

Coast Guard, partners urge paddle craft labeling, owner responsibility

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The Coast Guard and its Washington and Oregon boating safety agency partners urge the labeling of paddle craft and owner responsibility on the waters of the Pacific Northwest.

Reports of unmanned and adrift paddle craft divert federal, state and local response boat and air crews on hundreds of dangerous and costly searches that turn out to be false alarms. Since 2016, 13th Coast Guard District aircraft and vessels have launched on 746 individual cases of vessel reported capsized and adrift.

All were unmanned and adrift, not resulting in an actual distress. Each case represents a minimum cost of approximately \$40,000 to the taxpayers to respond and conduct searches for possible persons in the water. For the 13th District, this accounts for an operational cost of approximately \$29,840,000.00.

The Coast Guard treats every distress call and report of an unmanned paddle craft as if a real life is at stake.

"Unmanned adrift vessel search and rescue responses are the No. 4 response activity in the Coast Guard nationwide," said Dan Shipman, recreational boating program specialist for the 13th District. "By properly securing your small craft, on the beach, dock or your vessel from being set adrift, you're not only saving taxpayers' dollars, you are helping protect your property, the environment and possibly the life of someone who is actually in need of assistance."

The Coast Guard urges the public to do the following three things:

Help us help you find your kayak. Mark It! Take responsibility for your paddle craft by labeling with an 'If Found' sticker. This label allows responders to confirm if someone is actually in trouble and collect information to help search efforts.

Take responsibility for recovering your paddle craft. Unmanned and adrift kayaks, canoes, dinghies and rowboats often cause hazards to navigation in the waterway and increase the level of risk and fatigue on response crews tasked to find the owners associated with the unmanned paddle craft.

Do your part to prevent false alarms. First responders deployed in search of unmanned paddle craft divert resources away from actual lives in distress.

For more information on paddle craft labeling, contact your local Coast Guard Auxiliary and visit iffoundsticker@d13cgaux.net to get free "If Found" stickers to help label your paddle craft

To get a free vessel safety check – "I want a vessel safety check"- go to <http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=V-DEPT&category=i-want-a-vsc>.

Let's pull together to paddle smart and paddle responsibly.