



News Release

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Coast Guard, Washington State Parks remind boaters to “boat responsibly”

SEATTLE – Recent deadly boating accidents are a tragic reminder of how dangerous cold water can be in the Pacific Northwest. The 13th Coast Guard District, and the Washington State Parks Boating Program remind boaters to be careful on the water this spring.

In Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, there have been nine fatal boating accidents since mid-March, with five occurring in Washington state.

“There are three common factors in each one of these tragic accidents: cold water, no life jackets and small paddle crafts,” said Dan Shipman, Recreational Boating Safety Specialist for the 13th Coast Guard District. “All accidents included water temperatures in the upper 30s, seven of the victims were not wearing lifejackets, and eight were operating small paddle crafts.”

Sudden immersion and exposure to cold water can quickly incapacitate a person who has unexpectedly ended up in the water. The sudden immersion in cold water makes it difficult, if not impossible, for boaters to keep their heads above water and stay afloat. Wearing a lifejacket gives boaters the best chance to survive.

Snow melt and mountain runoff means spring waters in the Northwest will be cold and dangerous for the next several months. Boaters should make sure they have the required equipment - on board and in peak condition.

“If you go out on the water this spring, make sure to check the weather, water conditions and never boat beyond your skill level and the capabilities of your vessel,” said Shipman.



The National Weather Service offers online weather and river information useful for trip planning at the following sites for the state of Washington:

- www.weather.gov/Seattle
- www.weather.gov/Spokane
- www.weather.gov/Portland
- www.weather.gov/Pendleton

The 13th Coast Guard District and Washington State Parks Boating Program offer these additional boating safety guidelines:

- Start enjoying boating the right way, with a course to develop skills and safe operation. Paddle sports instruction is offered by local clubs, outfitters and many park and recreation departments.
- Always wear a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Washington state requires all children 12 years of age and younger to wear a personal flotation device when boating.
- Scout the condition of the lake, river or waters before getting underway.
- Be a competent swimmer.
- Be constantly alert for unexpected hazards.
- Never use alcohol or drugs when boating or floating in a river. They dull important survival reflexes and impair decision-making skills.
- Children should never boat or float a river without the close supervision of an adult.
- Know and practice river rescue and self-rescue techniques. Going in the water is always a possibility. Be prepared.

Boating fatality statistics have shown that wearing a lifejacket gives boaters the best chance of survival in the event of an accident, especially in cold water. Make boating safe, enjoyable and fun.

For more information on water safety and drowning prevention, visit the following websites:

- www.boat.wa.gov
- www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/
- www.uscgboating.org
- http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Top_10
- http://www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/sei-educational_resources/brochure_cold_water_survival.pdf