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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 26, 2023

Be Careful on Area Waterways this Holiday Weekend

Memorial Day weekend and the “unofficial” start of summer is here. The National Weather Service, US Coast Guard and various agencies urge extreme caution when boating, canoeing, or kayaking every spring in Vermont and New York due to the dangers of cold water and potential hypothermia.

After the long winter, most of us are eager to get outside. But when going to lakes and rivers on a warm day during the spring, recreationists need to be mindful that water temperatures remain dangerously cold and that the temperature of the water is much slower to respond than the air temperature.

On Lake Champlain and other bodies of water across the North Country, surface water temperatures are typically only in the 40s to lower 50s this holiday weekend and don't exceed the 50s until the second half of June. Immersion in waters of those temperatures can lead to hypothermia.

Immersion in cold water can become life threatening very quickly. Should your craft capsize, hypothermia in waters less than 50 degrees can occur in just a matter of minutes. Since water conducts body heat away up to 25 times faster than air of the same temperature, the cold water rapidly causes extremities to become numb, weakens the ability of muscles to work effectively and eventually lead to hypothermia.

To raise awareness, we ask you remember these safety tips:

- Consider postponing small craft boating activities until water temperatures become warmer in late spring and summer.
- If you do choose to boat, canoe, or kayak in the early season, wear a dry suit appropriate for water temperatures in the 40s and 50s.
- Wear all recommended protective gear to guard against the cold water in the event of an accident or capsize.
- Remember, no matter the season, when you are on the water, **ALWAYS** wear a personal flotation device.

Safe boating is no accident. Please take the time to think safety first and plan appropriately for weather and water conditions before heading out on lakes, rivers, and streams.

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Other links –

NWS Safe Boating – <https://www.weather.gov/safety/safeboating>

Lake Champlain Recreational Forecast - <http://www.weather.gov/btv/recreation>

National Center for Cold Water Safety - <http://www.coldwatersafety.org/>

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