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**HOUSE BILL NO. 2374**

Offered January 10, 2007

Prefiled January 9, 2007

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 29.1-748 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 29.1-735.2, relating to boating safety education requirements; penalty.*

Patron—Dudley

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That § 29.1-748 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 29.1-735.2 as follows:**

§ 29.1-735.2. *Boating safety education required; Board to promulgate regulations.*

A. *It is unlawful for any person to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft on the waters of the Commonwealth, unless the operator has met the requirements for boating safety education in accordance with the age provisions established in subsection D.*

B. *A person shall be considered in compliance with the requirements for boating safety education if the person meets one of the following:*

1. *Completes and passes a boating safety course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and accepted by the Department;*

2. *Passes a proctored equivalency examination that tests the knowledge of information included in the curriculum of an approved course;*

3. *Possesses a valid license to operate a vessel issued to maritime personnel by the United States Coast Guard or a marine certificate issued by the Canadian government;*

4. *Possesses a state-approved nonrenewable temporary operator's permit to operate a motorboat for 90 days that was issued with the certificate of number for the motorboat, if the boat is new or was sold with a transfer of ownership;*

5. *Possesses a rental or lease agreement from a motorboat rental or leasing business, which lists the person as the authorized operator of the motorboat;*

6. *Operates the motorboat under supervised training;*

7. *Demonstrates that he is not a resident, is temporarily using the waters of Virginia for a period not to exceed 90 days, and meets any applicable boating safety education requirements of the state of residency, or possesses a Canadian Pleasure Craft Operator's Card; or*

8. *Has assumed operation of the motorboat due to the illness or physical impairment of the initial operator, and is returning the motorboat to shore in order to provide assistance or care for the operator.*

C. *The Board shall promulgate regulations by July 1, 2008, to implement a mandatory boating safety education program for all motorboat and personal watercraft operators to meet boating safety education requirements.*

D. *Such regulations shall include provisions that phase-in the requirements for boating safety education according to the following:*

1. *Personal watercraft operators 20 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2009;*

2. *Personal watercraft operators 35 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2010;*

3. *Personal watercraft operators 50 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2011;*

4. *All personal watercraft operators, regardless of age, to meet the requirements by July 1, 2012;*

5. *Motorboat operators 20 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2011;*

6. *Motorboat operators 30 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2012;*

7. *Motorboat operators 40 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2013;*

8. *Motorboat operators 45 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2014;*

9. *Motorboat operators 50 years of age or younger to meet the requirements by July 1, 2015;*

10. *All motorboat operators, regardless of age, to meet the requirements by July 1, 2016.*

E. *Such regulations may include, but not be limited to, provisions for compliance, statewide availability of NASBLA-approved courses including through the Internet, the issuance of certificates to document successful course completion, duplicate certificates, record keeping, requirements for course providers, instructor certification, student name and address changes, equivalency exam criteria,*

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59 *requirements for motorboat rental and leasing businesses, issuance of a temporary operator's permit,*  
60 *and the establishment of fees (not to exceed the cost of giving such instruction for each person*  
61 *participating in and receiving the instruction) for boating safety courses and certificates.*

62 *F. The Board shall consult and coordinate with the boating public, professional organizations for*  
63 *recreational boating safety, and the boating business community in the promulgation of such*  
64 *regulations.*

65 *G. Any person who operates a motorboat on the waters of the Commonwealth shall, upon the*  
66 *request of a law-enforcement officer, present to the officer evidence that he has complied with*  
67 *subsection B.*

68 *H. Any person who violates any provision of this section or any regulation promulgated hereunder is*  
69 *guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor.*

70 § 29.1-748. Restrictions on operation; penalty.

71 A. It shall be unlawful for any person to:

72 1. Operate a personal watercraft unless he is at least sixteen years of age, except any person fourteen  
73 or fifteen years of age shall be allowed to operate a personal watercraft if he (i) has successfully  
74 completed a boating safety education course approved by the Director and (ii) carries on his person,  
75 while operating a personal watercraft, proof of successful completion of such course. Upon the request  
76 of a law-enforcement officer, such person shall provide proof of having successfully completed an  
77 approved course;

78 2. *Operate a personal watercraft unless he has complied with the provisions of § 29.1-735.2,*  
79 *regarding board regulations for mandatory boating safety education.*

80 3. Operate a personal watercraft unless each person riding on the personal watercraft is wearing a  
81 type I, type II, type III, or type V personal flotation device approved by the United States Coast Guard;

82 34. Fail to attach the lanyard to his person, clothing, or personal flotation device, if the personal  
83 watercraft is equipped with a lanyard-type engine cut-off switch;

84 45. Operate a personal watercraft on the waters of the Commonwealth between sunset and sunrise;

85 5-6 Operate a personal watercraft while carrying a number of passengers in excess of the number for  
86 which the craft was designed by the manufacturer; or

87 67. Operate a personal watercraft in excess of the slowest possible speed required to maintain  
88 steerage and headway within fifty feet of docks, piers, boathouses, boat ramps, people in the water, and  
89 vessels other than personal watercraft. Nothing in this section shall prohibit a personal watercraft from  
90 towing a person with a rope less than fifty feet in length.

91 B. A violation of any provision of this section shall constitute a Class 4 misdemeanor.

92 C. A violation of this section shall not constitute negligence, be considered in mitigation of damages  
93 of whatever nature, be admissible in evidence or be the subject of comment by counsel in any action for  
94 the recovery of damages arising out of the operation, ownership, or maintenance of a personal  
95 watercraft, nor shall anything in this section change any existing law, rule, or procedure pertaining to  
96 any such civil action, nor shall this section bar any claim which otherwise exists.

97 **2. That the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries shall submit the proposed and final regulations**  
98 **authorized under the provisions of this act to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation**  
99 **and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural**  
100 **Resources at the same time such regulations are submitted to the Virginia Register, so that the**  
101 **Committees may exercise their oversight responsibilities pursuant to § 2.2-4014 of the Code of**  
102 **Virginia.**