

Coast Guard urges boating safety this summer across PNW

May 27, 2022



The Coast Guard urges boaters to be ready this National Safe Boating Week as summer nears the Pacific Northwest.

This year National Safe Boating Week takes place Saturday through May 27. National Safe Boating Week promotes safe boating practices for recreational boaters in order to reduce preventable accidents and deaths. The Coast Guard encourages boaters to become safer, always ready boaters this 2022 boating season.

As air temperatures rise with the arrival of summer, be advised that water temperatures in the Pacific Northwest remain dangerously cold.

In 2020 in the U.S., 86% of drowning victims who died were not wearing a life jacket. Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents. Where the primary cause was known, alcohol was listed as the leading factor in 18% of deaths.

Factors that contributed most to fatal accidents were: failure to wear a life jacket, operator inattention or inexperience, alcohol and drug use, hazardous waters, weather conditions, and navigation rule violations.

Don't forget: life jackets are required by law to be on all vessels, including kayaks, canoes and paddleboards. Federal law requires that all children ages 13 and under wear a life jacket.

Below are steps you can take to ensure a fun time out on the water this boating season:

- Check the weather. Check the marine weather forecast prior to setting out on the water. **Boating Safety Tips and Resources (weather.gov)** Check It!

- Wear protective clothing to help reduce exposure. Boaters and paddlers should always wear the proper protective clothing for the water temperatures they are recreating in (such as a dry suit). The waters of the Pacific Northwest are deceptively colder than the air temperature, especially in the early spring and summer months. This risk is not often recognized by inexperienced paddlers until they find themselves in the frigid water after capsizing or falling overboard.

- Wear a life jacket. The Coast Guard urges all boaters and paddlers to wear (not stow/bring) a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Donning a life jacket is much harder once you're in the water, especially if you're fatigued or injured. Wearing an improperly fitted life jacket is just as deadly as not wearing one at all. Wear It!

- Identify your paddle craft with an "If Found" sticker. Placing an "if found, please call" sticker on your paddle craft, with your contact information, can not only get your craft returned to you quickly should it accidentally drift away, but it can also help rescuers to determine the type of response needed. If you're looking for stickers you can contact your local marine law enforcement agency, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power and Sail Squadron, or local Coast Guard unit. Mark It!

- Take a boating safety course. Research show that boaters believe they are boating safely if they have proper equipment and training, though statistics show that safe boating is really a matter of their own behavior. Take It!

- Get a Vessel Safety Check. Get a free Vessel Safety Check inspection from the Coast Guard Auxiliary. VSCs are offered by experienced members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. A VSC is your best way of learning about problems that might put you in violation of state or federal laws or, worse, create danger for you or your passengers on the water. Get It!

Have a Courtesy Vessel Safety Check at Your Boat!! (uscgaux.info)

- Always boat sober. Never boat under the influence. It is illegal to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents.

These simple steps can ensure you are prepared to enjoy the water safely and responsibly.

