



## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

**2017 Wisconsin Act 163**  
[2017 Senate Bill 69]

**Requirements for Operating a  
Motorboat While Towing a  
Person on Water Skis**

Prior law generally prohibited the operation of a motorboat while towing a person on water skis, aquaplane, or similar device, without a competent person in the boat, in addition to the operator, who is in a position to observe the progress of the person being towed. A person is considered “competent” if the person can in fact observe the person being towed and relay any signals to the operator. The second competent person is sometimes referred to as a “spotter.”

2017 Wisconsin Act 163 generally authorizes the operation of a motorboat towing a person on water skis, aquaplane, or similar device, if either of the following apply: (1) there is a competent spotter in the boat; or (2) the boat is equipped with a mirror that provides a wide field of vision to the rear.

However, the Act authorizes certain municipalities to enact ordinances to prohibit the operation of a boat without a spotter. Specifically, under the Act, a town, village, or city may enact such an ordinance if both of the following criteria apply:

- The ordinance applies to an inland lake that has a statutorily authorized water safety patrol unit.
- The relevant water safety patrol unit biennially performs at least 1,500 hours of enforcement or search and rescue activities on the lake, as determined by the Department of Natural Resources.

**Effective date:** March 30, 2018

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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.wisconsin.gov>.