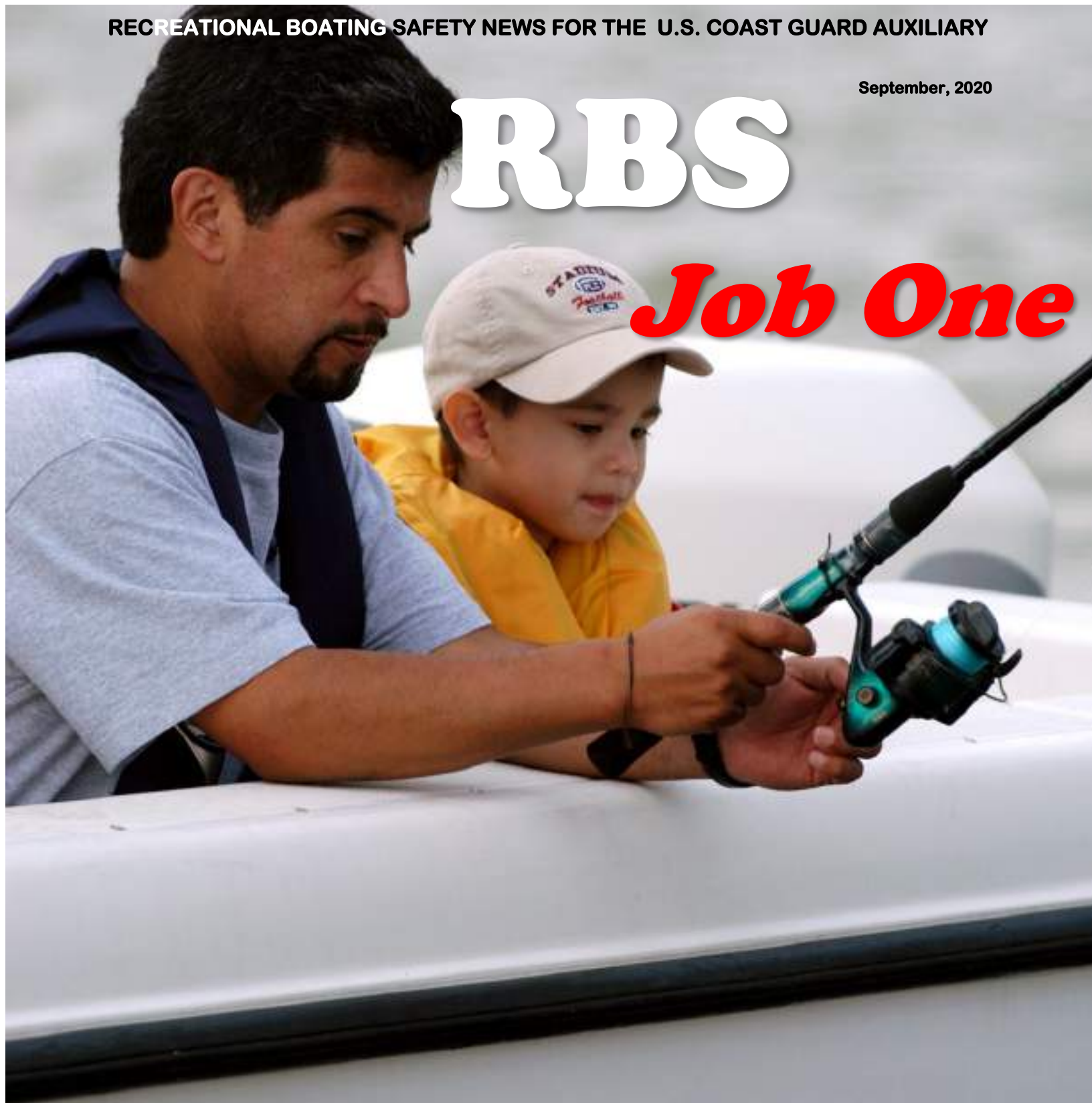


# RBS

## *Job One*



## **The Silent Marina Killer**

**What Auxiliarists Should Know**

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# RBS *Job One*

September 2020

Publication of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary  
Recreational Boating Safety Directorates

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ON THE COVER: Even at anchor, this father knows the importance of wearing a life jacket..

**Photo Courtesy of US Coast Guard Boating Safety Division**

RBS *Job One* is the flagship publication for the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Directorates; RBS Outreach (B), Public Education (E) and Vessel Examination and Partner Visitation (V). Its purpose is to inform all members of the Auxiliary of current developments affecting their job performance in conducting the core mission assigned by the Coast Guard and to share best practices. RBS *Job One* is published several times a year. Send submissions to [sydneyhay@mindspring.com](mailto:sydneyhay@mindspring.com).

Distribution: All Coast Guard Auxiliarists with email addresses in AUXDATA, COMDT (CG-BSX) staff, CGAuxA executive director, and U.S. Power Squadrons, via direct email.

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# 2019 Recreational Boating Safety Statistics Released

## *Failure to Wear Life Jackets Remains Leading Cause of Death*

By Sydney Hay, BC-BRE

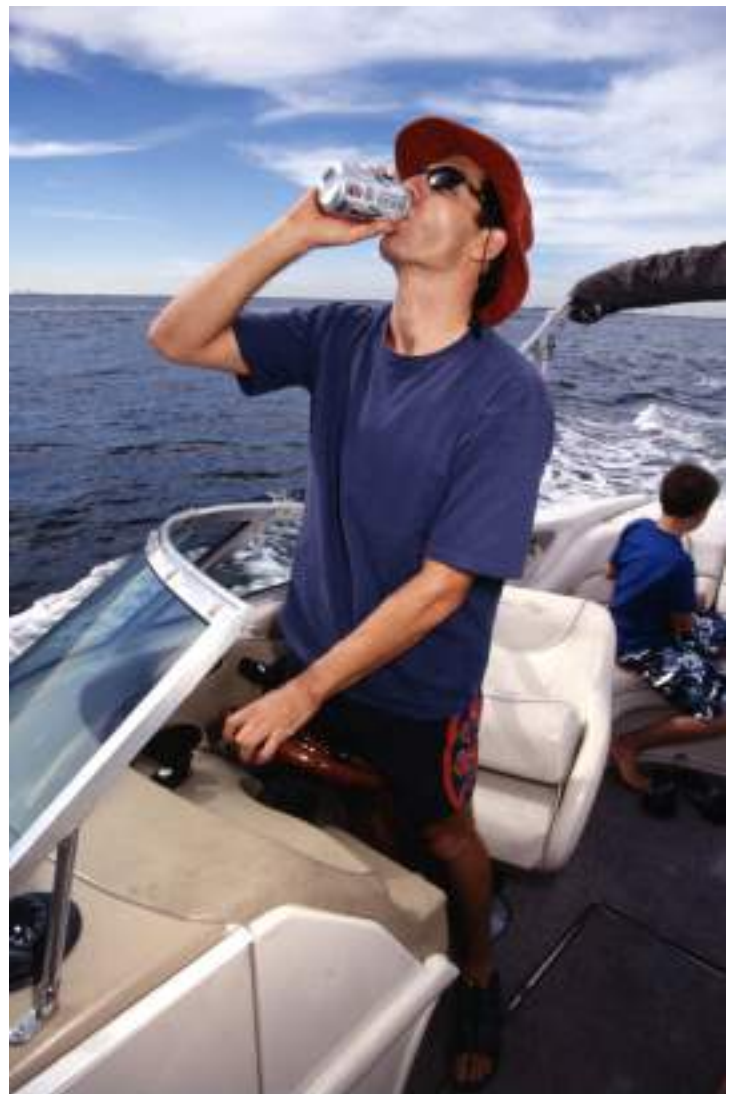
The Inspections & Compliance Directorate of the US Coast Guard is tasked with the responsibility of collecting, analyzing and annually publishing statistical information on recreational boating casualties. Within the Directorate, the Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety, Boating Safety Division has responsibility for the National Recreational Boating Safety Program.

On June 4, 2020, the Recreational Boating Statistics report for 2019 was released containing statistics on recreational boating accidents. This publication is a result of the coordinated effort of the Coast Guard, all 50 states and the territories that have federally-approved boat numbering and casualty reporting systems.

Upon viewing the report, Michael Bozarth, ADSO-Operations for District 11SR, who also has a Master Merchant Marine credential had this to say:

“As a lifetime waterman, it still surprises me every time I see these statistics. While we continue to make incremental progress each year on the number of deaths on the water, there are three recurring themes that I wish everyone would take to heart. One, life jackets save lives. When you hit the water either hurt or unconscious, a good life jacket worn correctly is the only thing that will save your life. Two, alcohol continues to be the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents. It doesn’t take much alcohol to impair your judgment when combined with the exposure and dehydration you are subject to while you are out there. And three, something as simple as a nationally-approved boating course can make a huge difference in these numbers.”

Suzanne White, DSO-Public Education for District 11SR agreed, “It is concerning that more inexperi-



*Drinking alcohol while boating, inattention, no life jackets,— even on a child — form a recipe for disaster as evidenced by the newly-released boating safety statistics.*

**(Photo courtesy of USCG Boating Safety Division)**

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

enced boaters are out on the water. With the arrival of the COVID pandemic and the restrictions it has caused, sales of watercraft have greatly increased.”

She continued, “Hopefully, with the unveiling of Boat America in the past week and the approval by National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to allow us to conduct electronic classes, we have a new tool that can be utilized. But it will take a commitment on the part of auxiliaries to make it happen.”

Jim Pearson, SO-OP for Division 4 in District 11SR,

to tie a bowline or navigate a course, but they do need to understand basic boating safety and know how to be a lookout.”

Jim is also concerned that online classes may not be as effective as the in-person, hands-on classroom experience.

“Even the airlines do not trust you to read the card in your seat pocket – they SHOW you how to don and fasten the seatbelt and the life jacket.”

Barbara Burchfield, DSO-PV for District 7, summed it up this way, “This boating accident report underscores



*Alcohol consumption is a leading cause of boating accidents. This boater has found out the hard way.*

**(Photo by David Marin courtesy of US Coast Guard Compass blog)**

who in his professional life is a nautical and underwater motion picture coordinator also emphasized the public education role of the Auxiliary along with vessel safety checks.

“Vessel inspections should culminate in the owner/operator having a better understanding of his or her boat but finish with a referral to a convenient Auxiliary boating safety course,” Pearson said, “Vessel examiners should highlight the fact that the classes are not just for operators. Not everyone boarding a boat needs

the value and importance of our program visitors, vessel examiners, instructors and public affairs staff who work diligently to inform and educate the boating community. These RBS teammates encourage a culture of boating safety in order to reduce accidents and save lives. It would be great if we could measure the lives saved and property not damaged because of the outstanding efforts of our RBS outreach. Every safety message we deliver is one more positive step to make boating safer for everyone.” Ω

# Recreational Boating Safety Statistics

## 2019 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- In 2019, the Coast Guard counted 4,168 accidents that involved 613 deaths, 2,559 injuries and approximately \$55 million dollars of damage to property as a result of recreational boating accidents.
- The fatality rate was 5.2 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels. This rate represents a 1.9% decrease from the 2018 fatality rate of 5.3 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels.
- Compared to 2018, the number of accidents increased 0.6%, the number of deaths decreased 3.2%, and the number of injuries increased 1.9%.
- Where cause of death was known, 79% of fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those drowning victims with reported life jacket usage, 86% were not wearing a life jacket.
- Where length was known, eight out of every ten boaters who drowned were using vessels less than 21 feet in length.
- Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; where the primary cause was known, it was listed as the leading factor in 23% of deaths.
- Where instruction was known, 70% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator did not receive boating safety instruction. Only 20% percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally-approved boating safety education certificate.
- There were 171 accidents in which at least one person was struck by a propeller. Collectively, these accidents resulted in 35 deaths and 155 injuries.
- Operator inattention, improper lookout, operator inexperience, excessive speed, and alcohol use rank as the top five primary contributing factors in accidents.
- Where data was known, the most common vessel types involved in reported accidents were open motorboats (45%), personal watercraft (19%), and cabin motorboats (16%).
- Where data was known, the vessel types with the highest percentage of deaths were open motorboats (48%), kayaks (14%), and personal watercraft (8%).
- The 11,878,542 recreational vessels registered by the states in 2019 represent a 0.22% increase from last year when 11,852,969 recreational vessels were registered.

# Bystander Rescues Woman and Two-Year-Old in Whitewater Mishap

## *River Photographer Jumps to the Rescue*

By Robin Pope, BC-BPU, BC-HYA

The Tuckasegee River in Dillsboro, North Carolina is a popular Class II Whitewater River used by a wide range of paddlers, rafters and tubers. One of the largest rapids on the river is Prudential Rock. This rapid starts with waves, then flows around a large rock, into a hydraulic, and finally has a long, fast outflow. If someone on the river is going to get in trouble, this is a likely spot for it to happen.

In late June, a woman took her two-year old child down the Tuckasegee on an inner tube, and it could have been a disaster. After entering the rapid, their inner tube flipped, sending both people into the water. The child was wearing a life jacket; the mother was

not. This could have had a tragic outcome. Fortunately, though, a bystander, Barry Kennon, was able to help. Barry is a former world champion canoeist, and runs a river photography spot along the river. He was able to extend his canoe out for the mother to grab, and then help her to shore and safety. His quick actions may have prevented a tragedy.

Mr. Kennon is not a member of a professional rescue organization. He was working as a photographer, taking pictures of people paddling down the river, and certainly had no duty to act. What he did have was the knowledge of what needed to be done to save two lives, and the willingness to act.

This incident highlights several things. First, clearly, it's unwise to take a two-year old down a whitewater river on an inner tube, and it's unwise to float down whitewater rivers without a lifejacket. The mother's decisions led to a frightening experience that could have been much worse. Second, there are many people on the water who have significant rescue skills. They may not be part of a professional rescue organization such as the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and many have no interest in joining a rescue organization. They still possess strong skill sets that allow them to save lives. Third, the actions of these people, who happen to be in the right place at the right time, save lives. Seconds count, and Mr. Kennon's quick actions made a difference.

Boating safety is the Auxiliary's mission. Mr. Kennon and thousands of people like him, using all types of boats, are not part of the Auxiliary – but they still help in our mission. As we strive to reduce boating accidents, injuries and fatalities, it may make sense to explore ways to work with boaters who have superior rescue skills, as well as exploring ways to increase this pool of competent rescuers.

More information about the event can be found at

<https://wlos.com/news/local/bystander-rescues-mother-and-child-after-they-capsized-in-river?fbclid=IwAR1XhoDREc10pSXJexDivXp81V274yT17861TI8OM8LbecxZ17fp7-G90lk>



*Whitewater rafter without life jacket and two-year-old rescued by the quick action of a bystander.*

**(Photo by Barry Kennon)**

# Take the “How YOU Could Drown” Quiz

Reprinted from the US Army Corps of Engineers “Please Wear It” Blog

By R.J. Garren

**A**re you an adult who thinks it’s unlikely that you could ever drown? Take this five-question quiz to see if you can prove why drowning isn’t likely to happen to you. You may learn some tips that could help save your life or the life of someone you love.

## 1. Do you know how to swim well?

Most adults who drown in open waters were known to be good swimmers. Great swimming ability is one of the things that can help prevent drownings, but the problem is things like currents, wave action, and colder water temperatures when swimming in open waters can reduce your swimming abilities, especially if you don’t swim on a regular basis. Even floating and treading in open waters can be challenging due to waves from boats or wind. Tip #1: Wearing an inflatable, belt-style life jacket is great for those who know how to swim because you hardly know you have it on, and if you need it you can just pull the cord, wait for it to inflate, and pull it over your head.

## 2. Do You Know How to Breathe Properly While Swimming?

Breath holding during water games, underwater swimming, and swim challenges are common causes of water-related death due to shallow water blackout. This condition happens from holding your breath too long while swimming or over breathing by taking several deep breaths in a row (hyperventilating) before a swim. A simple description of what happens is it can cause you to faint or blackout from low oxygen to your brain. Interestingly, shallow water blackout usually happens to people who know how to swim well, but they deny their body’s desire to inhale for too long. Learn more at [www.ShallowWaterBlackoutPrevention.org](http://www.ShallowWaterBlackoutPrevention.org). Tip #2: It’s best to take swimming lessons to improve your ability to breathe properly while swimming. Avoid breath-holding games and challenging others to swim in open waters to a boat, buoy, island, or across a cove, etc.

## 3. Do you avoid drinking alcohol while boating?

Avoiding alcohol on any vessel is a good idea because even a day on the water without alcohol can produce something called boater’s hypnosis that has the same symptoms of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Boater’s hypnosis is caused by the stress of sun, wind, glare, noise, and motion (vibration) of a boat. These boating stressors can slow your reaction time almost as much as if you were legally intoxicated. Adding alcohol to these stressors multiplies your chances of being in a fatal boating accident. Also, people recreating outside often tend to not drink enough water so they become dehydrated, which can make them very tired. Drinking alcohol and caffeinated drinks have a diuretic effect, which increases urination, decreases hydration, and can make you tired too. Tip #3: Drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated while

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

you're enjoying a day out on the water and operate your vessel defensively. Wearing a life jacket helps protect you from others on the water that may be operating recklessly for whatever reasons.

#### **4. Do you always check the weather before going boating?**

It's a good idea to check the weather before you go boating or swimming in open waters; however, that's not always good enough. Most fatal water-related accidents happen on sunny, calm days when you would least expect it. If you're out on the water for a long period of time, it's good to keep an eye on the sky and check the weather forecast because surprise storms can pop up. Weather, wave action, and slips are some of the things that can cause you to fall overboard. Falls are the second highest cause of water-related death on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed waters. When the length of a vessel was known, the U.S. Coast Guard



This boater has checked two crucial things for a safe and enjoyable day on the water. The weather report looks good and the life jacket is secure.

*(Photo courtesy of US Coast Guard Boating Safety Division)*

reports that eight out of ten boaters who drown were using vessels less than 21 feet in length. Tip #4: Check the weather before you head out and continue to check it while enjoying being in, on, or near the water and always wearing a life jacket while boating can help you survive an unexpected fall overboard.

#### **5. Do you believe that if you fall overboard you can put your life jacket on in the water?**

The best way to prove how challenging this can be is for you to try it yourself. If you want to test your skills with putting on a life jacket in the water do it in shallow water without touching the bottom. The fact is that even strong swimmers struggle with doing this task and it takes an average of 10-minutes for an experienced swimmer to put on a life jacket in the water. Wave action and cold water can make doing that nearly impossible. Plus, thinking that you'll be able to grab a life jacket as you're falling overboard is as ridiculous as thinking you'll put on a seat belt just before having a car accident. Tip #5: The time to put on a life jacket is before you get on a boat or in the water because it's extremely difficult to put it on in the water and you'll want it on if you're fighting with wave action waiting to be rescued.

The best way to pass this quiz and help prevent drowning is to always wear a life jacket whenever you're in, on, or near the water. By following all these tips you can drastically decrease your chances of becoming a water-related fatality statistic. Share this quiz with those you care about that think they don't need to wear a life jacket. Ω



# Vessel Safety Check Program: The Examiner Is An Educator

By Rick Young, Division Chief, RBS District Liaison



Justin Peck performs a Vessel Safety Examination at Lake Perris State Recreational Area in California and offers boating safety education in the process. **(Photo by Paul Saba)**

The Courtesy Vessel Examination (VE) is an excellent opportunity for the Auxiliarist to engage the recreational boater in many different ways. Moreover, statistics repeatedly show that the educated boater is more likely to be a much safer boater. The following is a list of ideas collected from many vessel examiners hailing from many different parts of the country. While no situation is going to fit all of these, finding common ground between the boater and the Auxiliarist is always an opener for a far greater and mutually-beneficial conversation. Consider the following:

## Regular “customers:”

If the first VE experience was a good one, don’t be surprised when those same boaters reach out for you to conduct them in future years. Also, do not be bash-

ful, keep a customer list and reach out to them as well.

**Give them something:** Every FSO-PA has a bag of goodies that are great icebreakers. For kayakers, the orange “if found” labels and the reflective paddle stickers are great openers, but so are whistles. If children are present, have a supply of Auxiliary coloring books available as these are always a hit, but they are also informative. One examiner made copies of the Kidde Fire Extinguisher Recall and asks boaters if they have checked their units—it is not uncommon for someone who has had their extinguisher replaced to stop by and say “thanks.”

## VE blitzes at the launch ramp:

Learn what are the busiest days and hours at the ramp.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



Doug Houle gives a kayaker important safety tips while inspecting his paddle craft at Lake Pleasant in Arizona.

(Photo by Sydney Hay)

Then engage boaters as they wait in queue for ramp time. Many will counter that they don't want to lose their place in line but you can assure them that you'll be done before it's their turn.

#### **Ask about safe boating courses:**

Although now required by many states with even more either phasing in or contemplating such requirements, inform the boater that many insurance companies may offer discounts to those who have achieved their Safe Boating Certificate.

#### **Learn their lingo:**

If you are examining sailboats or paddlecraft take the time to get beyond the powerboat image that many in the Auxiliary have. If you can talk the talk, you will be perceived as "one of them."

Once you have permission to conduct the VE, you

now have a captive and interested audience—boaters just love talking about boats, especially their own. Remember, we're all about education and it is just one more opportunity to inform the boater about a wide range of Auxiliary activities. Here is a partial list:

#### **Public education course offerings:**

Be informed about when and where the next courses will be offered.

#### **Marine safety and environmental pollution:**

Be knowledgeable about safe fueling practices, if they have a marine head which local marinas have pump-out facilities, and what to do if they discover pollutants in the water. The Auxiliary has several handouts available, so check with your FSO-PA.

Invasive species enforcement. Some states now require boats to be cleaned before transiting to other bodies of water and potentially introducing harmful non-native species. Be informed of local regulations and how the boater can avoid a potential citation.

#### **America's Waterway Watch© (AWW):**

Depending on locale, the boater familiar with a particular area knows what fits and what might seem out of place. They should be encouraged that "if they see something, they should say something!" Again there is printed material available from your FSO-PA or FSO-MS that includes the phone number for the National Response Center—(1-800-424-8802).

Finally, and this could be the biggest opportunity of all: Engaging boaters is a chance to recruit new members into the Auxiliary. Know how they can contact your FSO-HR, or get their contact information and share it with your FSO-HR. Even better, invite them to a flotilla meeting.

Safe boating has many dimensions and the Auxiliary has a long list of ways that we can engage the recreational boater that will not only make them safer out on the water, but ways that they can enjoy their recreational experience with less potential for unfortunate mishaps and even enforcement encounters. It might have a VE focus, but public affairs is everyone's job.

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# Electric-shock Drowning is a Silent Killer in Fresh-water Marinas

By Sydney Hay, BC-BRE

The Wednesday, July 15, 2020 newspaper headline announced: "Brothers likely electrocuted as one tries to save the other at Arizona lake, cops say." Crew from the fire department had originally been dispatched to respond to a possible drowning at Lake Pleasant, north of Phoenix. But, soon, officials learned that there was more to the incident than a drowning. Fire Captain, Mario Bravo, announced to the news media that the incident was "more of an electrocution."

The death occurred in the Scorpion Bay Marina when Timothy Miller, 53, decided to go into the water where his boat was docked. Others in Miller's group of friends and family saw that he was in distress and Timothy's brother, Michael, 50, and an unnamed girlfriend jumped in the water to help him. Bystanders

were able to pull Michael and the girlfriend from the water, but Timothy disappeared into the murky depths.

When police arrived, good Samaritans were performing CPR on Michael Miller but he was pronounced dead after transport to a local hospital. The woman's injuries were not life-threatening, but one friend described them as burns on her feet and legs. These deaths and injuries have been attributed to Electric-shock drowning

According to WebMD, "Electric-shock drowning (ESD) happens when an electric current, typically low-level AC current from boats, docks or lights "escapes" and shocks nearby swimmers. The shock paralyzes them, so they can't swim or help themselves. The danger of ESD is most prevalent in fresh water marinas due to the difference in the conductivity between fresh and salt water. In an article by Beth Leonard published by Boat US, she explains, "Salt water is anywhere from 50 to 1,000 times more conductive than fresh water. The conductivity of the human body when wet lies between the two but is much closer to salt water than fresh. In salt water, the human body only slows electricity down, so most of it will go around a swimmer on its way back to ground unless the swimmer grabs ahold of something — like a propeller or swim ladder — that's electrified. In fresh water, the current gets "stuck" trying to return to its source and generates voltage gradients that will take a shortcut through the human body."

The Electric Shock Drowning Prevention Association (ESDPA) reports "since experts began tracking this silent killer, there have been over 60 deaths, several near misses, and likely hundreds of deaths that have gone unreported" and that "a random sampling of shore power cords in several fresh-water marinas in the US displayed that approximately 13% of the boats tested were leaking potentially lethal amounts of electrical (AC) current into the water. The founder of ESDPA, Kevin Ritz, formed the advocacy organization after his young son, Lucas, was electrocuted next to the dock in a fresh-water marina and his wife nearly succumbed attempting a rescue. The official report called the death a drowning, but Ritz knew there was



*These paddlers need to be instructed about the need for life jackets and about the dangers in marinas should they fall into the water.*

(Photo by Sydney Hay)

more to it. Thus began his crusade to educate the boating public to the dangers and encourage every boat owner to take responsibility to ensure their vessel is not leaking electricity.

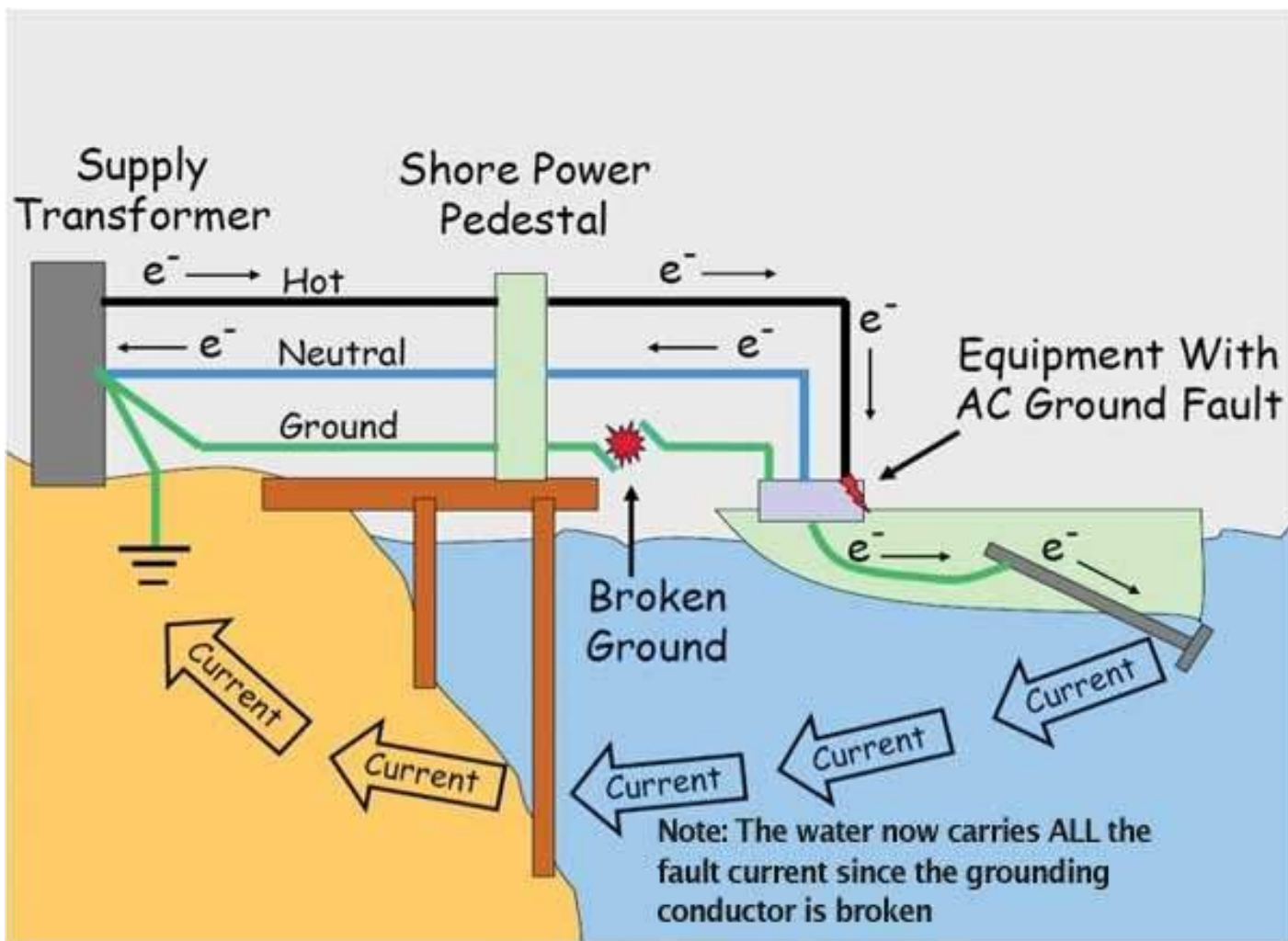
Fourth of July weekend in 2018 turned deadly for four children due to ESD. Alexandra Anderson, 13, and her 8-year-old brother, Brayden, were swimming near a private dock in the Lake of the Ozarks, MO, when their parents heard their screams, pulled them from the water, and attempted to resuscitate them to no avail. Both were pronounced dead. That same day 10-year-old, Noah Winstead and his friend, Nate Lynam, 11, were killed and seven others injured at Cherokee Lake, near Knoxville, TN.

In all of these cases, swimmers were either electrocuted or paralyzed by AC current leaking from nearby boats or docks. It is vital that every fresh-water boater and swimmer learns how ESD happens, how to prevent it and what to do and not to do to help an ESD victim.  $\Omega$



Swimming in a fresh-water Marina brings with it the danger of Electric-shock drowning. Should paralysis occur without a life jacket, a drowning death is probable

(Photo by Sydney Hay)



This diagram of a marina electrocution accident waiting to happen was produced by David Rifkin and published in Boat US. Used with permission.

# Electric Shock Drowning: What You Need To Know

## In General

- ESD victims are good candidates for successful Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). Learn to perform CPR and maintain your training.
- To retrieve a person in the water, reach, throw, and row, but don't go.
- Tell others about ESD. Most people have never heard of it and are unaware of the danger.
- Make sure your children understand the importance of not swimming anywhere there could be electricity. Don't let them roughhouse on docks. Tell them what to do if they feel a tingling or shock in the water (see below).

## In Marinas

- NEVER swim within 100 yards of any freshwater marina or boatyard.
- Talk to marina owners or operators about the danger of ESD. Ask your marina operator to prohibit swimming at their facility and post signs.
- Ask marina operators if they are aware of and following the guidelines from NFPA 303 (Fire Protection Standard for Marinas and Boatyards) and National Electric Code (NEC) 555.

## If You Have A Boat

- Have your boat tested once a year to see if it is leaking electricity, or buy a clamp meter and test it yourself. If you find any problems, have your boat inspected by a qualified electrician trained to ABYC standards.
- Have a qualified ABYC electrician install an ELCI on your boat (refer them to the ABYC E-11 Standard) or use an ELCI in the shore power cord. As an alternative, install an isolation transformer on the boat.
- Test the GFCI/ELCI at least once a month or per the manufacturer's specifications.
- DO NOT do your own 120-volt AC electrical work on a boat or hire an electrician who is not familiar with ABYC standards to do it. Many of the problems that lead to electrical faults result from the differences between shore and boat electrical systems and standards.
- DO NOT use common household extension cords for providing shore power to your boat. Use, and encourage other boaters to use, shore power cords built to UL standards.
- NEVER dive on your boat to work on underwater fittings when it is plugged in to shore power, even in saltwater.

## If You Have A Private Dock

- NEVER swim within 100 yards of ANY dock using electrical power!
- If you have not electrified your dock or put an AC system on your

boat, weigh the risks carefully before doing so.

- If you need electricity on your dock, hire a licensed electrician and make sure the wiring meets the requirements in NFPA 303 and NEC 555. If your dock is already wired, hire an electrician to check that it was done properly. Because docks are exposed to the elements, their electrical systems should be inspected at least once a year.
- Exercise your GFCIs/ELCIs as recommended by the manufacturer.
- If you normally run a power cord from your house or garage to charge your batteries, make sure the outlet has a GFCI and include an ELCI somewhere in the shore power cord.
- NEVER swim off your dock without shutting down all shore power to the boat and the dock.
- Even if you adhere to all of these rules, nearby docks can still present a shock hazard. Educate your neighbors and work together with them to make the waterfront safe.

## If You're In The Water And You Feel Tingling Or Shocks

- DO NOT follow your instinct to swim toward the dock!
- SHOUT! Drowning victims cannot speak, let alone shout. Let everyone know what's happening so they'll understand the danger and react appropriately.
- Try to stay upright and back out of the area the way you came, warn any other swimmers in the area of the danger, and then head for shore 100 yards or more from the dock.
- Alert the dock or marina owner and tell them to shut the power off to the dock until they locate the problem and correct it.
- Go to the hospital to make sure there are no lingering effects that could be dangerous.

## If You Have To Rescue An ESD Victim

- Know how to distinguish drowning from ESD
- Fight the instinct to enter the water — many rescuers have died trying to help ESD victims.
- Call for help. Use 911 or VHF Channel 16 as appropriate.
- Turn off the shore power connection at the meter base and/or unplug shore power cords.
- Get the victim out of the water. Remember to reach, throw, row, but don't go.
- If the person is not breathing or you cannot get a pulse, perform CPR until the Fire Department, Coast Guard, or ambulance arrives.

(Reprinted with permission from Boat US)

# Now is the Time to Kick-Start Virtual Online Public Education Classes

By Karen Miller, BA-EDI



(Photo by Karen Miller)

The extended stand-down for safety from the COVID-19 virus is no reason not to continue with one of our most important recreational boating safety missions – Public Education classes. The Public Education Directorate has worked closely with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and individual states and territories to gain permission for the Coast Guard Auxiliary to continue to teach our NASBLA certified boating safety classes using videoconferencing instead of in-person.

Videoconferencing offers the Public Education Officer and instructors the ability to see, hear, speak and chat simultaneously with all students. From the experiences of many flotillas who have embraced this new way of instructing, they have been able to actually increase their class size (and revenue) while keeping their instructors and class members safe. This newer method of course delivery expands offerings state-wide without the requirement to commute to a brick and mortar classroom.

Our traditional face-to-face classes are often limited by classroom size, transportation, ability to obtain free or rent space, parking, facilities, projector, electricity, WI-FI, comfortable seating, ability to break for lunch and other physical and logistical factors. And, of course, we cannot do any of that safely now and into the foreseeable future.

Students who take the online self-study courses are likely to select those to comply with state boating requirements, but they are not likely to attract boaters interested in actual learning – these self-study classes just get the student through the minimum requirements.

Videoconferencing classes are likely to attract both boaters interested in learning, safety, etc. and complying with state boating requirements. The classes are limited only by the need to have audio and webcam. That means flotillas can effectively reach boaters virtually within our states; bringing the benefit of Auxiliary knowledge and skills to our boaters in unprecedented numbers. And, flotillas can greatly strengthen their financial resources to support their multiple missions. There are numerous resources on the Public Education Directorate's website under What's New to help instructors and Flotilla Public Education Officers kick-start their programs.

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# “Kids Don’t Float” Teaches Water Safety

By Commodore Mike Morris, DVC-EM

The *Kids Don’t Float* (KDF) program is a statewide, national award-winning injury prevention effort developed to address Alaska’s drowning rate for children and youth. This intervention is a collaborative effort between several state and federal agencies, organizations and local sponsors.

The *Kids Don’t Float* program is a model curriculum anyone can use to teach boating safety. The program includes several components that can be combined, based on the unique needs of any group. Several short lessons and activities emphasize cold-water survival, including the selection and proper use of life jackets.

How will this benefit the members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary? Through this program, Auxiliary members will gain access to science-based cold water survival information and the latest safe boating information regarding life jackets.

The program also includes age-appropriate activities complete with lesson plans for each activity. It also contains more detailed instructions and lesson plans on how to introduce the KDF Program and Life Jackets.

*Kids Don’t Float* has been so effective in promoting life jacket wear among Alaskan children that the wear rate for children in the state is three times the national rate. The Auxiliary’s National Public Education Directorate is on the threshold of promoting and making this program available to all Auxiliary members.

Stay tuned for more information. Ω



(Photo courtesy of Alaska Dept of Natural Resources.)