



GET CONNECTED TALKING POINTS

PROBLEM: It only takes a second for a boater to fall overboard when the boat hits a wave, wake, takes a sharp turn, runs into a submerged object, or suffers steering failure. This puts them in immediate danger of being struck by the boat propeller.

SOLUTION: The National Safe Boating Council's Get Connected campaign encourages boaters to use their engine cut-off switch every time they go boating. An engine cut-off switch stops the boat's engine should the operator unexpectedly fall overboard. Some devices are even designed to stop the engine should passengers fall overboard. This campaign is produced under a grant from the Sports Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard. www.getconnectedboating.org

How do engine cut-off switches work?

An engine cut-off switch cuts power to the engine by sensing when the captain, or even passengers, goes overboard. Lanyard and wireless devices are available. A lanyard may attach to the boat operator from the powerboat's installed engine cut-off device. Wireless device options may resemble a wristband or key fob. Some wireless devices may sound an alarm, track the boat's location, and even call search and rescue assets in emergency situations.

Also known as:

- Engine cut-off link
- Engine cut-off device
- Engine cut-off system
- Kill switch
- Kill switch lanyard
- Man overboard

Why are engine cut-off switches needed?

If a boat operator or passenger falls overboard, they may be struck by the boat propeller. The boat may continue across the water, leaving the person stranded, or the boat may continue to circle striking others in the water.





Does my powerboat have an engine cut-off switch?

A majority of new powerboats already have an engine cut-off switch installed. In 2019, a provision in the Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act requires that boat manufacturers, dealers, and distributors ensure that boats less than 26 feet and with engines capable of more than 115 pounds of thrust have an engine cut-off switch. However, older boat models may require a device to be installed.

Do I always have to use an engine cut-off switch when I'm operating a boat?

Starting April 1, 2021, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, individuals operating vessels required to have an engine cut-off switch must use them. The only exception is if the main helm is within an enclosed cabin or the vessel does not have or is not required to have an engine cut-off switch. Penalties with fees will be given to people who do not follow this requirement.

[Learn more from the U.S. Coast Guard.](#)

Does my state require an engine cut-off switch?

States with engine cut-off switch requirements include Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, New Jersey and Texas.

What does research find?

- Accident reports show that using the engine cut-off switch prevents propeller injuries and deaths. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that in 2019, propeller accidents resulted in 35 deaths and 155 injuries.
- Most propeller injuries and fatalities are preventable because they result from operator inattention, improper lookout, operator inexperience, excessive speed, and alcohol.

What can boaters do to stay safe on the water?

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, use an engine cut-off switch, never boat under the influence, watch the weather, and be aware of your surroundings.