

Modernizing Pleasure Craft Operator Competency Program (PCOCP) Regulations

The PCOCP is responsible for developing and maintaining the regulations, standards, policies, and guidelines related to operator competency requirements for recreational boaters operating motorized pleasure craft. It also oversees course providers that offer Transport Canada (TC) accredited boating safety courses and tests for the public by delivering course accreditation services to course providers and giving course providers access to official standardized testing materials. Accordingly, this provides the training and testing needed to obtain a Pleasure Craft Operating Card (PCOC).

And just to give you an idea of the scope of the program and number of new PCOC cards issued:

2020: 237,810 issued to September 2020. A huge COVID inspired surge in boating interest.

2019: 142,000 issued.

2014 to 2019 Average: 153,000 annually.

1999 to 2019: 4,442,000 cards issued.

What exists now:

Everyone operating a power-driven vessel needs a PCOC. To get the PCOC card take a boating safety course and pass the test. Private test providers charge between \$50 and \$70 for you to take the course and test and issue the card. Currently there are 21 accredited providers.

There are no fees of any type for PCOC services for course providers. The program costs TC \$1.69 million per annum.

Proposed Changes:

- Change the name of the Competency of Operator Pleasure Craft Regulations (COPCR) to Pleasure Craft Operator Regulations (PCOR).
- Adding "Age Restrictions" and provisions within sections 18, 19, 20 and 21 from the Vessel Operation restriction regulations (VORR) to the COPCR/PCOR: These are not new, they are just being moved to better align the regulations within the regulatory programs, and are as follows:
 - No person who is under 12 years of age shall operate, and no person shall allow a person who is under 12 years of age to operate, a pleasure craft, other than a personal watercraft, propelled by a motor with an engine power greater than 10hp, unless the person is accompanied and directly supervised in the pleasure craft by a person who is 16 years of age or older, and holds proof of competency.
 - No person who is under 16 years of age shall operate, and no person shall allow a person who is under 16 years of age to operate, a pleasure craft, other than a personal watercraft, propelled by a motor with an engine power greater than 40hp, unless the person is accompanied and directly supervised in the pleasure craft by a person who is 16 years of age or older, and holds proof of competency.
 - No person who is under 16 years of age shall operate, and no person shall allow a person who is under 16 years of age to operate, a personal watercraft.

- Strengthen course accreditation requirements for providers.
- Making course accreditation for providers valid for a 5-year term.
- Give Transport Canada the power to suspend or cancel course accreditation due to non-compliance.
- Clarify and strengthen reporting requirements.
- Give Transport Canada the power to cancel a PCOC.
- TC originally had proposed that they would no longer recognize the Rental Boat Safety Checklist as a form of competency and that a PCOC would be required. There was stiff opposition to this change from the boating industry and boat rental companies in particular. The compromise now being proposed by TC is that the rental checklist will continue to be proof of competency and that persons under 21 renting a personal watercraft (PWC) hold a PCOC unless accompanied by a person over 25 years of age.
- TC will charge course providers an accreditation application fee of \$5,000 paid every 5 years. They will also charge a test materials access fee of \$8.50 for each PCOC issued.

Why:

Strengthen the accreditation process and recover most of the costs associated with providing accreditation and boating safety course and test services materials.

When:

Like any regulation change, all these improvements must go through the Canada Gazette I Publication (feedback stage) estimated in Winter 2022 and Canada Gazette II (notification of impending changes). The changes are therefore expected to be in place by the fall of 2022.

Note:

Failure to have your PCOC with you will result in a \$250 fine.