

Marine patrols urge waterway safety

April 7, 2022



Marine patrol members across Oregon and the Oregon Marine Board are urging safety as people head to local waterways for recreation this spring and summer.

In the coming weeks more people will be pulling out their boats from winter storage in preparation for launch in the waters of this state.

Rivers and the Pacific Ocean (even the surf zone) are the most inherently dangerous, according to the Oregon Marine Board.

It's important to always scout ahead, mind the tide, decide on the safest route and expect the unexpected, the Oregon Marine Board states on its website, adding that most accidents and fatalities are due to falling overboard, collisions, and operator error/misjudgment, and reckless behavior.

The state marine board urges boaters and watercraft users to ask themselves the following questions.

- Think about what you would do if you fell overboard. Could you self-rescue?

- What do you do if you're caught in a snag?
- What do you do if your boat swings around and the anchor line is near the prop?

"Thinking is a necessity in boating. Act with intention. Be smart about your activity and understand how your activity impacts those around you," the Oregon Marine Board website reads.

The Oregon State Marine Board contracts with 32 county sheriff's offices and the Oregon State Police to enforce boating laws and help patrol Oregon's waterways. The Marine Board provides state-of-the-art, hands-on training for marine law enforcement and provides equipment, gear, and funding for patrol boats.

The following are suggestions from the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office which can contribute to your safety and add to your boating pleasure.

- Know the legal requirements for your size vessel. Safety equipment must be accessible and in working condition.
- Wear your life jackets!! 85% of the boating fatalities could be avoided by wearing a personal floatation device. Remember it won't save your life if you don't wear it.
- Have children and non-swimmers wear a personal floatation device. Each device should be of suitable size for the intended wearer and fit securely. 90% of those who die in boating accidents drown.
- Be prepared and carry extra equipment such as a bailer (bucket), anchor, first aid kit, visual distress signal, tool kit, flashlight with extra batteries, and a cell phone.
- Don't over load your boat. Follow the recommendations on the capacity plate of your boat.
- Capsizing, sinking, and falling overboard account for 70% of boating fatalities.
- If your boat should capsize, your best chance for survival and rescue is to stay with the boat. Pull as much of your body out of the water as possible to preserve body warmth.
- Hypothermia can be a killer; keep your body dry and warm as possible.
- It is illegal to operate any boat while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Use the designated driver concept; a sober skipper is a must.
- Stressors such as exposure to sun, wind, cold water, vibration, noise, and alcohol all affect your ability to react.
- Don't run out of fuel. Practice the 1/3 rule: 1/3 for trip, 1/3 for return, and 1/3 for spare.
- Fuel vapors are heavier than air and collect in the bilge. Never fill gasoline cans in the boat.
- When anchoring, use a line that is several times longer than the depth of the water and never anchor by the stern.

- File a float plan. Let someone know where you're boating and when you'll be back.
- You're responsible for damage or injury caused by your wake. Exercise caution around other boaters and docks.
- By state law, all persons operating a motorboat greater than 10 horsepower are required to carry a Boater Education Card. The card shows that the operator has passed an approved boater education course or equivalency exam.

*For more information about boating in Oregon, visit the Oregon State Marine Board web site:
www.boatoregon.com.*