



safe boating hints for

MORRO BAY



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF BOATING AND WATERWAYS

Gray Davis, Governor
State of California

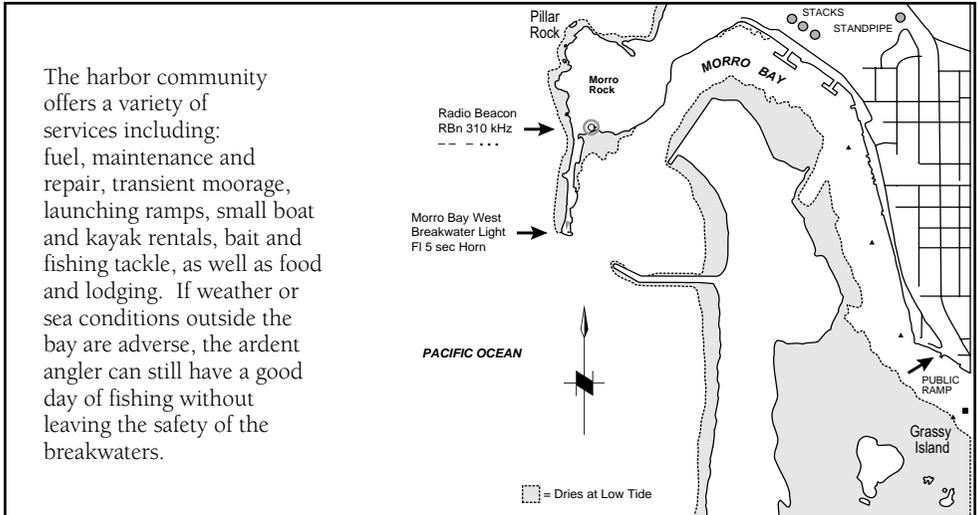
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Secretary for Resources

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Department of Boating & Waterways

Morro Bay Harbor

Morro Bay Harbor in San Luis Obispo County is easily identified by the 581-foot-high Morro Rock just north of the harbor, and by three tall smokestacks at the harbor's PG&E power plant.

The harbor entrance, one of the roughest on the West Coast, has a hazardous bar warning posted up to 40 days a year because of turbulent seas. The boat operator should exercise caution regardless of experience. Throughout the year, extreme high and low tides result in swift currents inside the harbor. During stormy winter months, waves up to 18 feet batter the breakwater, causing hazardous boating conditions at the harbor entrance.



Leaving the Harbor

Morning and evening fog is commonly encountered in the area. However, by late morning or early afternoon the fog may lift or clear. Boaters should never venture out to sea in the fog without competent knowledge in the use of a compass, charts and radio aids to navigation.

A calm morning will often be followed by afternoon winds, and this should be considered when planning the length and direction of a boating trip. If spray can be seen along the top wall of the west breakwater from inside the harbor, the cautious boater will give the weather and sea conditions utmost consideration before venturing outside. REMEMBER, MOST OF THE AREA'S BOATING FATALITIES OCCUR OUTSIDE OF THE BREAKWATERS.

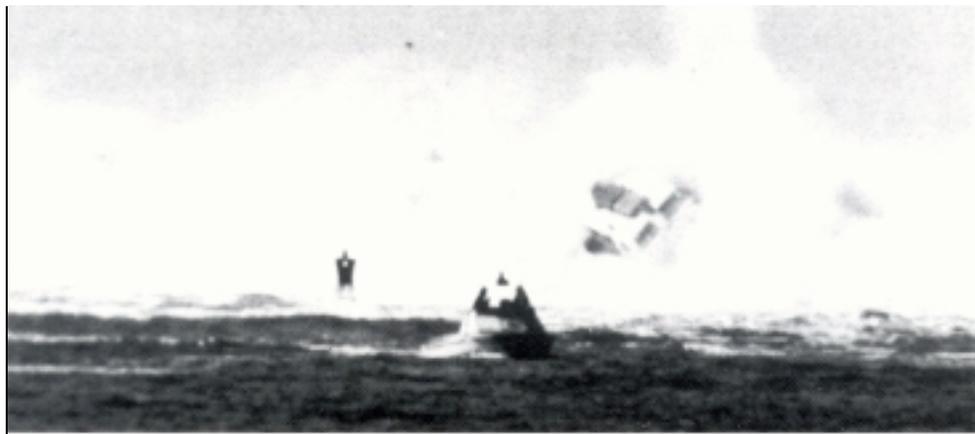
State law provides that no operator of a for-hire vessel shall leave or enter Morro Bay after being directed by the harbormaster of the harbor not to do so because of the condition of the weather, the sea, the vessel, or a combination thereof.

It is advisable to check all of your safety equipment. In case of engine failure at sea, it is vital to have a suitable anchor, chain and at least 300 feet of line. Never try to beach your boat outside of the breakwaters. Inexperienced kayakers should not leave the protected waters inside the breakwaters.

Entrance Channel

The dredged entrance channel between the two breakwaters is marked by red and green buoys. However, the buoys are not shown on charts of the area, as they are frequently moved to mark the continually

shifting channel. A shoaling area extends into the channel from the south. Boaters are well advised to pass close to the green buoys at low tide. Even without any wind, the entrance can become hazardous for small craft due to large waves generated by storms at sea. A boater should never risk crossing the mouth of the bay if large waves are breaking in the channel. Before entering the bay, contact the harbormaster or the Coast Guard on VHF-FM Channel 16 for current entrance and channel conditions.



Vessel about to capsize in large winter wave at the mouth of the Morro Bay Harbor. Photo by Tom Laurie.

Breakwaters

Morro Bay Harbor is protected by two breakwaters. The west breakwater extends from the base of Morro Rock almost due south for a distance of about 1,800 feet. A light flashing white every 5 seconds and a foghorn are located on the seaward end. The south breakwater extends almost due west from a sandy peninsula for a total distance of 1,800 feet, with a small change of direction about 400 feet from its seaward end. It is always a good practice to pass well beyond the visible end of the jetty. Often, submerged rocks lie close to the seaward tip of a breakwater, and seas start breaking first on shoals in these areas.

Alternate Harbors

Depending on favorable weather, there are other harbors that provide alternate landings for recreation or refuge. Port San Luis is 18 nautical miles to the south and provides good anchorage north of its breakwater. San Simeon Bay is 23 nautical miles to the north and provides shelter from northerly weather, but is exposed to weather from the south. Both of these alternate harbors are excellent destinations for short cruises under favorable conditions. For boating in coastal waters, consult "Safe Boating Hints for the Southern California Coast" available from the Department of Boating and Waterways (see box on back page for address).

Rescue Information

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains a 24-hour watch on VHF Channel 16 (156.8 MHz). Telephone numbers for search and rescue purposes are (805) 772-2167 and (805) 772-1293 or 772-1294. The Coast Guard Moorings are located at the North "T" Pier with offices at 1279 Embarcadero.

The harbor office at the city pier maintains a radio watch on VHF Channel 16 and 12 from dawn to dusk. Harbor patrolmen operating radio-equipped patrol boats are on duty during these hours and on call 24 hours a day. Their emergency rescue telephone number is 9-1-1. Business calls may be made from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (805) 772-6254.

Sometimes the quickest way to seek aid is from a passing boat. The Coast Guard requires that vessels operating on coastal waters and on the high seas carry the required number of approved visual distress-signaling devices. Recreational boats 16 feet or greater in length must carry suitable devices aboard at all times. Boats less than 16 feet, manually propelled craft of any size, and sailboats of completely open construction, not equipped with propulsion machinery and under 26 feet in length, are only required to carry suitable signaling devices between sunset and sunrise. All the devices must be Coast Guard-approved, readily accessible, and in serviceable condition.

All boaters are strongly encouraged to carry VHF-FM radios on board their boats to call for assistance should an emergency arise.

Weather

Twenty-four-hour weather information may be obtained by calling (805) 988-6610 or visiting www.weather.com/weather/local/usca0733. Weather is also broadcast on several of the radio stations in the area including: KUHL (1440 kHz) every hour on the half-hour and KSMA (1240 kHz) at 6:30 a.m., 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. When emergency conditions exist, special weather broadcasts are announced on Channel 16 and given in complete detail on 2670 kHz (after a preliminary announcement on 2182 kHz) and on Channel 22A. The National Weather Service also broadcasts on VHF Channel WX1 (162.55 MHz).

Nautical Charts and Other Information

Special information on harbor characteristics, anchorage areas, charts and boating safety hints is available at the harbor office at the city pier, located at 1275 Embarcadero. Nautical charts of the area, published by the National Ocean Service, are available through local nautical chart agents listed in the yellow pages of the telephone book. Chart No. 18703 provides details of Morro Bay and the coast south to Port San Luis. Chart No. 18700 gives general coverage of the coastline from Point Conception to Point Sur. U.S. Coast Guard Pilot No. 7, an aid to Pacific coastal navigation, contains information on Morro Bay. Updates to this book are published in the Coast Guard's Local Notice to Mariners. For subscription information, call (510) 437-2970 or visit www.navcen.uscg.gov/lnm.

BOATING SAFETY CLASSES explaining required and recommended equipment for small boats and offering training in good seamanship are conducted throughout California by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons and certain chapters of the American Red Cross. For information on Coast Guard Auxiliary and Power Squadron classes, call (800) SEA-SKIL (732-7545) or (800) 368-5647. The Department of Boating and Waterways offers a free home study course entitled *California Boating Safety Course*. For more information, e-mail us at pubinfo@dbw.ca.gov, or phone (916) 263-1331 or tollfree (888) 326-2822, or write: Department of Boating and Waterways, 2000 Evergreen Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, California 95815-3888. Visit our Website at www.dbw.ca.gov.