

Society, in general, has set down some rules for us to live by. Some of these rules are just simple common sense while others are laws that must be adhered to. In boating, we have history repeating itself. Good common sense and basic courtesy will always be to your advantage. For everything else we have the Rules of the Road. The rules cover a variety of different topics that will be discussed in several upcoming articles.

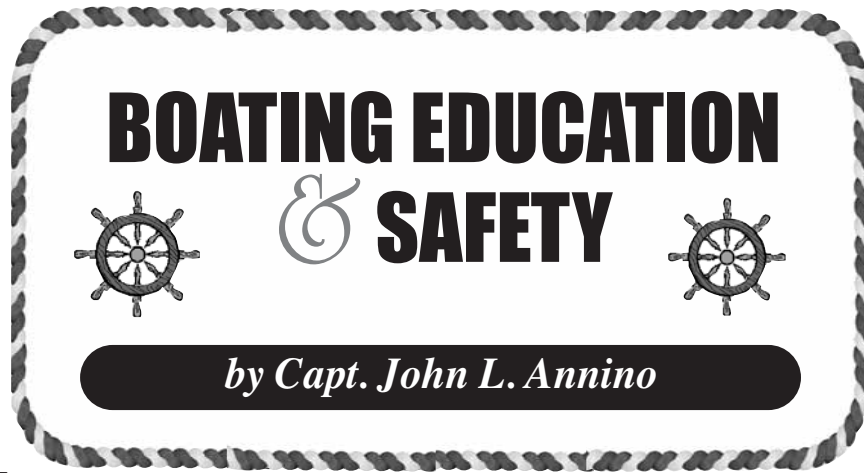
Although good common sense and courtesy are not enough to keep you safe on the water, you must be an informed boater with the knowledge to act properly in given situations. It is our Rules of the Road that tell us what these proper actions are. First we must lay some groundwork:

- 1) The Rules of the Road were developed for one reason only – to prevent collisions.
- 2) There are two different sets of rules – the International Rules and the Inland Rules.
- 3) Everything in the state of Connecticut falls under Inland Rules.

Our rules spell out specifics for us. They tell us who has the right of way and who must give way. They also tell us appropriate maneuvering signals, lighting configurations, fog signals, towing configurations and address a variety of other topics.

Why do we have rules? Try to imagine a busy port or harbor. There may be a Japanese freighter, a Russian trawler, a Liberian tanker, an Italian cruise ship and a host of recreational boats with pilots all talking different languages. Utilizing established rules, they can communicate with each other without ever speaking a word. This is accomplished with whistle and maneuvering signals.

At a 1972 United Nations conference when the Colregs (collision regulations a.k.a. the International Rules of the Road) were being decided, the United States spoke up and requested a special set of rules. The U.S. felt



Introduction to Navigation Rules Part VII

that it had some special inland bodies of water (Chesapeake Bay, San Francisco Bay, Mississippi River, and Great Lakes, to name a few) that merited special rules. These rules are called the Inland Rules. On a nautical chart the lines that separate inland rules from international rules are magenta-colored (purple) and are known as the Colregs Lines of Demarcation. In Connecticut these lines run from Plum Gut to the west end of Fishers Island and then proceed from the east end of Fishers Island to Watch Hill, Rhode Island. All boaters inside these lines (Fishers Island Sound, Long Island Sound, and our chartered rivers) must follow the inland rules, while areas south of these lines call for international rules.

The Pecking Order

The pecking order tells us who has the right of way and who must give way. With few exceptions (discussed later), the higher up in the order, the more right of way you have.

1. **NUC** – a vessel “Not under Command.” This is the top guy. The vessel must be unable to maneuver, usually due to some exceptional circumstance. Examples might include a vessel that has run out of gas or has lost its rudder or steering ability.

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2. **RAM** – a vessel “Restricted in its Ability to Maneuver.” This is a workboat. It is unable to maneuver due to the nature of its work. Examples are dredges, mine sweepers, vessels servicing buoys or involved in diving operations, and in some situations tow boats.

3. **CBD** - a vessel “Constrained by its Draft.” This classification only exists in international rules. This category is usually reserved for the supertankers. On inland waters, eventually we would all be constrained by our draft.

4. **Fishing** -not to be confused with two guys out in a small boat with fishing poles. This designation is for commercial fishing boats (long liners) and trawlers (not trolling). The rules give these vessels the right of way only when they are engaged in the collection of seafood, not on the way to or from the fishing grounds.

5. **Sail** - a vessel propelled by the wind only. When a sailboat turns on any form of engine, it then becomes a power-driven vessel (even if the sails are up). Also in this category are non-powered vessels, i.e. rowboats, kayaks, canoes, paddleboats, etc.


6. **Power** - a vessel that is propelled by mechanical propulsion. Outboards, inboards, inboard-outboards, and jet drives are among the boats in this category.

7. **Seaplane** - the bottom of the food chain. A boater would have great difficulty navigating out of the way of a plane taking off or landing at high speeds on the water.

In our next article, we will look at ways to identify these vessels.

Until then.....Safe Boating

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