



# Press Release

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## **DANGER AHEAD: 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday is the busiest, and often deadliest times of the Boating Season**

**U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary offers seven tips on how to stay safe on the 4th of July**

**SACRAMENTO** – The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is urging all boaters to use extra caution while boating during the upcoming July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July, along with Memorial Day and Labor Day, typically account for more than one third of all boating related accidents and fatalities.

In light of the dangers, the Coast Guard Auxiliary is offering seven tips to stay safe while boating during this busy summer holiday:

- ***Always wear a life jacket:*** While in many areas of the country it's hot and steamy, don't be tempted to forgo wearing a life jacket. Accidents happen quickly, and often there isn't time to put on a life jacket once an accident has happened. Statistics consistently show that 80 percent of those who perished in boating accidents were not wearing life jackets.
- ***Make sure your boat is properly equipped and that required equipment is functioning properly:*** The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is sometimes the first and only time people venture out on the water after dark. Make sure your navigation lights work so you can be seen. Better yet, request a free Vessel Safety Check ([www.vesselsafetycheck.org](http://www.vesselsafetycheck.org)) to make sure your boat has all the legally required and recommended equipment onboard.
- ***Be prepared for emergencies:*** Accidents happen quickly, often with little or no warning. Take the time to familiarize your crew with basic emergency procedures, and show them how to contact authorities for help via marine radio or cell phone. If you boat in an area that requires flares, make sure they are up to date, but ***never*** use flares as a form of fireworks. Doing so constitutes a false distress call, which is a class D felony, punishable by up to six years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines, plus the cost associated with the false distress.
- ***Boating and Alcohol do not mix:*** Boaters are also reminded of the dangers of drinking and boating. Along with decreasing the operator's ability to make good judgments, the consumption of alcohol also negatively affects the ability of passengers to respond in the case of an emergency on the water. The effects of the sun, wind, waves and a boat's motion in the water can add to an operator's impairment. Intoxicated boaters can face both federal and state charges with penalties of up to one year in prison and up to \$100,000 in fines.
- ***File a Float Plan with a friend:*** A float plan for a boater is similar to a flight plan for a pilot. It lists who is going, where you're going, what the boat looks like, and when you expect to be

back. Don't file this with the Coast Guard; rather, share it with a friend who will be staying ashore, and instruct them what to do in the event that they don't hear from you within a reasonable time of when you expect to return home. Visit <http://floatplancentral.org> for a complete plan along with instructions.

- **Keep a sharp lookout for other boats, the weather, or anything that is unusual:** The Coast Guard asks the public to be more aware of their surroundings, including carefully watching the weather, celebrating responsibly and understanding the hazards of boating under the influence of alcohol and misusing emergency flares as fireworks. Report any emergencies to local authorities by calling 911 or VHF-FM channel 16. Any suspicious activity that might involve terrorism should be reported to America's Waterway Watch at 1-877-24-WATCH.
- **Practice the 3 Cs – caution, courtesy, and common sense:** use caution, especially in close quarter maneuvering situations with other boats. In such situations, slow speeds are better. Be courteous to your fellow boaters, and use common sense. Don't cut people off at the launch ramp, and never light fireworks from your boat!

By following these six simple tips, you could save your life or the life of your passengers.

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## **Remember - to be a survivor - WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!!!**

*The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is composed of uniformed volunteers who assist the Coast Guard in all of its varied missions, except for military and direct law enforcement. These men and women can be found performing a variety of missions - on the nation's waterways, in the air, in classrooms and on the dock, performing Maritime Domain Awareness patrols, safety patrols, vessel safety checks and public education.*

*The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary was founded in 1939 by an Act of Congress as the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and re-designated as the Auxiliary in 1941. Over 27,000 members donate millions of hours annually in support of Coast Guard missions.*

For more information on the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, visit us at [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org) or [www.axupa.org](http://www.axupa.org)