

US Coast Guard Message, continued

The danger of alcohol use affects passengers as well as the operator. Over half of all boating fatalities occur when people fall overboard, not from operator error. Higher air temperatures increase the body's absorption of alcohol and its effects are felt more quickly. Alcohol can cause an inner ear disturbance, which makes it impossible for someone suddenly immersed in water to distinguish between up and down. Alcohol also accelerates the onset of hypothermia, which can contribute to accidents and impair chances of survival.

Personal Watercraft (PWC) Operations: It's the operator, stupid! The causal factors in personal watercraft accidents are lack of operator education and poor operator knowledge of the characteristics of their craft, excessive speed for existing conditions, operating in too close proximity to other vessels, people or objects, and inattention while operating. Most states have addressed these issues through education, regulation, and enforcement with a measurable positive effect on accident rates, injuries and fatalities.

Accident data shows that the wearing of life jackets by personal watercraft riders is the main factor responsible for this low fatality rate. Personal watercraft riders epitomize the safety effectiveness of wearing lifejackets.

Despite the intensity of people's feelings about personal watercraft, most of the controversy is really related to nuisance, noise or perceived environmental impacts rather than to true boating safety issues. Our role is to adequately address boating safety factors and ensure all users can have equitable use of our public waterways.

Partnerships: The future and success of Recreational Boating Safety depends on the involvement of several key groups. The Coast Guard will continue to provide national leadership and direct national education efforts, focus on outreach initiatives, create partnerships, improve boat and boating standards, act as the consumer protection service for boats, oversee use and development of new equipment and materials, and act as the clearing house for information. Our Operation BoatSmart effort is an excellent example of this partnering effort.

Similarly, the Coast Guard Auxiliary will continue to perform their traditional role of field RBS experts, conduct general and youth education, be active partners in national promotion and awareness initiatives, and provide active operational support to the Coast Guard.

Marinas will need to become the local focus for boating safety education, boat knowledge and operator training programs, act as accident reporting hubs, and be the primary boating safety promotion and awareness assets within their community.

The Boat manufacturing industry and its associations will become even closer partners in the development of clear and sensible international, national and federal standards of construction, in identification and correction of safety hazards, for improved compliance and in promoting education and enforcement efforts.

The States will continue in their premier role as the operational arm of boating safety enforcement and education. Continued efforts to ensure comity and uniformity of boating laws and regulations will be a key aspect of this partnership.

Boating Organizations, such as the U.S. Power Squadron, the National Safe Boating Council, the National Recreational Boating Safety Coalition, the National Water Safety Congress, Boat U.S. Foundation, etc., are critical partners in taking national programs in education and awareness to the local level to make boating safer for everyone.

Stewardship: Returning the greatest service for each boating dollar spent is a public trust. Congress has passed legislation making the transfer of motorboat fuel tax dollars to the states and the Coast Guard an automatic event, while at the same time increasing the amount of funds available to both. The States will be working to ensure that this increased funding is used to support greater education and awareness efforts, support our Homeland Security/Defense activities, and to provide for more enforcement presence to deter those who continue to not get the message. The Coast Guard will be improving manufacturers compliance with greater oversight and better safety standards, supporting research in boating safety hazard reduction, making program management more effective and efficient, and improving the quality of boating safety materials, goods and services delivered to the public.

Most importantly for all of us to understand is that it is a different world out on the water. Our waterways are not like our nation's highways, with clearly marked lanes of travel, exit and access points, and signals for us to read. Driver predictability, experience and consistency are much lower, and weather makes a bigger difference to safety. Boats are not cars, either in how they handle or in reliability. Boating on our waterways requires greater care, preparation and attention than when we are traveling the highways of America. For those reasons it is important to:

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MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORIES

The membership directories have been distributed. If you failed to receive your copy or would like additional copies, contact the NSBC office. If there are any errors in your listing, we would like to make the appropriate corrections as well as alert the membership to the changes. Please let us know. Thank you.

ACCIDENT REPORTING – VERY IMPORTANT

There is a new poster available that catches the attention of boaters and explains the requirements for accident reporting. This is an ideal poster to put-up at access areas, parks, marinas, boat clubs or any location boaters' visit. There is also a version worded for hospitals and first care facilities. The poster lists the reporting requirement if a boat is involved in a mishap. Posters can be customized with individual state information and who to contact when involved in a boating incident. Posters can be easily downloaded from the NSBC web site or limited copies are available from the NSBC office.

(USCG article continued)

BOAT SMART: Know your boat, the equipment onboard, the Navigation Rules and your Safety Devices. Learn first aid and emergency procedures. Understand the environment and the weather.

BOAT SAFE: Obey the rules of the nautical road, plan your trip or outing, practice courtesy, exercise good judgment, avoid excessive speed and wear your life-jackets.

BOAT SOBER: Avoid Alcohol and other drugs which can impair both operator's and passengers' abilities to safely operate or move about on a boat.