

Boating in Restricted Visibility



Article Source: United States Power Squadrons®

We are fortunate to live in an area that allows boating throughout the year. However, winter and early spring requires caution relating to changing weather condition. Rain and fog may restrict visibility on the water. As a boater, you can avoid collision by making every effort to detect other boats and make your presence known to them. See and be seen; hear and be heard.



Prevention

Next to running out of fuel, bad weather spoils more boating days than anything else. So be on the lookout for any weather conditions that might affect visibility. Before setting out, check the weather forecast for rain in advance of fronts, thunderstorms, or squalls. Keep in mind, a dew point close to the temperature could mean fog.

Monitoring

Periodically check NOAA weather radio (VHF) or public weather broadcasts. Seek shelter if you observe lowering and thickening clouds or squall lines. And monitor humidity and temperature changes. Falling temperatures may lead to fog.

Procedures

Use the following procedures when boating in restricted visibility:

- Turn on your navigation lights.
- Reduce speed; you should be able to stop your boat within one-half the visible distance. If another vessel looms up ahead and is following the same precaution, collision will be unlikely.
- Everyone should be wearing life jackets. A person in the water in a life jacket is more easily seen, especially in poor visibility.
- Post two lookouts, one on the bow and one on the stern. The helmsman must concentrate on the boat's operation.

- Sound the proper sound signals for your vessel. Powerboats sound one prolonged (four to six seconds) blast every two minutes. Sailing vessels (no power) sound one prolonged blast followed by two short blasts every two minutes.
- If necessary, briefly shut down your engine to listen for sounds of nearby boats and aids to navigation. If you hear a signal, reply with your own signal. Then proceed cautiously until you determine the other boat's position. It's difficult to determine the direction of sound in fog.
- Determine your position as accurately as possible, and plot the safest course to your destination. Try to navigate from one lighted navigation aid to another. Avoid a course that brings you close to hazards. Never take undue risks to get home.

If lost, anchor and wait for conditions to improve. You will save fuel and avoid becoming further disoriented.

This article is given the courtesy of America's Boating Club of the Pamlico. Planning is underway for 2022 and includes advanced courses as well as 4 hour seminars. To learn more about our boating courses, email our Education Officer at psps@gmail.com. We invite you to reference our website at <https://pamlicosailandpowersquadron.org> to learn more and to keep up on the education opportunities offered.