

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION Department of Public Safety		POLICY NUMBER 801
POLICY TITLE Marine Operations Policy		
DATE OF REVISION January 6, 2026		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER DPS Emergency Manager		ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE Finance and Operations

PURPOSE

Provide requirements for the safe operation of all watercraft by and for the use of USC Beaufort faculty, staff, students and volunteers.

DEFINITIONS

USCB DPS: University of South Carolina Beaufort Department of Public Safety

SC DNR: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

US Coast Guard: United States Coast Guard

POLICY STATEMENT

I. Department Requirements

A. University personnel of each Department who operate watercraft will develop a specific operations plan for each area of operation and submit to USCB DPS for review and approval. Plan must include the following:

1. Motorboat Operations

- a. Effective 08/18/2023, Boaters born after July 1, 2007, are required by law to pass an SC DNR approved boater education course before operating a boat, personal watercraft, or a specialty prop craft powered by a ten hp or larger engine. The training must include:
 - i. On-site training with a demonstration by the applicant providing their abilities to operate the boat.
 - ii. Launch and removal of the boat from the water.
 - iii. Cleaning of the boat and used devices after use.
- b. Users must be trained by the department on the watercraft they will be using. This training must include:
 - i. Boat operations.
 - ii. Launch and removal of boat.
 - iii. Basic navigation in the waterways in which they will be operating.
 - iv. Emergency calls using the department's emergency plan.
 - v. Abandon ship drills and actions to be taken while awaiting rescue.

2. Watercraft Requirements

- a. All watercrafts must meet inspection requirements of SC DNR and the United States Coast Guard.
- b. All watercrafts will be inspected annually and may be subject to random university inspections throughout the year by the USCB DPS Safety Officer or designee.

3. Life Jackets

- a. Each boat shall be required to carry one life jacket per person on the boat.
- b. Passengers who do not have swimming ability or ability is unknown, must wear a life jacket while on board.
- c. Passengers under the age of 18 years must wear a life jacket while on board.
- d. The Boat Captain is the authority on the boat and will determine when life jackets are required.

4. Kayaks

- a. All persons utilizing a kayak must be trained to operate kayaks or canoes utilizing SC DNR or Power Squadron training material.
- b. **Life Jackets are required** to be worn while using kayaks or canoes.

5. Float Plans

- a. A float plan for each trip must be filed by the Boat Captain or designee with approval of the Boat Captain, prior to launch and submitted electronically every time any watercraft will to be on the water.
- b. Each Boat Captain must be trained on how to file the plan, its requirements and modifications, such as extension of return times.

II. Special Use of Department Watercraft by Other USCB Groups

- A. The department who controls the watercraft are responsible for training the personnel who will be utilizing their boats and adhering to all protocols outlined in in Section I.
- B. For programs involving minors, refer to USC System Policy UNIV 4.00 Programs Involving Minors to ensure all requirements are met prior to operating any watercraft involving minors.

III. Weather

- A. Department personnel assigned to manage a project are responsible for monitoring the weather and determining whether conditions are safe for operations.
- B. USCB DPS will provide special weather briefings as provided by the NWS- Charleston to assist in determining if conditions are safe for operations.
- C. The USCB DPS Safety Officer has the authority to issue a suspension order to watercraft operations during severe weather alerts.

IV. Usage of Private Watercraft

- A. Any private watercraft being used for USCB marine operations must follow the department's guidelines for private watercraft usage.
- B. At a minimum, the private watercraft must meet all SC DNR and US Coast Guard rules and regulations.
- C. A USCB Float plan must be filed by the watercraft captain when any USCB personnel are on board.

V. Insurance

- A. No watercraft will be used until the proper insurance has been obtained. The insurance coverage will include the value of the vessel and its contents, and liability insurance for those onboard.
- B. All persons on board a USCB watercraft shall sign a liability waiver for each calendar year.

VI. Watercraft Safety Officer

- A. The Department operating watercraft will designate one person within the Department as the Watercraft Safety Officer.
 - a. The Watercraft Safety Officer will be responsible to ensure all documents, training, and safety procedures are in compliance and stored in an accessible file.
 - b. The Watercraft Safety Officer has the authority to suspend any watercraft operations when severe weather or failure to comply with safe watercraft operations.
 - i. Upon suspending any watercraft operations, the USCB DPS Safety Officer will be notified by the Watercraft Safety Officer.

VI. Failure to Comply with Safe Boating Operations

- A. The Boat Captain is the authority while operating the boat. Passengers who fail to comply with the captain's instructions shall be subject to removal as soon as it is safe to do so and has the authority to suspend passenger privileges on future boat operations.
- B. The USCB DPS Safety Officer has the authority to suspend any boating operations when it is determined that inadequate training or failure to comply with safety boating rules, regulations or guidelines are not in compliance.

VII. Required Documents and Audits

- A. Required documents maintained by Department.
 - a. Liability waivers for all personnel and passengers utilizing USCB watercraft.
 - b. Inspection documents for each watercraft.
 - c. Department training documents, which at a minimum must include:
 - i. Course Date
 - ii. Course Outline
 - iii. List of persons completing training
 - d. Insurance certificates for each watercraft.
- B. Audits
 - a. The USCB DPS Safety Officer will audit all documents twice a year.
 - b. When any record is found to be inaccurate or missing the department will have 30 days to make any corrections. If the corrections are not, the USCB DPS Safety Officer will issue a stop order for all operations affected by the violation.
 - c. Any safety training not completed for any individual, the USCB Safety Officer will immediately issue a stop work order to prohibit the individual from participating in marine operations.

VIII. DPS Safety Inspections

- a. The USCB DPS Safety Officer may conduct unannounced inspections of watercraft operations, as necessary.
- b. Safety complaints from any source will be investigated by DPS and once completed will be given to the Department involved, the Vice Chancellor for Operations and the Vice Chancellor for the Department involved.
- c. Serious safety concerns may warrant a stop order for all operations until the deficiency is corrected. Re-inspection is required prior to rescinding the stop order.
- d. Other safety deficiencies must be corrected within 30 days and are subject to re-inspection.

PROCEDURES

Procedures are spelled out under each requirement within the policy.

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
January 6, 2026	New Policy Approval