

Safe Boating original appeared in Discover Boating

Boating safety is always—always—a critical consideration whenever you push off the dock, but with all the recent issues regarding **COVID-19**, many people are wondering if boating is considered a safe social distancing practice.

As boaters everywhere do their best to navigate these uncharted waters, we'll do our best to serve as a reliable resource in answering many of your questions about boating during the coronavirus—from navigating local boating restrictions and boat ramp closures in your area, to following best practices for social distancing on the water.



Is Boating a Safe Social Distancing Activity?

The short answer is yes, but the long answer is a bit more involved.

First and foremost, all the usual rules apply:

- You need to **limit the people aboard** to those family members you share your home with, period—no guests.
- You also **can't raft up with other boats or pull up onto a beach close to another boat**, as that could put you in close proximity with the occupants.
- You also have to be careful to **maintain a safe distance from others** when doing things like loading up at the marina or fueling the boat.
- After doing anything that requires touching an item someone else may have touched, like a marina gate lock or a fuel pump, **disinfect by washing your hands or using a hand sanitizer** as soon as possible.

Finally, to maintain the highest level of safety pack your gear and supplies ahead of time and don't plan to stop at a store on the way to the marina or launch ramp, as you usually might.

Social Distancing When Boating



Only boat with those in
your immediate household.



No beaching
your boat
right next to
someone else.



Maintain your distance
at the fuel dock –
and remember to
wash your hands.



No rafting up
– keep your
distance on
the water.

No guests on your boat!

This includes family members
not in your immediate
household or your closest
boating buddies.

**Go right from your house
to the boat and back –**
no unnecessary contact
with anyone.

**Enjoy your boat, the water and the fresh air;
but enjoy it while boating responsibly.**

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Social distancing is the best way to stay safe.

SEA TOW

Infographic Courtesy of [Sea Tow](#).

Where Can I Go Boating, and What Boat Ramps are Open in My Area?

Every state and in many cases different municipalities or counties have different regulations in place as to where you can launch a boat during this time of crisis. And these rules are changing by the day.

At Discover Boating, we strongly recommend checking on the legalities before making any trips. One resource you may want to use is our [Where to Boat and Fish Tool](#), which has an interactive map to different boat launches, marinas, tackle shops, and access points. While this map is NOT currently updated with regulations and restrictions regarding COVID-19, it does include links to the websites for the different resources displayed there. So you can use it to find a local park, ramp, or marina, then click through to the website to determine if it's accessible or not during the current emergency.

Another handy resource can be found at the [US Fish & Wildlife Service: State By State Closures](#), which lists the US Fish & Wildlife locations including many with access points, and their current status is updated daily.

[Find Places to Boat & Fish Near You](#)

Will I Receive Assistance If I have Mechanical Issues While Boating During the COVID-19 Crisis?

This is a question that may weigh heavily on a lot of people's minds, since it's another way your safety may be impacted out on the water. As we publish this report, on-the-water towing assistance from major fleets like [TowBoatUS](#) and [Sea Tow](#) remain active and able to respond (see the latest [BoatUS COVID-19 statement](#) and the [Sea Tow statement](#) on this issue).

In addition, search and rescue (SAR) and emergency personal from the US Coast Guard and most state agencies also remain active. However, due to the constantly changing nature of this emergency we highly recommend double-checking on all of the above, before taking out your boat.

How Do I Disinfect My Boat During the COVID-19 Crisis?



Like many solid surfaces, the parts of your boat could temporarily house the COVID-19 virus. As long as you keep boating between you and your family, your boat in and of itself shouldn't be any problem. But, what if you want to be extra cautious and disinfect your boat?

In that case, go by the [CDC recommendations](#). That means disinfecting surfaces with [EPA-approved disinfectants](#), however, you should remember that some of the approved disinfectants (like bleach or acids) can harm some of the surfaces of a boat. The canvass and vinyls are particularly subject to damage or discoloration, if disinfecting chemicals are left on their surfaces.

So, after disinfecting be sure to give your boat a thorough wash-down. The most important thing overall is simply to maintain a clean boat; see our [How to Clean a Boat Guide](#) to keep things ship-shape.

The Bottom Line on Boating During Coronavirus

We boaters love getting out on the water, and part of that love comes from bonding with family, and spending quality time with a loved one, or just enjoying the solitude.

Thankfully, in areas where short-distance travel hasn't been entirely eliminated we can still do all of these things safely on our boats. So check on the regulations affecting your locality. Be careful to maintain social distancing practices. And then cast off those lines and feel the wind in your hair—because boating is still the hands-down best way to enjoy living on planet Earth.

[Read Next: 3 Ways Boating Soothes the Soul & Helps You Find Solitude](#)

You Might Also Like:

- [**Boating Safety Guide**](#)
- [**10 Best Sailing & Boating Books for Your Reading List**](#)
- [**Boat Storage Ideas: 10 Tips for Staying Organized Onboard**](#)
- [**10 Best Boat Movies of All Time**](#)
- [**Find the Right Boat for Your Lifestyle**](#)