate a vessel on coastal waters unless each visual distress signal required under this section is in serviceable condition and the service life of the signal, if indicated by a date marked on the signal, has not expired.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 286 (H.B. [1106](#)), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2013.

SUBCHAPTER D. BOATING REGULATIONS

Sec. 31.091. UNIFORMITY OF BOATING REGULATIONS. In the interest of uniformity, it is the policy of the State of Texas that the basic authority for the enactment of boating regulations is reserved to the state.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.092. LOCAL REGULATIONS. (a) The governing body of an incorporated city or town, with respect to public water within its corporate limits and all lakes owned by it, may designate by

ordinance certain areas as bathing, fishing, swimming, or otherwise restricted areas and may make rules and regulations relating to the operation and equipment of boats which it deems necessary for the public safety. The rules and regulations shall be consistent with the provisions of this chapter.

(b) The commissioners court of a county, with respect to public water within the territorial limits of the county that is outside of the limits of an incorporated city or town or a political subdivision designated in Subsection (c) of this section and that are not lakes owned by an incorporated city or town, may enter an order on its books designating certain areas as bathing, fishing, swimming, or otherwise restricted areas and may make rules and regulations relating to the operation and equipment of boats which it deems necessary for the public safety. The rules and regulations shall be consistent with the provisions of this chapter.

(c) The governing board of a political subdivision of the state created pursuant to Article XVI, Section 59, of the Texas Constitution, for the purpose of conserving and developing the public water of the state, with respect to public water impounded within lakes and reservoirs owned or operated by the political subdivision, may designate by resolution or other appropriate order certain areas as bathing, fishing, swimming, or otherwise restricted areas and may make rules and regulations relating to the operation and equipment of boats which it deems necessary for the public safety. The rules and regulations shall be consistent with the provisions of this chapter.

(d) A copy of all rules and regulations adopted under this section shall be summarily filed with the department.

(e) No city, town, village, special district, or other political subdivision of the state may impose or collect a fee for the registration or inspection of vessels to be used on public water against the owner or operator of a vessel used on public water. This section does not apply to Chapter 321, Tax Code, nor to any launch fees, docking fees, entry fees, or other recreational fees which may be imposed or collected by any political subdivision of the State of Texas for the use of the facilities afforded by any such district to the public.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 1274, ch. 496, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 29, 1977; Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 2, Sec. 14.27(a)(5), eff. Aug. 28, 1989.

Sec. 31.093. RULES OF THE ROAD. The United States Coast Guard Inland Rules apply to all public water of this state to the extent they are applicable.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.094. RECKLESS OR NEGLIGENT OPERATION. No person may operate any motorboat or vessel or manipulate any water skis, aquaplane, or similar device in a wilfully or wantonly reckless or negligent manner that endangers the life, limb, or property of any person.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.095. EXCESSIVE SPEED. (a) No person may operate any boat at a rate of speed greater than is reasonable and prudent, having due regard for the conditions and hazards, actual and potential, then existing, including weather and density of traffic, or greater than will permit him, in the exercise of reasonable care, to bring the boat to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead.

(b) The commission may provide for the standardization of speed limits for moving vessels. No political subdivision or state agency may impose a speed limit not in conformity with the commission's standards.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 313, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 31.096. RECKLESS OPERATION AND EXCESSIVE SPEED. No person may operate a vessel or manipulate water skis, an aquaplane, or a similar device on the water of this state in wilful or wanton disregard of the rights or safety of others or without due caution or circumspection, and at a speed or in a manner that endangers, or is likely to endanger, a person or property.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.
Amended by Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 3, Sec. 10, eff.
Sept. 1, 1985.

Sec. 31.098. HAZARDOUS WAKE OR WASH. No person may operate a motorboat so as to create a hazardous wake or wash.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.099. PROHIBITION ON CIRCULAR COURSE AROUND INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED IN WATER ACTIVITIES. (a) No person may operate a motorboat in a circular course around:

(1) any other boat or personal watercraft any occupant of which is engaged in fishing, waterskiing, or a similar activity; or

(2) any person swimming.

(a-1) Subsection (a) does not apply to a person operating a motorboat in a circular course to retrieve a downed or fallen water-skier or other person engaged in a similar activity.

(b) No swimmer or diver may come within 200 yards of a sight-seeing or excursion boat except for maintenance purposes or unless within an enclosed area.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 236 (H.B. 596), Sec. 2, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 236 (H.B. 596), Sec. 3, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.100. INTERFERENCE WITH MARKERS OR RAMPS. (a) No person may moor or attach a boat to a buoy, beacon, light marker, stake, flag, or other aid to safe operation placed upon the public water of this state by or under the authority of the United States or the State of Texas. No person may move, remove, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy the markers or aids to safe operation.

(b) No person may moor or attach a vessel to a state-owned boat launching ramp except in connection with the launching or retrieving of a boat from the water.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.101. OBSTRUCTING PASSAGE. (a) No person may anchor a boat in the traveled portion of a river or channel so as to prevent, impede, or interfere with the safe passage of any other boat through the same area.

(b) No person may anchor a vessel near a state-owned boat ramp so as to prevent, impede, or interfere with the use of the boat ramp.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.102. OPERATING BOATS IN RESTRICTED AREAS. No person may operate a boat within a water area that has been clearly marked, by buoys or some other distinguishing device, as a bathing, fishing, swimming, or otherwise restricted area by the department or by a political subdivision of the state. This section does not apply to a patrol or rescue craft or in the case of an emergency.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.1021. OPERATING VESSELS IN SCUBA DIVING OR SNORKELING AREAS. (a) No person may operate a vessel within 50 feet of a buoy or of another vessel displaying a "diver down" flag that marks an area in which a person is scuba diving or snorkeling.

(b) No person may operate a vessel at a speed greater than the minimum speed necessary to maintain steerageway and headway while the vessel is within 150 feet of a buoy or a vessel displaying a "diver down" flag that marks an area in which a person is scuba diving or snorkeling.

(c) To be entitled to the protections of this section, a scuba diver or snorkeler must prominently display a "diver down" flag from a buoy or vessel.

(d) This section does not apply:

(1) to a person who is operating a patrol or rescue craft; or

(2) in an emergency.

(e) Subsection (a) of this section does not apply:

(1) to a person who is already operating a vessel in an

area when another person displays a "diver down" flag within 150 feet of that vessel;

(2) to a person who is operating a vessel in a waterway that is less than 300 feet wide; or

(3) to a person who has permission to enter the area from the person who placed the buoy or the person who is operating the vessel displaying the "diver down" flag.

(f) In this section, "'diver down' flag" means a square or rectangular red flag, at least 15 inches by 15 inches, that has a diagonal white stripe.

Added by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 1146, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 226, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

Sec. 31.103. WATER SKIS, AQUAPLANES, ETC.: TIME AND MANNER OF OPERATION. (a) No person may operate a vessel on any water of this state towing a person or persons on water skis, surfboards, or similar devices and no person while being towed may engage in water-skiing, surfboarding or similar activity at any time between the hours from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise. This subsection does not apply to motorboats or vessels used in water ski tournaments, competitions, or exhibitions or trials therefor if adequate lighting is provided.

(b) All motorboats having in tow or otherwise assisting in towing a person on water skis, aquaplanes, or similar contrivances shall be operated in a careful and prudent manner and at a reasonable distance from persons and property so as not to endanger the life or property of any person.

(c) A person being towed on water skis, aquaplanes, or similar devices by a vessel is considered an occupant of the vessel. Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 421, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.104. ACCIDENTS: DUTY OF OPERATORS. The operator of a vessel involved in a collision, accident, or casualty shall:

(1) render to other persons affected such assistance

as may be practicable and necessary in order to save them from or minimize any danger insofar as he can do so without serious danger to his own vessel, crew, and passengers; and

(2) give his name, address, and identification of his vessel in writing to any person injured and to the owner of any property damaged in the collision, accident, or other casualty.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.105. INCIDENT REPORTS. (a) This section applies only to an incident that is a collision, accident, or other casualty that results in:

(1) the death of a person;

(2) injury to a person that requires medical treatment beyond the provision of first aid; or

(3) damage to property in excess of an amount set by the commission of not less than \$2,000.

(b) Not later than the 30th day after the date of an incident to which this section applies, the operator of a vessel involved in the incident shall provide to a marine safety enforcement officer or game warden commissioned by the department a full description of the incident in accordance with regulations established by the department.

(c) A marine safety enforcement officer who in the regular course of duty investigates an incident to which this section applies shall electronically file a written report of the incident with the department:

(1) in a form prescribed by the department; and

(2) not later than the 15th day after the date the officer initially became aware of the incident.

(d) On request made by an authorized official or agency of the United States, any information available to the department under Subsection (b) of this section shall be sent to the official or agency.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1977, 65th Leg., p. 835, ch. 311, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 1977; Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 543, Sec. 4, eff. June 14, 1989.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 474 (H.B. 555), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 943 (S.B. 1670), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 31.1055. RELEASE OF INCIDENT REPORTS. (a) This section applies only to an incident report that is held by the department or another governmental entity.

(b) In this section:

(1) "Incident" means an incident described by Section 31.105(a).

(2) "Incident report" means a written report required under Section 31.105(c).

(c) Except as otherwise provided by this section, an incident report is confidential and for the use of:

(1) the department; and

(2) an authorized official or agency of the United States or a state or local governmental entity.

(d) On written request, the department or the governmental entity shall release an incident report to:

(1) an entity described by Subsection (c);

(2) the law enforcement agency that employs the marine safety enforcement officer who investigated the incident and filed the incident report with the department, including an agent of the law enforcement agency authorized by contract to obtain the information;

(3) the court in which a case involving a person involved in the incident is pending if the incident report is subpoenaed; or

(4) a person directly concerned in the incident or having an interest in the incident as:

(A) a person involved in the incident;

(B) the authorized representative of a person involved in the incident;

(C) a vessel operator involved in the incident;

(D) an employer, parent, or legal guardian of a vessel operator involved in the incident;

(E) the owner of a vessel or property damaged in the incident;

(F) a person who has established financial responsibility for a vessel involved in the incident, including a policyholder of a liability insurance policy covering the vessel;

(G) an insurance company that issued an insurance policy covering a vessel involved in the incident;

(H) an insurance company that issued a policy covering any person involved in the incident;

(I) a person under contract to provide claims or underwriting information to a person described by Paragraph (F), (G), or (H);

(J) a radio or television station that holds a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission;

(K) a newspaper that is:

(i) a free newspaper of general circulation or qualified under Section 2051.044, Government Code, to publish legal notices;

(ii) published at least once a week; and

(iii) available and of interest to the general public in connection with the dissemination of news; or

(L) a person who may sue because of death resulting from the incident.

(e) In addition to the information required to be released under Subsection (d), the department shall publish at least annually statistics derived from incident reports that relate to the number, cause, and location of the reported incidents.

(f) The department when releasing information under Subsection (d)(4)(J) or (K):

(1) may not release the personal identifying information, as defined by Section 521.002(a), Business & Commerce Code, of an individual included in an incident report; and

(2) shall withhold or redact:

(A) the address, other than zip code, and telephone number of a person included in an incident report;

(B) the registration or hull identification number of a vessel included in an incident report;

(C) the badge number or identification number of the investigating officer;

(D) the date of death of a person who died as a result of the incident; and

(E) the location to which a person injured or killed in the incident was transported or the person that provided the transportation.

(g) The amount that may be charged for information provided under Subsection (d) shall be calculated in the manner specified by Chapter 552, Government Code, for public information provided by a governmental body under that chapter.

Added by Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 943 (S.B. 1670), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 31.106. PERSONAL WATERCRAFT. (a) No person shall operate a personal watercraft in the following manner or under the following circumstances:

(1) unless each person riding on or towed behind the vessel is wearing a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device;

(2) if the vessel is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard type engine cutoff switch, unless such lanyard is attached to the person, clothing, or personal flotation device of the operator as appropriate for the vessel involved;

(3) during the period between sunset and sunrise;

(4) within 50 feet of any other vessel, person, stationary platform or other object, or shore, except at headway speed;

(5) if the operator is under 13 years of age unless the operator is supervised by another person who:

(A) is at least 18 years of age;

(B) can lawfully operate the watercraft; and

(C) is on board the watercraft when under way;

(6) if the personal watercraft is a motorboat, within any area prohibited for operation of a motorboat by state law or local rule or regulation;

(7) while towing water skis, an aquaplane, a

surfboard, a tube, or any other similar device, unless the towing vessel is designed to carry on board a minimum of two persons;

(8) by jumping the wake of another vessel recklessly or unnecessarily close to that vessel; or

(9) in a manner that requires the operator to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid collision.

(b) The provisions of this section do not apply to professional exhibitions or an officially sanctioned race, tournament, or exhibition.

(c) Subsection (a)(4) of this section does not prohibit the operation of personal watercraft on bodies of water less than 100 feet in width.

(d) An owner of a personal watercraft permitting a person under 18 years of age to operate the personal watercraft in a manner prohibited by this section may be notified of the violation.

(e) For the purposes of this section, a person is considered to be accompanying the operator of a personal watercraft if the person is on board the personal watercraft when underway.

Added by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 571, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 739, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 269 (H.B. [1395](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.107. OPERATION OF MOTORBOAT. No person may operate a motorboat powered by a motor with a manufacturer's rating of more than 15 horsepower on the public waters of this state unless the person is at least 13 years of age or is supervised by another person who:

(1) is at least 18 years of age;

(2) can lawfully operate the motorboat; and

(3) is on board the motorboat when under way.

Added by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 1006, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Renumbered from Sec. 31.106 by Acts 1990, 71st Leg., 6th C.S., ch. 12, Sec. 2(23), eff. Sept. 6, 1990. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 269 (H.B. 1395), Sec. 2, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.1071. OPERATION OF MOTORBOAT WITH EMERGENCY ENGINE CUTOFF SWITCH. (a) In this section, "engine cutoff switch" means an emergency switch installed on a motorboat that:

(1) is designed to shut off the engine if:

(A) the motorboat operator using a lanyard attachment activates the switch by falling overboard or otherwise moving beyond the length of the lanyard; or

(B) the motorboat operator or a passenger using a wireless attachment activates the switch by falling overboard and submerging a man-overboard transmitter; and

(2) attaches:

(A) physically to the motorboat operator through the use of a lanyard worn by the operator; or

(B) wirelessly through the use of a water-activated man-overboard transmitter worn by the motorboat operator or any similarly equipped passenger on the motorboat.

(b) A motorboat operator may not operate a motorboat less than 26 feet in length and equipped by the manufacturer with an engine cutoff switch while the motorboat is under way and moving at greater than headway speed without first verifying that the switch is operational and fully functional and properly attaching the lanyard or wireless attachment, as appropriate for the specific motorboat, to the operator's body or to the clothing or personal flotation device being worn by the operator.

Added by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1030 (H.B. 337), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 31.108. BOATER EDUCATION PROGRAM. (a) The commission shall adopt rules to:

(1) administer a boater education program that is designed to educate persons about the safe operation of vessels;

(2) approve boater education courses that meet or exceed the minimum instruction requirement established by the

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators on or after January 1, 2016, and adopted by commission rule;

(3) create an equivalency examination that may be taken, as the commission determines is consistent with promoting public safety in the operation of vessels, instead of the boater education course; and

(4) ensure that boater education courses and examinations are available in each county.

(a-1) A boater education course or equivalency examination under this section must include information on how to prevent the spread of exotic harmful or potentially harmful aquatic plants, fish, and shellfish, including department-approved methods for cleaning:

- (1) a boat;
- (2) a boat's motor;
- (3) fishing and other equipment; and
- (4) a boat trailer.

(b) The commission by rule may create exemptions from boater education requirements imposed by statute to the extent the exemptions are consistent with promoting public safety in the operation of vessels.

(c) The commission by rule shall create a standard form for a boater identification card to be issued to a person who successfully completes a boater education course or course equivalency examination.

(d) The department may appoint agents to:

- (1) administer a boater education course or course equivalency examination; and
- (2) issue boater identification cards under guidelines established by the commission.

(e) An officer or employee of the department shall collect a \$5 examination or course fee and forward the fee and any examination documentation to the department not later than the 30th day after the date the examination or course is administered.

(f) An agent acting under authority of Subsection (d):

- (1) shall collect a \$10 examination or course fee and forward the fee and any examination documentation to the department

not later than the 30th day after the date the examination or course is administered; and

(2) may collect and keep a \$3 service fee, or an amount set by the commission, whichever is greater.

(g) Money received by the department under Subsections (e) and (f)(1) shall be deposited in the state treasury to the credit of the game, fish, and water safety account established under Section 11.032 and may be used only for the administration of the boater education program established under this section.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1254 (H.B. 3722), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 142 (H.B. 597), Sec. 1, eff. May 24, 2013.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 235 (H.B. 2755), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 31.109. BOATER EDUCATION COURSE REQUIRED FOR CERTAIN PERSONS. (a) This section applies only to a person who is:

(1) born on or after September 1, 1993; and

(2) operating on the public water of this state:

(A) a vessel powered by a motor with a manufacturer's rating of more than 15 horsepower; or

(B) a windblown vessel over 14 feet in length.

(b) A person subject to this section must have in the person's possession a photographic identification card and either:

(1) a boater identification card issued by the department; or

(2) proof of completion of the requirements to obtain a vessel operator's license issued by the United States Coast Guard.

(c) The department shall issue a boater identification card to a person who has successfully completed:

(1) a boater education course approved by the department; or

(2) a course equivalency examination approved by the department.

(d) A boater identification card issued to a person who has successfully completed a boater education course or course equivalency examination does not expire.

(e) If, on or before the trial of a person charged with an offense for failing to possess a document required under Subsection (b), the person produces for the court or the prosecuting attorney a document required by Subsection (b) that was issued to the person and was valid at the time of the offense, the court shall dismiss the charge.

(f) A person charged with a Class C Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor for failing to possess a document required under Subsection (b) may make to the court not later than the 10th day after the date of the alleged offense an oral or written motion requesting permission to take a boater education course approved by the department or a vessel operator's licensing course provided by the United States Coast Guard. The court shall defer the proceedings brought against a person who makes a motion described by this subsection and allow the person 90 days to present written evidence that the person has successfully completed the course approved by the department or provided by the United States Coast Guard. If the person successfully completes the course and the court accepts the presented evidence, the court shall dismiss the charge.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 269 (H.B. [1395](#)), Sec. 3, eff. June 17, 2011.

Sec. 31.110. EXEMPTION FROM BOATER EDUCATION COURSE REQUIREMENT; DEFERRAL PROGRAM. (a) A person is not required to comply with Section [31.109](#) if the person:

(1) holds a master's, mate's, or operator's license issued by the United States Coast Guard;

(2) is supervised by a person who is at least 18 years of age and who is otherwise exempt from the requirements of

Section [31.109](#) or possesses a boater identification card as required by Section [31.109](#);

(3) is not a resident of this state and has proof that the person has successfully completed a boater education course or equivalency examination in another state that is approved by the department;

(4) is exempt by rule of the commission as a customer of a business engaged in renting, showing, demonstrating, or testing boats; or

(5) is exempt by rule of the commission.

(b) For purposes of this section, to be considered to be supervising the operator of a watercraft, the person must be on board the watercraft when under way.

(c) The commission by rule shall establish a boater education deferral program. The deferral program must be available at no cost to boat dealers, manufacturers, and distributors.

(d) Money received by the department in connection with a boater education deferral program established by the commission under Subsection (c) shall be deposited in the state treasury to the credit of the game, fish, and water safety account established under Section [11.032](#) and may be used only for the administration of the boater education program established under Section [31.108](#).

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 269 (H.B. [1395](#)), Sec. 4, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 235 (H.B. [2755](#)), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 31.111. OPERATING VESSEL LIVERY. (a) A vessel livery must purchase liability insurance from an insurer licensed to do business in this state.

(b) Before releasing possession of a rented vessel, a vessel livery shall provide each operator of the rented vessel instruction relating to:

(1) the provisions of this chapter;

(2) operational characteristics of the rented vessel;
and

(3) boating regulations that apply in the area of operation of the vessel.

(c) After providing the instruction required by Subsection (b) and before releasing possession of the rented vessel, the vessel livery shall require each operator to sign an acknowledgment form indicating that the operator has received the required instruction. The vessel livery shall retain the form for at least six months.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

SUBCHAPTER E. ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

Sec. 31.121. ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS. (a) In this section:

(1) "Game warden" means a person who is commissioned as a game warden by the commission.

(2) "State military forces" has the meaning assigned by Section [437.001](#), Government Code.

(a-1) All peace officers of this state and game wardens must be certified as marine safety enforcement officers by the department to enforce the provisions of this chapter by arresting and taking into custody any person who commits any act or offense prohibited by this chapter or who violates any provision of this chapter.

(a-2) Game wardens commissioned by the commission are the primary enforcement officers responsible for enforcing the provisions of this chapter related to water safety.

(b) The commission by rule shall establish standards for training and certifying marine safety enforcement officers under this section.

(c) The commission by rule may create exemptions for peace officers from marine safety enforcement officer training and certification requirements imposed by statute.

(d) The commission by rule shall establish and collect a fee to recover the administrative costs associated with the certification of marine safety enforcement officers. The

commission shall require the applicant for certification or the applicant's employer to pay the fee required under this section.

(e) State military forces may assist game wardens in the search for and rescue of victims of water-oriented accidents.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.
Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 788 (H.B. [2138](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 789 (H.B. [2141](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 161 (S.B. [1093](#)), Sec. 22.001(37), eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1217 (S.B. [1536](#)), Sec. 3.18, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 31.1211. JURISDICTION OF MUNICIPAL PEACE OFFICERS.

(a) Notwithstanding any other law limiting the enforcement jurisdiction of a peace officer, a peace officer of a municipality who is certified as a marine safety enforcement officer under Section [31.121](#) may enforce the provisions of this chapter within an area of a lake that is outside the enforcement jurisdiction of the peace officer if:

(1) any portion of the lake is contained in the corporate limits or extraterritorial jurisdiction of the municipality; and

(2) the municipality has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the governmental entity having enforcement jurisdiction in that area granting the peace officer enforcement jurisdiction in the area.

(b) The memorandum of understanding under Subsection (a)(2) must:

(1) designate the jurisdiction that has the authority to conduct any prosecution or ongoing investigation of a violation resulting from an enforcement action under this section; and

(2) be approved by the Parks and Wildlife Department.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 975 (S.B. 410), Sec. 1, eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.122. WATER SAFETY VESSELS: LIGHTS. Only the department and police water safety vessels may use rotating or flashing blue beacon lights.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 543, Sec. 5, eff. June 14, 1989.

Sec. 31.123. REQUIRED RESPONSE TO POLICE WATER SAFETY VESSEL. The operator of a vessel underway, on sighting a rotating or flashing blue beacon light, shall reduce power immediately and bring the vessel to a no-wake speed and subsequent stop until the intention of the water safety vessel is understood.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 543, Sec. 6, eff. June 14, 1989.

Sec. 31.124. INSPECTION OF VESSELS. (a) In order to enforce the provisions of this chapter, an enforcement officer may stop and board any vessel subject to this chapter and may inspect the boat to determine compliance with applicable provisions.

(b) An officer boarding a vessel shall first identify himself by presenting proper credentials.

(c) The operator of a vessel required by this chapter to hold a certificate of number aboard the vessel shall show the certificate to the officer on demand, and failure to do so constitutes a violation of this chapter.

(d) No person operating a boat on the water of this state may refuse to obey the directions of an enforcement officer when the officer is acting under the provisions of this chapter.

(e) The safety of the vessel shall always be the paramount consideration of an arresting officer.

(f) If an enforcement officer determines that a vessel and its associated equipment is being used in violation of this chapter or of any regulation or standard issued thereunder so as to create

an especially hazardous condition, he may direct the operator to return to mooring, and the vessel may not be used until the condition creating the violation is corrected.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.125. VIOLATIONS; NOTICE TO APPEAR. (a) An enforcement officer who arrests a person for a violation of this chapter may deliver to the alleged violator a written notice to appear within 15 days after the date of the violation before the justice court having jurisdiction of the offense.

(b) The person arrested shall sign the notice to appear promising to make his appearance in accordance with the requirements set forth in the notice. After signing the notice the person may be released. Failure to appear before the court in the county having jurisdiction constitutes a violation of the chapter. A warrant for the arrest of the person failing to appear may be issued.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Sec. 31.126. VENUE. (a) Venue for an alleged violation or offense under the provisions of this chapter is in the justice court, county court, or municipal court having jurisdiction where the violation or offense was committed.

(b) For an offense under the provisions of this chapter, there is a presumption that the offense was committed in the justice precinct and county where the dam containing the body of water is located.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 176 (H.B. [1222](#)), Sec. 1, eff. May 25, 2013.

Sec. 31.127. PENALTIES AND FINES. (a) A person who violates or fails to comply with any provision of this chapter, or who violates or fails to comply with a proclamation of the commission entered under this chapter or a city ordinance or order of a commissioners court or a political subdivision of the state

made or entered under this chapter, commits an offense that is a Class C Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor.

(b) A person who violates Section 31.043(c) or 31.096 commits an offense that is a Class B Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor. A person who violates Section 31.043(c-1) commits an offense that is a Class A Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor.

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (f), a person who operates a vessel in violation of Section 31.021(b) or 31.095 commits an offense punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 or more than \$500.

(d) The operator of a vessel who is involved in a collision, accident, or other casualty that results in death or serious bodily injury to another person and fails to comply with Section 31.104 commits an offense that is a Parks and Wildlife Code felony.

(e) Except as provided by Subsection (d), the operator of a vessel who is involved in a collision, accident, or other casualty and fails to comply with Section 31.104 commits an offense that is a Class A Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor.

(f) A court may dismiss a charge of operating a vessel with an expired certificate of number under Section 31.021 if:

(1) the defendant remedies the defect not later than the 10th working day after the date of the offense and pays a reimbursement fee not to exceed \$10; and

(2) the certificate of number has not been expired for more than 60 days.

(g) A person who operates a motorboat in violation of Section 31.1071 commits an offense punishable by a fine of not more than \$200.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 3, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 185, Sec. 2, eff. July 1, 1989; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 200, Sec. 8(m), eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1133, Sec. 13, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1027 (H.B. 1623), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 695 (H.B. 384), Sec. 3, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1030 (H.B. 337), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1352 (S.B. 346), Sec. 2.55, eff. January 1, 2020.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1352 (S.B. 346), Sec. 2.56, eff. January 1, 2020.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 919 (S.B. 1923), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 31.128. DISPOSITION OF FINES. (a) A justice of the peace, or a clerk of any court, or any other officer of this state receiving any fine imposed by a court for a violation of this chapter shall send the fine to the department within 10 days after receipt and shall note the docket number of the case, the name of the person fined, and the section or article of the law under which the conviction was secured.

(b) In justice court cases filed as the result of an arrest by a game warden, the amount to be remitted to the game, fish, and water safety account shall be 85 percent of the fine. In county court cases filed as the result of an arrest by a game warden, the amount to be remitted to the game, fish, and water safety account shall be 80 percent of the fine. All costs of the court shall be retained by the court having jurisdiction of the offense and deposited as other fees in the proper county fund.

(c) In court cases filed as the result of an arrest by a marine safety enforcement officer other than a game warden, the amount to be remitted to the game, fish, and water safety account shall be 60 percent of the fine. All costs of the court shall be retained by the court having jurisdiction of the offense and deposited as other fees in the proper county fund.

(d) Not less than 50 percent of the amount remitted to the game, fish, and water safety account under Subsection (c) must be used for the administration and enforcement of this chapter.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 679, Sec. 39, eff. Sept. 1,

1993; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 31.129. VIOLATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF SEWAGE DISPOSAL REGULATIONS. (a) A person who violates or fails to comply with a rule of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality concerning the disposal of sewage from boats commits an offense that is a Class C Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor. A separate offense is committed each day a violation continues.

(b) The enforcement provisions of this subchapter apply to violations punishable by this section.

(c) A game warden or peace officer who is certified as a marine safety enforcement officer under Section 31.121 may enforce a rule of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality concerning the disposal of sewage from boats.

(d) A marine safety enforcement officer who reasonably suspects that a boat is discharging sewage in an area where discharge is prohibited may, if the owner or operator is aboard, board the boat for the purpose of inspecting the marine sanitation device for proper operation and testing the sanitation and holding devices, including placing a dye tablet in the holding tank.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975. Amended by Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 267, art. 3, Sec. 13, eff. Sept. 1, 1985; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1256, Sec. 24, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 579 (S.B. 2445), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 579 (S.B. 2445), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2009.

Sec. 31.130. BOATER EDUCATION COURSE PERMITTED IN LIEU OF FINE. (a) Except as provided by Section 31.131, this section applies to a person who violates for the first time a provision of this chapter relating to the operation of a vessel.

(b) A justice may defer imposition of a fine and place a defendant on probation for a period not to exceed 60 days if the defendant:

(1) pleads guilty or nolo contendere or is found guilty; and

(2) requests permission from the court to attend a boater education course.

(c) The justice shall require the defendant to successfully complete a boater education course approved by the department during the probation period.

(d) If the defendant presents satisfactory evidence that the defendant has successfully completed the boater education course, the justice shall waive imposition of a fine. If the defendant fails to successfully complete the boater education course, the justice shall impose a fine for the violation.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 31.131. BOATER EDUCATION COURSE REQUIRED FOR CERTAIN VIOLATIONS. (a) A justice shall require a person who is adjudged guilty of an offense resulting from the violation of a provision of Sections 31.094-31.103 or [31.106](#) to:

(1) pay any fine imposed for the violation; and

(2) successfully complete a boater education course approved by the department not later than the 90th day after the date the person is adjudged guilty.

(b) If the person fails to successfully complete the boater education course, the person commits an offense that is a Class A Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 31.132. REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a marine safety enforcement officer shall provide to the department on a form prescribed by the department a report of any incident the officer investigates that involves a boating accident, water fatality, or person who allegedly operates a boat while intoxicated. The officer shall provide the report not later than the 15th day after the date the officer initially became aware of the incident.

(b) This section does not apply to an incident that is required to be reported under Section 31.105(c).

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1363, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 474 (H.B. 555), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2011.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 943 (S.B. 1670), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2023.

SUBCHAPTER F. WATER FACILITIES

Sec. 31.141. BOAT RAMPS. (a) The department may construct and maintain boat ramps and access roads by the use of existing or additional services or facilities of the department.

(b) On the completion of the work, the department shall prepare and send vouchers to the comptroller of public accounts payable to the department or to any person, firm, or corporation for reimbursement for the work, and the comptroller shall issue warrants on the game, fish, and water safety account to reimburse the department or any person, firm, or corporation for the work performed.

(c) The department may remove sand, silt, and other materials from state-owned submerged land and may contract for the removal of sand, silt, and other materials from state-owned submerged land to provide access to boat ramps.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1979, 66th Leg., p. 1069, ch. 499, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 27, 1979; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 679, Sec. 40, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 31.142. BUOYS AND MARKERS. The department may provide for a standardized buoy-marking program for the inland water of the state. The department may purchase and provide the controlling agency of the water bodies with buoys and markers.

Acts 1975, 64th Leg., p. 1405, ch. 545, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1975.

Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 679, Sec. 41, eff. Sept. 1,

SUBCHAPTER G. PARTY BOATS

Sec. 31.171. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Licensed party boat operator" means a person issued a license by the department under this subchapter.

(2) "Party boat" means a vessel:

(A) operated by the owner of the vessel or an employee of the owner; and

(B) rented or leased by the owner for a group recreational event for more than six passengers.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.172. APPLICABILITY; EXCEPTION. (a) This subchapter applies only to a party boat that operates on the inland waters of this state.

(b) This subchapter does not apply to a boat that is less than 30 feet in length or to a sailboat.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.173. PARTY BOAT OPERATOR AND STAFF. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (c), the party boat owner shall provide staff members, including a licensed party boat operator, who:

(1) operate and staff the party boat for the duration of a rental or lease for a group recreational event as follows:

(A) for a boat with not more than 25 passengers, one staff member who is an operator;

(B) for a boat with at least 26 but not more than 50 passengers, two staff members, including one operator; and

(C) for a boat with more than 50 passengers, three staff members, including one operator; and

(2) have each successfully completed a boater safety course approved under this chapter.

(b) At least one staff member on the boat must be certified

to conduct cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

(c) This section does not apply to a party boat rented or leased for an overnight or longer period for which the owner, or the owner's staff, does not intend to remain in constant possession, command, and control of the party boat.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.174. BOAT REQUIREMENTS. A party boat:

(1) may not carry more than the maximum number of passengers the boat may safely accommodate as determined by the department on inspection;

(2) must have a direct and reliable communication connection to the land-based office of the owner and law enforcement and emergency services by cellular telephone or very high frequency radio; and

(3) must pass an annual water safety inspection conducted by the department or a person under contract with the department.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.175. PASSENGER SAFETY INFORMATION; INSURANCE. (a) The owner of a party boat shall provide each passenger with written and verbal safety information and require each passenger to sign a form acknowledging that the passenger reviewed and understands the information.

(b) The verbal and written safety information must disclose that no lifeguard is present on the party boat if there is not at least one staff member on the boat who is certified as a lifeguard by the American Red Cross, the American Lifeguard Association, or another comparable nationally recognized organization.

(c) The owner of a party boat must obtain at least a minimum amount of liability insurance from an insurer licensed to do business in this state. The commission shall set the amount.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.176. PARTY BOAT OPERATOR LICENSE. (a) The commission by rule shall establish, as necessary to protect the public health and safety, the requirements and procedures for the issuance and renewal of a party boat operator license under this subchapter.

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (c), the rules for obtaining a license as a party boat operator must require at a minimum that the applicant:

- (1) be at least 21 years of age;
- (2) observe for at least four hours a licensed party boat operator operating a party boat on open water;
- (3) operate for at least four hours a party boat on open water while being supervised and observed by a licensed party boat operator; and
- (4) pass a written examination covering onboard safety procedures and the applicable provisions of this chapter.

(c) An applicant is not required to comply with Subsections (b)(2) and (3) if the applicant has:

- (1) at least 25 hours of experience operating a party boat as shown by appropriate documentation; and
- (2) no record of boating violations.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.177. FEES. (a) The commission by rule shall establish and collect a reasonable fee for:

- (1) the issuance of a party boat operator license under this subchapter; and
- (2) the annual water safety inspection of a party boat required by this subchapter.

(b) A fee collected by the department under this subchapter and any interest that accrues on the fee shall be deposited to the credit of the game, fish, and water safety account established under Section 11.032.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.178. DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING. If a party boat is involved in an accident causing serious personal injury or death, each staff member on board is subject to mandatory drug and alcohol testing.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.179. ENFORCEMENT. (a) In addition to a game warden, any peace officer of a municipality or other political subdivision of this state who is certified as a marine safety enforcement officer under Section 31.121 may enforce this subchapter:

(1) in the area of a navigable body of water that is in the jurisdiction of the municipality or other political subdivision; or

(2) in any part of a lake that is partly or wholly inside the boundaries of:

(A) the municipality or its extraterritorial jurisdiction; or

(B) the political subdivision.

(b) A party boat is subject to enforcement inspections conducted under Section 31.124.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.

Sec. 31.180. RULES. The commission shall adopt and enforce rules necessary to implement this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1159 (H.B. 12), Sec. 19A(a), eff. June 15, 2007.