California Boater Card FAQ

What is a California Boater Card?
In the California Boater Card (the Card), the Card Program is being designed to ensure that residents and all others operating on California waterways are properly trained in an effort to reduce the risk of fatalities and injuries to boaters and non-boaters alike. The Card Program is being designed to ensure that residents and non-residents who operate motorized recreational vessels on state waterways will be required to carry a California Boater Card. The Card will be issued by the California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW).

Where did the idea of a California Boater Card come from?
DBW issued a statement on February 11, 2010 that California boating safety organizations had expressed concern about the need for a Californian boating education program. DBW plans to seek input from the public on this program before proceeding.

What are the benefits of obtaining a boating safety course?
A: It will increase your knowledge of the laws that govern boating safety. It will improve your driving skills and help you operate a boat safely. It will reduce the risk of injury and death.

What are the costs of the boating safety course and how will I find them?
A: Boating safety course providers may charge a course fee to cover the cost of the course. The new requirement will begin on January 1, 2018 for all persons 20 years of age and younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways. The cost of the card will be determined by the California Boater Card Program. The Card Program anticipates that the cost of the card will be no more than $10. The lost card replacement fee will be no more than $5.

When will operators be required to have a Boater Card?
A: January 1, 2018:
- Persons 16 years of age or younger who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.
- Persons 20 years of age or younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways.
- Persons 25 years of age or younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on federal waters.
- January 1, 2019:
- Persons 25 years of age or younger who operate a boat with a motor of more than 15 horsepower.
- January 1, 2020:
- Persons 30 years of age or younger who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.
- January 1, 2021:
- Persons 35 years of age or younger who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.
- January 1, 2022:
- Persons 40 years of age or younger who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.
- January 1, 2023:
- Persons 45 years of age or younger who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.
- January 1, 2024:
- Persons 50 years of age or younger who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.
- January 1, 2025:
- All persons regardless of age who operate a vessel with a motor of more than 15 horsepower or sailboat over 30 feet.

How much time will it take to complete a approved boating safety course?
A: The approved courses will vary in length and will last from 3 hours to 6 hours. Approved courses are pre-approved by DBW. Check www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com for course details.

What courses will be approved to offer Boater Card exams, and how will I find them?
A: Approved online courses run a minimum of three hours to complete. Classroom and home study courses must include a minimum of six hours of instruction. Once you complete your course, you will be provided with a copy of the exam questions. You can expect to take the exam online at a location of your choice.

Who are the members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG)?
A: The California Boater Card Technical Advisory Group is composed of individuals from the boating community, waterways, navigation and recreation. The TAG members are:
- Kevin Ketchum (Chair), Marine Recreation Association
- Doug Powell, California State Sheriffs Association
- Glen Brandenburg, Mission Bay Aquatic Center
- Steve Powell, Los Angeles Lifeguards
- Tom Trainor, California Yacht Brokers Association
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy

What is the current status of the California Boater Card?
A: The new requirement will begin on January 1, 2018 for all persons 20 years of age and younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways. The cost of the card and where to obtain the card will be determined by the California Boater Card Program. The Card Program anticipates that the cost of the card will be no more than $10. The lost card replacement fee will be no more than $5.

How can I apply for my California Boater Card and what will it cost?
A: A person who has been ordered by a court to complete a boating safety course pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 678.11, or who was required to take a course pursuant to section 678.12 of the Government Code, shall be granted a temporary license to operate a vessel until the completion of the required course. Once the course has been completed, the person shall present the certificate of completion to the California Department of Water Resources (DBW).

Where did DBW determine the cost of the California Boater Card?
A: DBW determined the cost of the California Boater Card through a public hearing held in May, 2010. DBW determined the cost based on input from the public and other stakeholders.

Who are the members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG)?
A: The Technical Advisory Group includes individuals from the boating community, waterways, navigation and recreation. The TAG members are:
- Kevin Ketchum (Chair), Marine Recreation Association
- Doug Powell, California State Sheriffs Association
- Glen Brandenburg, Mission Bay Aquatic Center
- Steve Powell, Los Angeles Lifeguards
- Tom Trainor, California Yacht Brokers Association
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Approved online courses run a minimum of three hours to complete. Classroom and home study courses must include a minimum of six hours of instruction. Once you complete your course, you will be provided with a copy of the exam questions. You can expect to take the exam online at a location of your choice. You can find approved courses at www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com. The new requirement will begin on January 1, 2018 for all persons 20 years of age and younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways. The cost of the card and where to obtain the card will be determined by the California Boater Card Program. The Card Program anticipates that the cost of the card will be no more than $10. The lost card replacement fee will be no more than $5.

The new requirement will begin on January 1, 2018 for all persons 20 years of age and younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways. The cost of the card and where to obtain the card will be determined by the California Boater Card Program. The Card Program anticipates that the cost of the card will be no more than $10. The lost card replacement fee will be no more than $5.

Approved online courses run a minimum of three hours to complete. Classroom and home study courses must include a minimum of six hours of instruction. Once you complete your course, you will be provided with a copy of the exam questions. You can expect to take the exam online at a location of your choice. You can find approved courses at www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com. The new requirement will begin on January 1, 2018 for all persons 20 years of age and younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways. The cost of the card and where to obtain the card will be determined by the California Boater Card Program. The Card Program anticipates that the cost of the card will be no more than $10. The lost card replacement fee will be no more than $5.

Approved online courses run a minimum of three hours to complete. Classroom and home study courses must include a minimum of six hours of instruction. Once you complete your course, you will be provided with a copy of the exam questions. You can expect to take the exam online at a location of your choice. You can find approved courses at www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com. The new requirement will begin on January 1, 2018 for all persons 20 years of age and younger who operate a motorized recreational vessel on state waterways. The cost of the card and where to obtain the card will be determined by the California Boater Card Program. The Card Program anticipates that the cost of the card will be no more than $10. The lost card replacement fee will be no more than $5.