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**MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN**  
**[MSIB # 08-18]**

June 1, 2018

**BOATING SAFETY: SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS MAY SAVE A LIFE**

Recently the Coast Guard released its recreational boating statistics report for calendar year 2017. A key statistic is the number of lives lost. The good news is that boating fatalities are down 6.1% from 2016. But what struck me as surprising—and ironic—are the simple precautions that, had they been taken, may have reduced deaths significantly, perhaps exponentially.

Here are some striking facts from the Executive Summary to the Coast Guard's report (my emphasis added):

- Where cause of death was known, 76% of fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those drowning victims with reported life jacket usage, **84.5% were not wearing a life jacket.**
- **Alcohol** use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; where the primary cause was known, **alcohol was listed as the leading factor in 19% of deaths.**
- Where instruction was known, **81% of deaths** occurred on boats where **the operator did not receive boating safety instruction.** Only 14% of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally approved boating safety education certificate.
- Where data was known, the vessel types with the highest percentage of deaths were:
  - open motorboats (47%),
  - kayaks (15%), and
  - personal watercraft (7%).

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U. S. COAST GUARD SECTOR SOUTHEASTERN NEW ENGLAND

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The takeaways from this report (and precautions to save one or more lives) are simple:

- (1) **Wear a life jacket.** If you take no other safety precautions this year, at least wear a life jacket when underway in a recreational boat, kayak, paddle craft, etc.
- (2) **Don't drink and boat.** As in driving a vehicle, alcohol and boating can be a deadly mix.
- (3) **Take a boating safety course.** Our Coast Guard Auxiliary, state boating safety agencies, and other boating safety organizations offer ample courses at convenient places and times, for little or no cost. Take a course! To locate a Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety course near you go to <http://cgaux.org/boatinged/> and click on "PUBLIC EDUCATION COURSE FINDER (BY ZIP CODE)."
- (4) **Be especially vigilant in open motorboats, kayaks, and personal watercraft.** These vessels make up the vast majority of the recreational boating population.

The full 2017 Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics report (along with all reports since 2004) may be found here: [http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.php](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.php).

The U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety mobile app can be found at [uscgboating.org/mobile](http://uscgboating.org/mobile).

For additional information on boating safety go to <http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=B-DEPT>.

Let's have a safe and enjoyable 2018 boating season in southeastern New England!



R. J. Schultz  
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Captain of the Port  
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