BOATING SAFETY AT VESTER MARINE FIELD STATION

Emergency & Reference Contacts
Sheriff’s Office: 911 for emergencies
  Lee County - Marine Division: 477-1200
  Collier County Sheriff: 252-9300
U.S. Coast Guard Station, Ft. Myers Beach: 463-5754
  For search and rescue assistance on VHF Channel 16
Vester Field Station Facility Manager (Bob Wasno): 732-6222
FGCU Campus police: 590-1900

To become an authorized boat operator at Vester Field Station you must first complete the following:

1. Complete an approved boating safety course; ALL Vester Field station BOATS WILL BE OPERATED ACCORDING TO RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD AND FLORIDA’S BOATING LAWS, FOUND IN CH. 327 AND CH. 328, FLORIDA STATUTES (see http://myfwc.com/boating/regulations/).
2. Provide documentation of and/or acquire practical experience in operating a boat.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in the safe operation of the proposed type of boat in local conditions (see Boat operator check-out program).
4. Demonstrate proficiency in the operation of any specialty equipment and procedures specific to the boat or task to be undertaken.

BOAT OPERATOR CHECK-OUT PROGRAM

All boat users operating out of Vester Field Station must be trained and demonstrate proficiency in operating a boat in local waters prior to using any vessel for their research or educational program. We typically run two check out / training courses each year, one during the Fall and Spring semesters. We allow only 6 students in each course due to training ratios and logistical constraints. Priority is given to those that need boat operations as part of their work or research.

Prior to taking the check-out / training program, at a minimum, each operator must have successfully completed an approved boater safety course. In Florida, anyone born on or after January 1, 1988, who operates a vessel powered by 10 horsepower or more
must pass an approved boater safety course and have in his/her possession photographic identification and a boater safety identification card issued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Please submit a boat training application (all found under Boating Forms) to the Facilities Manager.

**BOAT OPERATOR LEVELS**

Boat operator levels are determined by the Facilities Manager based on a review of a boating history summary.

Designated levels of boating operation are:

- **Trainee:** Trainees may operate a boat only in the presence of another authorized operator, listed on the float plan, with a more advanced level of boat operation.
- **Inshore:** May operate boats in protected waters, such as bays and rivers
- **Offshore:** May operate boats in all inshore areas, plus offshore to distances designated in approved float and/or operational plans.
- **Offshore and Twin Screws:** May operate boats including twin motors in all inshore areas, plus offshore to distances designated in approved float and/or operational plans.

**RESERVATIONS OF BOATS and FLOAT PLANS**

To reserve a boat or canoes, you must submit a Vester Reservation Form, available on the Vester website (see that form for instruction on use of the calendar) at least one week prior to the operation. The reservation of any boat is on a first come, first served basis. All vessels leaving from Vester Field Station must file a float plan (see appendix II), which shall be placed on a clipboard in the main office; all student contact information and medical details are required as part of this cruise plan. In addition, prior to leaving you must write on the white board in the lab: Name and contact information, name of faculty contact, vessel, time out, destination, expected time back.

**INCIDENT REPORTING**

All incidents must be reported to the Facility Manager and, in the case of bodily injury, to your Supervisor as soon as possible.

A reportable incident is defined as follows:

a) Someone is injured and requires more than just first aid for the injury. If the situation is life threatening: First, deliver first aid to prevent/minimize loss and then call Sheriff’s
Dept. emergency 911 or hail the US Coast Guard on VHF channel 16 - they will be your responder.

- MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY!
- This is -- Vessel name, ID number & description
- Nature of distress
- Location (Speak slowly and repeat position)
- Number of people on board

b) A vessel breaks-down while in use in any manner that is not easily remedied (see, VESSEL BREAKDOWN PROTOCOL below).

c) Vessel suffers hull damage, or is involved in a near-accident or other unsafe event whether on land or in the water.

d) A citation or boarding of the vessel by Marine Patrol or other agency.

e) Striking a manatee, dolphin or other wildlife

WEATHER

General Guidelines

1) NOAA Weather 5-Day Marine Forecasts are to be considered the basic weather planning guideline for small boat operations. These forecasts are available online at (http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?map.x=102&map.y=87&site=mfl) or on VHF or dedicated weather radios.

2) All Boat Operators are required to consult NOAA Weather 5-Day Marine Forecasts for the planned area of operation immediately prior to departure, and are required to indicate that they have done so on their float plan when departing Vester.

3) In general, Boat Operators shall not plan small boat operations when NOAA forecasts for the time and area of operation include predictions of small craft warning.

4) Thunderstorms in Florida and over its coastal waters are frequently unpredictable. Even with the best weather reports, along with constant and accurate observations of climatic conditions, boaters can still be caught in open waters in a thunderstorm. With or without a lightning protective system, it is critical to take additional safety precautions to protect the boat’s personnel. Head towards shore and take these precautions during a thunderstorm:

- Stay in the center of the cabin if the boat has an enclosure. If no cabin is available, stay low in the boat. Don’t be a "stand-up human" lightning mast!
- Keep arms and legs in the boat. Do not dangle them in the water.
• Discontinue sampling, fishing, scuba diving, swimming or other water activities when there is lightning or even when weather conditions look threatening. The first lightning strike can be a mile or more in front of an approaching thunderstorm cloud.
• Disconnect and do not use or touch the major electronic equipment, including the radio, throughout the duration of the storm.
• Lower, remove or tie down the radio antenna and other protruding devices, e.g., graphite fishing poles, if they are not part of the lightning protection system.
• To the degree possible, avoid making contact with any portion of the boat connected to the lightning protection system. Never be in contact with two components connected to the system at the same time.

PRE AND POST BOAT OPERATIONAL CHECKLIST (SEE APPENDIX 2)

VESSEL STABILITY and SAFETY

Boat operators are ultimately responsible for the stability of the vessel. Boat operators must familiarize themselves with the maximum occupancy of the vessel as per vessel manufacturer recommendations. While considering stability issues, Boat operators must also consider additional equipment and weight added to the vessel, weather and sea conditions and probable effects to the stability of the vessel.

All boat personnel are advised to wear personal flotation devices (PFD) at all times, which can include inflatable belt packs (i.e., fanny pack) or inflatable vest. PFDs must be worn by all personnel:

1. While the vessel is underway (up on a plane)
2. When conditions become unsafe.
3. At all times while working at night.
4. Transferring from one vessel to another.
5. Non-swimmers must wear a PFD at all times.
6. Federal Regulations require that while in federal waters children under the age of 13 wear a USCG approved PFD at all times when underway or on a deck; Florida requires children under the age of 6 wear a USCG approved PFD at all times.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

SCUBA DIVING

Any persons SCUBA diving from a Vester boat are required to observe the provisions of the University Diving Safety Manual and have approval of the Dive Safety Officer (DSO).
KAYAK AND CANOE USE

- Never boat alone
- A PFD is required for each occupant; however, because local waters are shallow, PFDs are not required to be worn at all times, unless you are a non-swimmer or under the age of 6.
- Always have whistle or other noise maker.
- Always write on the white board in the lab: Name and contact information, name of faculty contact, time out, destination, expected time back.
- Carry first aid kit, water, sunscreen, hat and cellphone in ziplock bag
- No horseplay, particularly getting in and out of canoe
- Do not use canoe or kayak in or if threat of foul weather
- Upon returning, replace canoes and PFD as they were found and remove your float plan from the white board in the lab.

VESSEL BREAKDOWN PROTOCOL

It is the responsibility of each captain to plan an appropriate response for a vessel breakdown and to communicate this to their boaters.

If the situation is life threatening or there is potential you will lose your vessel, First, initiate control measures to prevent/minimize loss of life and the vessel and then hail the US Coast Guard on channel 16 - they will be your responder.

- MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY!
- This is -- Vessel name, ID number & description
- Nature of distress
- Location (Speak slowly and repeat position)
- Number of people on board

If the situation is not life threatening, no vessel loss is imminent, call Boat US. They will arrange for a vessel to respond.

If the situation is not life threatening, no vessel loss is imminent AND you are near the Vester Field station, call Bob Wasno to see if he can respond.

WORKING IN THE FIELD

Work on mudflats and oyster reefs can be hazardous and adequate precautions must be taken to prevent members of a group being injured, e.g., stung by a ray or cut on oyster shells. Training, experience of team-leaders and personnel to ensure continuous
vigilance are required. Ensure that appropriate clothing, including footwear is worn by all personnel.

If injured in the field, it is important to inform your supervisor and monitor the cut for signs of infection such as swelling, redness, or oozing; you may need to be seen by a medical professional and receive a tetanus shot.

Prevention of heat stress is important. Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related disorder. It occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body’s temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. Take the following steps to treat a worker with heat stroke: Call 911 and notify their supervisor; move the sick person to a cool shaded area; cool the person using methods such as: Soaking their clothes with water, spraying, sponging, or showering them with water, fanning their body.

**REVOCATION OF AUTHORIZATION**

Boat operator authorization may be revoked for any action deemed unsafe or unlawful or for not meeting the procedural requirements of Vester Field Station.
Appendix 1

FLOAT PLAN
Vester Field Station

Date: | Vessel: 
-----|------

Captain: | Cell #: 
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PERSONS ABOARD: Please list names along with any medical problems.


TRIP DETAILS: Please be specific, with responses that would be most informative in the possible case of an emergency.

Departing from: 
Destination: 
Project Title: 
Expected Return Time: DOCK
Shore contact person: 
Comments / Additional Info: 

SAFETY / SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT: Please choose yes or no for each of the items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPIRB on board</th>
<th>Satellite Phone</th>
<th>Everglades Survival Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

In the event of an emergency, in which a vessel and crew have reasonably exceeded expected return time and no contact can be made, please contact the appropriate U.S. Coast Guard office. Vessel specifics are provided in the box below.

239-463-5754 Fort Myers Beach Coast Guard
239-261-7375 Naples Coast Guard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boat</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tidewater 1</td>
<td>FL 809INY</td>
<td>White, 25’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidewater 2</td>
<td>FL 6887PK</td>
<td>White, 25’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Skiff</td>
<td></td>
<td>White, 25’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grady White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Hawk</td>
<td>FL0836GW</td>
<td>White 25’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2
Pre and Post Boat Operational Checklist

Pre-Operation Checklist
- File a float plan as appropriate; establish communication schedule and responsible shore contact person.
- Assess all environmental risks -- weather conditions, sea conditions.
- Fill in the boat logbook.
- Check the boat hull and prop for damage and steering.
- Secure all cargo.
- Check the safety equipment (see Appendix 3).
- Check the anchor, chart, compass, push pole / oar, and other required equipment.
- Start engine.
- Check the engine telltale for indication of adequate water pressure.
- Check all gauges for proper operation and indication of proper systems operation, e.g., Navigation Lights, Bilge Pump, Radio, etc.
- Check fuel status and refuel, if necessary
- Provide a safety briefing for passengers.

Post Operation Checklist
- Cancel your float plan as appropriate.
- Ensure adequate fuel remains for subsequent operations or refuel boat. If refueling, be sure to let staff over at Bonita Boat Rental know what activity you have used to boat for so they can log fuel usage.
- Tie up vessel within slip or maneuver onto a lift -- if there is sufficient water and you have sufficient experience
  - Vessel placed on lift with bow approximately 18" to 24" inches from seawall. This keeps the vessel properly balanced and reduced structural stress if it is too heavy on the front or back.
  - When up on lift, keep motor down. Place engine cover over cowling and tie down.
- Shut down engine and turn off electrical equipment.
- If vessel is tied up in water, trim the engine’s lower unit out of the water.
- Be sure all toggle switches on dashboard are off, secure electronics – replace cover on GPS, stow gear, close but do not lock compartments.
  - Check bilge pump operation – re-confirm switch is in off position
  - Boat box has some expensive equipment in it. Be sure to secure.
  - PFD bags should be opened and left to dry before putting away.
- Remove all personal items.
- Check the boat hull and prop for damage.
- Wash/ scrub boats and flush motors when finished. Deck drains should be cleared of debris so rain water can drain.
- Place covers and/or tarp over boats to keep the sun off them.
- Return boat key / VHF radio to their proper place
- Record an entry in the boat logbook for fuel pumped and any problems that might have been experienced on the trip
- Notify Facilities Manager of any boat problems that need to be solved before the boat is used on another trip
APPENDIX 3. SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Required Equipment:

- One VHF radio or cellular telephone (all offshore ocean operations require a functional VHF radio)
- Class I, II, or III PFD for each person on board, plus one ‘throwable’ with at least 50’ of line. Inflatable belt packs (Type V Inflatable) must be worn in order to count toward the total number of PFDs required by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Anchor and anchor line
- USCG approved visual distress signaling device
- Emergency repair kit and tools
- Fire extinguisher
- Fog horn, whistle or other signaling device
- First aid kit and, if diving, an oxygen unit

Suggested equipment:

- A back-up cellular telephone
- Inflatable pfd fanny packs or inflatable pfd vests
- Drinking water
- Sunscreen
- Spare fuel
- Dock lines
- Bailer
- Boat hook