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Public Information Statement  
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC  
722 AM EDT Thu May 15 2014

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From: Mark Tew  
Chief, Marine and Coastal Weather Services Branch

Subject: National Safe Boating Week, May 17-23, 2014

NWS and the National Safe Boating Council will partner again this year for National Safe Boating Week May 17-23. The week will highlight relevant weather and safety-specific Public Service Announcements for the recreational boating public. Topics will include:

Saturday 5/17: Boating Under the Influence (BUI). Boating under the influence of alcohol and drugs affects judgment, vision, balance and coordination. These impairments increase the risk of being involved in a boating accident for both passengers and boat operators. Alcohol is a contributing factor in about a third of all recreational boating fatalities.

It is illegal in every state to operate any boat or watercraft while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Penalties can include fines, suspension or revocation of your driver's license and even jail time.

Sunday 5/18: Thunderstorm Safety. Thunderstorms can develop quickly and create dangerous wind and wave conditions with shifting and gusty winds, lightning, waterspouts, and torrential downpours.

All thunderstorms produce lightning. A lightning strike to a vessel can be catastrophic. If you see lightning, get inside if possible and avoid touching metal or electrical devices. If your boat doesn't have a cabin, stay as low as you can in the boat.

Boaters should use extra caution when thunderstorm conditions exist and have a plan of escape. Keep in mind that thunderstorms are usually brief so waiting it out is better than riding it out.

Monday 5/19: Life Jackets. Nearly 85 percent of those who drown while boating were not wearing a life jacket. Wearing a life

jacket is one of the most effective and simple life-saving strategies for safe recreational boating. Boaters are required to have a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket on board for every passenger on their vessel. The most important thing is this: remember to grab a life jacket and "Wear It!"

Tuesday 5/20: Hurricane Preparedness. Don't wait until you hear a hurricane warning to secure your boat. By the time NWS issues a hurricane warning, it's too late to be working on a dock safely. Listen to weather forecasts and plan ahead. Haul your boat to a safer location or add additional lines during a hurricane or tropical storm. Hurricane and/or Tropical Storm Watches are issued before a warning, typically 48-hours before the anticipated onset of storm winds.

Wednesday 5/21: Love the Life, Wear it! A new public service announcement highlighting the importance of wearing life jackets called "Love the Life!" shares the experience of two families and a dog as they spend the day boating and fishing. View the YouTube video by going to "Love the Life – Wear It!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RQ4QNT1a40>

Thursday 5/22: Safe Navigation in Fog. Fog is considered dense if it reduces visibility to less than one mile. Fog can form quickly and catch boaters off guard. Visibility can be reduced to a few feet in extreme cases, disorienting boaters.

If you encounter fog, navigate at a slower than normal speed. Turn on all of your running lights, even in daytime. Listen for sounds of other boats that may be near you, or for fog horns and bells from nearby buoys. Use GPS or a navigation chart to help obtain a fix on your location. If you are unable to get your bearings, stay put until the fog lifts but make sure you are in a safe location. Have a compass available. Even if you don't know where you are in the fog, with a compass you can determine the direction you are navigating.

Friday 5/23: Fire Extinguishers. U.S. Coast Guard approved, marine-type fire extinguishers are required on boats where a fire hazard could be expected from the engines or fuel system. A boater shouldn't have to travel more than half the length of their boat to get to the fire extinguisher. Inspect your fire extinguishers at least once a year to ensure they are properly charged, stored and undamaged.

For more information on hazardous weather and boating safety, visit the following websites:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/safeboating>

<http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/>

or contact:

Wayne Weeks  
NWS Marine and Coastal Services  
Wayne.Weeks@noaa.gov

NWS Public Information Statements are online at:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/notif.htm>

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