

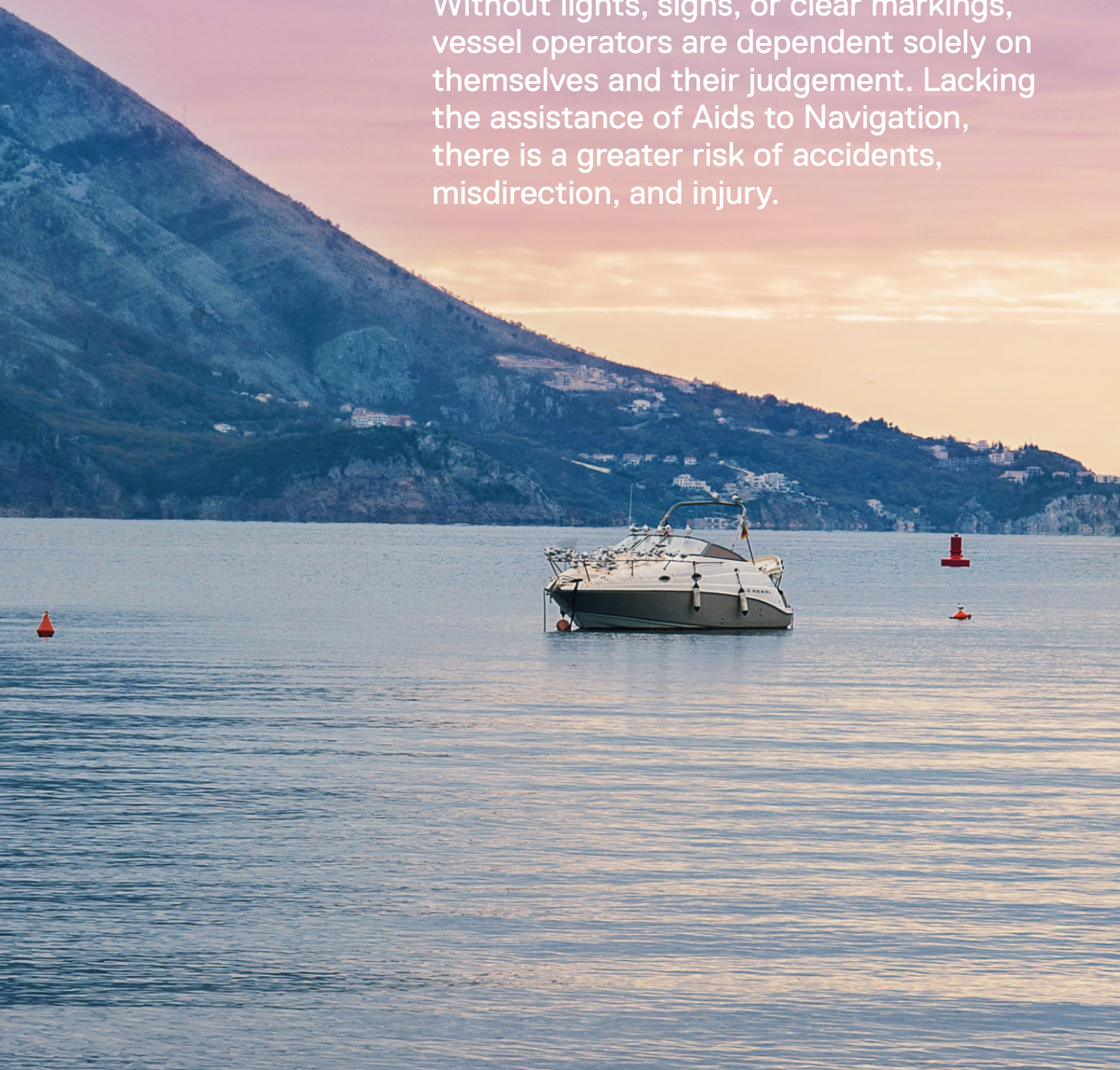
Know Your Buoy

Understanding the **Safety Rules**
of the **Waterway**



Similar to traffic signs for roadways, a mariner relies on aids to navigation to safely travel through waterways.

Without lights, signs, or clear markings, vessel operators are dependent solely on themselves and their judgement. Lacking the assistance of Aids to Navigation, there is a greater risk of accidents, misdirection, and injury.



Navigation Rules

Collisions are the number one type of accident that occur on the water, according to the [2020 Recreational Boating Statistics](#) provided by the United States Coast Guard (USCG). When following the ‘rules of the road’, most accidents can be avoided. In prevention of collision at sea, navigation rules were unified under the [Inland Navigation Rules Act of 1980](#) and put in effect December 1981.

The Inland Navigation Rules lays out Rules 1 through 38 and subdivided into:

1. General
2. Steering and Sailing Rules
3. Lights and Shapes
4. Sounds and Light Signals
5. Exemptions

In 2010, the USCG transferred the Navigation Rules from United States Code to Regulations. This allowed the Coast Guard to have legal authority to affect regulatory changes. As rules of the road provide safe driving for vehicles, navigation rules aid mariners in safe boating.



Know Your Buoy

Part of the navigation rules was standardizing the colors, symbols and signage that aid mariners. Buoys are the traffic signs of the waterways. These aids to navigation float on top of water and are moored to the bottom of the body of water. Colors as well as the size of symbols and text are chosen for highest visibility during the day.

Buoys can be affixed with lights to increase their visibility at night or in foul weather. When equipped with autonomous lights, the complete aid to navigation alerts vessel operators of specific messages.

The following are standard messages of the U.S. Coast Guard regulations:

Restricted Operations

Buoys with the circle symbol indicate areas of regulated operations such as speed or no wake.

Information

A square symbol provides helpful information such as directions, distances, and locations.

Danger

A diamond shape alerts boaters to hazards, for example, rocks or construction.

Exclusion

A diamond shape with a cross means boats are prohibited from entering the area.

Special Aids

Yellow buoys mark special areas such as anchoring, traffic separation, or pipelines.

Green Lateral Aids

This type of buoy is a channel marker configuration, usually with a cylindered top called a 'Can', and is on the port (left) side when traveling toward open waters (seaward).

Red Lateral Aids

Like the green lateral aid, the red lateral aid should be on your starboard (right side) when travelling seaward. They are usually characterized by its conical top called a 'Nun'.

Special Markings

Shoreline markers are black and white vertically striped buoys to alert vessel operators of an obstruction to navigation extending from the nearest shore to the buoy. The vessel cannot pass the buoy.

- **Safe Water** markers have red and white vertical stripes used to mark fairways, mid-channels, and offshore approach points. There are unobstructed water on all sides.
- **Wreck** markers are buoys with blue and yellow vertical stripes to easily identify new wrecks and under water hazards.

Noted Danger

Buoys marked with a letter correspond to a noted danger on a nautical chart provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Edge of Channel

Green lateral aids with odd numbers mark the edge of the channel on the port (left) side. Red lateral aids are marked with even numbers to indicate the edge of the channel on the starboard (right) side. Numbers usually increase when returning from open sea or heading upstream.

U.S. Coast Guard Standard Buoy Messages

Restricted Operations



Information



Danger



Exclusion



Special Aids



Green Lateral Aids



Red Lateral Aids



Shoreline Markers



Safe Water Markers



Wreck Markers



Noted Danger



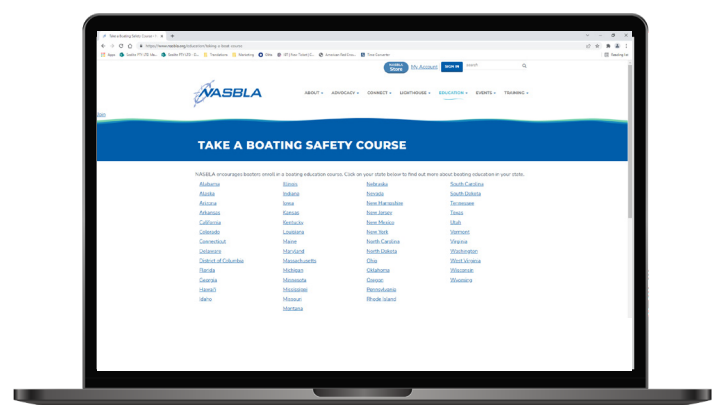
Edge of Channel



Boater Safety Courses

In addition to being familiar with the navigation rules, operators should be knowledgeable of their state's boating regulations. Currently, [46 U.S. states require that all operators of boats and personal water crafts \(PWCs\), which are small vessels that use an inboard jet, have boater education](#). Operators 16 years old of motorboats over 25 HP need to pass a boater safety course and carry a boater education card.

Available online through organizations such as [National Association of State Boating Law Administrators \(NASBLA\)](#) and [National Safe Boating Council \(NSBC\)](#), these comprehensive courses allow the general public to learn about their local laws and regulations, boater safety, boating skills, navigation rules, boat maintenance, and visualize real emergency scenarios.



Safety on the Waterways

While organizations maintain the safety on the waterway with buoys, signage, and lighting, there are simple precautions before heading out to the water:

Post a lookout

Designate someone to watch for dangers that may come in any direction.

Maintain a safe speed

Take account of visibility, vessel traffic, boat's ability to maneuver, and weather conditions.

Avoid a collision

Understand which boat is designated as the 'give-away' vessel that yields to the other boat and the 'stand-on' vessel who maintains its course and speed.

Wear a life jacket

86% of the fatal boating accident victims who drowned were not wearing a life jacket, as reported by the USCG *2020 Recreational Boating Statistics*.

Learn local/state regulations

Boating regulation vary from state to state. The majority of American waterways are referred to as the U.S. Aids to Navigation System or IALA-B.

Complete a boater safety course

Understand boater safety, maintenance, and learn what to do when emergencies rise.

Safety is Sealite's Priority

Sealite manufactures seamless, rotationally molded buoys using UV-stabilized virgin polyethylene. Colored pigments permeate through the plastic during manufacturing resulting in buoys with the brightest color. In combination with graphics compliant with USCG regulation, Sealite regulatory buoys are highly distinguishable and easily legible.

Benefits of rotationally molded buoys:

- Buoys are molded in one piece making them durable, with greater stress resistance.
- They withstand extreme elements such as icing, cyclonic winds, salt-spray, prolonged UV exposure.
- All buoys contain closed-cell polyurethane foam that prevents the buoys from being waterlogged in the event of damage, which means the buoys will remain upright until they are replaced.
- Colors remain vibrant over the buoys' lifetime.

Visibility and durability are not the only priorities at Sealite when it comes to safety on the water. Of equal importance is how and when your aids to navigation arrive at their destination. Sealite buoys are made in the United States and strategically located to provide local service and supply chain throughout the Americas. Inventory is in stock ready for purchase and delivery when needed.



Contact Us

We Believe Technology
Improves Navigation



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