

CAPACITY, STABILITY, AND SAFETY

I guess the definition of a “small boat” for capacity calculation is the key to the discussion in the article. My Sisu 26 is about 25.3 feet long with a beam of about 9.34 feet. If I use the formula of length times beam divided by 15, I get a capacity of 15 people! There is not enough room on the boat for that many people if everyone is inside the gunwales.

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The “Capacity, Stability, and Safety” article gives the formula for boat capacity in persons as “length times beam, divided by 15.” The article then states that the formula is not applicable to large boats. However, the formula may not be applicable to small boats, either. My 22-foot cuddy has a beam of 8.5 feet. Applying the formula rates this small boat at 12.5 persons. According to the capacity plate, my boat is rated for eight persons. My experience with eight persons aboard tells me that 12 persons would make the boat a real handful unless the water was smooth and everyone was in the middle of the boat and as low as possible. In other words, an emergency-only situation. I hope that this formula does not mislead anyone.

Ted Fautz

By email

Chris Landers responds: *I probably should have been more specific when I said “smaller boat” since there are a couple of different designations used for determining the length cut-off for capacity plate requirements. The formula purports to be valid as a rough guide for boats under 20 feet (the federal cut-off point for capacity plates), which is smaller than either boat above. Both comments are well taken, though, and demonstrate the key point in the article – for the layman (like myself), determining boat capacity is not straightforward and one-size-fits-all formulas don’t work well.*