

Water Conditions and Safety

Written by Texas Outdoors

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Open bodies of water (lakes, rivers, bays, bayous, ponds, oceans) are vastly different from neighborhood swimming pools and therefore **warrant extra precautions**. The key differences are that there are no lifeguards; water conditions can change rapidly; and underwater currents sometimes exist. Before you go paddling, tell a friend or family member where you will be and when you expect to return.

It is recommended that everyone who participates in boating wear a life jacket. In Texas, **children under 13 years of age in or on vessels under 26 feet must wear a [U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket](#)**

. All vessels (including canoes and kayaks) must have a sound producing device and at least one

[Type I, II, III or V](#)

life jacket of the proper fit for each person on board.

Remember: The life you save may be your own! Before you paddle make sure you review these informative safety tips:

- [Video: "Never Happens: True Stories From Texas Boaters and Swimmers"](#)
- [Passport to Texas Radio Episode : Safety on the Water](#)
- ["Wear It!" campaign](#)
- [Nobody's Waterproof](#)