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RBS

Job One



Life Jackets and Paddlers

Important Advice

RBS *Job One*

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ON THE COVER: Paddlers have life jackets designed just for them.

Photo Courtesy of US Coast Guard Boating Safety Division

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Life Jackets and Paddlers

Important Advice from Experts

By Bob Amiro, BC-BPS



Fun while paddling is all the better with the right life jacket.

(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

To wear or not to wear, that is the question. Well, not really. If you are a boater and don't think you should be wearing a life jacket, think again. What's the first thing you do when you get into your car? What's the first thing you put on when you board an airplane? You put on your seat belt. Then, why in the world would you even think of getting into your paddlecraft without first putting on your life jacket? A life jacket can only save your life if you are wearing it.

If you are in the water without a life jacket your chance of survival is greatly diminished. Why would

you even tempt fate? With a life jacket you have a chance, no life jacket, little chance. With the amount of life jackets out there today, there is absolutely no reason, no reason at all, to not wear one.

Today life jackets come in many different designs and styles. You can find one to match your favorite water activity. Check the label inside the life jacket. Make sure it has a USCG approval number. Read the label for info on what the life jacket is used for. For example, a life jacket designed for Personal Watercraft (PWCs) is impact rated for 50 miles per hour. Paddlers won't be going that fast, they don't need an impact rating. A fishing jacket with many pockets for

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flies and lures is not going to be of much help to the paddler.

The best colors for a life jacket are Red, Yellow, Orange, Lime Green, even Pink, if you happen to have a Pink paddlecraft. You want to be seen; bright colors are best. I wear an orange wick dry T-shirt under my life jacket. You want as much flash as you can get. Put paddle reflection decals on your paddle tips. Most of the time you will see the paddle flash before you see the kayak. These reflectors are great addition to your safety gear. Colors you want to stay away from are Brown, Black, Dark Blue, and Dark Green. The reason is, we can't see you in the water. Bright colors give you a better chance of being seen and surviving. When you are in the water you look like a watermelon. Not so easy to see even on a good day. With a bright life jacket on, at least you have a chance of being seen. When buying a life jacket, first, try it on, grab a paddle and try a couple of strokes. It should fit snug but comfortable. Comfort is close to the top as a

priority in choosing a life jacket. If it is not comfortable, you won't wear it. Remember when paddling in a paddlecraft you should have plenty of room under your arms, nothing worse than a chafing while paddling, it makes for a long day. Check the label to make sure you are looking at a paddling life jacket. Most kayaking life jackets are designed with a partial mesh back. This feature enables you to sit square in your seat. The open sides of a life jacket allow you to paddle correctly free from chafing.

Another consideration when buying a life jacket is, do you want to zip it, buckle it or pull it over your head. Buy one that has pockets, so you can put a whistle and a mirror in them. A compass, a VHF radio, even a GPS will fit in these pockets also. Remember you need a whistle. Put it in a pocket with a lanyard attached to the inside of your pocket. Never put it around your neck, if you are in the water, it could get tangled around your neck causing you to choke or get tangled up and keep you under the water surface.

One of the newer life jackets on the market today is



Inflatable life jackets are often the choice for paddlers like these two women.

(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

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the inflatable life jacket. Inflatables come in two styles. The suspender type and the belly pack. Not a fanny pack. If you wear the belly pack like a fanny pack you will have trouble inflating it and pulling it around to your front, where it should be, and then putting it on. This takes time and when you are in frigid waters, time

Brightly colored life jackets will help you to be seen.



Through proper choice of life jackets, paddlers can help insure a fun and safe day on the water.

(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

is so important. Every second you're in cold water, you lose strength and energy. Twenty-six percent faster than you would on dry land. The suspender type is just

like suspenders that hold your pants up. Of the two, I like the suspender type. It is already on and in position, no moving it around, it's done. These two types of in-



Boaters must be 16 years of age in order to wear an inflatable life jacket as demonstrated by this pair of canoers.

(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

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The bright red inflatable life jacket is a better choice than the navy blue jacket due to its increased visibility.

(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

Inflatable life jackets are light weight, you don't even know you have them on. Both of these inflatables inflate with a CO2 cartage and they can also be inflated manually with a mouth tube, located on the life vest. Once you inflate the life jacket, you will have to replace the CO2 cartage and rearm the life jacket. Once a year you should inflate them manually, leave them over night, check in the morning to see if they have lost any air. To wear an inflatable life jacket, you have to be 16 years of age.

One word of caution. You don't want to be wearing an inflatable life jacket if you are paddling in a kayak, or canoe. If you go in the water and activate your inflatable life jacket, you will not be able to get back in your kayak, because when the life jacket inflates, it has so much buoyance up front. It will not allow you to get up and over the cowing and back into your kayak in a timely manner.

All the inflatable life jackets mentioned here are inflated manually by pulling a yellow tab at the bottom of the vest. The belly has the same type pull tab located on the bottom of the package. Most paddlers use a type III because of the smooth flat front allowing the paddler to climb back in to his or her paddlecraft.

Speed is of the essence in frigid waters. If you paddle on a stand-up paddle board the inflatable life jacket is a great choice. They are light weight, and they stay out of your way, allowing you to paddle freely. One of the disadvantages of the inflatable, is after you use it, you have to rearm it with a CO2 cartage before you can use it on your next paddling adventure.

Inflatable life jackets are not cheap. They range in price

from 100 to over 200 dollars. But remember, your life jacket is the most important piece of equipment you can have, with the possible exception of your swim suit. If you suddenly find yourself in the water, you won't care how much your life jacket costs. How much is your life worth?

When buying a life jacket for children or yourself, check the weight range found on the label inside the life jacket along with the USCG approval number. Size ranges run for a child 30 to 50 lbs. Youth 30 to 90 lbs. and an adult over 90 lbs. The size range in which your child falls may not be the one that fits him. Not all bodies are the same. Try a different style and a different manufacturer. When you find one that seems right, put it on your child and make sure everything is buckled or zipped, nice and snug,

Now lift your child up by the shoulder straps. The life jacket should not go above the chin. If it slides any farther up, your child will have his face in the water. What is the first response when you are immersed in cold water. You gasp, you inhale water. Now, the child panics. This makes rescue harder. Some children's life jackets have a grab loop at the top of the life jacket and some have a crotch strap. This is an added feature preventing the life jacket from rising up.

After you purchase your life jacket and when you get it home, put your child's name on it so when they put them on at the dock, they put the right one on. Under

*Speed is of the essence
in frigid water.*

your supervision, have your children either at a lake or a pool put on the new life jackets and try them out. Teach them not to panic if they go into the water in an emergency.

Two things. Make sure the jackets don't ride up and that children learn to remain calm in an accidental over-board.

You should try to keep your life jacket clean. Wash it and air dry it after salt water use. At the end of the season before you put it in storage, wash it again so you put it away clean. In the spring inspect your life jacket for rips, making sure buckles and zippers work, if it is faded or soft you should replace it before going out on the water. Next time you go paddling "WEAR IT" — wear that life jacket and bring along some COMMON SENSE. It will make the day safer and more fun. Ω

Boat America Course Package is Ready for Distribution

By Greg Fonzeno, DVC - ET

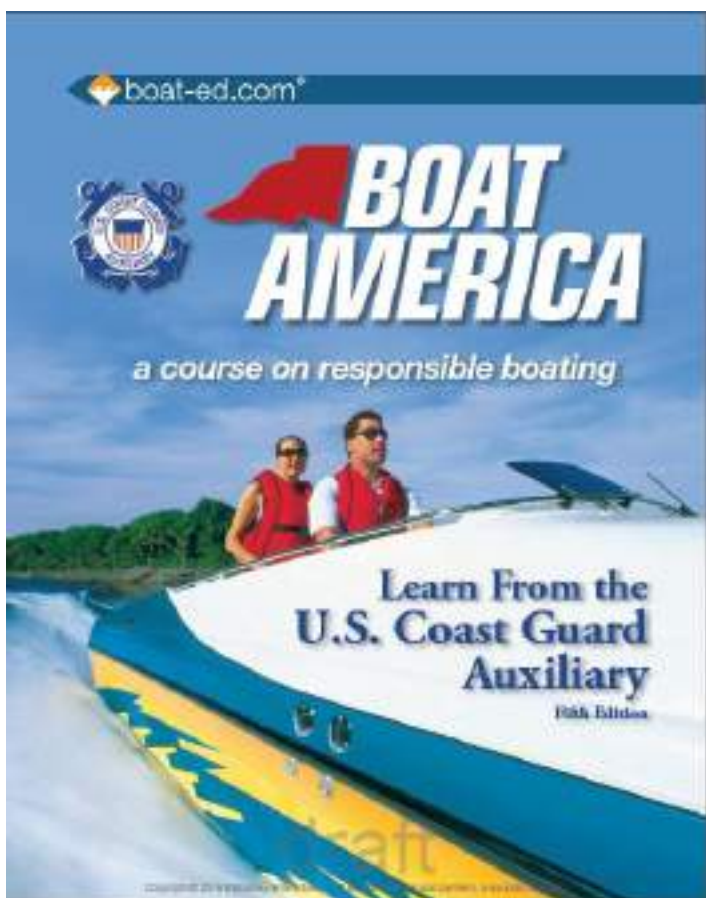
The long awaited Boat America Course package is ready for distribution. The PowerPoint slides are finished, the course exam, answer template, and ancillary materials are all completed.

However, given the substantial number of About Boating Safely (ABS) books still in stock at the Auxiliary Center (AUXCEN), the preference is to sell all of the ABS books before stocking and releasing the Boat America product. Until that time, flotilla staff officers should continue to order the number of ABS books and materials needed over the coming months and teach About Boating Safely until the inventory runs low. Once the inventory of ABS books is consumed, AUXCEN will begin stocking the Boat America books for ordering.

Please remember that ABS is National Association of Safe Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved through December 31, 2020. If necessary, ABS can be taught until that time. While Boat America is a new product, you should see a format that is familiar, making the transition easy.

Public Education Officers:

Watch for information on Boat America availability.



Boat America will also have a DVD available for purchase (produced by Boat Ed.) you can use in the classroom. The DVD contains short videos (between two and three minutes each) that demonstrate each of the skills the students are learning. It is strongly recommended that each flotilla purchase at least one copy of the DVD to use in class. You will find these videos a useful and pleasing classroom asset.

The E-Directorate will keep you informed as the Boat America product is available. If you are in a position of leadership, elected or appointed, and particularly if you are a DSO-PE, please communicate this information to all your SO-PEs and FSO-PEs. Ω

The cover of the new Boat America course makes it clear that responsible boating is the goal of the Auxiliary.

(Photo courtesy of the Coast Guard Auxiliary)

Distracted Boating Can Be as Deadly as Distracted Driving

By Sydney Hay, BC-BRE



According to the latest Coast Guard statistics, alcohol was the leading factor in fatal boating accidents, but distracted boating was the number one cause of boating accidents overall in the United States.

“Inattention of the boat operator continues to be the leading cause of boating accidents, according to our statistical report,” said Maj. Rob Rowe, leader of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission’s Boating and Waterways Section. “It is critical for operators to be aware of what is going on around them.”

In August of 2019, Grandfather John Wickman, during sentencing for negligent homicide, cried as he remembered the fateful evening one year prior when the 24-foot Boston Whaler he was operating plowed into a massive buoy on the Piscataqua River in New Hampshire. His granddaughter and girlfriend died at the scene in an accident that investigators determined was caused by distracted boating.

Accidents caused by distracted boating can result in arrest and prosecution.

(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

“When I blink my eyes, I see her deceased body in the river. It was awful,” Wickman said as he pled guilty.

At the time of the accident, rather than looking ahead, Wickman was looking at his passengers and his GPS, which he admitted being “mesmerized by.”

Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety courses stress the dangers of inattentive boating and the need for vessel operators to remain alert and aware at all times. A conscientious boat operator who would never even think of drinking and boating, may easily find himself distracted by conversation with passengers, equipment displays, sight seeing, texting and “selfies.”

As a family member of John Wickman told the court, “...it only takes one second of distracted driving to create a lifetime of sorrow for all of our family.” Ω

Eleven Causes of Boating Accidents You May Not Have Thought Of

These 11 mundane events cause the most critical boating accidents

By Steve Griffin

Reprinted with permission from USCG Boating Safety Magazine

Boating accidents make news. Maybe it's a throw-back to the great tales of misadventure at sea. Maybe it's their novelty; many mundane activities are statistically riskier. But beyond the headlines, one or more of a relative handful of causes are usually to blame, says Randy Vance, editor-at-large at Boating. Here are 11 situations to avoid:

RUNNING OUT OF GAS:

It's amusing, maybe, on small water in good weather or when a marine towing company can quickly bring rescue in a gas can. But run out of gas in the middle of the Gulf Stream, or just above Niagara Falls, and the situation can be dire.

How does this happen? Maybe you miscalculated your bearing and burned up too much fuel finding your way, or you fished or cruised longer than you intended. Perhaps you skirted unexpected storms or ran offshore to avoid them. Or maybe you just plain forgot to gas up.

Plan ahead: Calculate how much fuel you need, and then add a generous cushion. "If I'm going 25 miles offshore to fish," Vance says, "I figure 15 gallons out, 15 gallons to fish and 15 gallons back. Then I add 5-10 gallons (about 10-20 percent) for a safety margin."



Passengers keep a watchful eye on the tube rider being towed.
(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

Your mileage may vary, so be even more conservative until you get to know yours.

RUNNING AGROUND:

Sometimes entertaining, often embarrassing, occasionally truly dangerous — that's grounding. Vance says that while commuting by boat to his family's Lake of the Ozarks resort and marina, more than once he came upon a boat high and dry in the woods, evidence someone had been inebriated or careless. Stay sober, slow down, keep watch and keep afloat.

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In the water but stuck on a bar, you'll likely be eager to yank the boat off the rocks and end the humiliating drama. First, make sure a cracked hull is not flooding the bilge. Red-faced or not, Vance says, "It's better to be safely aground than sinking!"

FALLING OVERBOARD:

An overboard tumble can likewise be mainly embarrassing — unless you knock yourself out on the way over. You don't naturally float face up, so be sure to wear a life jacket that will turn you over. Also remember that as a solo boater who falls overboard you will likely watch the boat run off into the distance — unless it turns a hard circle and threatens to run you down. Wear the emergency cut-off-switch lanyard, or its modern, electronic replacement, which kills the motor if anyone wearing a sender falls over. For a short video on the importance of always wearing this lan-

yard click here: <https://www.boatingsafetymag.com/boatingsafety/boating-safety-videos?video=x7cssmd>

SINKING:

What sinks boats? Laugh if you want, but most often it's a hole in the boat, often one intentionally made for a through-hull fitting. Brass through-hulls are best, but plastic ones are less expensive and less corrosion prone. Plastic fittings do crack if overtightened, though, and then may not actually leak until long after that happens. Test wiggle through-hulls for a clue, and get in the habit of checking the bilge for water. Check the bilge pump and the bilge plug (formal name "garboard plug") as well. Added anti-sinking insurance? A small selection of wooden bungs for quick-plugging holes, including through-hulls.

CATCHING FIRE:

Boat fires are increasingly rare, thanks to spark-



An emergency cut-off lanyard is an important piece of safety gear that all boat operators should wear in case of falling overboard.

(Photo Courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

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protected mechanical systems and double-clamped fuel lines. Still, it pays to be safe. Always sniff the bilge for fuel fumes. Look for obvious fuel spills or leaks, or a rainbow-hued slick on bilge water. And never start a marine engine without running the bilge blower for at least five minutes. Make sure you have fire extinguishers aboard, rated for fuel or electrical fires, and that they're still charged. Have them inspected or replace them if in doubt.

BREAKING DOWN:

The U.S. Coast Guard says serious accidents often reflect mechanical failure and that can easily stem from electrical troubles. A faulty battery won't start a boat motor. Boat lights won't work either, so if it's nighttime, you're stranded and practically invisible. Many boats now have absorbed-glass mat batteries, requiring no maintenance and threatening no leakage or battery-acid boil-off. But if you have a flooded-cell battery, check it regularly — say, every weekend — for proper fluid level, adding only distilled water if needed. Watch gauges for battery voltage; it should be no less than 12 volts. Carry a backup flashlight to use as a signal, and of course, make sure your safety kit includes flares.

SPEEDING AT NIGHT: A chief cause of boating accidents is not matching speed to conditions or setting. At night you can't always trust your senses to determine a clear path. (Maybe another boat's gone dark, see previous item.)

LACKING PROPER SAFETY GEAR:

Too many boaters neglect the safety equipment that's on (or should be on) their boat. Or worse yet, on themselves. Wear your life jacket. Blah, blah, blah, you say. Well, life jackets save lives. The U.S. Coast Guard says about half of drowning fatalities involve boaters without life jackets.

A life jacket only really helps if it's the right kind, the right size and handy — ideally on you before you need it. Remember, immersed in 50-something-degree F water, you have but a few moments of coordinated movement before you muscles fail you, and you can't



A properly functioning anchor is a vital piece of safety equipment.

(Photo Courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)

keep your head out of the water.

Right size? "I once rescued three boaters when their boat sank," Vance said. "One was a small child who couldn't keep his head above water without assistance because his father had put him in an adult-size life jacket."

Inappropriate. Unlawful. Unsafe.

Wear a life jacket always, but at the very least keep it handy, and put it on in rough weather, during night passages and in cold weather. Stay alive.

Don't leave port without working flares, lights or horn, and backup propulsion such as a canoe paddle. Anchors are overlooked safety items too; they're first line of defense in a breakdown or storm.

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IGNORING WEATHER:

Boaters once got weather updates only from dedicated weather radios or marine (VHF) radios. Then some stereo systems added settings for NOAA weather channels. Now your smart phone, provided you're in tower range, can run weather apps, including live radar. You know that keeping a piloting lookout is important; keep a weather lookout too, and don't leave port if conditions are questionable. Too many good-weather days lie ahead.

FAILING TO MAINTAIN A LOOKOUT:

"I didn't see them coming" is the too-oft explanation for a crash. Well, see them coming, by maintaining a lookout whether underway or at anchor.

STAY SOBER:

Alcohol slows reflexes and clouds judgment. Both can lead to an accident. Why chance it?

The U.S. Coast Guard asks all boat owners and operators to help reduce fatalities, injuries, property damage and associated healthcare costs related to recreational boating accidents by taking personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of their passengers. Essential steps include: wearing a life jacket at all times and requiring passengers to do the same; never boating under the influence (BUI); successfully completing a boating safety course; and getting a Vessel Safety Check (VSC) annually from local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, United States Power Squadrons(r) or your state boating agency's Vessel Examiners. The U.S. Coast Guard reminds all boaters to "Boat Responsibly!" For more tips on boating safety, visit www.uscgboating.org.

A video for safety tips upon embarking for a fun day on the water is available here: www.boatingsafetymag.com/boatingsafety/boating-safety-videos?video=x6b7yvc



An Auxiliary Vessel Examiner begins a Vessel Safety Check., an important service provided to recreational boaters.

(Photo Courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)