

## FEDERAL BOAT SAFETY ACT OF 1971

**WHO:** Through partnerships with volunteer organizations, state-led agencies, boaters and the maritime community, the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 (FBSA) led to a significant reduction in recreational boating accidents and fatalities.

**WHAT:** The Act mandated a cooperative Federal-State effort to improve the safety of recreational boating in the United States.

**WHERE:** With its endless ponds, rivers, lakes, bays and oceans, the United States is a boating country. The FBSA is instrumental in ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for boaters.

**WHEN:** On August 10th, 1971, President Richard Nixon signed the Federal Boat Safety Act.

**WHY:** The 20th century saw a dramatic increase in the number of recreational boaters, but this also brought growth in the number of boating-related accidents and fatalities. Marine legislation was needed.

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### QUICK FACTS

- FBSA established the National Recreational Boating Safety Program and gave the U.S. Coast Guard the authority to establish mandatory boat manufacturing and safety standards.
- Recreational boating fatality rates have decreased since 1971\*:

1971: fatality rate was 20.6 per 100,000 boats

#### [FBSA act passed]

1972-1975: rate was 12% lower than in 1971

In 2019, the fatality rate was 5.2 per 100,000 boats

\*U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics are available at [https://uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.php](https://uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.php)

- Examples of improved industry standards: flotation and capacity requirements, ignition protection, electrical safety requirements, safe installations of gasoline fuel systems, maximum horsepower and safe handling, navigation lights and sound signals, engine cut-off devices, and fire fighting.





## WHAT BOATERS CAN DO

In order to keep everyone safe on the water, recreational boaters are encouraged to:

- Take a boating safety course
- Check equipment
- File a float plan
- Always wear a life jacket
- Never boat under the influence
- Use an engine cut-off device
- Watch the weather
- Be aware of your surroundings

## ABOUT THE FBSA 50th ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

The National Safe Boating Council (NSBC), whose mission is to create a safe boating experience for all recreational boaters, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, developed the commemorative campaign to recognize the remarkable impact of the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971. It is produced under a grant from the Sports Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

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