

Press Release

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COAST GUARD AUXILIARY CONCERNED OVER RISE IN BOATING FATALITIES

Leading Cause: 90% of drowning fatalities in 2006 - victims were not wearing a life jacket

LOS ANGELES, Calif. - The Coast Guard Auxiliary is once again expressing great concern at the increase in the number of boating fatalities and injuries, and plans to step up its efforts to remind boaters that "You're In Command - Boat responsibly."

Published reports by U.S. Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety, show that for the second consecutive year; the number of boating fatalities increased (710 deaths in 2006 vs. 697 in 2005) as did the number of injuries (3,474 injuries in 2006 vs. 3,451 in 2005). The reports also show some other consistent and disturbing facts; two-thirds of all fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those, 90 percent were not wearing their life jackets. Eight out of every ten boaters who drowned were using boats less than 20 feet in length.

Also consistent with previous years - 70% of reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction. The report states that operator inattention, carelessness/reckless operation, excessive speed, and failure to maintain a proper lookout are the primary contributing factors in all reported accidents.

And despite the progress being made against driving under the influence (DUI) - alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; accounting for nearly twenty (20) percent of all reported fatalities.

Perhaps the most alarming statistic is increase in the number of children under 12 years old who lost their lives while boating in 2006, where 29 children died, compared to 21 children in 2005 and 14 children in 2004. Nearly twice as many children drowned in 2006 (15) compared to 2005 (8).

Boat owners, operators and even passengers can take these relatively simple steps to insure their safety while enjoying recreational boating:

- **Wear life jackets** – Just Wear It! Wearing a life jacket is **the** single most important thing you can do to ensure your safety on the water. Even if you are a strong swimmer, you need to wear a life jacket!
- **Take Boating safety courses** - Knowledge is power! Owners, operators and passengers should take courses offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Our courses cover topics ranging from basic boating skills to advanced coastal navigation. The Coast Guard Auxiliary encourages everyone who might be put in a position of having to take command due to incapacity of the owner/operator to take a basic course.
- **Free vessel safety check** - A properly equipped boat is a safe boat! Owners and Operators are encouraged to take advantage of free vessel safety checks offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, including owners and operators of canoes and kayaks, which are also required to carry basic safety equipment such as a sound producing device. (A significant increase was observed in the number of reported fatalities associated with the use of canoes/kayaks (99) when compared to 2005 statistics (78)).
- **Don't Drink and Boat** - A sober operator is a safer operator! In the marine environment — motion, vibration, engine noise, sun, wind, and spray intensify the effect of alcohol and drugs. These “stressors” cause fatigue — and dramatically affect a boat operator’s coordination, judgment, vision, and reaction time. Levels of blood alcohol or medications that would have little impact on land can potentially cause a much greater degree of impairment for the operator of a boat. Never boat under the influence!

The complete 2006 Boating Statistics report is available from the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary and Boating at www.uscgboating.org/statistics/Boating_Statistics_2006.pdf .

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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 30,000 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 or www.auxpa.org .