



Code of Safety for Small Pleasure Craft

SCC Code 2017

General Provisions

The Shipping (Small Craft Control) Regulations 2017 are made in exercise of the powers contained in The Small Craft Control Act No. 14 of 2015, which came into force on the 1st January 2016.

The aim of this Code is to prescribe the standards of construction and emergency equipment for small pleasure craft operating in Antigua and Barbuda, in compliance with the above regulations.

Part A - Application and Interpretation

1. Application

The Code applies to:

All pleasure craft of less than 24 metres in length, whether non self-propelled, power driven, maneuvered by oars, or poles, or under sail. It also includes commercial vessels of less than 5 metres in length, but does not include a fishing vessel registered under the Fisheries Act No. 22 of 2006.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this Code, unless expressly provided otherwise

Authority means the Antigua & Barbuda Department of Marine Services (ADOMS).

Coastal waters, is designated as the area of water surrounding Antigua and Barbuda extending to not more than 20 miles from a safe haven in Antigua and Barbuda and does not include any international voyage

Commercial vessel means a vessel in commercial use and carrying cargo, or passengers for reward

Fishing vessel means a vessel solely engaged in commercial fishing operations

Length means the greater of 96% of the total length on a waterline at 85% of least moulded depth (measured from top of keel), or the length from the fore side of the stem to the axis of the rudder stock on that waterline, if that is greater

Near shore, is designated as not more than 200 metres from a safe haven in Antigua or Barbuda

Open craft, refers to a craft without a cabin, or below deck facilities and where any seating is exposed, or partially exposed to the elements

Pleasure craft means any craft used only for sport or pleasure by the owner and where there is no commercial gain

Power craft means motorboats, powerboats, fast powerboats and personal watercraft (jet skis)

Protected waters, is designated as an area of sheltered waters extending to not more than 1 mile offshore of Antigua and not more than 3 miles from a safe haven and includes Barbuda lagoon

Safe distance for PWCs (jet skis) is defined as at least 15 metres from another craft underway, or not within 50 metres of an anchored or moored vessel, a person in the water, or a jetty or wharf. Freestyling or wave/wake jumping is not allowed within 30 metres of another PWC, or not within 50 metres of another vessel, or person in the water. PWC (jet skis) should not exceed 5 knots when they are closer than 75 metres from the shore

Safe haven, means a place where a craft may be anchored, beached or berthed, in such a manner that all persons on board can be safely disembarked.

3. Equivalencies and exemptions

The Authority may grant exemptions or equivalencies, where considered necessary and will note such on the small craft control safety certificate issued

4. Approved equipment and material

The Authority will consider accepted international standards for equipment and material.

5. Licensing and Registration

Small pleasure craft that are not power craft and under 5 metres in length are excepted from licensing, but it is recommended they comply with a voluntary scheme. This applies to owners of canoes, kayaks, paddle boats, paddle boards, windsurf/sail boards, kiteboards, sailing boats etc. who operate only for pleasure purposes. In this case the Authority request that owners meet the relevant safety standards in this code and give details of their small craft, either online, or by completing a form, so that the small craft can be entered on the Authority small craft database.

All other small pleasure craft need to be licensed, even if they are also registered.

Small craft that are only licensed will be given a unique licence number, followed by letter P for pleasure. The letter C will be used where commercial operations apply.

Small craft that are also registered will retain the standard five character call sign.

The small craft licence is combined with the small craft control safety certificate and is valid for five years from the date of inspection.

The licence decal is renewed each year upon satisfactory annual inspection.

6. Marking of craft

The small craft license number, or registered call sign must be prominently displayed, in a contrasting colour above the waterline, where it can be clearly seen. Numbers and letters should read from left to right on both sides and be at least 75mm (3 ins.) high in block form.

The decal should be affixed on port side of the craft and be placed within 150mm (6 ins.) before or after and in line with, the licence or call sign number/letters.

It is illegal to operate a pleasure craft, or allow others to operate the craft, unless it is licensed and marked as above.

Where a small craft also has a fishing licence, it can be marked with assigned fishing number and licence decal.

This allows Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard (in their specific role for enforcement and search and rescue) to clearly identify and obtain information about that craft, to check compliance and to follow up in event of an incident, or emergency.

Small commercial craft that are not power craft, under 5 metres in length and that operate from resorts, will not require individual decal marking provided they operate:

- with a certified small commercial vessel (rescue boat) available at all times
- watersports staff can observe and monitor craft at all times
- within defined operational area limits
- safety checklist is completed, including wearing lifejackets/PFDs, with whistles to attract attention
- watersports craft are marked with resort name
- ABDF CG are aware of the resort watersports areas

Part B - Inspections

7. General

The initial or renewal survey will cover following items, as applicable; hull, machinery and propulsion, electrical, lifesaving equipment, fire protection equipment, steering systems and operational practices, including craft safety knowledge and crew competence.

8. Notice of inspection deficiencies and requirements

On completion of inspection the Authority surveyor will record any deficiencies and issue an Inspection Report form with requirements for rectification.

9. Unsafe practices - Prohibition Notice

During the course of any inspection due regard shall be given to confirming that all unsafe practices identified onboard have been corrected and this may include operational activities.

A Prohibition Notice can be used to stop or prohibit an activity, if that activity involves a risk of accident leading to personal injury, or of serious pollution of any navigable waters. A Prohibition Notice can be made to have immediate effect.

Part C - Passenger and Seafarer Capacity

10. Total number of persons permitted

The total number of persons permitted to be carried on a craft will be determined by the Authority.

In determining this number the Authority shall take into account stability restrictions, operating area, seating and deck area, lifesaving equipment and crew manning.

Part D - Certification

11. Application for Small Craft Control (SCC) Safety Certificate and Licence

A Small Craft Control Safety Certificate and Licence may be obtained, or renewed by making an application in writing to the Authority.

12. Small Craft Control (SCC) Safety Certificate and Licence

A craft to which this Code applies should not be operated, unless excepted, without a valid Small Craft Control Safety Certificate and Licence, issued by the Authority, after a satisfactory survey and confirmation of evidence of competence.

The Small Craft Control Safety Certificate is combined with the Small Craft Licence and is valid for 5 years, subject to annual inspection.

The inspection for renewal should be carried out up to 3 months prior to expiry of the certificate. The annual inspection should be carried out during the period of 6 months, extending from 3 months before to 3 months after the anniversary date.

The annual inspection should be sufficient to establish that craft continues to meet requirements of the Code and on satisfactory completion the Small Craft Control Safety Certificate and Licence will be endorsed to show completion of the annual inspection.

A Small Craft Control Safety Certificate which is not endorsed for the required annual inspections is invalid and the craft must be submitted for a renewal inspection and issue of a new certificate.

13. Posting of certificates or decals

The Small Craft Control Safety Certificate and Licence should be posted onboard under transparent material and where posting due to vessel size and design is impracticable, it should be kept in a protective cover available for presentation when requested. The licence decal will also show that craft has been certified.

Part E - Construction

14. General

The construction and arrangement of small pleasure craft should allow safe operation of the craft, giving consideration to:

- seaworthiness of hull
- protection against fire
- means of escape
- guards and safety rails (rails or equivalent protection at periphery of all decks accessible to passengers and crew)

- ventilation of enclosed spaces
- electrical arrangements and battery installation
- lighting
- facilities for accommodation for use of passengers and crew
- watertight and weathertight openings
- bilge pumping
- freeboard and stability

Part F - Machinery

15. General

The design, construction, installation and operation of propulsion machinery, steering and associated safety systems should be to international standards and to the satisfaction of the Authority.

Particular attention will be paid to inboard gasoline engines and the fitting of outboard engines and the storage of gasoline and ventilation arrangements.

Part G - Safety equipment requirements for pleasure craft

16. General

The safety equipment requirements for small pleasure craft detailed below are based on the assessed risks for operations within Antigua and Barbuda protected waters, or restricted operating areas near shore, where applicable.

Where operations will include coastal waters, then safety equipment should include liferafts and/or buoyant apparatus, sufficient to accommodate the total number of persons onboard.

All safety equipment must be in good working order, be maintained and replaced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and be within easy reach, so that can be readily used in an emergency.

These safety equipment requirements apply to pleasure craft (and commercial vessels under 5 metres in length) and are the same whether you own, rent/hire, or borrow the craft.

The same level of safety equipment will equally apply to any tenders operated from mega yachts and cruise ships, within Antigua and Barbuda waters. Similarly, where a cruising permit is issued to a visiting vessel it will include a self-declaration section, regarding compliance with these operational standards for small craft.

These requirements do not apply to inflatable self-propelled water toys, which are not designed for use in open waters. If these are found in open water, Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard will treat them as pleasure craft that are subject to the same regulations.

This is the minimum safety equipment required onboard small craft under The Small Craft (Control) Regulations 2017 and owners/operators may wish to provide more equipment, based on their particular type of craft, activity and the operational sea area.

17. Craft up to 5 metres in length

PWCs (jet skis)

- Every person on a personal watercraft (PWC) is required to wear a personal flotation device (PFD)/lifejacket at all times when onboard, or being towed in any manner by a PWC. Lifejacket or PFD must be inherently buoyant. PFD/ lifejacket should be fitted with a whistle to attract attention and be in a high visibility colour.
- One buoyant heaving line at least 15m in length
- Three distress flares in a watertight container, combination of orange smoke and red flare
- and waterproof torch/light
- One fire extinguisher
- PWC to be equipped with lanyard/kill cord for attachment to operator's body, clothing or PFD/lifejacket.

PWCs should operate at all times near shore and within navigation marks/buoyed channels and/or controlled designated areas, as applicable and during daylight hours only.

Do not operate a PWC under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Age restriction on person operating PWCs is must be 16 years of age or older.

If engaged in towing a float with a suitable PWC, it is essential to carry an observer.

A high incidence of accidents with PWCs involve collisions and when manoeuvring at speed (including freestyling and wave/wake jumping) a safe distance should be kept from other PWCs, vessels underway or at anchor, or persons in the water.

Evidence of competence required.

A pre-launch safety checklist must always be completed prior to operating, or renting out a PWC. This should include a safety information briefing for persons renting, which should cover handling and recovery skills, collision avoidance and operating area restrictions.

Canoes, Kayaks, Paddleboats, Paddleboards, Windsurf/Sailboards, Kiteboards, Sailing Boats

- One PFD/lifejacket to be worn at all times for every person on board. Lifejacket or PFD must be inherently buoyant. PFD/ lifejacket should be fitted with a whistle to attract attention and be in a high visibility colour.

Operations during daylight hours only and near shore in controlled designated areas

A prelaunch safety check list should be completed, which includes a safety information briefing for persons renting.

Sail craft

- One PFD/lifejacket to be worn at all times for every person on board an open craft. Lifejacket or PFD should be inherently buoyant. PFD/lifejacket should be fitted with a whistle to attract attention and be in a high visibility colour. A light is required if also operated during hours of darkness

- One buoyant heaving line at least 15m length (not required if rescue boat is available)
- One paddle, or similar manual propelling device (not required if rescue boat is available)
- If craft can hold enough water to cause capsize, then bailer or manual bilge pump required
- Navigation lights are required if craft is operated during hours of darkness

A prelaunch safety check list should be completed.

Power craft

- One PFD/lifejacket to be worn at all times for every person on board an open craft. PFD/lifejacket should be fitted with a whistle to attract attention and be in a high visibility colour. A light is required if also operated during hours of darkness
- One buoyant heaving line at least 15m length
- Three distress flares in a watertight container, combination of orange smoke and red flare and waterproof torch/light
- One paddle, or similar manual propelling device
- If craft can hold enough water to cause capsize, then bailer or manual bilge pump required
- One fire extinguisher
- Navigation lights are required if craft is operated during hours of darkness

Evidence of competence required and a prelaunch safety check list should be completed.

Note for tenders that do short transfer operations then PFDs, waterproof torch/light and means of communication is sufficient.

18. Sail and power craft of over 5 metres in length up to 13.7 metres (45 feet) in length

- One PFD/lifejacket for every person on board and on an open craft it is recommended that they are worn at all times. Lifejacket or PFD should be fitted with a whistle to attract attention and be in a high visibility colour. A light is required if also operated during hours of darkness
- One lifebuoy attached to a buoyant line at least 15m in length
- If craft is equipped with a motor, then one waterproof torch/light and six distress flares in a watertight container
- One paddle, or similar manual propelling device
- If craft can hold enough water to cause capsize, then bailer or manual bilge pump required
- One fire extinguisher required if equipped with a motor and one fire extinguisher if equipped with fuel burning cooking, heating or refrigerating appliance
- First aid kit
- A re boarding device is required if the vertical height that a person must climb to re board the craft from the water (freeboard) is over 0.5 metres
- One sound signaling appliance

- One magnetic compass
- One marine VHF radio installation
- Navigation lights are required if craft is operated during hours of darkness

Evidence of competence required and a prelaunch safety check list should be completed, including voyage planning.

Note for tenders that do short transfer operations then PFDs, waterproof torch/light and means of communication is sufficient.

19. Sail and power craft of over 13.7 metres in length up to 24 metres in length

- One PFD/lifejacket for every person on board. PFD/ lifejacket should be fitted with a whistle to attract attention and be in a high visibility colour. A light is required if also operated during hours of darkness
- Two lifebuoys, one with a self-igniting light attached and one with a buoyant line at least 15m in length
- One waterproof torch/light and six hand-held distress flares, two rocket parachute flares and two buoyant smoke signals in a watertight container
- Bilge pumping arrangement required
- One fire extinguisher at entrance to accommodation space, one fire extinguisher at entrance to machinery space and one fire extinguisher if equipped with fuel burning cooking, heating or refrigerating appliance
- First aid kit
- Fire bucket
- A re boarding device is required if the vertical height that a person must climb to re board the craft from the water (freeboard) is over 0.5 metres
- One anchor and at least 50 metres of cable, rope or chain in any combination
- Fixed magnetic compass
- Sound signaling appliances
- One marine VHF radio installation
- Navigation lights are required if craft is operated during hours of darkness

Evidence of competence required and a prelaunch safety check list should be completed, including voyage planning.

20. Safety equipment specifications

Lifesaving appliances

- Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) do not offer same level of protection as lifejackets for staying afloat and rolling you over onto your back so you can breathe. However, since they are designed for constant wear, they are more comfortable than lifejackets. Select a PFD based on your activity and operational area. If operating at higher speeds chose one with three chest belts for security and always in a colour that is easy to see in the water. Children should wear a lifejacket or PFD at all times when on the water and it

should fit snugly and not ride up over the head. Lifejackets/PFDs should be kept in good condition and be dried in open air and not in direct sunlight.

- Buoyant line is approved for use as long as it floats, is in good condition and used only as emergency equipment.
- Lifebuoys should be at least 610 mm (24 ins.) in diameter.
- A transom ladder or swim platform meets the requirements of a re boarding device.

Firefighting equipment

- Fire extinguishers should be ABC rated, be of correct size for the space protecting and should be maintained, serviced and recharged, as per the manufacturer's instructions

Visual and sound signals

- Distress flares should be stored in a readily accessible watertight container and should only be used in an emergency, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- If craft is fitted with navigation lights they must work and meet the technical standards set out in the Collision Regulations.

21. Operational requirements

Competency for pleasure craft operations

Evidence of competence for existing operators (prior to 1 January 2016) of small pleasure craft will be assessed on application, based on operational experience and will be stated on the small craft control safety certificate. Inexperienced and new operators (after 1 January 2016) should take an appropriate training course, or alternatively the oral, written and practical elements, based on the Authority syllabus for assessment of competence.

In the case of renting a small craft, then a rental craft safety checklist to the standards in this code must be completed. This should provide a basic safety orientation to the particular craft, its equipment and features and also cover any operational area restrictions.

Both parties, renter and craft operator, must sign the checklist as proof of competency for the rental period only and operator is required to retain for record purposes.

In the case of PWCs (jet skis), the Personal Watercraft Proficiency Certificate, or equivalent course is recommended, as evidence of competence. In the case of PWCs (jet skis) being hired out then satisfactory completion of the above course, or equivalent is required, as these operators will also be expected to give a safety briefing to persons renting and will need to sign the rental safety checklist.

Voyage planning

As a pleasure craft user you should always take into account the following points, when planning a boating trip. Weather, limitations of the craft, crew competence, navigational dangers, contingency plan and information left ashore.

Emergency procedures and accident reporting

Operators of small craft should know the relevant emergency procedures and be aware of the requirements for accident reporting.