



A Northwest Tradition

A guide to skippers and crew on how to plan for and participate in the Northwest's preeminent Winter event.



Minimum Requirements

- All vessels must meet the minimum Coast Guard standards for the size of their vessel.
 - Required number of Personal Floatation Devices (PFD's) and throw devices.
- All Skippers (including backup skippers) must have Boater Safety Cards.
- All vessels must have a VHF radio.
- All vessels must have a copy of their insurance policy aboard.
- All boats must be able to do 6 knots.

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Safety is #1

- Every time we take our boats out on the water, we are operating in a dangerous environment. This is particularly true when operating at night.
- Err on the side of safety. Take no risks.
- As captain, you are responsible for the safety and conduct of your vessel, your crew and your passengers.
 - This responsibility extends from the parking lot to your boat, and back.
 - We're also responsible for the behavior of our guests.

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Safety is #1

- We operate in a cold and potentially icy environment.
- Be aware of icy docks and decks.
- Encourage the adult use of PFDs.
 - All children under the age of 14 are required to wear PFDs from ramp to ramp, and at all times aboard your Christmas Ship.
- Dress for the weather (layer up).



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Safety is #1

- If you lose the lights on your display, announce on the radio that you have had a blackout.
 - “xxx has a blackout”
 - Turn your navigation lights on
- The parade leaders will make the call when conditions are too hazardous to start or continue the parade.
 - You’re still the captain of your boat – don’t go out in conditions that you’re not comfortable with.

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Problems and Emergencies

- In the case of a breakdown of any sort, communicate your problem with the leader.
 - State the nature of the issue, your boat name and your decoration (easier to spot that way), and your location.
 - Sheriff, USCG and Auxiliary boats are there to help us if we request that help.
 - If your problem affects the safety of the fleet, move out of line if possible, and/or clearly state your intentions so the boats behind you know what to expect.
 - Other boats around the one with problems should assist if appropriate.

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Problems and Emergencies

- If there is an emergency with the crew or passengers:
 - Immediately make this known to the leader and/or the emergency vessels there to assist us (Sheriff/USCG/Auxiliary).
 - In case of a man-overboard, immediately get and maintain a spotlight on the person, and call very clearly for immediate assistance.
 - Designate someone to keep their eye on that person, and another to toss a floatation device.
- **DO NOT GO IN THE WATER TO HELP.**



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Obstacles in the Water

- The rivers quite often, particularly at this time of year, have debris floating downriver and deadheads sticking out of the water.
 - The leader, if he sees them, will call out the obstacle.
 - Stay alert at all times, the leader may not be the first to see an obstacle.
 - If possible, light up the obstacle with a spotlight for the boat behind you to see.
 - Take care not to blind the skipper behind you with your light.
 - Call out the obstacle on the VHF if that's appropriate.
 - Don't let this get out of hand – not everyone needs to call it out and jam up the VHF.



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Displays

- Displays do not need to be complex
 - Simple quite often is better
- Type of lights
 - LED lights use less power
 - Rope lights are easier to form into patterns
- Attachment
 - Plan on wind and wave action working on your display.
 - Attach it securely.

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Displays

- Don't obstruct your view outside.
 - Lights placed in front can create vision problems
 - Consider the glare that lights can create on your windshield.
- Mark the stern of your vessel
 - It can be difficult to see the boat in front of you unless the stern is marked clearly.
 - Consider subtle lighting for the back so that your stern is clearly marked.



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Displays

- Never forget you're dealing with AC power!
 - Ensure that all lighting and cords are in good shape.
 - Use Ground Fault Interrupters (GFIs)
 - Secure the power end of the cords out of the weather
- Don't overload your system.
 - Limit your light load to a reasonable fraction of your power capability.
 - Blown breakers and brownouts are hard to deal with in the dark while aboard a pitching boat.



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Power Supplies

- Will you be using a genset or inverter.
 - Inverters often mean limited power.
- Portable generators must be secured to the deck of the boat.
 - Ensure that you have enough fuel for the length of the parade.
 - Don't fuel the generator while the generator is hot.
 - Modifying the fuel supply system is not recommended.



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Power Supplies

- Have carbon monoxide (CO) detectors onboard.
 - CO detectors in cabins save lives.
 - Ensure that your generator is properly ventilated and not placed near windows or doors.
- Keep an extra fire extinguisher close at hand for portable generators.
 - Make sure it's the proper fire extinguisher (2A10BC) for your fuel.
 - Make sure the crew knows how to properly deal with gasoline/diesel fires.



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Planning for your Guests

- Decide on the maximum number of guests.
 - How many can safely be on your boat?
 - Do you have PFD's (life jackets) for ALL of your guests?
 - Is there room to move around freely, without impeding the operation of the ship?
 - Will guests be a distraction to the skipper or crew?
 - The operation of the ship needs to be of prime importance – from maintaining awareness to listening to the VHF radio.



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Planning for your Guests

- Will children be allowed aboard?
 - Children, depending on their age, quite often require extra attention.
 - Parents or guardians must maintain a constant vigilance over their children.
 - Children can become bored rather easily on these long runs, sometimes necessitating a distraction to keep them occupied.
 - Children under 14 **MUST** wear PFD's from ramp to ramp.
 - Safety of our young guests has to be of prime importance.



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Planning for your Guests

- The parade must start on time.
 - Be very clear to your guests that there is a deadline for them being on board. “The ship leaves the dock no later than 6:30pm.”
 - If you do find yourself detained, inform the parade leader of your ETA so that he/she can fit you in when you catch up with the parade.
 - Don’t scrimp on safety in trying to catch up, get everyone settled before launching off the dock.
 - The parade moves slowly most of the time, there’s always time to catch up.
 - Avoid being in this situation by reiterating the need to your guests to arrive early enough for an orderly departure.

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Planning for your Guests

- Give your guests a complete safety briefing prior to leaving the dock.
 - Location of PFD's, and their use.
 - Cabin exits.
 - Engine/system failures.
 - Staying out of the way of the crew, assisting only if asked.
 - Emergencies.
 - Notifying the skipper or crew immediately of any illness or injury.
 - Stay on the ship unless notified by the skipper to do otherwise.



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Joining the Parade

- Which River? Columbia or Willamette?
 - Larger ships.
 - Wind and wave action on many parts of the Columbia are more easily handled with larger boats.
 - More options for moorage on the Columbia for larger boats.
 - The larger displays that bigger boats sport work better on the Columbia due to the distance from viewing areas.
 - Smaller ships.
 - The ability to dodge debris floating down the Willamette makes a maneuverable boat more desirable.
 - There are many more options for moorage for smaller boats on the Willamette than there are for larger boats.
- Boats of all sizes are welcome on either river.

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Joining the Parade

- Be alert for commercial traffic
 - The rivers are busy places. Know how to recognize lights at night.
- Make sure you're on the proper VHF Channel
 - Columbia River fleet uses channel 68
 - Willamette River fleet uses channel 71
 - Set your radio to "Low Power"
 - Know the signs of a stuck microphone.
- Keep radio traffic down to the minimum necessary for the safe operation of the fleet.
 - Either switch to another channel to chat, or use your cell phone.
 - Don't stay off frequency too long, as the leader will be giving frequent direction for maneuvers.



Joining the Parade

- Pick a spot in line.
 - The leader and his immediate support boat will take the first and second places in line.
 - The last place in line is also reserved.
 - Listen to your VHF radio for changes to the line up. The leader will often call to form two parallel lines.
- Avoid “rubber banding”.
 - As the parade begins to move, gaps will expand and contract with the different acceleration rates of the various boats. Try to anticipate starting and stopping by watching the boat in front of you, AND the boats in front of her.

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Joining the Parade

- Follow the leader.
 - Unless directed otherwise by the leader, the parade formation is single file.
 - Parallel lines may at times be formed at the discretion of the leader.
 - If the line starts moving into a hazardous position, move your boat to safer waters and announce to the fleet what you're doing.
- Use onboard electronics.
 - Use your chartplotter (if available) to maintain your position in the channel.
 - Use your radar (if available) to stay clear of obstructions.

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Joining the Parade

- Use care around floating homes and docks.
 - We're guests in these waters. Avoid "waking" our spectators.
- Maintain proper distance from buoys and markers.
 - Always keep in mind that the current can and will push you down on a buoy – and the buoys seldom lose in this situation.
- Observe "No Wake" zones.

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Joining the Parade

- Maneuvers
 - The parade leader will make all the calls to initiate a maneuver.
 - The captain of the ship is responsible for knowing if he or she can safely complete the maneuver.
 - If it's not safe for your boat, announce on the VHF that you will be holding position, and drift with the fleet until the completion of the maneuver.
 - Come to a stop prior to starting a curtsey or cartwheel.

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Joining the Parade

- Maneuvers
 - Curtsey
 - Cartwheel
 - Circle
 - Circle in a Circle
 - Figure 8
 - Ribbon Candy

Maintain your spacing at all times.

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Ending the Parade

- The leader will call the end of the parade and the time to disband.
- Observe an orderly departure.
 - Don't create a wake as you leave.
 - Know which direction the various boats will be heading.
- Wind and waves may make docking difficult – don't be afraid to ask for help.
 - If helping others, always keep in mind that the docks may be slippery. Exercise due caution.



Ending the Parade

- Docking
 - When at guest docks (St. Helens, Riverplace, etc.), observe the order of departure and return in the reverse of that manner.
 - It may be necessary to dock in a specific order so that all boats can fit in.
 - Go back to the spot you used prior to leaving. Don't take someone else's spot.
 - If you have maneuvering problems, or otherwise need assistance, ask for help on the VHF and wait for that help to arrive before attempting to dock.



Community Support

- Christmas Ship participants are honored with a broad base of community support.
 - Free or reduced rate moorage
 - Fuel discounts
 - Complimentary meals
 - Reduced rate repairs and haul-outs
 - Help with putting displays on boats.
 - A night on the Portland Spirit

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Summary

- The whole point of the Christmas Ship season is to get out there and entertain our fellow citizens, while at the same time having a great time doing it.
- Thanks for coming and agreeing to participate, you're soon to become part of a select group of boaters, and part of a grand tradition.



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**Welcome to the
Christmas Ship
Parade!**

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