

## BOATING TO CANADA? TAKE A CELLPHONE

**I**N AUGUST 2012, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) seized two boats and a personal watercraft belonging to two New York men who'd gone to Ontario's Port Dalhousie. Earlier last year, a fisherman in the St. Lawrence River was boarded by the CBSA, which seized his boat as well. The offense in each case was the same — failure to properly check in with Border Services after entering Canadian waters — but their defenses were also similar: The boaters thought they'd done everything they needed to do. In all three cases, the boats in question were seized on the spot, and the men had to pay a \$1,000 fine per vessel (including the PWC) to get them back. Senator Charles Schumer of New York has asked for reviews of all three cases, and the CBSA has said they'll look into them.

### CROSSING INTO CANADA

"It is no different than if you arrive at the land border or if you arrive by air," says Alex Attfield, CBSA's Director of Traveller Border Programs. "You're expected to make yourself known and allow CBSA to make a determination on your admissibility into the country."

For a boater, that means reporting directly to one of CBSA's 439 designated Marine Reporting sites ([www.cbsa.gc.ca/contact/listing/indexpages/indextype39-e.html](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/contact/listing/indexpages/indextype39-e.html)). Many of them, located at yacht clubs and marinas, consist of no more than a special telephone, a sort of border-services hotline that will connect you to an agent. Assuming that goes well, that's it. Welcome to Canada.



"Once you enter Canadian waters, there's an obligation to report," Attfield says. "But we appreciate that if someone isn't intending on landing, but just want to enjoy our Canadian waters, enjoy the scenery, we provide a means of making a call by cellphone to the same telephone reporting centers."

So, if you're, say, in the middle of Lake Ontario, tacking back and forth across the international boundary, you need to call Border Services when you first enter Canadian waters and let them know. That requires a cellphone, and more than that, it requires a cellphone that works wherever the border is. If you can't make contact by cell, you'll need to head directly to a reporting site (or, presumably, stay in U.S. waters).

There are a number of programs designed to make it easier on frequent travelers, including the joint U.S.-Canadian NEXUS card. For a \$50 application fee, the card requires an interview, as well as approval from both

countries, but it enables the bearer to check in by phone when crossing the border.

### ... AND BACK AGAIN

For re-entry to the United States, the process is similar to reporting to Canada. If you have a NEXUS card, a phone call will cover it, and Customs and Border Protection's website lists the phone numbers you can call. If you aren't a member of NEXUS (or a similar program), you'll need to report in person to a regular port of entry or to an inspection station equipped with a video phone.

These are the rules as described on the CBSA website, clarified by a CBSA official over the phone to BoatU.S., and again in an email from a CBSA spokeswoman. In each of the three boat-seizure cases mentioned above, the boaters say that they thought they were following the rules. So before you go, check the relevant websites and call them if you have any questions. — C.L.