

This article in our series on legally required equipment will simplify some of the confusion surrounding a vessel's lighting. We begin by defining the different lights found on recreational boats.

**Running Lights** – These are found on both sides of the vessel. When standing behind the boat looking forward, the right is starboard and the left is port (remember that port and left both have 4 letters). The starboard side will have a green light and the port side will have a red light. These lights shine from dead ahead to an arch of 112.5 degrees on each side of the boat.

**Stern Light** – This is a white light that shines an arch of 135 degrees from the rear of the boat.

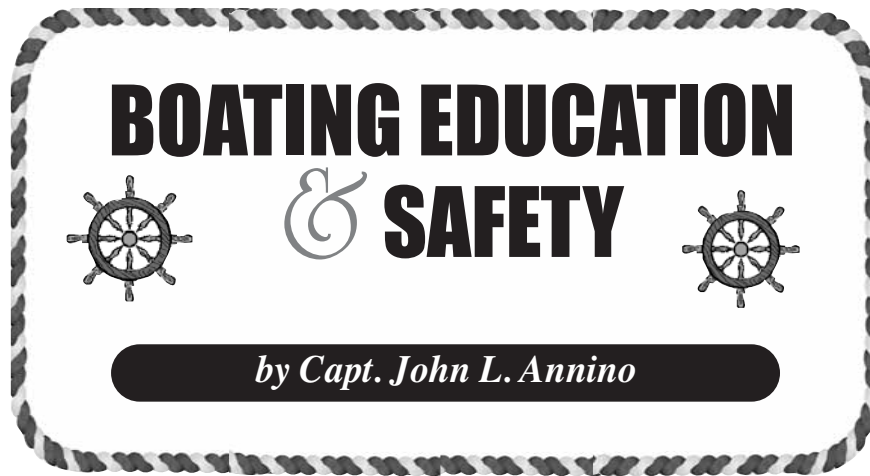
**Masthead Light** – This is a white light that shines forward an arch of 225 degrees. This light must be a minimum of 1 meter (3 feet) above the red and green running lights. It is also visible along with the running lights (112.5 + 112.5 = 225).

**Anchor Light** – This is an all-round (360 degree) white light that is used when anchored anywhere other than a designated anchorage area or a mooring. When anchored, if you are required to display an anchor light, you must also post a lookout.

These are the definitions of different lights. Now let's apply them to different boats.

**Power Boats:**

Power driven vessels that are underway (not anchored, rafted, moored or made fast to shore) must display running lights, a stern light and a masthead light between sunset and sunrise and during any period of reduced visibility (fog, smoke, rain, sleet, hail, snow, etc).



## Safety Equipment Part V

If the vessel is less than 12 meters (39'4"), a combination (360 degree) white light may be used in place of the stern and masthead lights, but it still must be at least 1 meter above the running lights. This is the plug-in post light that is found on most run-about-style boats.

If the vessel is less than 20 meters (65'7"), a combination red/green light on the bow can be used rather than two individual colored lights.

**Sailing Vessels:**

First we must understand that a boat is a sailing vessel when the wind, and only the wind propels it. When a sailboat turns on a motor (even an electric trolling motor), it becomes a power vessel.

The lighting requirements for a sailing vessel are the same as for a power driven vessel with 2 exceptions:

There is no forward burning masthead light on a sailboat. Only running lights and a stern light are displayed.

If the vessel is less than 7 meters (23'), only a white lantern or electric torch (flashlight) is needed to display in time to prevent a collision. No other lights are required.

Two other options available to the sail-

boat are the use of a tri-color light or identification light. The tri-color light is a single light on the mast of a sailboat that displays 3 colors - red, green, and white. It serves as the red and green running lights as well as the white stern light. This is allowed on any sailboat less than 20 meters in length (65'7"). The identification lights consist of a 360 degree all-round red light positioned over a 360 degree all-round green light. These are used in conjunction with the regular running lights and stern lights. They may be used on any sailing vessel less than 20 meters in length (65'7"). This makes it a little easier to identify

the boat as a sailboat, as opposed to a powerboat with a burned out masthead light. When the sailboat turns on any form of auxiliary power, it then must be lighted as a powerboat. This means no identification lights may be shown and a masthead light must be illuminated.


**Non-Powered Vessels**

Rowboats, canoes, kayaks, paddleboats and other non-powered boats are only required to have an electric torch (flashlight) or lantern shining a white light. This light must be ready to display in time to prevent a collision.

Commercial and larger vessels are required to have many more lights to identify themselves and the nature of their work. You can stay safe by remembering that the more lights you see, the farther away you should probably stay. If this material fascinates you, pick up a copy of the US Coast Guard Navigation Rules or Chapman's Piloting. They make great reading material on a cold winter night.

In the next edition we will discuss visual distress signals such as flare guns, dye markers, flags, etc. Until then.....Safe Boating.

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