



## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

**2005 Wisconsin Act 308**  
[2005 Assembly Bill 934]

**Operation of Patrol Boats During  
an Emergency**

State law or local ordinances may establish speed limits and other regulations for the operation of or equipment of boats on the water. Prior statutes provided an exemption from boating speed limits if the boat exceeding the speed limit was a patrol boat engaged in law enforcement duties and the patrol boat displayed flashing lights with a blue lens.

2005 Wisconsin Act 308 creates a broader exemption for emergency responders on the water. The exemption from state laws and local ordinances is expanded to cover not only speed limits but rather to cover any requirement of state boating law or local boating ordinances. The Act also expands the scope of the statute to apply to all emergency responders on the water, including state and local law enforcement, search and rescue, firefighting, emergency response, and water safety.

In order to qualify for this exemption, the patrol boat must activate a siren or emergency light or, if the patrol boat is equipped with both a siren and an emergency light, both the siren and emergency light must be activated. An emergency light must comply with federal requirements, which specify flashing blue lights for law enforcement vessels and alternating flashing red and yellow lights for other emergency vessels.

The prior statutes required a patrol boat that is responding to an emergency to give “due regard” to the safety of others in the vicinity. This requirement is continued and is not affected by Act 308.

**Effective Date:** Act 308 takes effect April 21, 2006.

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This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature’s Web site at: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>.