

Required Safety Equipment for Paddleboards

Paddleboarding is a rapidly growing sport that involves a person standing on a board, similar to a surfboard, and propelling themselves



Did you know the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has determined that a paddleboard is a vessel in most situations and is required to have the same safety equipment as other small human-powered vessels (canoes/kayaks)?

Here is what this means if you are using a paddleboard:

Unless the paddleboard is being used within a “swimming, surfing or bathing area,” the paddleboard must have a USCG-approved life jacket for each person and a sound-producing device on board while on the water.

Although persons on the paddleboard are not required to wear the life jacket while on Florida waters (unless they are less than six years of age), it is advisable to find a comfortable life jacket that you can wear or easily carry while on the water.

A “sound-producing device” is a small whistle or horn that can be heard for a least one-half nautical mile. “Referee-type” whistles or other similar devices that can be attached to your life jacket should work well.

If you are operating in limited visibility or at night, you will also need a flashlight or lantern that produces a white light. It should be displayed to approaching vessels in enough time to prevent a collision. The light should not be continually displayed.

If using a paddleboard offshore or on certain coastal waters at nighttime, visual distress signals may be required, per the Code of Federal Regulations.

This information on required equipment for paddleboards is general information and is not intended to address every situation on the water. For more information on required safety equipment for boats, please visit MyFWC.com.