

Learn Safe Boating Rules and Requirements

Every year, the U.S. Coast Guard reports thousands of accidents and hundreds of deaths resulting from recreational boating. Four leading causes of these tragic accidents are speeding, recklessness, inattention, and operator inexperience. These four problems magnify themselves, especially when combined with other safety concerns and issues.

Utilize and Maintain Safety Equipment

Having the right safety equipment on-board and in good working order can mean the difference between life and death on the water.

*Fire extinguishers - Boats with false floors or enclosed compartments require a Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher to be on board at all times. Be sure to keep it charged, and in a handy location.

*Life jackets and Personal Flotation devices - Each person on board needs to have a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket. Boats that are more than 16 feet long need to have a PFD that can be thrown to a person who has fallen overboard.

*Boat lights - Test your lights before you leave the dock. Be sure to carry extra batteries as well.

*Anchor - Not only do you need to have an anchor, but you also need to know how to use it. Each year improper anchoring is a cause of fatal and non-fatal accidents.

*Emergency supplies - Keep a first aid kit on board along with maps, flares, and matches. It is wise to keep your emergency supplies in a floating pouch.

Leave the Alcoholic Beverages Onshore

*Never operate a boat when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The effects of alcohol can be increased by exposure to wind and sun, as well as noise and vibration.

*Most years, about a third of all boating deaths are drug or alcohol related. Don't become a grim statistic. Stay sober and alive.

Loading and Unloading Your Boat

*Know your boat's weight capacity and abide by it. Overloading your boat can spell trouble.

*Practice good boat launch etiquette and safety. Load equipment into your boat before you arrive at the ramp. Ask someone to hold the bow line and to help out in boat handling at the pier. Be courteous and cooperative with other boaters upon launching and upon your return.

Use Good Judgment and Common Sense

*Tell a close friend or family member where you are going and when you will return.

*Read and understand local and federal boating regulations before entering the water.

*Do not allow passengers to ride on seatbacks or on gunwales, and ask them to stay inside of protective railings.

*Watch your speed and follow all boat traffic rules.

When it comes to boating, take steps to prevent accidents before they happen.

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