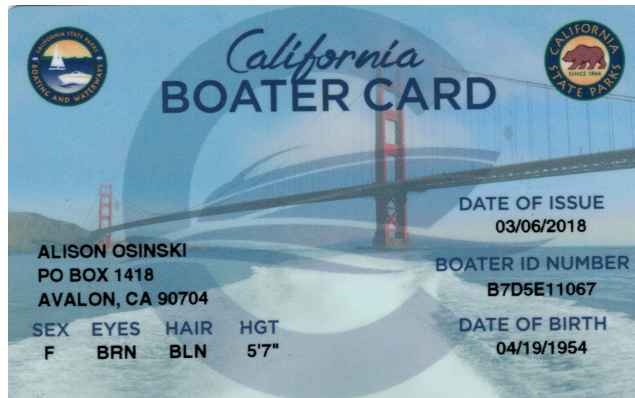




Aquatic Consulting Services

356 Sumner Ave. • P. O. Box 1418 • Avalon • California • 90704
Santa Catalina Island • (619) 602-4435 • alison@alisonosinski.com

California Boater Card



Like many other states, California decided to require recreational boaters to obtain and carry the equivalent of a driver's license when operating a boat. In 2015, California passed Senate Bill 941 requiring that boaters pass a boater safety education courses and obtain a Vessel Operator Card in order to operate an engine propelled vessel on California waterways, or state shared waterways (like Lake Tahoe, Lake Havasu, or the Colorado River).

The program is being phased in by age group, over a period of 7 years. Beginning on January 1, 2018 all boat operators 20 years old and younger must comply with the requirement. By January 1, 2025, all non-exempt boaters must be licensed regardless of age.

- 2018 Persons 20 years of age or younger
- 2019 Persons 25 years of age or younger
- 2020 Persons 35 years of age or younger
- 2021 Persons 40 years of age or younger
- 2022 Persons 45 years of age or younger
- 2023 Persons 50 years of age or younger
- 2024 Persons 60 years of age or younger
- 2025 All persons

Exceptions listed in the California Harbors & Navigation Code, Section 678.11(b) include:

- Persons operating rental craft
- Residents of other states operating a vessel temporarily (< 60 days) in California waters, as long as they comply with licensing requirements of their home state
- Residents of other countries operating a vessel temporarily (< 60 days) in California waters, as long as they comply with licensing requirements of their own country
- A person being directly supervised by an adult (over 18) who holds a valid California Boater Card
- A person operating a vessel in an organized regatta, boat or water ski race
- Licensed commercial fishermen
- Person with a Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training course completion card
- Person with a valid USCG (Master and Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels licenses) or SCTW marine operator license

You must be over age 16 and have a state driver's license in order to obtain a California Boater Card. You have to, in person, by home study, or on-line, take and complete all portions of an approved boating safety class and pass the written examinations. The course must be approved by the State of California Division of Boating & Waterways and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. Many web based courses as well as courses sponsored by Boat US, US Sailing, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, and US Power Squadrons meet these requirements.

Course topics include: parts of a boat, types of boats, float plans, knots, trailering, boat engines, boating emergencies, boat capacity, docking, lights, navigation rules, sound signals, aids to navigation, anchoring, charting, avoiding jet and propeller injuries, dams, locks and bridges; unlawful operation, risk management, avoiding collisions, fire emergencies, cold water and hypothermia, capsizing and swamping, grounding, carbon monoxide poisoning, weather, summoning help, man overboard, rescue, boat operator responsibilities, watersports and boating.

As required by the Harbors & Navigation Codes Section 678.15, the card must be on board the vessel being operated and available for inspection by police, rangers, harbor patrol officers, or other enforcement personnel, if requested. Fines (of less than \$100 for the first infraction up to \$500 for the third infraction) can be levied if the operator does not have the card with them, is operating without a license, or does not have a similar course completion card or license from another state or country with which California has reciprocity. Currently, the California Boater Safety Card is valid for the lifetime of the operator.

