

News Release

Nevada Department of Wildlife

For Immediate Release

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New Federal Law Requires Use of Engine Cut-Off Device for Boaters

Reno, NV: A new federal law that took effect this month requires boat operators to wear an engine cut-off switch (ECOS) when operating a boat on federal waterways such as Lake Mead and Lake Tahoe. The law should not be much of a change for Nevada boaters as the state has mandated use of the ECOS since 2007.

The device is designed to shutoff the boat's motor if the operator is accidentally ejected overboard. A boat running without an operator will often circle back around and strike the people who were ejected from the boat. This is often referred to as the "circle of death." Engine cutoff devices typically connect a boat's operator to the cutoff switch with a lanyard. Some ECOS devices eliminate the lanyard and rely on wireless proximity devices to shut down an engine if the operator goes overboard.

"Honestly, it simply doesn't make sense to operate a boat without wearing the engine cut-off switch," said Captain Brian Bowles, Boating Law Administrator for Nevada. "Operators fall overboard for any number of reasons; steering malfunction, sudden turn to avoid a collision. Believe me, you do not want to be floating in the water as your boat turns and starts bearing down on you. With the ECOS, the engine immediately shuts down and you can safely swim back to your boat."

The new federal law (Section 8316 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021) requires individuals operating recreational vessels less than 26 feet in length with an engine capable 3 hp or more to use ECOS links. Situations in which an ECOS link would not be required include docking, launching and loading on a trailer, trolling and operating in no-wake zones.

While most boats are equipped with the ECOS, boat owners who do not have the device on their boat will not be required to install it.

Currently, Alabama, Illinois, Arkansas, New Jersey, Louisiana, and Texas are the only other states to already have the cutoff switch as a law for state water bodies.

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The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) protects, restores and manages fish and wildlife, and promotes fishing, hunting, and boating safety. NDOW's wildlife and habitat conservation efforts are primarily funded by sportsmen's license and conservation fees and a federal surcharge on hunting and fishing gear. Support wildlife

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