## BOATING AT THE CANAL

*The sheltered waters of the Cape Cod Canal offer some of the most scenic and enjoyable recreational boating opportunities on Cape Cod. Yet swift currents and a high volume of large commercial traffic can make transiting the Canal a challenge for boat operators of any level of experience.*

*Within this recreational boating guide are a few rules and safety tips that, when followed, will help ensure your canal transit will be a safe and pleasurable one.*

## VESSELS ALLOWED PASSAGE

- Vessels must be adequately powered, properly equipped and seaworthy in order to transit the Canal.

- All radio equipped vessels shall monitor channel 13 VHF while transiting the Canal.

- Vessels 65 feet or more in length are required to contact the Marine Traffic Controller on channel 13 VHF before entering the Canal.

- Sailing vessels are required to have and use auxiliary power during passage throughout the Canal. Use of sails while motoring is permitted. But, large course changes and/or tacking are strictly prohibited in the landcut and approach channels.

- Personal watercraft, kayaks, canoes, wind surfers or other non-motoized craft are not permitted to operate within, or pass through the Federally maintained limits of the Canal.

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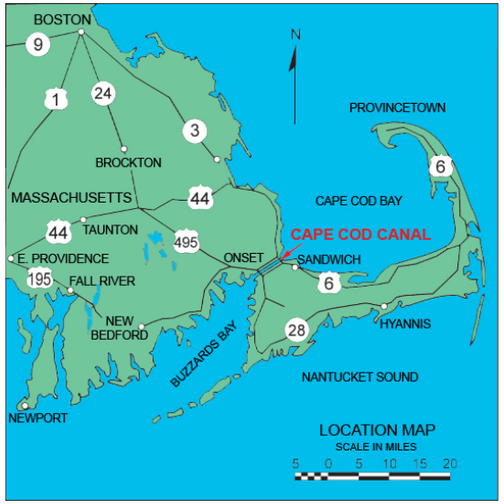



**For More Information**

**Write:**

Canal Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Cape Cod Canal Field Office
PO Box 1555
Buzzards Bay, MA 02532

**Phone:**

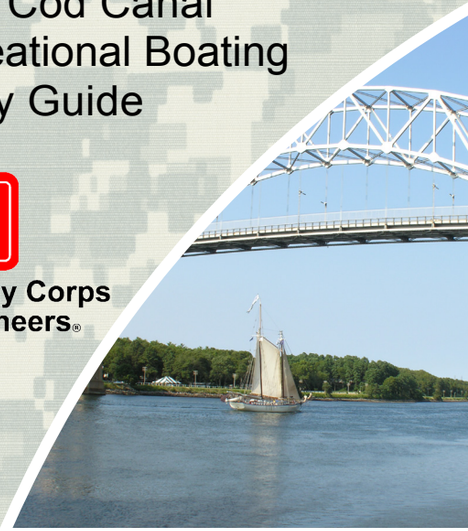
Cape Cod Canal Field Office: 508-759-4431

**Website:**
www.capecodcanal.us

US Army Corps of Engineers®

# Cape Cod Canal Recreational Boating Safety Guide

US Army Corps of Engineers®



# RULES FOR NAVIGATION

### Speed/Excessive Wake

A 10 MPH speed limit and "no excessive wake" is in effect for Cleveland Ledge and Hog Island channels and the land cut of the Cape Cod Canal. The wake restrictions and speed limit are strictly enforced to ensure the safety of vessels using the Canal and approach channel, and to protect visitors along the banks of the Canal.

### Obstructing Navigation

Stopping, anchoring, unnecessarily idling at a low speed or otherwise obstructing navigation within the limits of the Canal is prohibited. Low powered vessels not making adequate headway are an obstruction to navigation. Vessels must stay to the right hand side of the channel while transiting.

### Railroad Bridge

Vessels shall not travel under the Railroad Bridge while it is in the process of being lowered, or while it is fixed in the lowered position. In accordance with posted restrictions, all vessels must maintain a safe distance from the bridge while it is fixed in the lowered position .

### Fishing

Fishing, trolling, or lobstering by boat within the land cut, or the confines of the approach channels of the Canal, as defined by U.S. Coast Guard buoys and beacons, is obstructing navigation and is strictly prohibited.

### Swimming/Diving

Swimming, snorkeling or scuba diving within the limits of the Cape Cod Canal is prohibited.

### Emergencies

Boat operators are required to notify the Marine Traffic Controller immediately, via channel 13 VHF, if an emergency situation has developed, or appears to be developing. When the Marine Traffic Controller, or patrol boat operator determines that an emergency situation exists, they are authorized to require boat operators to accept assistance from government vessels.

### Right of Way Hierarchy

While transiting the Canal, the following right of way hierarchy shall be observed, in addition to the U.S. Coast Guard Inland Navigation Rules:

1. Vessels under 65 feet in length shall not interfere with vessels 65 feet and over in length.

2. Recreational vessels shall not interfere with commercial vessels.

3. Vessels traveling against the current shall not interfere with vessels traveling with the current.

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**For complete Canal Regulations see:**

Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations part of 207.20.

Fines range between $25 - $5,000 for violating these regulations.

# SAFETY TIPS

The two greatest dangers recreational boaters face in the Canal are the swift currents and encounters with large commercial traffic within a narrow channel.

### Swift Currents

The current within the Canal can reach a velocity of 6 knots. Vessels of low power should not attempt to transit the Canal against the current. Transiting against the current in a low powered vessel can cause unnecessary delay and/or engine failure through overheating or excessive fuel consumption. Check tide charts and plan accordingly before attempting a transit.

Tide charts are available at the Canal Field Office on Academy Drive in Buzzards Bay, or seasonally at the Cape Cod Canal Visitor Center on Ed Moffitt Drive in Sandwich. They are also available online at www.capecodcanal.us and http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/

Avoid interfering with vessels traveling with the current. They have the right of way.

### Large Marine Traffic

Stay clear of large marine traffic such as tankers, cruise ships, and tug and barge combinations. The vessels' size and momentum, the necessity to travel at a minimum speed to maintain steerage, and the Canal's channel limits and swift currents pose multiple constraints and potential hazards.

Small boat operators should be aware of and respect a large vessel's:

- Inability to maneuver or stop quickly
- Limited line of sight. Blind spots can extend for hundreds of feet.
- Capability to 'steal the wind' from sailing vessels, pull smaller vessels towards them when passing along side, and/or generate a strong underwater current causing severe turbulence hundreds of yards behind it.

Small boat operators shall not impede the passage of commercial vessels within the channel. They must:

- Avoid crossing in front of a commercial vessel
- Avoid meeting or passing large vessels in a bend. Large vessels will use the entire bend to successfully complete a turn.
- Stay clear of two large vessels meeting within the confines of the Canal.
- Monitor VHF 13 and 16
- Learn the whistle signals. Five or more short blasts means danger, stay clear!