A stand-up paddleboard (SUP) is subject to federal and state boating laws. You are responsible for knowing the legal requirements and navigation rules — such as right-of-way and necessary equipment.

Federal and Washington state laws require you to carry the following:

- **Life jackets** — One for every person on board. U.S. Coast Guard-approved. The right size and type and in good condition.
  - Belt pouch-type inflatables must be worn to meet legal requirements.
  - Inflatable life jackets, including belt pouch-types, are not approved for children 15 years old and younger.
  - Children 12 years old and younger must always wear their life jacket while on board.

- **A sounding device** — Horn, whistle or bell.

- **White all-around navigation light** — For use during low visibility such as heavy rain, fog or dusk and dawn.

According to safety experts, these laws are minimal and do not maximize the chance of survival in an accident, such as falling overboard into cold water.
The State Parks Boating Program recommends the following to help maximize your safety:

**Get educated.** Learn emergency procedures and the “Navigation Rules of the Road.” If you don’t know these rules, you should NOT be out on the water.

**File a float plan.** Before going out, even for a brief time, always tell someone the names of everyone going, the route, what time you’re going and returning, and what to do if you don’t return when expected.

**Wear a leash.** A variety of leashes are available — coiled, hybrid, straight, quick release, etc. The right one depends on the waterway, so research before you go.

**Carry a communication device on your body.** A cell phone (in a waterproof bag), VHF marine radio (while on coastal waters) and personal locator beacon are recommended.

**Avoid alcohol and drugs.** Operating a SUP while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or marijuana, is not only unsafe, it’s illegal.

**Check and understand the weather.** Wind and waves can lead to falling overboard. Check warnings, weather conditions, wind and wave forecasts, tides and currents or river flows.

**Mark it!** The U.S. Coast Guard urges you to label your SUP with your name and phone number. This information can help guide a search, prevent a false alarm or aid in the return of your SUP.

Learn more by visiting PaddleSafeWa.org