

## 5 Must Haves Boat Rental Operators Need for Inexperienced Boat Renters

by Robin G. Coles

In 2020 the world came to a halt as we knew it. This thing called Covid was taking over the world. Everyone had to quarantine. Businesses sent nonessential employees home to work. Children went to school on their computers. Everyone felt trapped or bored. No more hanging with friends or co-workers. This originally hurt boaters because they love to party at the yacht clubs, sailing centers and hang on the boats.

2021 saw lots of people taking to the water because they soon realized it was a sport they could do as a family. It's outside which means no masks and it allows them the freedom to live a little. Only problem is that most new boaters have no experience.

Jonathan decides to extend his business trip and brings his family of five with him for vacation. His wife, Nicole, loves the idea of hosting a picnic on an island and knows the only way to get there is renting a boat. This is perfect because it allows them to enjoy the boating lifestyle with little responsibility. One problem, though. There are more boaters on the water; like Nicole's inexperience and her husband's little experience. She searches the web and finds your shop. Are you prepared for her?

Here are five key essentials she'll depend on you for:

1. Lifejackets – There's five of them ranging in age from two-years to 85. Nicole is a good swimmer; however, she'll want to make sure you have clean lifejackets for everyone on board. Not to mention, a throwable in case something goes wrong.
2. Insurance – Always cautious, Jonathan has requested to make sure someone has towing insurance. It doesn't matter if it's with Towboat US or Sea Tow. Anything can happen. He doesn't want to be one of the statistics he reads about. Boaters running aground, running out of gas, man overboard, etc.
3. Safety cards – A friend of Nicole's mother told her there should be a notebook on the boat somewhere for them to read up on how to handle the boat, turn the engine on/off, work the head, etc.
4. Working VHF radio/GPS – For some reason people believe their cell phones work great out on the water. It's not always the case. You'll need to reinforce how to use the VHF radio, make sure they know to release the button after they speak to hear the other person. Walk them through how to turn on the GPS system in case of an emergency.
5. Fire Extinguishers – Recently the United States Coast Guard (USCG) released an update regarding fire extinguishers. The new law goes into effect April 20, 2022. If your boat's fire extinguisher is older than 12 years, you must remove it from service. These same fire extinguishers must be "Marine Type – USCG Approved" with Underwriters Labs (UL) stamp of approval.

As you see, Nicole has done her homework on what to look for regarding renting a boat. Other renters may not take the time to do this. Either way, it behooves you to take care of them before hand than have the USCG board their boat because of a problem, leave the boaters stranded and costing you lots of fines.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documens/2021/10/22/2021-22578/fire-protection-for-recreational-vessels>