



Media Update

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ABP Requirements Clarified

Requirements for the Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats (ABP), which is set to become mandatory from 1 July 2006, have been hotly debated amongst those in the boating industry.

The ABP applies to most new recreational and imported boats and details information in an easily understood format, from the maximum number of people and load allowed to engine rating and weight and, for boats less than 6 metres, buoyancy performance.

National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) CEO Ms Maurene Horder said that industry has been extensively consulted over the last five years via meetings, boat shows and surveys.

“A technical reference group, made up of naval architects, boat builders, dealers and government representatives, was set up last year to investigate technical issues raised by industry, such as the maximum load requirement,” she explained.

As a result, the ABP plate with symbols has been changed in accordance with the ABP standard, with the engine symbol added to the person and luggage symbols to clarify the fact that maximum load includes all three elements for boats with an outboard engine.

Ms Horder explained that the reason that a vessel powered by an inboard can have a different maximum load to a similar one with an outboard engine is because a boat with an outboard also has its engine weight included on the ABP.

“The builder can also use the optional warning statement part of the plate to clarify information, such as defining the maximum load for the boat.”

Ms Horder went on to point out that the plate is not the only safety measure that is meant to be in place, boat owners also need to refer to the owners manual, which clarifies technical and safety requirements for the particular boat.

Ms Horder stressed that the requirement for dealers to ensure that any modifications they make do not invalidate information on the ABP has been strongly supported by builders.

“It’s important for those testing a boat to test it to the highest level requirements incorporating most customization options.

“Also, most builders have developed sets of “standard customization options” that reflect purchaser demands.

“This gives the dealer the ability to confidently option up to that level without having to alter the ABP.

“However, if there are modifications that go beyond those options, then dealers need to have an ABP fitted.”

The ABP is being progressively introduced prior to it becoming mandatory from 1 July 2006. Most States and the Northern Territory will be amending their legislation to bring the ABP requirements into force.

“This initiative will require boat builders to apply minimum safety standards to some key elements in the design of recreational boats as there are no compulsory boat building standards in Australia.”

Recreational boats that won't need an ABP include: amphibious vehicles; canoes, kayaks, or surf skis; pedal powered boats; second hand vessels; rowing shells; sailboards or sail kites; surf row boats; hydrofoils or hovercraft; sailing vessels; submersibles; aquatic toys; personal watercraft; and inflatable boats in certain conditions.

To make it easier for manufacturers to comply with the ABP standard, the Australian Marine Industries Federation (AMIF) provides on line facilities for ordering plates (www.amif.asn.au). Plates are supplied with customised details already printed, including buoyancy levels, maximum HP and loads.

For more information and for a copy of Edition 3 of the ABP Standard, visit NMSC web site at www.nmsc.gov.au and follow the links to the ABP page.

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