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Safety Info

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Expert Information, Safety Organizations, Courses and Education

US Coast Guard (<http://www.uscg.mil>)

Transport Canada (<http://www.tc.gc.ca>)

Canadian Red Cross (<http://redcross.ca/>)

American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org>)

Canadian Safe Boating Council (<http://www.csbc.ca>)

National Safe Boating Council (<http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org>)

US Power Squadrons (<http://usps.org/>)

Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons (<http://www.cps-ecp.ca/>)

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TRIP PLAN

Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. Any number of things can happen to interrupt your plan. Wouldn't it be good to know that someone would come looking for you?

Get into the habit of filing a trip plan with a reliable friend or neighbor even if you are just heading out for an afternoon. Needless searches can be avoided with a simple safety protocol and help can find you sooner when you really need it. There are also mobile applications that make it simple to track your journey or automatically raise an alarm.

LOOK OUT

Situational Awareness is the most valuable skill for a boater to have. The ability to observe your surroundings and any changes in weather, water and boat traffic needs to be learned, practiced and (with experience) become almost automatic. Although sometimes helpful, the increase in use of screen technology during boating activity has a flip side. The phrase "heads up!" has never been more important.

Learn the rules of navigation and stay away from shipping lanes. Always be aware of what 'the other person' might do and avoid erratic behavior or sudden changes yourself. Your passengers and other boaters will respect and thank you for it.

WEAR IT! GET EVERYONE TO PUT ON A LIFEJACKET!

New designs of lifejackets are comfortable, attractive and are meant for constant wear.

A lifejacket is the most important safety gear a boater can own. Of course, you need to be wearing your lifejacket for it to work. This is especially true in small boats where a fall overboard or capsize is a risk factor.

Some boating activities require special features in a lifejacket. Careful reading of the label and manufacturers information will help you select the device appropriate for you.

CAPACITY - DON'T OVERLOAD YOUR BOAT!

Every boat has a maximum capacity that it is designed to carry. Where the weight is distributed (front to back, side to side, top to bottom) is also very important.

Changes in weather and waves can reduce the capacity that is safe for travel. Small boats require enough freeboard to negotiate waves and boat wakes without swamping.

A boat's stability can be affected by overloading and a small shift in the load, or a person standing or moving at the wrong moment can result in capsize.

COLD WATER - GASP WITH YOUR HEAD UP!

An unexpected fall into cold water can be terrifying and a real shock to the system. Gasping and loss of muscle control can make simply staying above water impossible without a lifejacket on.

After surviving these first moments of cold shock it is important to remain calm and conserve energy. Strong and experienced swimmers can experience swim failure quite quickly in cold water as their muscles lose coordination.

After a longer time in the water, hypothermia can begin to set in. Continued heat loss in the core of the body can lead to unconsciousness as the body shuts down to protect vital organs and the brain.

ALCOHOL - DON'T DRINK & BOAT!

Consuming alcohol (or drugs) and operating a boat is just as dangerous and unlawful as driving drunk. In some jurisdictions you may also lose your driving privileges along with being charged with boating under the influence (BUI).

Sun, wind, vibration and noise can exaggerate the effects of alcohol and reduce powers of observation and decision-making. Passengers consuming alcohol are also at greater risk of balance problems and disorientation. This can lead to falls overboard or capsize of a small boat.

WEATHER

Weather is probably the most important factor affecting the boating experience that is out of your control. However, how you prepare for, monitor and react to weather is entirely up to you.

Check the weather forecast frequently, preferably a detailed marine forecast if available. Weather can change quickly and two locations quite close to each other may experience different conditions. Don't ignore warnings or try to outrun a storm.

Learn and observe cloud patterns, wind changes, the sight and smell of humidity in the air, etc., as part of your situational awareness. Consult with experienced boaters in your locale to understand unique local weather patterns and their warning signs.

EQUIPMENT

Create an equipment safety checklist using the [carriage regulations for your length of boat](#) as a minimum. Check your list before every departure. Every boat must have a lifejacket of the correct size for each person on board.

Carry a rope and throwing device to assist another in the water.

Have a sound signaling device and flares to attract attention in an emergency.

Carry a bailer and an extra paddle or oars in the event of a break down.

EDUCATION

Regardless of which boating activity you pursue, everyone can benefit from a few lessons. There is always something more to learn.

Numerous organizations offer courses in boat handling, safety, navigation, racing, etc. Fun and informative, these courses are designed for beginners as well as advanced level participants.

Most jurisdictions require a basic knowledge course about boating equipment, rules, safety protocols, environmental conditions and emergency procedures. Many of these basic courses are offered online and certificates of testing can be obtained to fulfill local regulations.

ENGINE & PROPELLERS

Engine Cut off Switches

Always wear the kill switch lanyard attached to your wrist or lifejacket when underway. This will ensure that if you leave the helm in an emergency the boat engine will stop. This helps prevent serious traumatic propeller injuries and runaway boats.

Carbon Monoxide

Beware of carbon monoxide build up that can occur in boat cabins, spaces between pontoons and around swim platforms. Install appropriate alarms and operate only in well ventilated areas.

BOATING FACTS

No of boats, participation

Fatalities:

1. demographics
2. size of boat
3. type of boat / activity
4. lifejackets
5. alcohol
6. trauma
7. contributing factors
8. cold water
9. time of year, day

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