

By Wilbur B. Scott

COURTESY ON THE WATER

As new boaters take to our area waters for the first time they may be pleasantly surprised to find how courteous most other boaters and their crews are to one another, which of course is in sharp contrast to the many ill-tempered outbursts one sometimes finds on our highways.

Homosassa Flotilla 15-4 of your U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary emphasizes in their free safe boating courses, that good manners and courtesy are admirable traits at any time but on the water are truly necessary and appreciated. These traits are old traditions of the sea and have become the hallmarks of the competent pleasure boaters of today, (well most anyway). Regrettably we do on occasion encounter a thoughtless and inconsiderate boater on our waters. In most cases these individuals have little concern for the dangers to others their actions create.

As the numbers of vessels on our waterways continue to increase each year, such marine customs as common courtesy, good manners and the golden rule on the water become prime ingredients of boating safety. Practicing these traditional amenities, Coast Guard Auxiliary instructors point out, is largely the exercising of common sense and fair play as well as respecting the rights of other boaters. This practice also sets a great example for the novice skipper.

While cruising our local waterways you have undoubtedly received a hand wave from the crew of a passing vessel, an indicator of people enjoying their time on the water and you cheerfully responding to their friendly wave in return.

There are a number of boating courtesies and examples of good and bad manners that are covered in the USCG Auxiliary boating classes. Here are some of the more important ones:

SPEED – Keep your speed down in narrow channels, anchorages, harbors, near docks and in the vicinity of fishing vessels, water skiers, small sail boats and kayaks.

WAKES – Severe damage to moored vessels, docks and seawalls can result from heavy wakes. Keep your wake down in confined areas. It is not only good manners to do so but it is the law as well, AND you can be liable for any damage caused by your heavy wake!

BUZZING – The “hot rudder” boater shows a lack of courtesy by buzzing piers, swimming areas, and other vessels. Such practice is not only very dangerous but will draw the attention of law enforcement personnel very quickly, resulting in severe penalties!

POLLUTION – The considerate boater retains used cans, cartons, garbage and other debris in a container until the cruise ends.

RIGHT OF WAY – If the other boat fails to recognize your right of way, the well mannered and prudent skipper will avoid a collision by giving way.

ANCHORING – Only the thoughtless skipper anchors in mid channel or ties illegally to a buoy or navigation aid while fishing.

BOW RIDING – An extremely dangerous practice, especially where children are concerned! Please do not allow this practice on your vessel.

DRINKING – Drinking alcohol while operating a vessel can be a deadly practice that has occurred on our area waters in the past resulting in serious injuries and death! **DON'T DO IT!** Very severe legal penalties await the boater who is arrested and charged with, “Boating Under the Influence of Alcohol”. You owe it to your family, the passengers on your boat and to the other boaters who share the water with you.

Giving the other fellow a helping hand when you spot a distress signal is the mark of a considerate boater and has long been the tradition and the law of the sea. Even at the launch ramp courtesy and good manners come into play. It may be something as simple as helping another boater launch his craft.

Your Coast Guard Auxiliary boating instructors stress that practicing courtesy and good manners is not only elementary but essential as well in developing boating skills and seamanship. For those of you who have not participated in a USCG Auxiliary safe boating course I urge you to do so at your earliest convenience. Watch your local news papers for announcements of the next USCG Auxiliary boating course in your area. I might add too, that graduation from this course may earn you a reduction in your boat insurance premiums.

The members of Homosassa Flotilla 15-4 wish you and yours many safe and happy hours on our area waterways!

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