

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY - U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

## *PE SpeedGram*

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### **Critical Elements of NAV Rules and Collisions**

The US Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety (G-OPB) annual statistics report continues to identify the high number of accidents and fatalities due to an alarming increase in collisions involving recreational boaters. At the same time, the professional mariners involved with tugs and barges have indicated their concern over how to make barges and towing vessels more visible in order to avoid collisions and near collisions.

The purpose of this SpeedGram is to reemphasize the importance of certain aspects of the Navigation Rules and make certain that proper terminology is utilized by Auxiliary instructors.

First, it's important to recognize that we should not refer to "right of way" when discussing passing and crossing situations except when discussing head-on situations in waters possessing a current. Otherwise, "right of way" refers to highway situations and not vessels afloat.

We need to emphasize and reemphasize the "stand on" and "give way" vessels and the responsibilities of each in meeting, crossing and overtaking situations.

Most significantly, at every opportunity, we must continue to emphasize the overarching responsibility rule and that it is the vessel operator's responsibility to take all measures necessary to avoid collisions irrespective of whether they are in a stand-on or give-way position.

Finally, when we are teaching our public recreational boating classes, we must remember that none of our students typically operate privileged vessels...unless of course they're under sail. However, even then the recreational boater must recall the responsibility rule in all situations and take whatever steps are necessary to prevent collisions.

Please give this subject some serious thought and consider the type of boating that takes place in your area and make certain that your public education students fully understand the collision avoidance aspects of NAV Rules and how they will apply to them.

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