

New Regulations for Fire Extinguishers onboard watercraft

The United States Coast Guard has issued new regulations for fire extinguishing equipment on board watercraft effective April 20th, 2022.

These regulations apply to watercraft operated on the Great Lakes and connecting waters and do not apply on bodies of water regulated by state law only. If you operate a vessel on the Great Lakes or connecting waters that shares both federal and state jurisdiction, then you must adhere to these new regulations. In Allegan County, this includes Lake Michigan and the Kalamazoo River.

The new law regarding the fire extinguishers that must be carried aboard recreational boats goes into effect April 20, 2022. The new regulation, which can be found in the Federal Register at CFR 33 Part175 subpart E breaks down into three main takeaways and applies to recreational boat less than 65 feet LOA. Notably, outboard-powered boats without any closed compartments that could hold explosive vapors or gasses (think: simple skiffs, garveys, etc.) are not required to carry fire extinguishing equipment by federal law.

- The first takeaway is that portable fire extinguishers aboard all recreational boats must not be older than 12 years. The age of a fire extinguisher may be stamped on its bottom. This is a reasonable service life, we think, for a device that may save a life. If your extinguishers have no date, we say: replace them.
- The second thing to know about the new regulation is that it requires all boats from model year 2018 and newer to carry fire extinguishers labeled as 5-B, 10-B or 20-B. Extinguishers labeled with the old B-I or B-II designations only are no longer acceptable. Boats older than 2018 can still carry

extinguishers labeled B-1 and /or B-11, provided they are serviceable and they are not date-stamped as more than 12 years old. Again, we say, replace those 13-year old or older extinguishers anyway.

- Third, the number of extinguishers required to be carried aboard any boat type does not change.

As a reminder, any vessel operated on Michigan waters is subject to certain safety equipment carriage requirements including Life Jackets, Throwable life rings or devices, sound producing equipment (horn, whistle), visual distress signals and fire extinguishers. Make sure to check your equipment prior to boating to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable trip on the water.