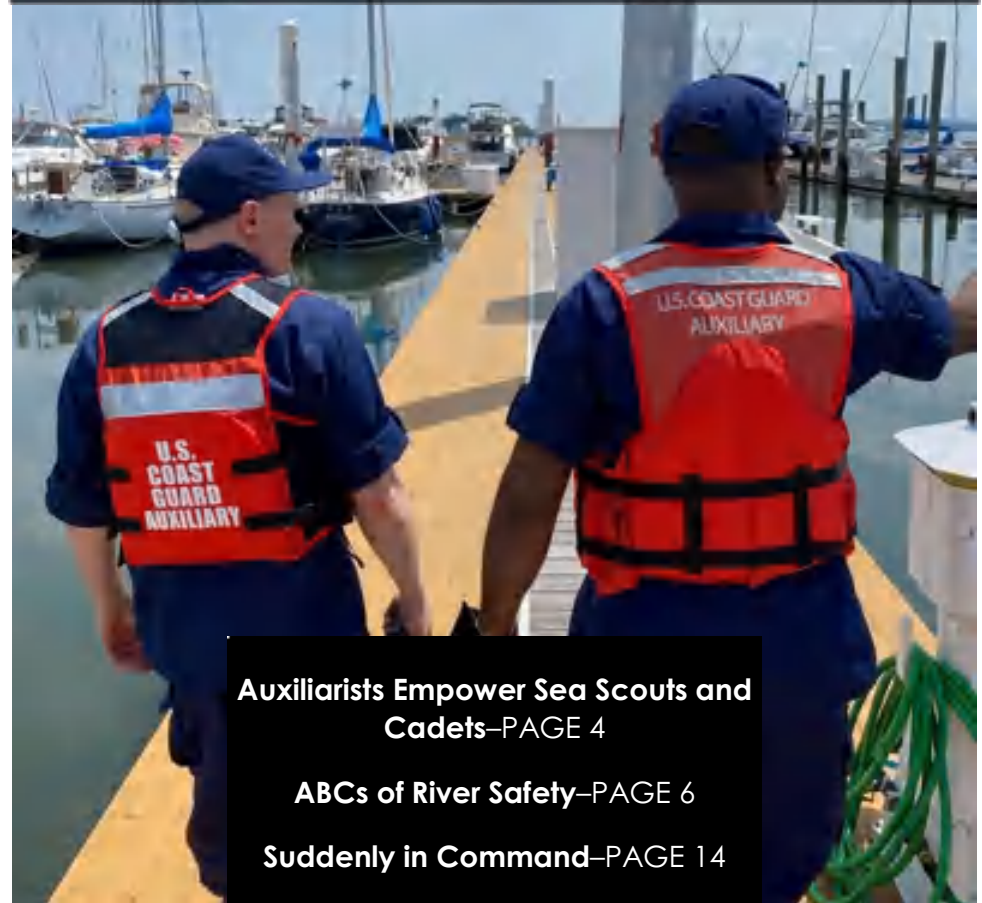


RBS Job One

Publication of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety Directorates



Auxiliarists Empower Sea Scouts and Cadets—PAGE 4

ABCs of River Safety—PAGE 6

Suddenly in Command—PAGE 14

Volume 8, Issue 2 (Summer 2022)

2021-2022 National Staff

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COMO Gus Formato

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If you have any photograph submissions, article submissions, or ideas for future publications, send an email to anthony.f.king@cgauxnet.us.

Cover Photo: BRONX, N.Y. – Auxiliaries Michael Harmon from Flotilla 53 (left) and Wallace Herisse Jr. from Flotilla 54 (right) walking the docks at the South Minneford Yacht Club offering free vessel safety checks on the first day of Operation Dry Water. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by David Mooney.

RBS Job One Involvement

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RBS Job One

Volume 8, Edition 2

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NEW YORK–Auxiliarist Jose Colon conducts a paddlecraft vessel safety check prior to a kayak race. This was the paddler’s first time getting a vessel safety check. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by David Mooney.

Director's Message

David Fuller
Director, Public Education

All Directors from each U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Directorate have finished a two-year program known as Senior Officer Training or ASOC. This training aims to prepare senior leaders for the challenges of leading the Auxiliary into the future. While none of us has a crystal ball nor precisely knows the future, this training has focused on looking ahead while remembering what is behind us and the path that led us to where we are today. Our capstone assignment for the course was to develop a Directorate Operational Plan for the next two years using all the tools learned during the time we spent together.

We always need to look ahead to the future and think about where we want to go. Only then can we decide how to get there and what roadblocks we must overcome to succeed.

I started by looking at the Coast Guard Strategic Plan and its goal to change boater behavior to make boating safer. I thought of a similar shift in behavior decades ago as more people began using seatbelts in their cars. This was an intellectual activity (reinforced by law) that changed behavior. Now, you don't even think about jumping in your car without buckling your seatbelt – it is automatic and now regular behavior.

Can we do the same thing with boaters wearing life jackets and practicing safe boating? How do we affect the behavior we want to achieve? I believe one way to achieve it is to start with the youngest—our school-age kids. Shape their behavior by teaching them early and start building the habits we want them to emulate. Kids wearing bicycle helmets and adults now wearing them regularly highlight one success story of behavior change that started with kids. As kids grow up with a safety culture, there is a much better chance they will continue this habit as they become adults. At the very least, they will have been educated and aware of what they should be doing.

We do not have the power to make laws that mandate this behavior, but we do have the ability to educate and persuade. Let's work on what we can do and not worry about what we can't.

The Public Education Directorate looks to the future with an increased emphasis on kids' education. We are currently creating the tools flotillas can use to enter this arena.

We will need to break out of the mold of focusing only on adult education with only one education product. Sure, that will always be an essential part of what we do, but we are only one small part of the big picture of adult education. We will continue to improve our existing products. We have many other projects on our plate, but kids' education will be prominent in our efforts.

Kids' education can potentially move the needle with RBS statistics over time. It will have a cumulative effect as these kids grow up and become the most significant demographic of boaters. An investment of our time and effort right now will set up these kids for a lifetime of safe boating practices.

As educators, we don't often see the fruits of our labor when someone uses what we taught them to make a decision that saves their life or prevents a lousy day on the water. In the world of Prevention, we must be satisfied with the look in the eye of a student when they "get it" and understand what we are teaching.

While none of us have a DeLorean powered by a 1.21-gigawatt flux capacitor ("Back to the Future" reference for those who do not know), we can look ahead from here; it seems like kids will be an essential part of that future.



What's Next?

Anthony King
Division Chief—Communication Services

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliarists on National Staff gather for meetings, training, and fellowship twice a year. In January, we brave the elements in St. Louis, Missouri, for National Training (N-Train), and in August, National Conference (NACON) in Orlando, Florida.

At every other NACON, elections are held for a few positions at the National level. On Friday, August 19, 2022, elections were held at NACON in Orlando, Florida. The Auxiliary National Bridge elected the National Leadership team for the 2022-2024 term. Our leaders for this coming term are:

National Commodore: Gus Formato

Vice National Commodore: Mary Kirkwood

Deputy National Commodore-Atlantic Area East, Marine Safety: Allen Fredd

Deputy National Commodore -Atlantic Area West, Response & Prevention: Patrick Feighery

Deputy National Commodore-Pacific Area, Recreational Boating: Tiney Singler

Deputy National Commodore-Information Technology & Planning: Linda Merryman

Furthermore, appointments to National Staff are moving forward. Selected for the next term as leaders in the Recreational Boating Safety Directorates are:

Assistant National Commodore-Recreational Boating: Robert Laurer

Deputy Assistant National Commodore-Recreational Boating: Chris Wilson

Recreational Boating Safety Outreach Directorate: Nan Ellen Fuller, Director

Public Education Directorate: Dave Fuller, Director

Vessel Examination and Partner Visitation Directorate: Jim Cortes, Director

We congratulate everyone on their new positions and look forward to working with everyone as we continue to do our number one job, recreational boating safety. Terms of office will begin November 1, 2022.



ORLANDO, Fla. – (Left to Right) Chris Wilson, B Directorate, Director, Anthony King, Division Chief, Nan Ellen Fuller, B Directorate, Deputy Director, Robert Laurer, Assistant National Commodore-Recreational Boating, and Robert Brandstein, E Directorate, Deputy Director, stand for a picture before the National Commodore's Banquet at NACON 2022.

Auxiliarists Empower Sea Scouts and Cadets

Jennifer Angone
Flotilla 35-11, Jackson, Illinois



CHICAGO, Ill.—U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Instructors and Sea Scout Adult Leader stand for a picture. From left to right: Jennifer Angone, Bradley Couch, Diane Karpman, Rafael Ruelas, Don Hoffman, Katie Paul, and Paul Malave. Auxiliary photo by Bradley Couch and Jennifer Angone.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary usually sees boat owners and individuals seeking knowledge from the experts on how to become safer boaters on the water—usually adults. But in a boating safety course on July 28, 2022, held in Chicago, most class enrollees were high school-aged Cadets from the Chicago Military Academy at Bronzeville and Sea Scouts from Ship 5111 “Challenge.”

This one-day course took place in the upper salon of the former icebreaker *Abegweit* at Columbia Yacht Club, moored just south of Navy Pier on Chicago’s scenic lakefront. With Lollapalooza’s live music booming nearby, amplified by rising afternoon temps, the Cadets and Sea Scouts displayed admirable focus in an environment in which many adults would struggle. “I hope I pass the exam,” shared Sea Scout Max Angone while grabbing a croissant before class. This was a familiar sentiment shared among the

many students in an environment outside of their traditional schools during the height of summer.

Thankfully, Auxiliarists from Six Chicago Flotilla brought their best instructors, led by Auxiliarist Bradley Couch, a principal-in-training at the Chicago Military Academy in Bronzeville. After the attendees took their seats and received their books, John Saran, Division Commander, kicked off the class with an introduction framing the importance of taking a boating safety class for Lake Michigan boaters noting to the teens, “You will learn many things in this class,” and then shared current statistics regarding accidents on Lake Michigan. “Believe it or not, most of the folks involved in those accidents – drowned—about 80%. And most of those folks were not wearing a life jacket. So just by wearing a life jacket, you may save your life...tell others to do so, and you may save a life.”

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliarist Instructor Phillip Leonard joined the class via Columbia Yacht Club’s AV system set-up with bi-directional cameras suitable for distance learning purposes and effectively illustrated the class material remotely. Auxiliary Instructor Paul Malave, also from Six Chicago Flotilla, took the helm as the lead instructor for the remainder of the day. Walking among the students and bringing student volunteers up to demonstrate various concepts and tools, Mr. Malave’s Socratic method, while maintaining a respectful and humorous presentation style, resonated with the teens, the majority of whom had never operated a vessel of any kind. Equipped with a bin of props, toy boats (to illustrate navigation rules), PFDs, visual distress signals, buoys, sound signals, and anchors, the chapters and information became tangible and relatable. Time was of the essence to cover all the material required for this one-day class.

Auxiliarists Don Leonard, Bradley Couch, and Rafael Ruelas continued Mr. Malave’s engaging instructional style by expanding on various concepts, including sharing their own experiences. Mr. Ruelas, also a Certified Addiction Counselor, led an honest discussion about the role drugs and alcohol have on boaters and how alcohol impairs a boater’s judgment to a greater degree than on land because of the sun, wind, and waves. Talking honestly about alcohol, discussing the importance of proper hydration, and looking out for one another were topics the Sea Scouts and Cadets brought up that further ingrained the safety lessons and discussions.

After taking the exam, students took a brief tour of the Columbia Yacht Club Ship. While walking around the ship, it was clear that this boating safety class empowered the students. This was made possible by the engaging sharing of knowledge by the Auxiliarist instructors and the student’s own raised level of self-

confidence, knowing they are equipped with the knowledge and ability to be prepared out on the water, maybe more so than their peers or most adults.



CHICAGO, Ill.—U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Instructors and Sea Scout Adult Leader stand for a picture on the dock with the Sea Scouts and Cadets. Auxiliary photo by Bradley Couch and Jennifer Angone.





CHICAGO, Ill. – Auxiliarists Jennifer Angone, Bradley Couch, Diane Karpman, Rafael Ruelas, Don Hoffman, Katie Paul, and Paul Malave, from the Six Chicago Flotilla and the Calumet Harbor Flotilla, hosted a joint public education course at the Columbia Yacht Club for scouts from Sea Scout Ship #5111, students from the Chicago Public Schools, and new Auxiliary members. Students spent the day learning a variety of topics about boating safety and local issues, such as rip currents, life rings, Lake Michigan drownings, and boating accidents. All students passed, and the fellowship was enjoyed by all at the course. Auxiliary photos courtesy of Bradley Couch and Jennifer Angone.
Disclaimers – All COVID protocols were followed; Youth Protection Training on file; photo consents on file.

ABCs of River Safety

Todd Wilkinson
Branch Chief-Paddlecraft Ashore Safety

Several years ago, I was fortunate to take one of National Park Ranger and American Canoe Association Instructor Dave Tobey's kayaking skills classes on the Current River. Those who have taken one of his courses, tours of Round Spring Cave, or sat enthralled at one of his campfire programs may be fortunate. Tobey has strongly supported the Springfield, Missouri Flotilla AUXPAD Ashore operations at Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Over 15 Auxiliaries from Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas have taken either his Dry Land Basics course or completed their Level 2 ACA Kayak course since 2017.

During the class, Tobey introduced us to the "ABCs of paddling." Ozark National Scenic Riverways personnel use these three succinct points each summer to keep millions of floaters safe while they paddle the Current or Jack's Fork Rivers.

"A" stands for "Always wear your life jacket." In its boating safety statistics for 2021, the Coast Guard notes that of the 81% of drownings associated with recreational boating in the United States, almost 83% of those were due to the victim not wearing a personal flotation device, or PFD. Of those drownings, 122 were in a canoe/kayak, with 222 total casualties in paddlecraft that year.

Just as it's too late to put on a seatbelt after a car accident, it will be too late to try to put on a life jacket in a kayak or canoe after you end up in the water. Constantly adjust your life jacket, so it's snug and comfortable. A good test to see how it fits is to have someone stand behind you and attempt to lift it by the shoulder straps. If your chin slips down into the "V," then it's not the correct size. And, of course, ALWAYS make sure kids wear their life jackets.

"B" stands for "Butt down, feet up." While wearing your life jacket, remembering this little phrase could save your life if you happen to get dumped into the water

unexpectedly. Many paddlers are tempted to stand up in a river if shallow water or swimming ability will keep them safe. Foot entrapment in river bottoms is a real danger. A foot caught under a rock or root wad can allow swift currents to push the paddler over until they are too tired to surface. By flipping over on your back when you land in the water, with your rear down and legs extended, your buoyant PFD allows you to float with the current. You can make your way to the nearest bank by paddling with your arms. I know firsthand that this works from the "heel-kicking river baptism" I experienced after a run-in with a root wad during Tobey's class!

And speaking of root wads or strainers: **"C"** stands for "Climb that root wad"! If your boat ends up in one of those "big ugly root wads" in the river, it may be tempting to push away with a paddle or oar. The problem with this strategy is that a paddler can accidentally tip their boat over. They could get sucked under the root wad, making escape nearly impossible. If you can't avoid crashing into a root wad with evasive paddling maneuvers, and you hit one, abandon your boat and climb on top of the root wad or strainer as fast as possible. Gear can be recovered. A paddler's life cannot.

Besides the "ABCs," a paddling course will teach the less experienced paddler how to "read" a river, an essential skill for anyone wishing to avoid the abovementioned hazards. In his account of serving as a "cub" pilot on a Mississippi River steamboat, a young Samuel Clemens (later Mark Twain) described how his mentor, Horace Bixby, drilled into his head the importance of learning every bend and shoal on the river. He told Clemens how to avoid hazards by memorizing the river like he would a darkened hallway in his house. Clemens recorded the river in a memoranda book; Dave used an old shower curtain to draw a river map for his students on the screened-in porch of Current River State Park.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

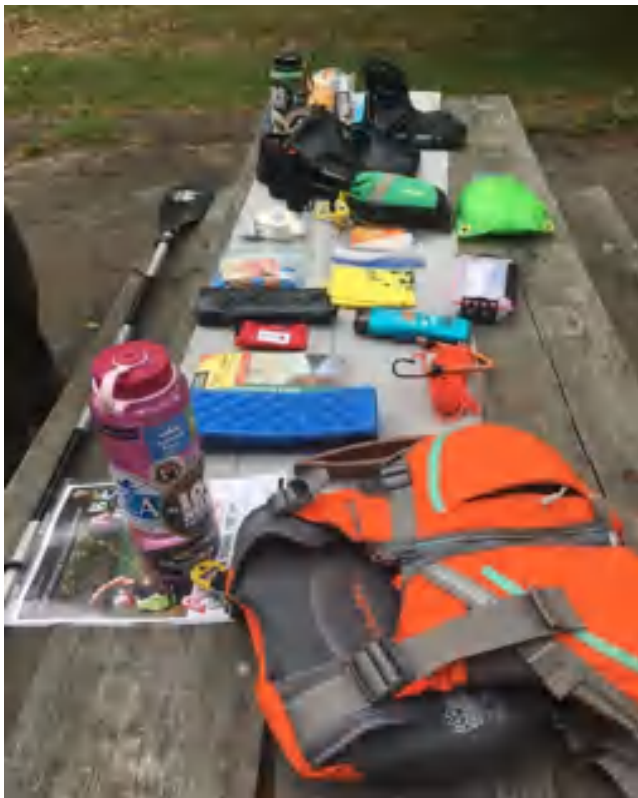
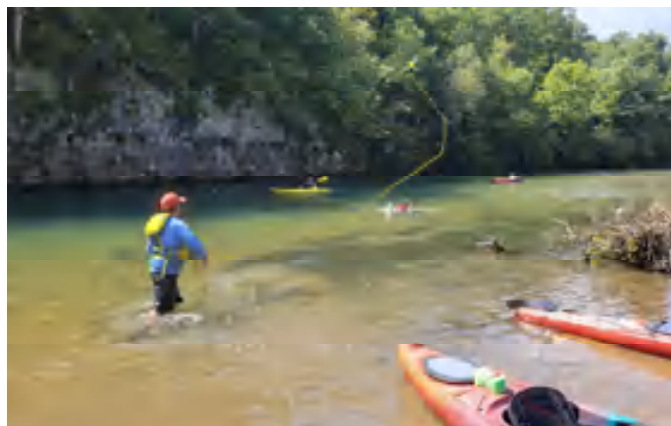
Ozark National Scenic Riverways

ABCs
of
RIVER
SAFETY

A ALWAYS WEAR YOUR PFD
Wear an approved type 3 life jacket for all river activities.

B BOTTOM DOWN, FEET UP
Do not try to stand in fast water. Float with your bottom down and feet up until you reach calm shallow water.

C CLIMB THAT ROOTWAD
Never try to go through a strainer.
Give it as much room as possible. If you find yourself being forced into a strainer that cannot be avoided, swim aggressively toward it and get on top of it.



A paddler needs to read, evaluate, and anticipate clues at a moment's notice to respond to potential hazards; an upstream "V" in the water, for example, indicates the presence of a swell from an item like a rock below the surface. We always told paddlers to head for the longest downstream, "V," a sign of the most current, deeper water, and a straight shot for the paddler. A straight, horizontal edge across the river may show a low-head dam and the deadly "hydraulic" turbulence below it, which can be fatal to a submerged paddler.

The current of a river is generally swifter on the outside of a bend and slower on the inside. The river is SAFER on the inside of the curve. Many paddlers stay in the "slacker" water inside the curve until they can see if there are hazards (fallen logs, strainers, root wads) in the swifter current on the outside, which is significant if you can't SEE around the curve. This gives you time to avoid obstacles in swift water and pull your boat over to shore if the river is blocked.

A paddler should also know how to check and read the U.S. Geological Survey river gauge data. This will help a paddler judge if a river's flow is too high (creating very swift currents and potential hazards like root wads and rocks that are hard to avoid) or too low to float without dragging boats through shallow riffles.

While Tobey retired in 2019, his legacy lives on in the over 700 students in his 50 skills classes at Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Several students, myself included, became ACA instructors because of him. Today, three Springfield Flotilla members – who studied under his tutelage – have received their AUXPAD Operator Qualifier Qualification. And in an ironic twist, Tobey joined the Auxiliary in 2022 and will soon be an AUXPAD Operator.

My ACA Level 2 Kayak Instructor Course was one of the most challenging but rewarding courses I have experienced. And it was Tobey who encouraged me to seek my instructor qualification. I wouldn't have it if it weren't for him. Whenever I am out on an AUXPAD mission, the knowledge, and skills – my "ABCs" – I learned from his courses are essential to our efforts to help keep the paddling community safe on our Ozarks rivers.

Top left: CURRENT RIVER STATE PARK, Mo.- ACA Instructor Dave Tobey demonstrates to Auxiliaries Avarad Hart and Jay Zimmerman how to "read" a river, using a map drawn on a piece of a shower curtain, May 2018. Auxiliary photo by Todd Wilkinson. **Top Right:** CURRENT RIVER STATE PARK, Mo.- Auxiliaries Jeff Angus uses a throw rope to "rescue" Auxiliaries Julie Carey during a skills practice session. Auxiliary photo by Todd Wilkinson. **Middle Right:** CURRENT RIVER STATE PARK, Mo.-Auxiliaries Todd Wilkinson assists Jeff Angus in re-entering his swamped kayak. Auxiliary photo by Julie Carey. **Bottom left:** CURRENT RIVER STATE PARK, Mo.- Paddlecraft safety gear display during a National Park Service Intro to Paddling Clinic. Auxiliary photo by Todd Wilkinson. **Bottom Right:** ACA Level 2 Kayak Instructor Course, October 2020.

Teach Your Children Well

Full Credit to Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young

Karen L. Miller

Division Chief—Instructor Development

Dan McIntyre, Public Education Directorate Branch Chief for Youth Development, has more than seven years of success in educating children about boating and water safety. He and his team have instructed thousands of children in Brevard County, Florida.

The youth education goal is to increase boating and water safety knowledge among young people throughout the United States and Territories by presenting U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Education classes at schools and other youth organizations.

A vital component of the U.S. Coast Guard Strategic Plan for Recreational Boating Safety is to change boaters' behaviors. By reaching youth in the schools, the youth program's long-term goal is to affect the boating safety habits of kids by teaching them early, setting expectations, and building good behaviors. This is similar to the long-term strategy of getting people to use their seat belts in a car. Now, buckling your seatbelt is automatic and the first thing you do when you get into a car. It has become a habit due to learned behavior.

Dan's primary assignment for the Public Education Directorate is to take his experience, materials, and resources and "nationalize" them so almost any flotilla can use them. Dan is also incorporating additional items from other flotillas that have successfully provided water safety training to youngsters.

According to AUXDATA II, fewer than 20 flotillas in the entire Coast Guard Auxiliary are recording time teaching Youth Courses. Many lost opportunities exist to complete our Recreational Boating Safety Job Number One. Here's a summary of some of the information you'll be seeing as Dan's project is

finalized to help your flotilla initiate this vital mission.

Public School Contact Process for Setting up Youth Boating Safety Classes.

- You'll read how he started by targeting middle school students. The focus and interest quickly shifted to high school students. Their experience with middle school students met with mixed results.
- The value of starting contact with the school superintendent's office in gaining leadership approval and introduction to school principals is a critical element of success. This strategy initially met with some success but not with the level of enthusiasm for which they had hoped. After a couple of years of moderate success, it was apparent that they would need to increase the amount of direct contact with individual school administrators. As a result, they established a productive relationship with three schools that continue to invite them back annually.
- Dan will prepare and share sample introductory letters and post-class thank-you notes to help build a template for flotillas as they learn to use the most effective tools for their local schools.

Contacting Junior Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructors at high schools and offering to provide an overview of the roles, missions, and opportunities in the USCG (AKA Recruiting).

- Most JROTC Instructors welcome this offer as it is rare for USCG recruiters to visit high schools and the instructors are very interested in their cadets getting information on all five of the armed services

“

The...goal is to increase boating and water safety knowledge among young people throughout the United States and Territories by way of the presentation of U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Education classes at schools and other youth organizations.

”

- As part of the presentation, they offer to provide a no-cost Boat America Course for their cadets later. This approach has led to scheduling classes at 10 high schools with an average of 20 students per class.
- PowerPoint presentations and some video clips that can be used for these introductory visits. They can also visit the nearest USCG Recruiting office to obtain additional information and materials to use during the overview visit.

Targeting Third Graders

- Using Boat 'N Kids and other supplemental material is ideal for this age group.
- The program has been presented to several different age groups, and they found third graders benefited the most.
- This youth course covers basic swimming safety, boating safety, and pollution awareness. The program generally runs 45-55 minutes and can be done either during the day in class or after school.
- They determined that the results were

outstanding if they were able to reach kids at a very young age (and kids at this age absorb our material like a sponge). Kids are interested, and they pay attention at this age. By teaching the same grade each year, the team reaches all children in the school as they pass through the third grade.

Overcoming challenges and objections.

- Liability
- Time for classes
- Charging for classes
- Personal Youth Training requirements by schools
- Potential background checks for instructors

According to U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Linda L. Fagan in her Auxiliary Policy Letter, Recreational Boating Safety is the number one mission for the Auxiliary. If we are to make a positive movement of the needle measuring our effectiveness at our primary mission, youth education certainly holds much promise as a way to change the statistics for the better over time.



CLASSROOM SAFETY

ENVIRONMENT

- Are the lights in the room working?
- If dimmers available, are they functional?
- Are window shades functional?
- Is the room temperature comfortable?
- Can you adjust heat/cooling system?



THE CLASSROOM

- Is the room ADA accessible?
- Are there directional signs to your classroom?
- Are exit doors marked and working?
- Is there more than one exit?
- Are emergency fire exit signs visible in the room and are they accessible?
- Can evacuation be made easily if needed?
- Are there any flammable or hazardous materials stored nearby?
- Is the power cutoff location known should power need to be cut?
- Are all electrical cords in good condition and properly sized for the load?
- Are extension cords taped down to avoid tripping?
- Is movement through the room easily accessible?
- Are the desks or tables in good working order?
- Are the tables secure from falling?
- Are the chairs in good condition?
- Have the tables been cleaned prior to use?
- Are the displays organized and visually appealing?
- Are the display tables set up with space for movement?
- If bookcases are in the room, are they secure from falling?
- Are the trash cans empty?
- Are there any cracks in the flooring that could be trip hazards?
- If there are any floor mats, are they secured to avoid tripping?
- Are the floors clean?



AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT

- If audio is used, can sound be heard throughout the room?
- Are any projection screens secure from falling?
- Is the projection screen or TV visible from all areas of the room?



BATHROOMS

- Where are the bathrooms located?
- Are the bathrooms in working order?
- Are the bathrooms clean?
- Are bathrooms supplied with paper?
- Are bathrooms supplied with soap/running water or hand sanitizer?



HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Is a first aid kit available and accessible?
- If an AED is available, it is accessible with proper signage and trained operators?
- Procedures for evacuation defined with muster location and roll taken?



U.S. COAST GUARD BOATING SAFETY APP



iOS

Android



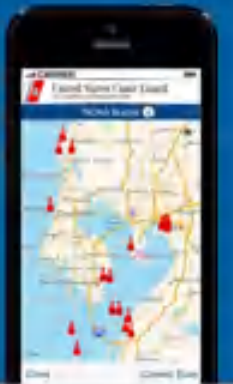
Discover local recreational boating community



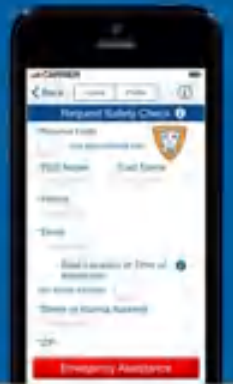
Create and share trip plans with family and friends



Get weather information provided by NOAA buoy's



Request a Virtual Safety Check



Seven Ways to Avoid Boating Accidents Next Season

Charles Fort, BoatUS

The GEICO/BoatUS Marine Insurance claims files are full of incidents that likely could have been avoided by spending a little time upgrading ... the skipper!

Our decades of experience as a recreational boat insurer means that here at GEICO/BoatUS Marine Insurance, our in-house experts know that things like leaking thru-hulls and sloppy electrical work often lead to insurance claims. But we also see too many claims that could have been avoided by improving the operator's skills.

To see what we mean, try answering these quick quiz questions:

1. What is the safest thing to do for someone suspected of having hypothermia?
 - A. Give them a warm alcoholic beverage
 - B. Massage the body to circulate blood
 - C. Get immediate medical attention
 - D. Apply hot towels to the head to thin the blood
2. How does alcohol use affect boat operators or passengers?
 - A. Physical reactions become slower
 - B. Depth perception becomes sharper
 - C. Reasoning ability becomes quicker
 - D. Balance and sense of direction improve
3. Which of the following is considered a safe refueling practice?
 - A. Closing all hatches and doors while refueling
 - B. Turning your key on to operate the fuel gauge
 - C. Sending all passengers below while refueling
 - D. Using the hands-free clip to avoid spills
4. U.S. Coast Guard regulations require that a 14-foot powerboat carry which of the following items between sunset and sunrise?
 - A. Power horn and bell
 - B. Garbage placards
 - C. Navigation lights
 - D. Navigation handbook
5. Which of the following is a requirement for life jackets?
 - A. They must be appropriately sized for the intended wearer
 - B. They must be stored safely in a watertight bag
 - C. They must provide miles-per-hour impact
 - D. They must be orange or other highly visible colors
6. Which of the following is recommended when docking with wind and the current?
 - A. Whenever possible, approach the dock with the wind and the current
 - B. Have your fenders and dock lines ready before you approach the dock
 - C. Have crew positioned to fend off the dock physically
 - D. Prepare two dock lines; any more than that will get tangled

Answers: 1:C, 2:A, 3:A, 4:C, 5:A, 6:B

How'd you do? Those were some simple sample questions asked in our BoatUS Foundation Safety Course, most based on real-life situations that resulted in real accidents found in our GEICO/BoatUS Marine Insurance claim files. This winter, as you're thinking of projects you want to check off your boat to-do list for next year, consider adding the following simple items to improve your skills. You'll reduce your risk of accidents and become a better and safer boater.

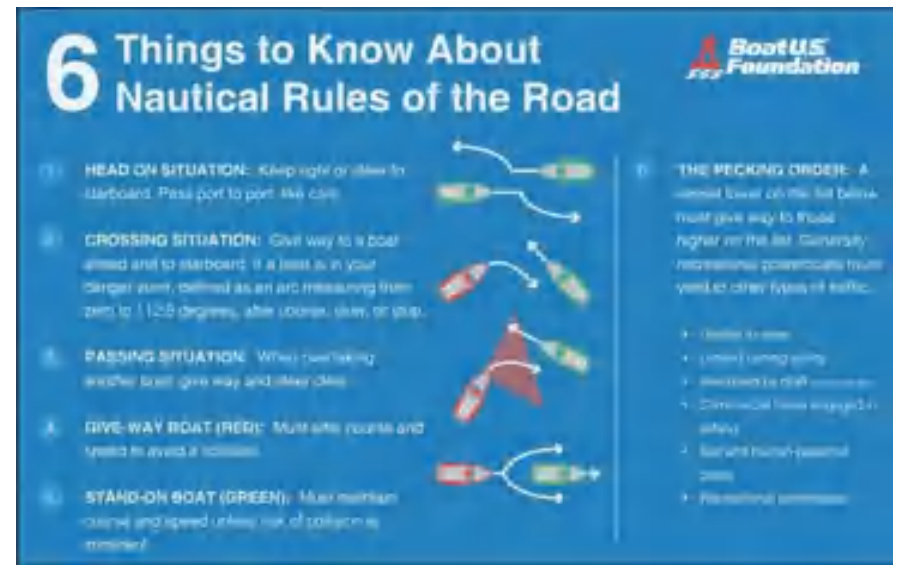
Challenge what you think you know

Last spring, an inexperienced boater took eight fishing buddies out in his new boat on Pamlico Sound. Unfortunately, the boat was only rated to carry six, and in what was described as fairly calm waters, the boat capsized, throwing the men in the water. Worse, there were only life jackets for four. The men survived by clinging to the upturned boat until rescued. If the water had been a little colder, the story could have had a tragic ending.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that in accidents that involve injuries or fatalities, the majority of operators had no formal boating education. By contrast, only 6% of fatalities involved operators who had taken a state-approved online boating safety course. Do the math, and you'll see why taking a course over winter (or any time of year) can make you a safer boater. Free online boating safety courses that meet requirements for most

states are available from our BoatUS Foundation. Take it a step further and check out the Foundation's other courses, including Weather for Boaters, AIS for Boaters, Propane Systems on your Boat, and even Learn to Sail. In all, there are 14 more courses in addition to the state-approved training.

Other organizations offering training include the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, which includes courses for children, knot-tying, and more. America's Boating Club offers classroom instruction on subjects such as piloting as well as engine maintenance and electrical-system courses. If you really want to dig deep into the systems on your boat, the American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) offers advanced courses like outboard and sterndrive corrosion and propeller selection and sizing.



Hone your on-the-water skills

Last time we looked at our top 10 insurance claims, collisions came in at No. 3. While many collisions are serious, such as a few high-profile ones in the 2019 season that ended in fatalities, most are low-speed encounters with a dock or another boat while maneuvering, often caused by inexperience at the helm. Most of us took driver's ed to learn to drive a car and hopefully not hit things in a parking lot, but there's been no such thing for boaters.

Until now. Here's an easy way to get hands-on training with experts to fine-tune your maneuvering skills. BoatUS offers on-water powerboat training courses at locations around the country. Courses include Intro to Boating (for both single-engine and twin-screw vessels), Women Making Waves (same as Intro to Boating but for female students only), and Precision Docking and Boat Handling. Courses are typically three hours long and affordable, around \$149 per person. Boats and safety gear are included in the cost of all courses. The Precision Docking and Boat Handling course covers 180-degree turnarounds, docking on both port and starboard sides, departing from a dock, and how to use the SCAN (Search, Concentrate, Analyze, and Negotiate) method to learn how to anticipate and avoid potential collision situations. Class sizes are limited to four students per vessel, ensuring students get sufficient time at the helm under the watchful eye of a U.S. Coast Guard-certified instructor. ([BoatUS.org/On-Water](https://www.boatus.org/On-Water))

Kick back and watch videos

A recent insurance claim came from the new owner of a 34-foot single-engine trawler who turned down a long, narrow fairway in an unfamiliar

marina, looking for a transient slip. In the end, the skipper realized he was in the wrong part of the marina and needed to turn around. Never having done it before, he tried spinning the boat around with a flurry of wheels and too much throttle. Before he'd gotten out of the fairway, five boats had received varying amounts of damage.

Suppose you can't take a hands-on course. In that case, you can still visit our YouTube site for our (free) comprehensive library of more than 100 BoatUS videos on nearly every boating subject – including exactly how to make a pivot turn in a marina. BoatUS videos are concise and educational, presented by our experts – BoatUS editors and instructors who are knowledgeable, clear teachers.

Two books to keep you out of hot water

Like most of us, you've got dozens of boating books in your library. When was the last time you opened one? With the winter wind blowing, now is an excellent time to take one out and expand your knowledge. *Chapman Piloting and Seamanship* is one of the best reference books a boater can have, but until you read chapter six on anchoring or chapter 11 on rough weather, this engrossing book is not helping you.

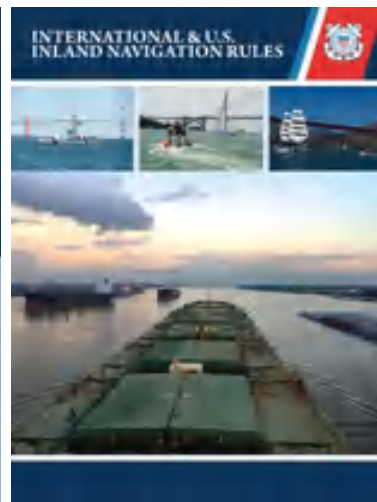
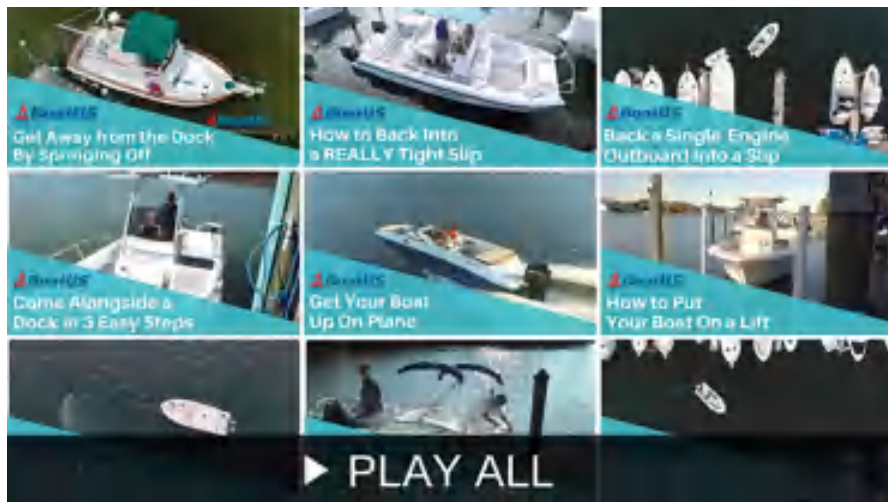
While the title might sound dry, the *Amalgamated International and U.S. Inland Navigation Rules* (commonly known as the "Rules of the Road" for boating) covers regulations and requirements for boaters, with topics such as sound signals, passing and overtaking other boats, and required safety equipment. (Pop quiz: Do two horn blasts from another boat mean they want to pass to starboard or port?) If your boat is more than 39 feet long, you're required to have a copy of the rules onboard, something that

a skipper cruising with his family last year in Puget Sound on their 45-foot sailboat learned after being boarded and fined for not having one (among other things). It's a fantastic reference if you want to review such things as when to have a lookout (Rule 5), regulations for sailing vessels (Rule 12), and even the lights used when a boat is minesweeping (Rule 27). (Answer: Two short blasts mean, "I intend to leave you on my starboard side." Rule 34)

Crack open your manuals

A couple of years ago, our BoatUS Consumer Affairs department received a call from a member wanting to know where to buy a manual for his new-to-him Mercruiser sterndrive. The reason? The winter after he purchased the boat, he winterized it the way he always had on his last boat, which was also a Mercruiser sterndrive. But the new engine had two additional drains that he overlooked, which caused the block to crack over the winter as the trapped water froze. That problem could have been avoided by reading the manual.

Most of us see the pile of manuals that come with our boats and gear, read the quick-start summaries, figure we'll read the rest when we have time, and never give it another thought until something goes expensively wrong and it's too late. Well, winter is a great time to pull out the manuals for your engine, VHF, chart plotter, and more. Learn to use all the valuable features on your radio, radar, GPS, and other gear. At best, you'll learn something that saves the day next season; at the least, you'll ensure your boat and equipment are serviced by manufacturer recommendations and remain under warranty.



Looking for the most recent version of the "International & U.S. Inland Navigation Rules"? Go to the U. S. Coast Guard Navigation Center webpage to view and download them at <https://navcen.uscg.gov/navigation-rules-amalgamated>.

For the lack of a good knot, boats are lost

While they might not save your life, knowing how to tie a few knots and hitches might save you a lot of grief. Every year, GEICO/BoatUS Marine Insurance gets several claims for dinghies that went missing while being towed, for boats that were banged up by dock rash when a dock line came off, and for boats blown ashore when a mooring pendant let loose. What do these claims have in common? Incorrect or inadequate knot-tying.

Over the years, riggers and seamen devised hundreds of knots, bends, hitches, and splices, all for good reason. Because dock lines, as well as most of the sail-control lines on sailboats, are made of rope, you still need to master a few basic but versatile knots to take care of your crew and your boat. Making sure a dock line stays on the piling with the right hitch can help you sleep better at night. Being able to tie the right knot, bend, or hitch in the dark, quickly, can save your bacon time and again. This winter, practice the bowline, clove hitch, sheet bend, and reef knot –

until you can do them at speed with your eyes closed.

Take a first-aid course

If one of your guests falls and hits his or her head on your boat, would you know what to do? How about if one of your crew develops heat exhaustion? Or has chest pains? Unfortunately, these frightening situations often lead to a cascade of other problems that result in boat damage because people onboard become understandably panicked. Claims for damage (and sometimes liability claims for injuries that weren't properly addressed) result. The more you know about how to treat someone who's hurt, the less likely you are to show up in our claims files.

Dreaming of summer cruises doesn't usually include fishhook-impaled fingers, sunburn, or sprained ankles, but we all know stuff happens on the water. Having a first-aid kit is great, but you need to know how to use what's in it, and how to respond if there's a medical emergency onboard. Having a course under your belt will

take away much of the stress of an emergency as well as make it more likely that your crew (or you) will quickly recover. The Red Cross offers first-aid and CPR courses around the country, and you can also find American Heart Association courses specifically for boaters that cover extras like carbon monoxide exposure, hypothermia, electric shock drowning (ESD), and seasickness.

ONLINE EXTRA

Visit <https://BoatUS.com/First-Aid-Kit> to learn what items you should have in your boat's first-aid kit.

Bio: Charles Fort is a former associate editor and head of consumer affairs at BoatUS.

This article was reprinted with permission from BoatUS Magazine, the flagship publication of the membership organization Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS). For more expert articles and videos to make your boating, sailing, or fishing better, visit BoatUS.com.



AIDS TO NAVIGATION

When Returning From the Sea or Going Upstream

Odd numbers on port side. Even numbers on starboard side.

REMEMBER

Red Right Returning

Regulatory Marks

Danger	Restricted Operations	Boat Exclusion Area	Information
xx. Docks	xx. 5 mph	xx. Docks Area	xx. Boat Ramp

BoatUS Foundation

New, Free Online Training for Paddlers

Robin Pope
Division Chief—Paddlecraft Safety



Margi Underwood (orange boat, no hat) and Joyce Pope (yellow boat, with a cap) enjoying a day out on the water. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by Robin Pope.

Paddling canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) are among the most popular outdoor activities in the United States. According to the “2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report” by the Outdoor Foundation, in 2020, it was estimated that 25 million or more people paddled at least one day. Participation has grown by about a million paddlers each year over the past decade. Unfortunately, paddling fatalities also have increased. Data from the U.S. Coast Guard’s Office of Boating Safety, “2021 Recreational Boating Statistics” report, show that nearly all these deaths could be prevented by simple steps taught in boating safety classes.

Many paddlers believe, with good reason, that the best way to learn how to paddle is through hands-on, on-water instruction. Whether formally from a

school or club or informally from knowledgeable friends, on-water instruction provides first-hand experience in skills such as capsizing avoidance and recovery that all paddlers should know. The reality is that most paddlers don’t receive that instruction before they go paddling. The Auxiliary’s partner in paddling programs, the American Canoe Association, has about 2,500 instructors in the U.S. Just reaching new paddlers alone would require each instructor to teach more than 400 students a year – a full-time job at what is often volunteer pay.

With those numbers, it’s clear that another approach is needed. To help address the need, the American Canoe Association, in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard, recently released a free online training program that provides essential

safety information needed by all paddlers. Course details and registration are a <https://bit.ly/3CSFKtL>.

The course takes less than an hour to complete. It doesn’t cover every possible contingency, but it addresses fundamental safety issues such as weather hazards, cold water immersion syndromes, trip planning, and life jacket wear. The straightforward message is two-fold. First, safe boating is fun boating. Second, safe boating doesn’t take much effort; the effort it does take has a great payoff.

The Paddlecraft Safety Division encourages everyone interested in safe boating to take this free online class. We hope every Auxiliary member will recommend the course to new paddlers they meet.



Suddenly in Command

Bob Currie
Flotilla 68, Galveston, Texas

Here is a scenario that happens all over the United States: You are the skipper of a nice recreational boat. You decide to take some friends out for a boat ride. Everything is going well when suddenly you hit a wave at the wrong angle, and you are thrown overboard. If you are doing what you are supposed to be doing, have the emergency engine cut-off switch (ECOS) lanyard attached to your life jacket, the boat will stop automatically once the ECOS is activated. If you aren't wearing the ECOS lanyard, the boat will keep going with your friends aboard. Maybe one of them knows how to operate a boat, and they can circle back around. But unless you have taken the time to designate a replacement skipper and train that person on how to operate your boat, it is more likely that no one on board can figure out what to do. Your responsibility to your passengers extends to making sure they know what to do when they become suddenly in command.

Perspective

Fortunately, recreational boating is relatively safe, but we can make it safer. Skipper incapacitation is rare but can happen. It is one of the many reasons someone may call the Coast Guard for assistance. Here are some real-life examples of why you should consider designating and training your replacement should you become incapacitated.

Man Overboard: After drinking heavily throughout the day, the boat operator-victim was sitting on the stern, and operating his boat at slow, no wake speed when he fell overboard. One passenger jumped into the lake to help while the remaining two passengers remained aboard. One passenger turned the engine off shortly after the operator fell overboard. No one aboard knew how to start the motor. They used

paddles to move the boat back to the location of the second subject, who had been searching for the victim. After retrieving the second subject, the passengers paddled the boat to a nearby dock. The operator drowned, and his body was recovered days later.

Skipper Incapacitated: A fishing charter captain with a history of uncontrolled diabetes had an episode in which his blood glucose dropped to a dangerously low level which induced a diabetic coma. Neither of his two passengers knew how to start and run a boat with two engines. Although there was a marine VHF-FM radio in the console with single button emergency activation, neither passenger knew how to operate the radio.



One passenger called 911, but the operator thought the call was a hoax and ended the call. The passenger looked up the number for the local sheriff's department and called their number. The sheriff's department notified the Coast Guard, who executed a search and found the boat hours later. The boat operator was still in a coma when rescued.

What Went Wrong

Foremost, none of the passengers, in either case, knew how to operate the boat. In the first case, as is the problem in many skipper-overboard cases, the operator did not have the safety lanyard attached to the ECOS on the boat. This results in the boat turning in circles or continuing in the direction where the helm is pointed. Many boat operators have been run over, injured, or killed by their own boats because they did not have that safety lanyard attached to their life vest.

In the second case, the charter boat captain had all the emergency gear you could ask for, including a Digital Selective Calling enabled marine radio with a distress button that would have contacted the Coast Guard if it had been pushed. However, the radio had been turned off. The equipment does no good unless at least two people know how to operate it.

To be safe, all passengers should undergo an emergency operation briefing, including how to operate the radio and the boat should they find themselves suddenly in command. Charter captains must give their passengers a safety briefing before getting underway and show them where the emergency checklist is.

Suddenly in Command Checklist

My youngest son got his pilot's license at age 16. Before he took me up in his plane, I made him tell me all about the controls and how to operate them. It took about 15 minutes, as I already knew how to operate a plane. Just not this plane. But after 15 minutes of on-the-ground instruction, I learned how to call for help on the radio and to keep the plane level and pointed in a particular direction.

I like checklists. It is too easy to forget an essential

point without one. Each boat is different, so each operator must make their own "Suddenly in Command" checklist. Then before leaving the dock, each passenger should be shown how to perform the various functions on the checklist. The list should include designating the replacement skipper, who hopefully has some boating experience. In addition, once underway, at least the replacement skipper should be allowed to operate the boat and get a feel of how it handles at different speeds and learn the location and function of the controls, such as the throttle, trim control, and steering.

Remember the guy that fell overboard above? He didn't have the emergency ECOS lanyard attached, but if he did, how on earth is the replacement skipper going to crank the engine? Simple: you must have a spare lanyard aboard, and the replacement skipper must know where it is and how to attach it to the ECOS. Below are the items you should include when you create your checklist.

1. File a float plan and give a copy to your passengers.
2. Designate a replacement captain.
3. Location of safety equipment (PFDs, throw cushion, lines, visual distress signals, etc.).
4. Location of the VHF Marine Radio and how to operate it.
5. How to make an emergency call to the Coast Guard using the marine radio.
6. How to make an emergency call to the Coast Guard using the Coast Guard cell phone app as a backup if the radio becomes inoperative.
7. How to attach the spare emergency ECOS lanyard (get one!).
8. How to crank and kill the engine using the ignition switch.
9. How to kill the engine using the emergency ECOS lanyard (test it!).
10. How to put the engine in forward or reverse and work the throttle.
11. How to steer the boat on and off plane.
12. Location of the first aid kit, what it contains, and how to stop bleeding.

13. How to use the Visual Distress Signals in an emergency (key concept: don't use them until another vessel is in sight).
14. How to determine your location using GPS or a cell phone app.
15. How to steer using the compass or GPS trails and waypoints.
16. How to bring the boat to the dock.
17. How to use the anchor (raise and lower, as well as how much line to pay out).
18. How to deal with a person in the water scenario.

It's not an exhaustive list, but just a starting point. The key is to designate a replacement captain and train that person to operate the boat and other equipment, such as the radio. Sometimes, the best thing to do is anchor the boat and wait for help to arrive.

Using the GPS

Many boats these days have a GPS/Sonar unit aboard. They are helpful, especially if you plan to get out of sight of the land. But if you plan ahead, you don't need to purchase an expensive unit for your boat. You can download a GPS app to your phone that works. I have one on my cell phone that I use as a backup.

Two essential functions can help you out: one is trails, and the other is waypoints. When the trails function is turned on, the GPS shows the route you create as you move through the water. I have seen some people with every trail they ever made still displayed on their GPS. I recommend that you delete the tracks at the beginning of your trip so that you are Suddenly in Command skipper isn't confused by all the trails you have stored and can thus navigate a reverse route back to the dock. I have many waypoints stored on my GPS, most of which are fishing spots. But I also have my different launch waypoints stored. Part of your Suddenly in Command instruction should be using your GPS to navigate by using a reverse route using the trail created going out or by navigating to a waypoint stored in your GPS.

Man Overboard (Person in the Water or PIW)

An essential function of every GPS is the Man Overboard (MOB) function. It would be best if you showed your replacement skipper how to hit the MOB button to aid in finding you or anyone else who falls

overboard. When a person is in the water, they are not always visible, and it is easy to lose their location visually. In addition to using the MOB function on your GPS, teach everyone aboard to shout "Man overboard!" and to point at the person in the water. At least one person should keep their eyes on the person in the water and continuously point to them until they are rescued.

Visual Distress Signals

It would be best if you always carried Coast Guard approved visual distress signals (VDS) and ensure they are not outdated. However, taking them is only half the job. You should know how to use them. If you have any expired VDS, then you should practice using them. If you practice using them near the water, contact the Coast Guard, give them your location, and tell them that you are testing your pyrotechnic VDS. This is especially important when your VDS includes rockets, which can be seen from many miles away. One of my beach neighbors was sitting on his deck one evening and saw a VDS rocket in the sky over the bay. He contacted the U.S. Coast Guard Galveston Watchstander, who said thank you and told him that just before his report, a captain had called to say he was teaching his deckhands how to use the rockets (Good job, Travis!).

Summary

It is up to you to create a Suddenly in Command checklist and to choose a replacement captain to take over should you become incapacitated or fall overboard. Doing so could save your life and the lives of your passengers. But don't stop with your boat. If you own an aircraft or other equipment, such as a UTV or ATV, teach your passenger how to operate it. It just makes good sense to do so.

Safety Note

A boater who tried to use his cell phone to notify the Coast Guard when his boat capsized has this to say about the experience, "Your cell phone touch screen does not work if your fingers are wet." Just another reason to get a handheld VHF/FM marine radio.

For more information on boating safety, please visit the Official Website of the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division at www.uscgboating.org.

“
Your responsibility to your passengers
extends to making sure they know what
to do when they become suddenly in
command.
”





Scan these QR Codes to stay informed on boating safety.



RBS Job One

Publication of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety Directorates comprised of the Public Education Directorate, Vessel Examination and Program Visitation Directorate, and Recreational Boating Safety Outreach Directorate.

Our mission is to prevent the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and adverse environmental impact associated with recreational boating, through outreach to the recreational boating community.

This is what we strive for. Recreational Boating Safety is our Job One. It is a cornerstone of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.