



# Seaplane Operations

*A quick-reference guide for public policymakers*

## ***What are seaplanes?***

Seaplanes are simply aircraft equipped with floatation gear that are designed to take off and land from the water's surface. While on the water, seaplanes are essentially boats.

## ***What are seaplanes used for?***

Seaplanes are used for a wide variety of purposes. For example, civil service applications include medivac, fire fighting, wildlife management, and patrol duties. Seaplanes are particularly useful for transporting people and supplies to remote areas otherwise inaccessible by air and not easily reached by conventional modes of transportation. Seaplanes are also popular among recreational users.

## ***How do seaplanes interact with other waterway users?***

The record shows that seaplanes do not pose a significant hazard to other waterway users. In a recent 13-year study of seaplane operations based on NTSB accident reports, it was found that only 3 collisions occurred between boats and seaplanes, 2 of which involved fatalities. One of the fatal incidents was a pre-arranged rendezvous. It is extremely rare for a seaplane accident or incident to involve anyone other than the occupants of the seaplane.

## ***What is the environmental impact of seaplanes?***

Negligible, according to a study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Seaplanes have no oily bilge water or sewage discharge, no underwater engine exhaust, propeller, or other underwater protrusions, and seaplanes do not generate a significant wake.

## ***How much noise do seaplanes generate?***

While seaplanes are louder than many other waterway users, the noise a seaplane generates during takeoff and landing is brief and infrequent. Unlike personal watercraft or ski boats, seaplanes are not a source of ongoing background noise. Averaged over time, seaplane operations have a negligible impact on noise pollution.

## ***How do I learn more?***

The Seaplane Pilots Association is happy to provide additional information and support at no charge to anyone interested in exploring seaplane issues. Our goal is to foster informed decision making with respect to regulation of seaplane operations. The association can be reached at:

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