

Safety Recommendations & Codes of Practice



Reviewed 2012 Amended 2012

Introduction

Safety is very important when participating in any sport. Safety not only means the safety of those participating in the sport, but also the safety of other water users, general public, spectators, etc.

British Water Ski & Wakeboard has drawn up this Code of Safety Recommendations for the guidance of those who participate in the sport of water skiing, and for the authorities who manage and control water ski areas. British Water Ski & Wakeboard is confident that if these recommendations are accepted and scrupulously followed, water skiing may be enjoyed by all without danger to participants or to other water users.

Definitions

"**Skier**" means any person being towed as part of the water skiing activities listed below.

*Note - Wakeboarders like to be known as **riders** but for the purpose of these Recommendations ALL participants are referred to as "Skiers" to avoid confusion with riders of Inflatable Equipment.*

"**Boat**" means any vehicle used to tow a skier.

"**Inflatable equipment**" means any other towed water sport as shown below.

The Towing Vehicle

Water skiing can take many forms and not all water skiers are towed by boats.

Water skiers would normally be towed by a boat; personal watercraft (PWC) or by a cable tow. British Water Ski & Wakeboard does not differentiate between boats and PWC's as towing "vehicles". The same rules apply for the driver and observer.

Similarly, no matter what the towing "vehicle" the skier should follow these Safety Recommendations at all times.

Water Skiing Activities

The following activities are all considered to be part of the sport of water skiing:-

The term "water skiing" includes any activity associated with the sport and includes, but is not limited to:

- Water skiing on 2 skis or 1 ski
- Slalom skiing
- Trick skiing
- Jumping
- Wakeboarding
- Wakeskating
- Kneeboarding
- Barefooting
- Water ski racing

British Water Ski & Wakeboard has also taken responsibility for producing safety recommendations for activities that are not "technically" water skiing, the use of inflatables such as;

- Ringos
- Tubes
- Biscuits
- Bananas

All of which are covered by the Recommendations for Towing Inflatable Equipment which BWSW has published as a separate document. The Code of Practice for the Use of Towed Inflatable Equipment is available to download on the BWSW website.

We do not recommend Wake Surfing in these Safety Recommendations or in the Code of Practice.

Cable Tow Water Skiing

British Water Ski & Wakeboard has published a separate Code of Practice for Cable Tow Water Skiing. Also available is the Operator's Manual for Cable Tow Water Skiing. Copies are available on the British Water Ski & Wakeboard website – www.bsw.org.uk

Driver Qualifications - Ski Boat Driver Awards

1. British Water Ski & Wakeboard strongly recommends that all water ski boat drivers acquire the British Water Ski & Wakeboard Ski Boat Driver Level 2 (SBD2). This voluntary certificate of competence can be gained via courses and tests at Centres throughout the UK. Details of your nearest Centre can be obtained from the British Water Ski & Wakeboard website.
2. British Water Ski & Wakeboard recommends that all water ski boat drivers, aboard and in charge* of a water ski boat should be in possession of the SBD2 as a minimum. *Novice drivers and drivers in training for the SBD2 should be permitted to drive a water ski boat if an experienced driver, holding a SBD2, is aboard and supervising the activity.
3. In the interests of safety, improved awareness, and the reduction of the conflict with other activities, British Water Ski & Wakeboard recommends, wherever possible, that an SBD2 is held by all water ski boat drivers. Water Ski Clubs and Associations, Local and Harbour Authorities are asked to make this a **requirement** for all ski boat drivers, operating in areas of water under their authority or supervision.
4. Ski boat drivers must always carry a 2-way radio or telephone
5. Ski boat drivers must always wear a kill cord when operating a boat

The Ski Boat Driver Candidate manual contains a whole host of valuable information on safe boat driving for all forms of water skiing. Copies of the SBD2 manual are available for download from the British Water Ski & Wakeboard website.

British Water Ski & Wakeboard Safety Recommendations

1. All water ski boats, PWCs and power boats towing water skiers on public waters and enclosed sites where more than one water ski boat operates must be occupied by two competent persons at all times whilst towing. This enables the driver to concentrate on navigation and the water ahead, whilst the second person is responsible for watching the skier and relaying his signals to the driver.
2. At water ski schools and water ski clubs on enclosed waters where only one water ski boat operates at any time and help can be summoned at any time, it is reasonable and safe for a qualified driver/coach to drive for water skiing without a second person aboard. However, an observer is always required when towing an inflatable, when towing two or more skiers and when towing a skier for jump. Water ski schools and clubs are strongly advised to carry out a risk assessment to determine the need for a second person in the boat where there is any possibility of another boat or activity using the water area at the same time. Boats should carry emergency throw lines especially if the boat is being operated solo.
3. All boats towing skiers must be operated in a careful and prudent manner, and at a reasonable distance from persons and property so as not to endanger the life or limb or the property of any person.
4. No boat should tow a skier from the period of one hour after sunset to one hour prior to sunrise, provided that the rule should not apply to boats used in duly authorised training and coaching sessions, ski tournaments, competitions, expositions or trials.
5. No person should manipulate any vessel or tow rope by which the course of water skis or water skiers may be influenced in such a way as to cause a collision or accident.
6. No person must operate a boat or water ski in a reckless or negligent manner.
7. No person operating a boat towing a skier should allow any person to ride or sit on the gunwales or decking of the vessel while underway.

8. When operating on the sea or other large expanse of water, the skier must wear a buoyancy aid, and the towing boat must carry a life buoy or other approved life preserver sufficient for the number of people in the craft. It is also recommended that all boats carry fire extinguishers and that the engine cover be lifted or blower operated (if fitted) for a short period after refuelling.
9. When skiing takes place from a public beach or other area where swimmers and other water users are present, one experienced person should be in charge of skiing operations and assume responsibility to ensure that all necessary safety precautions are rigidly observed. Take off and landing points must be clearly marked with buoys, ropes or guard boats to indicate these approach areas to other water users. Careful watch should be kept to ensure that swimmers in particular do not enter the danger area. Apart from take off and landing operations, all normal skiing must be carried out away from the shore at a safe distance beyond areas used by swimmers, pedalos and similar craft. All boats must observe any speed controls in this zoned area.
10. No person should operate a boat towing a skier within a water area which has been clearly marked by buoys or some other distinguishing device, as a bathing or otherwise restricted area provided that this rule should not apply in case of emergency.
11. Where water skiing takes place on areas of water where rowing or canoeing also take place, wash from ski boats can seriously disturb their activity. In the worst cases wash can swamp or even sink canoes and rowing boats. Water ski boat drivers should stop their boat and allow the rowers and canoeists to pass by with no wash. All water skiers are asked to "Give one minute of their time to make friends and allow other water users to enjoy their activity".
12. Wherever practicable water ski boats, operating within a speed limit area or in any area close to other craft, are recommended to proceed at a NO WAKE speed.
13. REMEMBER water ski zones and the removal of speed limits is created to enable ALL water skiers to enjoy the sport. Water skiers should use all water ski zones with respect for both the environment and other users of the area. Water skiers should conduct themselves, at all times, in such a way that that all water skiers will be welcomed back for years to come.
14. Local bye-laws must be observed by all boat drivers, observers and water skiers

Safety Hand Signals (a copy of the Safety Hand Signals available on BWSW website)



Rules for Safe Water Skiing

WATER SKIERS

ALWAYS be confident in the water and always wear a buoyancy aid / ski vest. If you cannot swim make sure the boat driver and / or your instructor know this. A buoyancy aid need not be worn by competent trick skiers who can swim

ALWAYS use approved signals between skier and observer and driver

ALWAYS let the observer / driver know you are OK immediately after a fall

ALWAYS watch the water ahead of you at all times

ALWAYS check your equipment is safe, wing nuts, loose binding, splinters and sharp metal

ALWAYS ski clear of solid obstacles - jetties, boats, mooring buoys, rocks, banks etc.

ALWAYS let go of the handle on falling

ALWAYS use an approved buoyancy aid and helmet when jumping

ALWAYS wear neoprene shorts if not wearing a suitable wetsuit when jumping - learners advised to wear two pairs.

ALWAYS use the phrase 'hit it' when you are ready to ski, shout 'hit it' to the driver when the rope is taut and your ski tips are up

TAKE CARE to remove jewellery that the rope might catch on

TRY TO avoid falling forwards - sit down, or if falling sideways, curl yourself into a ball

TRY TO recover skis quickly

NEVER wrap rope around any part of your body (fingers, hand or foot)

NEVER place any part of the body through the handle (neck, arm or leg)

NEVER ski in shallow water

NEVER ski at night

DO NOT ski directly ahead of, or to the side of another boat

DO NOT attempt fast landing directly towards the shore - sit down if coming in too fast

DO NOT ski in unknown waters

DO NOT jump from a boat whilst it is moving

LADIES should always wear neoprene shorts as protection if not wearing a suitable wetsuit

SKI BOAT DRIVER

ALWAYS have a competent observer in the boat when towing a skier (with the exception of recommendation rule 2 above)

ALWAYS wait for the skier's signal and his ski tips above the water before starting

ALWAYS steer clear of other boats and floating obstacles

ALWAYS when skiing in restricted waters stop and allow canoeists and rowers (who are easily swamped) to pass. You can make friends doing this!

ALWAYS be aware you have a long rope behind you that should be recovered as soon as possible and before you pick up your fallen skier - if the skier is not injured and not in danger

ALWAYS make sure observer understands water ski signals

ALWAYS give the skier a smooth and steady pull on take off

ALWAYS shut off your motor before taking aboard a skier

ALWAYS return immediately to pick up the skier

ALWAYS carry an extra life jacket in the boat

DO NOT turn sharply and put the skier in the water or on the whip - gradual wide turns are the rule

DO NOT take the skier aboard without shutting off the engine first

DO NOT drive the boat through swimming or restricted areas

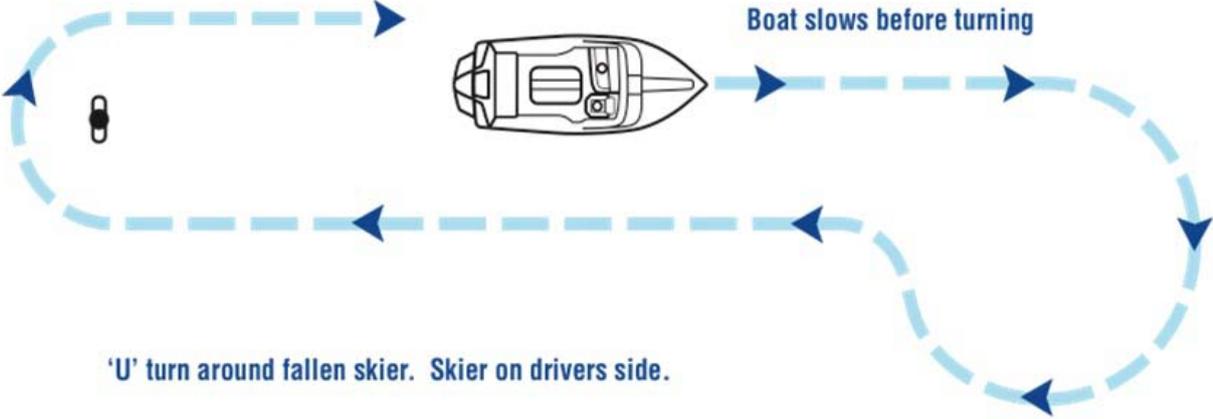
DO NOT operate the boat sitting on the side, always sit in the seat

NEVER put the boat into reverse when a skier is in the water behind the boat

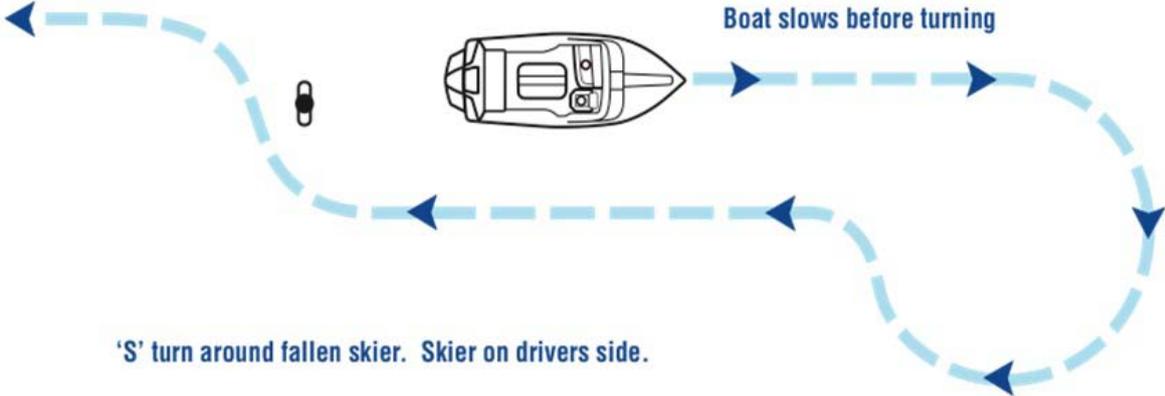
NEVER drag an injured skier over the gunwales or decking until you are satisfied that they are fit to do so and no further injury could occur

Diagrams for Recovering a Fallen Skier

'U' Turn



'S' Turn



BWSW's Abridged International Maritime Regulations for Use in Crowded Waters

Speed limits and their boundaries must be adhered to at ALL TIMES. Within speed limit zones, where ever possible, operate your water ski boat at a NO WAKE speed. Typically an 18 – 20ft water ski boat creates the maximum wash at about 10 - 12mph.

It should be noted that the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea apply to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected therewith navigable by sea going vessels.

Based upon: The Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1989 (Statutory Instrument 1989 No.1798) as amended by S.I. 1991 No.638. These Regulations apply the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea 1972 (as amended) to UK shipping.

1. Two speed boats meeting head on should alter course to "starboard"
2. Two speed boats crossing - the vessel which has the other on her starboard side gives way
3. Speed and sailing vessels – the speed boat must give way
4. Vessels to keep course and speed – the vessel with the right of way should keep her course and speed
5. Vessels overtaking must keep well clear of an overtaken vessel
6. Vessels in narrow channels – every speed boat must, when it is safe and practicable, keep to the side of the fairway (e.g. entrance to harbour) that lies on her starboard side
7. Speed boats when launched from slipways must proceed directly to sea at low speed - no warming up or exercising in harbours will be permitted
8. Towing vehicles and carriages must be removed from slipways and approaches immediately after launching
9. Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel must, so far possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear
10. Any action taken to avoid collision should, if the circumstances permit, be positive, made in ample time, and with the observance of good seamanship. If necessary to avoid collision or allow more time to assess the situation, a vessel should slacken her speed or take all way off by stopping or reversing her means of propulsion. (re: rules 9,10 and 11, these have been included at the express wish of the Ministry of Transport in the full knowledge that they will seldom apply in waters used by water ski clubs. However, we can see that there could be special circumstances which might arise and made the observance of these rules essential)
11. Power driven vessels must In general keep out of the way of vessels engaged in fishing. However a vessel engaged in fishing must not impede the passage of any vessel navigating within a narrow channel or fairway. A vessel of less than 20 metres length must not impede the passage of a vessel which can navigate safely only within a narrow channel or fairway
12. Special circumstances in construing and complying with these rules due regard should be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels Involved, which may make a departure from these rules necessary to avoid immediate danger
13. Nothing in these rules should interfere with the operation of special rules made by an appropriate authority for estuaries, harbours, rivers, lakes or inland waterways connected with the high seas and navigable by sea going vessels

SOUND SIGNALS

1 Short Blast	Altering Course to Starboard (Right)
2 Short Blasts	Altering Course to Port (Left)
3 Short Blasts	Going Astern