



HOT NEWS

Boating Season is Here - Please be Safe

Boating continues to become more popular every day, especially during the spring and summer months. Always remember, safety is the most important thing, then fun; but you can do both at the same time!

Safety begins with the knowledge of how to use a number of different pieces of equipment on board a boat. Life jackets and flotation devices are the most important piece of safety equipment for anyone on a boat. Also, having emergency signaling devices on board is a must, be sure that aerial flares are within their expiration dates and that strobe lights are in working condition with new batteries.

Weather is always a major factor when boating; if high winds are in the forecast, the waves can make it next to impossible to navigate. Knowing the forecast before you head out will help you make the decision to head out on the water or to stay on shore.

Before departing for a day of boating be sure you check the mechanical condition of your boat's motor; oil level, fuel level, batteries, etc. It is always good to have tools on board in the event you need to make a minor repair. In the event you do have a mechanical issue, have a paddle on board to get you close to shore and an anchor to keep you from drifting into dangerous rocks.

Lastly, it is important to let someone at home know your plan for the day, a description of your boat and what time to expect you back or at your final destination.

Safe Boating Tips

1. **Be Weather-Wise** - Always check local weather conditions before departure; TV and radio forecasts can be a good source of information. If you notice darkening clouds, volatile and rough changing winds or sudden drops in temperature, play it safe by getting off the water.

2. **Follow a Pre-Departure Checklist** - Proper boating safety includes being prepared for any possibility on the water. Following a pre-departure checklist is the best way to make sure no boating safety rules or precautions have been overlooked or forgotten.
3. **Use Common Sense** - One of the most important parts of boating safety is to use your common sense. This means operating at a safe speed at all times (especially in crowded areas), staying alert at all times and steering clear of large vessels and watercraft that can be restricted in their ability to stop or turn. Also, be respectful of buoys and other navigational aids, all of which have been placed there to ensure your own safety.
4. **Designate an Assistant Skipper** - Make sure more than one person on board is familiar with all aspects of your boat's handling, operations, and general boating safety. If the primary navigator is injured or incapacitated in any way, it's important to make sure someone else can follow the proper boating safety rules to get everyone else back to shore.
5. **Develop a Float Plan** - Whether you choose to inform a family member or staff at your local marina, always be sure to let someone else know your float plan. This should include where you're going and how long you're going to be gone.
6. **Make Proper Use of Lifejackets** - Did you know that the majority of drowning victims are the result of boaters not wearing their lifejackets? Make sure that your family and friends aren't part of this statistic by assigning and fitting each member of your onboard team with a life jacket prior to departure. Wear it!
7. **Avoid Alcohol** - Practice boating safety at all times by saving the alcohol for later. The probability of being involved in a boating accident doubles when alcohol is involved and studies have shown that the effects of alcohol are exacerbated by sun and wind.
8. **Learn to Swim** - If you're going to be in and around the water, proper boating safety includes knowing how to swim. Local organizations, such as the American Red Cross and others, offer training for all ages and abilities. Check to see what classes are offered in your area.
9. **Take a Boating Course** - Beginning boaters and experienced experts alike need to be familiar with the boating safety rules of operation. Boater education requirements vary by state; however, some require validated completion of at least one boating safety course. Regardless of your individual state's requirements, it's always important to be educated and prepared for every circumstance that might arise. You can learn boating safety rules by taking a local community course or online course to help educate yourself.
10. **Consider a Free Vessel Safety Check** - Take advantage of a free vessel safety check from the US Coast Guard. They offer complimentary boat examinations to verify the presence and condition of certain safety equipment required by state and federal regulations. Free of charge, they'll provide a specialist to check out your boat and make helpful boating safety tips and recommendations. They also offer virtual online safety checks as well.

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reflective address sign

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