



July 4th Boat Parade Captain's Safety Instructions

Saturday, July 4, 2026

Staging Begins: 6:00 PM | Parade Begins: 6:15 PM

Boat Launch Locations

Participants may launch from any public boat ramp; however, the following locations are recommended:

- Davis Islands Boat Ramp (*preferred option*)
- Lowry Park Boat Ramp (*preferred option*)
- Ballast Point Boat Ramp
- Williams Park Boat Ramp

Please allow sufficient time for launching, parking, and transit to the staging area at the southern tip of Harbour Island. All vessels should be in position and ready to begin lining up by 6:00 PM.

Boat Number Pickup

- Boat entry numbers not distributed at the Captain's Party may be picked up beginning July 1 at the Yacht StarShip Ticket Booth, 603 Channelside Drive.
- Ticket booth hours are 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM daily through parade day. Numbers must be picked up no later than 4:00 PM on July 4.
- For safety reasons, boat numbers will not be distributed on the water.

Entry Numbers and Parade Identification

- All boats must display their assigned entry numbers on both the port and starboard sides of the vessel.
- Display your red Friends of the Riverwalk flag prominently at the bow so spectators and judges can easily identify parade participants.
- Boats will stage at the southern tip of Harbour Island and southward from that location.
- Boats do not need to remain in numerical order. Entry numbers are for identification purposes only and do not determine your position in the parade.
- Small boats that can safely pass under the bridges will lead the parade.
- Larger vessels that cannot pass under the bridges will be positioned at the end of the parade.

Parade Schedule and Route

- Please arrive at the southern tip of Harbour Island by 6:00 PM and begin lining up.
- The Small Boat Parade (vessels under 12 feet of air draft) will begin at 6:15 PM from the lighthouse at the southern tip of Harbour Island.
- Large vessels (12 feet or greater air draft) that cannot navigate the river route will begin at approximately 6:45 PM from the lighthouse in Seddon Channel, following the small boat parade.

- A parade route map with estimated viewing times is attached. Please note that the route has changed this year.
- No bridge openings will occur during the parade.
- Recreational vessels must remain at least 500 yards from any cruise ship in transit.
- Two law enforcement vessels displaying flashing lights will lead the parade. Additional law enforcement vessels will be positioned at the midpoint and end of the parade route to assist with safety and coordination.

Other Event Highlights

The July 4th Boat Parade is part of Liberty by the Bay, Tampa's annual Independence Day celebration presented by the City of Tampa and Friends of the Riverwalk. Additional activities taking place throughout the evening include:

- **Two Water Ski Shows** at the Tampa Convention Center Basin (5:00 PM) and Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park (6:15PM) featuring professional water ski performers.
- **Blessing of the Fleet** at Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park as participating vessels pass through the parade route (7:30 PM).
- **Liberty by the Bay Festival** at Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park featuring live entertainment, food vendors, family activities, and community exhibitors (4:00 PM – 9:30 PM).
- **Drone Show** at Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park (9:00 PM).
- **Four Fireworks Displays** throughout downtown Tampa, including displays near the Tampa Convention Center (9:00 PM), Armature Works (9:00 PM), Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park (9:15 PM), and the American Victory Ship (9:30 PM).

Important: All parade participants must clear the Tampa Convention Center Basin and waters adjacent to Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park by 8:00 PM to allow fireworks barges and safety vessels to move into position.

Judging, Trophies, and Prizes

Best Decorated Boat

Judging stations will be located at:

- Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park (youth judges from MacDill Air Force Base)
- American Victory Ship (veterans and volunteers)
- Armature Works

Judges will award the Best Decorated Boat Trophy and prize package.

People's Choice Award

New this year, spectators can vote for their favorite boat using QR codes posted at various locations along the parade route. The winning vessel will receive the People's Choice Trophy and prize package.

Additional Awards

Several additional prizes will also be awarded. To remain eligible, participants must complete the entire parade route and pass all judging locations.

Winners will be announced the evening of the parade on:

- www.thetampariverwalk.com
- www.facebook.com/thetampariverwalk

Prize Eligibility Rules

- Boats must be registered and display their assigned entry numbers to be eligible for judging and prizes.
- Judges must be able to clearly see your entry number as you pass.
- When safe to do so, pass close enough to judging stations for judges to identify your vessel.
- Parade marshals will be stationed throughout the route, including at the American Victory Ship, Tampa Convention Center, Davis Islands (south end of Channel Drive), Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park, and Water Works Park (small boats only), to verify route completion.
- Only boats that complete the entire parade route will be eligible for trophies and prizes.
- To arrange trophy or prize pickup, contact Casey Young at cyoung@thetampariverwalk.com

Safety and Operating Instructions

- Maintain a single-file formation whenever practical.
- The parade will travel at approximately 4 to 5 mph.
- Keep a safe distance between vessels while minimizing unnecessary gaps.
- Do not throw beads, candy, promotional items, or any other objects from your vessel. Throwing objects creates a safety hazard for spectators and other boaters and is prohibited.
- If safe to do so, pass slower vessels such as eBoats and pedal boats to help maintain parade flow.
- Large gaps can cause spectators to believe the parade has ended, so please help keep the procession moving smoothly.
- Maintain a steady course and speed. Do not zig-zag or make sudden course changes.
- Stay clear of commercial traffic and follow all navigation and boating safety regulations.
- Follow instructions from parade marshals, law enforcement officers, and designated event officials at all times.
- Tampa Police and Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Marine Units will be patrolling the route and assisting participants.
- The parade may be temporarily delayed for commercial vessel traffic. Remain alert and follow instructions from law enforcement and parade marshals.
- Sailboats and other vessels with an air draft of 12 feet or greater will enter the parade from the south end of Seddon Channel after the small boats have passed.
- The Blessing of the Fleet will take place at Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park. Please continue moving through the blessing area and do not stop your vessel.
- All vessels must clear the Tampa Convention Center Basin and the waters adjacent to Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park by 8:00 PM to allow fireworks barges to be moved into position.
- After clearing the restricted areas, vessels are welcome to remain on the water and enjoy the fireworks from approved viewing areas outside the safety zones established by law enforcement and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Required Safety Equipment

- Captains are responsible for ensuring their vessel is equipped with all safety equipment required by the U.S. Coast Guard and Florida law.
- All passengers should be briefed on the location of life jackets and emergency equipment before departure.

Alcohol and Safe Boating

- Boating under the influence is illegal and will not be tolerated.
- Captains are responsible for the safe operation of their vessel and the conduct of their passengers throughout the event.

Decorative Lighting and Decorations

- Participants are encouraged to decorate and illuminate their vessels in patriotic themes.
- All decorations, lighting, generators, and other equipment must be securely attached and may not interfere with the safe operation or navigation of the vessel.

Weather

- The parade will take place rain or shine.
- In the event of severe weather, lightning, or unsafe boating conditions, participants should monitor their email and Friends of the Riverwalk social media channels for updates.
- Any decision regarding delays, route modifications, or cancellation will be made in coordination with law enforcement and public safety officials.

Day-of-Parade Contacts

On-Water Contact

TJ Couch, Lead Boat: Pirate Water Taxi Latitude Lindsey II, VHF Channel 8, Cell: (813) 360-1101

Emergency Communications

VHF Channel 16 will be monitored throughout the event for emergencies.

Land Contacts

MaryBeth Williams, Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park, (727) 234-3858

Casey Young, Jackson's Bistro, (813) 738-1490

Thank you for participating in the July 4th Boat Parade. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us provide a safe, enjoyable, and memorable Independence Day celebration for the Tampa Bay community.