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## Wake Me Up

*Responding to the biggest complaint of Oregon Boaters*

*By Capt. Lyman Louis*

It never ceases to amaze me the lengths to which people will go to complain about the excessive wakes of other boaters. Every weekend, and during the height of the season every weekday, the radio is full of people grumbling about other boater's wakes.

It really shouldn't be a surprise. The Oregon State Marine Board's triennial survey shows that violation of no-wake and other speed limited zones are the number one and two complaints of boaters in Oregon. (You can see the 1998 survey results on the OSMB's website: [www.marinebd.osmb.state.or.us/Library/TriSurvey/TriSurvey.htm](http://www.marinebd.osmb.state.or.us/Library/TriSurvey/TriSurvey.htm))

So who's doing the complaining? If you listen to the VHF it seems like everyone is getting in on the action. Some days it's downright funny. I've heard fishermen, illegally anchored in the Columbia River navigation channel, complain about a passing tug's wake. Cruisers who frequent the marine parks on Government Island can get downright nasty about large wakes, even though they are in an unprotected area.

And don't get me started about floating homes, some of the loudest complainers of all. I've even seen a floating home owner fire a flare gun at a passing boat who's wake was, at the most, questionable.

While entertaining at times, the complaints are usually legitimate. Excessive wakes can cause serious damage to homes, boats, docks and other property. And, as most of the complainers are quick to point out, any and all damage you cause by virtue of your wake is your responsibility. On top of that, the fine for an excessive wake is \$350.

And if your wake overturns another boat—as happened recently at the entrance to Scappoose Bay—you may be looking at a civil or even a criminal lawsuit. In that case, a passing cruiser's wake overturned a skiff putting two people into the water. In addition to being shook up, the skiff passengers lost their outboard motor and other possessions.

What's the law say? OAR 250-10-025 reads: "No person shall operate a boat on the waters of this state in excess of a "Slow-No Wake", maximum 5 MPH speed within 200 feet of a boat launch ramp, marina with a capacity for six or more moored vessels, floating home/boathouse moorage with six or more contiguous structures, and locations where persons are working at water level on floats, logs or waterway construction."

So don't look only for the buoy's to guide you; in fact they're not required. The only legal requirement is for you, the producer of the wake, to pass at 5 MPH or less such that your boat does not make a wake.

Now I know at this point some wise guy is going to say, "yeah, but I put out more wake at 5 MPH than I do at 25 so I should go faster to reduce my wake." Nice try. If you have to slow to 3 MPH because of your boat's hull design or engine configuration then you must slow down. The law is 5 MPH *and* no wake. (Will a traffic cop ever let you get away with speeding up?)

Now, with that out of the way, can I complain about the complainers? While at times it's funny to listen to them, at other times its just annoying. Then there are the times when it's simply offensive.

No matter how bad the wake is, there is never a reason to get on the air to scream at the source of your displeasure. If they are that rude the chances are they're not listening anyway and, if they are, won't be persuaded by your tirades. Instead, you're punishing the rest of us who are listening and, for those of us with small children, causing us to turn our own radios off. Swearing on the VHF is never acceptable.

Shooting a gun at a passing boater—even a flare gun—is also a no-no. Doesn't seem like you'd have to make this point, but I've seen it happen. Flares are pyrotechnic devices. They are made to produce a very hot missile which could easily start a fire on a boat, the shore, or a floating home. That anyone would think this is an appropriate response to a no-wake violation is incredible.

So what are the options? Get the details. Write down the name and type of boat with as much detail about the incident as possible. If there is real damage or injuries notify the Coast Guard and the appropriate county's River Patrol unit as soon as possible.

If you are in an area where no-wake violations are frequent get a procedure going to document the violations. Send them to the authorities on a regular basis with as much detail as possible. In tight budget times where law enforcement units are stretched to the limit, it's the squeaky wheel that gets the attention. By approaching the problem with an eye towards gentle persuasion rather than anger and vitriol you're likely to get the attention necessary to reduce the problem.

### *Website Watch*

There are several boating related websites that offer tips and suggestions to specific problems. Here are just a few that you may find interesting.

- BoaterEd ([www.boatered.com](http://www.boatered.com)) ? With forums dedicated to everything from engines and winterizing, to fishing and marine heads, Boater Ed is a great resource. All of the forums are moderated by people with expertise in their area and many other experts frequent the site. The best forum is probably the Marine Surveyor group. Free.
- Boat Diesel ([www.boatdiesel.com](http://www.boatdiesel.com)) ? Got a smoky, smelly diesel that the Admiral is complaining about? Get support from the experts at this site. There are forums and support documentation for just about every marine diesel out there. Much of the site is free, and membership is \$25/year.
- Grand Banks Information Exchange ([www.oxfordyachtagency.com/ubb/](http://www.oxfordyachtagency.com/ubb/)) ? Dedicated to all things Grand Banks, this is also a great resource for all trawler owners. The information is tailored to GBs, but there is a wealth of support here. Free.
- Oregon Marine Board ([www.marinebd.osmb.state.or.us/](http://www.marinebd.osmb.state.or.us/)) ? We are fortunate to have a strong marine board in Oregon. Many of our favorite cruise sites are set for renovation and improvements this winter as a result of their efforts. This site is a must see. Free.

### *Spider Tips*

Tis the season for winterizing and packing things away. Before you leave your boat for the last time this year, here's a couple of ideas (courtesy of the BoaterEd and Grand Banks websites mentioned above) for keeping down the spider population on your boat.

The chemical solution most recommended is a product called "HotShot" ([www.hotshotbrand.com](http://www.hotshotbrand.com)), available locally at home centers. Sprayed in and around the areas where spiders web, the product kills on contact and lasts for up to three months. The residue it leaves is not oily and the

product must be reapplied after washing the boat. Don't forget to spray the dock lines too.

While still chemical in nature, the use of dryer sheets (e.g., "Bounce") has met with some success. Put a couple under your bimini and in other strategic locations has worked for many people. Not sure if it's the smell or another property of the sheets that is effective, but the consensus is that they work well.

While not appealing to me personally, mothballs are also reported to reduce the creepy crawlies onboard. Two or three in a container, with several containers spread through the boat will improve the situation. I'd rather have the spiders than the smell of mothballs though!

If you want to get rid of the pests without pesticides I've found two alternatives, the first being traps. The Spider Trap available at [www.pestproducts.com/spidertrap.htm](http://www.pestproducts.com/spidertrap.htm). While not as effective as the chemical solutions above, they are a less caustic solution for those so inclined.

The middle road is available at [www.epestsupply.com](http://www.epestsupply.com) and called "Dr. T's Cobweb Eliminator." While still chemical in nature, it is claimed to be a 100% natural and biodegradable product. Dr. T's is reported to be a highly effective alternative by several boaters.

*Capt. Lyman Louis will respond to your questions on safety, maritime law, and other issues of general interest to boaters in the area. You can reach him by e-mail at:*

[askthecaptain@seatowpdx.com](mailto:askthecaptain@seatowpdx.com)