

and their associated equipment, the necessary flexible regulatory authority for inspection and testing, Federal preemption, certain necessary prohibited acts, enforcement authority, investigation and reporting requirements, procedures for repair and defect notification, and attendant penalties and injunctive relief. These laws are a direct response to the dramatic increase in the number of recreational boats and the Congressional recognition of the maritime safety problems that recreational boating has imposed upon our more than 25 million miles of waterways.

**Editorial Notes**

AMENDMENTS

2021—Pub. L. 116-283, div. G, title LVXXXIII [LXXXIII], §8318(b), Jan. 1, 2021, 134 Stat. 4700, substituted “Exemptions and equivalents” for “Exemptions” in item 4305.

2018—Pub. L. 115-282, title V, §503(b), Dec. 4, 2018, 132 Stat. 4271, added item 4312.

**§ 4301. Application**

(a) This chapter applies to a recreational vessel and associated equipment carried in the vessel on waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States (including the territorial sea of the United States as described in Presidential Proclamation No. 5928 of December 27, 1988) and, for a vessel owned in the United States, on the high seas.

(b) Except when expressly otherwise provided, this chapter does not apply to a foreign vessel temporarily operating on waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

(c) Until there is a final judicial decision that they are navigable waters of the United States, the following waters lying entirely in New Hampshire are declared not to be waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States within the meaning of this section: Lake Winnisquam, Lake Winnepesaukee, parts of the Merrimack River, and their tributary and connecting waters.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 529; Pub. L. 105-383, title III, §301(b)(4), Nov. 13, 1998, 112 Stat. 3417.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

<i>Revised section</i>	<i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i>
4301 .....	46:1453

Section 4301 provides that this chapter is applicable to a recreational vessel that operates on waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States or that is owned in the United States and while operating on the high seas.

It also provides that a foreign recreational vessel that temporarily uses our waters is not subject to the requirements of this chapter. However, if the vessel remains permanently in the United States, it would be subject to the provisions of this chapter.

Section 4301(c) recognizes the ongoing controversy over the navigability of certain waters of New Hampshire. While a recreational vessel operating on these waters need not meet the requirements of this chapter, it would be prohibited from operating on any other waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States if it does not comply with these requirements.

**Editorial Notes**

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Presidential Proclamation No. 5928, referred to in subsec. (a), is set out under section 1331 of Title 43, Public Lands.

AMENDMENTS

1998—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 105-383 inserted “(including the territorial sea of the United States as described in Presidential Proclamation No. 5928 of December 27, 1988)” after “of the United States”.

**Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries**

EFFECTIVE DATE

Chapter effective Apr. 15, 1984, see section 2(g)(1) of Pub. L. 98-89, set out as a note under section 3101 of this title.

**§ 4302. Regulations**

(a) The Secretary may prescribe regulations—

(1) establishing minimum safety standards for recreational vessels and associated equipment, and establishing procedures and tests required to measure conformance with those standards, with each standard—

(A) meeting the need for recreational vessel safety; and

(B) being stated, insofar as practicable, in terms of performance;

(2) requiring the installation, carrying, or use of associated equipment (including fuel systems, ventilation systems, electrical systems, sound-producing devices, firefighting equipment, lifesaving devices, signaling devices, ground tackle, life- and grab-rails, and navigational equipment) on recreational vessels and classes of recreational vessels subject to this chapter, and prohibiting the installation, carrying, or use of associated equipment that does not conform with safety standards established under this section; and

(3) requiring or permitting the display of seals, labels, plates, insignia, or other devices for certifying or evidencing compliance with safety regulations and standards of the United States Government for recreational vessels and associated equipment.

(b) Each regulation prescribed under this section shall specify an effective date that is not earlier than 180 days from the date the regulation was published, unless the Secretary finds that there exists a recreational vessel safety hazard so critical as to require an earlier effective date. However, this period may not be more than 24 months for cases involving, in the discretion of the Secretary, major product design, retooling, or major changes in the manufacturing process.

(c) In prescribing regulations under this section, the Secretary shall, among other things—

(1) consider the need for and the extent to which the regulations will contribute to recreational vessel safety;

(2) consider relevant available recreational vessel safety standards, statistics, and data, including public and private research, development, testing, and evaluation;

(3) not compel substantial alteration of a recreational vessel or item of associated equipment that is in existence, or the construction or manufacture of which is begun before the effective date of the regulation, but subject to that limitation may require compliance or performance, to avoid a substantial risk of personal injury to the public, that the