

Grant Allen Law

New life jacket law takes effect

A new requirement - for children under age 10 to wear a life jacket while boating on Minnesota waters - was recently passed by the Minnesota Legislature, signed into law by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on Thursday and went into effect on Friday, May 6, 2005.

Called the "Grant Allen Law," the measure was named in memory of the child who drowned after falling out of his father's boat in 2003.

The new law requires that a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket be worn by children younger than age 10 in boats that are underway or otherwise not tied up to a dock or permanent mooring.

There are a few exceptions to the law. Children are not required to wear a life jacket if they are in a boat's enclosed cabin or below decks, or on an anchored boat that is being used as a platform for swimming or diving. Also, children on board commercial or charter vessels with a licensed captain are exempt from the life jacket-wearing requirement.

Boat operators who violate the law are subject to a written warning for the first offense and a petty misdemeanor for a second offense until May 1, 2006, and a petty misdemeanor for any offense on or after May 1, 2006.

For more information, visit the DNR website at www.dnr.state.mn.us or call 1-888-MINNDNR.

Law Summary

- Requires life jacket to be worn by children less than 10 years of age when aboard watercraft in Minnesota when the craft is under way (not tied up at a dock or permanent mooring).
- Exemptions when in an enclosed cabin or below the top deck on a watercraft; when on an anchored boat that is a platform for swimming or diving; or when aboard a charter (passenger) craft with a licensed captain.

Penalties

- Written warning for first offense until May 1, 2006;
- Petty misdemeanor for second or more offense until May 1, 2006;
- Petty misdemeanor for any offense after May 1, 2006.