

Boating To Canada? Take A Cellphone (BoatUS Reports News From the World of American Boating) by Rick Lydecker

In August 2012, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) seized two boats and a personal watercraft belonging to two New York men who'd gone to Ontario's Port Dalhousie. Earlier last year, a fisherman in the St. Lawrence River was boarded by the CBSA, which seized his boat as well. The offense in each case was the same -- failure to properly check in with Border Services after entering Canadian waters -- but their defenses were also similar: The boaters thought they'd done everything they needed to do.

In all three cases, the boats in question were seized on the spot, and the men had to pay a \$1,000 fine per vessel (including the PWC) to get them back. Senator Charles Schumer of New York has asked for reviews of all three cases, and the CBSA has said they'll look into them.

Crossing Into Canada

"It is no different than if you arrive at the land border or if you arrive by air," says Alex Attfield, CBSA's Director of Traveler Border Programs. "You're expected to make yourself known and allow CBSA to make a determination on your admissibility into the country". <http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>.

For a boater, that means reporting directly to one of CBSA's 439 designated Marine Reporting sites <http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/contact/listing/indexpages/indextype39-e.html>. Many of them, located at yacht clubs and marinas, consist of no more than a special telephone, a sort of border-services hotline that will connect you to an agent. Assuming that goes well, that's it. Welcome to Canada.

"Once you enter Canadian waters, there's an obligation to report," Attfield says. "But we appreciate that if someone isn't intending on landing, but just want to enjoy our Canadian waters, enjoy the scenery, we provide a means of making a call by cellphone to the same telephone reporting centers."

So, if you're, say, in the middle of Lake Ontario, tacking back and forth across the international boundary, you need to call Border Services when you first enter Canadian waters and let them know.

That requires a cellphone, and more than that, it requires a cellphone that works wherever the border is. If you can't make contact by cell, you'll need to head directly to a reporting site (or, presumably, **stay in U.S. waters**).

There are a number of programs designed to make it easier on frequent travelers, including the joint U.S.-Canadian NEXUS card. For a \$50 application fee, the card requires an interview, as well as approval from both countries, but it enables the bearer to check in by phone when crossing the border.

... And Back Again

For re-entry to the United States, the process is similar to reporting to Canada. If you have a NEXUS card, a phone call will cover it, and Customs and Border Protection's website lists the phone numbers you can call. If you aren't a member of NEXUS (or a similar program), you'll need to report in person to a regular port of entry or to an inspection station equipped with a video phone.

These are the rules as described on the CBSA website, clarified by a CBSA official over the phone to BoatUS, and again in an email from a CBSA spokeswoman. In each of the three boat-seizure cases mentioned above, the boaters say that they thought they were following the rules. So before you go, check the relevant websites and call them if you have any questions.

Canadian:

<http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>
<http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/contact/listing/indexpages/indextype39-e.html>

U.S.

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/pleasure_boats/boats/pleasure_boat_overview.xml
http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/pleasure_boats/boats/pleasure_locations/michigan.xml

Border-Boaters: Enhance Your Driver's License

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Headed for the Canadian border by boat or with a boat in tow this summer? Well, no matter how you check into our neighboring country, you'll need very specific identification. If you live in Michigan, New York, Vermont, or the state of Washington, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol has made border crossing a bit easier for you. That's because part of a plan to promote post-9/11 travel, called the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, has paved the way for U.S. states and Canadian provinces to develop what is called an Enhanced Driver's License or EDL. This allows the license holder to cross the international border by boat or on land without a U.S. passport. Applicants must prove U.S. citizenship and residency in their particular state. Enhanced IDs are also available for non-drivers and for youth under 16.

The EDL could cut the inconvenience, expense, and advance notice required to obtain a passport in anticipation of a trip across the border. Other states are expected to follow suit in the 2013 legislative sessions, according to BoatUS President Margaret Podlich. "Legislation has been introduced in Ohio; and currently Minnesota, North Dakota, Idaho, New Hampshire, and Maine are in the process of developing their own EDL programs," Podlich noted. "As states use new identification technology, we hope it will reduce the time boaters spend dealing with security requirements and increase the time they have to enjoy being on the water with our northern neighbors." Podlich added that the EDLs cost less than a passport and eliminate the need to carry yet another document on your boat. Boaters are, however, still required to follow the standard procedure when checking in to Canada or the U.S.

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