

Captain's Pre-Launch Safety Briefing

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Captain's Welcome

“Alright, folks, welcome aboard! We’re going to have an awesome day out on Lake Martin. Before we head out, I need everyone’s attention for a couple of minutes. As captain of this boat, my #1 job is to make sure every single one of us comes back to this dock safe and sound. So, let’s quickly go over the rules of the road.”

1. The Most Important Thing: Life Jackets (PFDs)

“First, life jackets. We have more than enough for everyone on board.”

- **Kids:** “Alabama law is crystal clear. Any child **under 8 years old** has to wear a USCG-approved life jacket, zipped up and buckled, *at all times* while this boat is moving. This is non-negotiable.”
- **Adults:** “You’ll find all the adult-sized vests stowed right here [point to the storage locker]. You aren’t required to wear one, but I want every single one of you to know where they are. If you’re not a strong swimmer, or if you’d just feel more comfortable, please put one on.”
- **Throwable:** “You see this square cushion? [Hold it up]. This is our throwable flotation device. It is *not* a seat cushion. If someone falls in, this is what we throw to them.”

2. Rules of the Boat (While We’re Moving)

“This is a fast boat, and the water can be unpredictable. I have a few firm rules when the engine is on.”

1. **The “One Hand for the Boat” Rule.** “This is an old sailor’s rule and a great one. Any time you are standing or moving around, even when we’re idling, please try to keep *one hand on a fixed part of the boat*—a grab rail, the windshield frame, or the tower. It keeps you stable.”
2. **Everyone Needs a Seat When Planing.** When we are about to speed up to bring the boat onto plane I will say loudly, for all to hear “Coming up!”, which means I will be increasing speed in order to bring the boat onto plane. At this command, everyone needs to be in a proper, cushioned seat. No sitting on the edge of the boat, on the engine cover [point to the sun pad], or on the swim platform while we’re underway.

3. **My “WAKE!” Command.** “Lake Martin is a big lake, and we will cross wakes from other boats. I’ll do my best to slow down, but sometimes a wave can surprise us. If you hear me call out ”**WAKE!**” or ”**CHOP!**” that is your signal to **immediately sit down** in the nearest seat. This is the #1 way we prevent falls.”
4. **Arms and Legs Inside.** “Especially when we’re coming up to a dock. Never, *ever* use your hands or feet to stop the boat. That’s what these fenders are for.”
5. **The Propeller is the Danger.** “When this engine is on, even at idle, the propeller is extremely dangerous. We have a simple rule: **Engine off, people in. Engine on, people out.** Nobody gets in the water until I have shut the engine completely off and given the ‘all clear’.”

3. What to Do in an Emergency

“This is the part that will never happen, but we’re going to be ready for it anyway.”

- **Man Overboard!** “If someone falls out of the boat, I need every single person who saw it to point at them. Yell ”**MAN OVERBOARD!**” as loud as you can, and *do not take your eyes off that person*. Just keep pointing. I will handle getting the boat turned around.”
- **Fire!** “We have a new fire extinguisher right here [point to its location]. If you see smoke or fire, yell ”**FIRE!**” and point to it.”
- **First Aid:** “We have a full first-aid kit right here [point to it]. Let me know immediately if you get a cut or feel sick.”

4. The “Maiden Voyage” Part

“Last, this is a new-to-me boat. I’m still learning its personality. Be my extra set of eyes and ears. If you see something in the water or hear a funny noise, sing out.”

“Alright, that’s it! Stow your gear, let’s have some fun.”