



WAVES

Watercraft and Vessel Safety

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF BOATING

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FROM THE CHIEF

Jesse L. Harrup, Jr., DC-B

In lieu of normal staff articles and in consideration of the fact that by the time most of you read this issue, it will generally be warm enough that most recreational boaters will be getting out on the water, we provide these potentially lifesaving information pieces for your use in the boat operations program and to share with your local recreational boating citizens via PA handouts, PE coverage in the classroom, etc....

We will return to our normal staff officer articles in the next issue; 'til then, please learn from and share these articles and "Keep'er 'tween the bouys"

STATISTICS REVEAL HIGHEST FATALITY RISK IN COLDER MONTHS

U.S. Coast Guard Statistics

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard's newly released recreational boating accident statistics for 2002, the most recent year available, reveal that although fewer accidents occur in the winter, boaters face the greatest risk of dying in the colder months.

The Coast Guard calculates fatal accident risk by dividing the number of fatal accidents by the total number of reported accidents. In January 2002, it reached 19 percent, and in February 2002 peaked at 26 percent. This means that in February, more than a quarter of all reported boating accidents resulted in death.

Many boaters probably believe that the risks are greatest during the warmer months, when waterways are more crowded," said Capt. Scott Evans, chief of boating safety for the Coast Guard. "Our statistics show the opposite – that boaters are most at risk of dying during the colder months so boating safety should be a concern year-round, not just during peak boating season."

Evans attributes the higher fatality rate to the fact that fewer boaters and patrol officers may be available to rescue boaters in distress during winter

months. Hypothermia, the condition when the body loses heat faster than it is produced, is also a big danger. While hypothermia can happen at any time of the year, the colder the water, the more rapidly hypothermia may occur.

The 2002 accident statistics also reveal that overall fatalities were up from 681 in 2001 to 750 in 2002, reversing a downward trend. Boating fatalities involving alcohol use also rose to 39 percent in 2002 from 34 percent the year before. The number of registered recreational boats continued to rise, breaking the 13 million mark.

These statistics confirm the need for boaters to take charge of their safety and the safety of their passengers throughout the year," said Evans. "We want to be sure boaters are getting this message. That is why the Coast Guard and its boating safety partners have launched a new national boating safety awareness initiative: 'You're in Command. Boat Safely!'"



"You're in Command" urges boaters to wear a life jacket at all times while boating, take a boating safety course, get an annual Vessel Safety Check (VSC), and avoid boating under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or prescription medications. Recently, a number of leading organizations have agreed to support key elements of the "You're in Command" initiative.

State Farm Insurance, a leading insurer of recreational boats in the U.S. with more than a million registered boats insured, has agreed to help support the Vessel Safety Check program by funding the decals distributed to boaters who pass a free bow-to-stern check of their boat. Vessel Safety Checks are delivered free by qualified members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and United States Power Squadrons®, two of the nation's premier volunteer boating safety-related organizations.

We welcome the participation of State Farm and other leading organizations in support of our "You're in Command. Boat Safely!" initiative," said Evans. "These partners are helping get the word out. By boating more safely, recreational boaters can help reduce the number of preventable accidents to which the Coast Guard must respond. In addition to saving lives, this helps us devote more time and resources to homeland security efforts. We hope our initiative will become a year-round, lifelong philosophy among boaters to boat more safely." "You're in Command" urges boaters to wear a life jacket at all times while boating, take a boating safety course, get an annual vessel safety check, and avoid boating under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or prescription medications.

For more information on boating safety, visit www.uscgboating.org, or call the U.S. Coast Guard's Infoline at 1-800-368-5647.

<p style="text-align: center;">SPRING INTO BOATING -- COMMISSIONING CHECKLIST</p>
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Courtesy of BoatU.S.

To help boaters have a trouble-free summer boating season, BoatU.S., the nation's largest recreational boating association, has a spring commissioning checklist. Whether you have a power or sailboat, inboard or outboard, following this checklist is an easy way to get ready for the season.

The entire checklist is also available at <http://www.BoatUS.com/freebies>.

The list includes the following:

BEFORE YOU LAUNCH:

- Inspect and lubricate seacocks. Hoses and hose clamps should be inspected and replaced as necessary.
- Replace deteriorated zincs.
- Inspect prop(s) for dings, pitting and distortion. Make sure cotter pins are secure. Grip the prop and try moving the shaft - if it's loose, the cutlass bearing may need to be replaced.
- Check to make sure the rudder stock hasn't been bent.
- Inspect the hull for blisters, distortions and stress cracks.
- Make sure your engine intake sea strainer is free of corrosion and properly secured.

- Check the engine shaft and rudder stuffing boxes for looseness. After the boat is launched, be sure to check these as well as through-hulls for leaks.
- Use a hose to check for deck leaks at ports and hatches. Renew caulk or gaskets as necessary.
- If equipped, ensure that stern drain plug is installed.

OUTDRIVES and OUTBOARD ENGINES:

- Inspect rubber outdrive bellows for cracked, dried and/or deteriorated spots (look especially in the folds), and replace if suspect.
- Check power steering and power trim oil levels. Replace worn-out zincs.
- Inspect outer jacket of control cables. Cracks or swelling indicate corrosion and mean that the cable has to be replaced.

ENGINES AND FUEL SYSTEMS:

- Inspect fuel lines, including fill and vent hoses, for softness, brittleness or cracking. Check all joints for leaks and make sure all lines are well supported with non-combustible clips or straps with smooth edges.
- Inspect fuel tanks, fuel pumps and filters for leaks. Clamps should be snug and free of rust. Clean fuel filters.
- Inspect cooling hoses and fittings for stiffness, rot, leaks and/or cracking. Make sure they fit snugly and are double-clamped.
- Every few years, remove and inspect exhaust manifold for corrosion.
- Clean and tighten electrical connections, especially both ends of battery cables. Wire-brush battery terminals and fill cells with distilled water.
- Inspect bilge blower hose for leaks.

SAILBOAT RIGGING:

- Inspect fittings for cracks and rust. Inspect wire halyards and running backstays for "fishhooks" and rust.
- Remove tape on turnbuckles and lubricate threads, preferably with Teflon. Replace old tape with fresh tape.
- Recaulk through-deck chainplates as necessary (generally, once a decade).

TRAILERS:

- Inspect tire treads and sidewalls for cracks or lack of tread and replace as necessary. Check air pressure. Don't forget the spare!
- Inspect bearings and repack as necessary.
- Test tail and back-up lights. Test winch to make sure it's working properly.
- Inspect trailer frame for rust. Sand and paint to prevent further deterioration.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Check expiration dates on flares and fire extinguishers.
- Check stove and remote tanks for loose fittings and leaking hoses.
- Inspect bilge pump and float switch to make sure it's working properly.
- Inspect dock and anchor lines for chafing.
- Update or replace old charts and waterway guides.
- Check shore power cable connections for burns, which indicate the cable needs to be replaced.
- Make sure your boating license and/or registration is up to date. Don't forget your trailer tags.
- Review your boat insurance policy and update coverage if needed. Be sure you have fuel spill insurance coverage.
- Make sure you have a properly sized and wearable life jacket in good condition for each passenger, including kids and pets.

GAS IN THE BILGE: TOP TIPS ON PREVENTING THE BIG BANG

Courtesy of BoatU.S.

A recent study by Seaworthy magazine, the specialty publication from BoatU.S. marine insurance, revealed that 8% of all boat fires were caused by fuel leaks. While diesel fuel was an occasional culprit, 95% of fuel-related fires were caused by gasoline. Here are some lessons learned from the study and Seaworthy magazine's top tips for preventing and dealing with spilled fuel aboard.

The Seaworthy study found that aluminum fuel tanks are the most common source of leaks, and the most difficult, if not impossible to inspect. A 1992 Underwriters Laboratory study on aluminum tank corrosion found the average service life for aluminum tanks is only 6.5 years. If you can gain access to your tanks, regularly inspect them for the

telltale sign of corrosion - white powder - before the tank's integrity is completely breached by a pinhole. Often tanks corrode from the bottom, which makes holes difficult to spot.

If you can't visually inspect your fuel tank, do the next best thing every time you fill up – use your nose. The UL study notes that 76% of leaks were discovered only after the owners smelled fuel.

One cup of gasoline has the same explosive potential as five sticks of dynamite. If you are at the gas dock and find gas in the bilge, let the professionals handle it. Get everyone off the boat, don't operate anything electrical, including the blower, even if it is ignition protected. Don't try disconnecting the batteries.

If you are on open water with fuel in the bilge, first shut off the battery switch and summon help with a cell phone if possible. Keep in mind that VHF radios do not have to be ignition protected, an obvious risk if it's located in a cabin filled with fumes. If you decide to abandon the vessel, don't go far – you don't want a Good Samaritan to stumble upon your time bomb.

Finally, refamiliarize yourself with proper refueling procedures: remove all persons from the boat; shut off everything including the battery at the main switch; have an extinguisher handy; keep the fuel fill nozzle in contact with the fill to prevent static electricity; close all compartments, ports, and windows to prevent vapors from creeping in (open them once refueling is completed); use the blower for at least four minutes after refueling; and then sniff the bilge and engine compartment.

FREE BOATU.S. RECALL ALERT REGISTRY HELPS BOAT MANUFACTURERS REACH CUSTOMERS

Registry Connects Boat Builders to Owners When Recalls Arise

Boat manufacturers know that for a period of ten years after a boat is built, federal law requires them to recall and repair their vessels if they are found not to be in compliance with Coast Guard regulations or when they contain safety defects. But the law only requires that U.S. Coast Guard Defect Recall Notices be sent to original owners. With most vessels changing ownership at least once during their first ten years of life, well-meaning manufacturers often have difficulty reaching subsequent owners to let them know they have a fix available to remedy a safety problem.

SAFE BOATING COUNCIL SUMMIT MEETING

Bill Griswold, BC-BLN

The nation's largest recreational boat owners association, BoatU.S., has stepped in to fill this important gap between boat builders and owners with its National Recall Alert Registry, a free service for manufacturers that connects them to owners with U.S. Coast Guard recall actions.

"No one wants a recall action," says Caroline Ajootian, BoatU.S. Consumer Protection Bureau director. "But when one does occur, the system often fails because second or third owners aren't notified. It also fails when new boat owners don't return warranty cards. In both cases, manufacturers have no way to notify owners about a recall and their good efforts to correct them.

"The way the recall is handled is often remembered by boat owners and using this registry helps to reinforce the positive image of a company and its product. It can only help a difficult situation get better," said Ajootian.

"We want manufacturers to know that this system is secure," commented Ajootian, "So each manufacturer can view only the database of owners having their product."

IMPORTANT BOATING DATES FOR 2004

Ed Sweeney, DVC-BR

The following are some key boating safety dates to mark on your calendar **NOW**, and begin to plan accordingly for **TODAY!**

- **IBWSS:** 17-22 April 2004, Panama City, FL
- **National Safe Kids Week:** 1-8 May 2004
- **North American Safe Boating Week:** 22-28 May 2004
- **VSC Mega Month:** 22 May thru 4 July 2004
- **National Marina Day,** 14 August 2004.



TWO PARTING THOUGHTS: (1) please remember to post your own local boating safety events on the National Safe Boating Council's web site events page, which is located at http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/events/event_s.htm. (2) As VADM Terry Cross once said to me, "every week is National Safe Boating Week."

As I write this, the Summit is at hand in Panama City where 500 or more delegates will meet to swap boating education and water safety information. Several foreign countries will also be represented, as the messages are international.

This is the eighth Summit, presented by the National Safe Boating Council and the National Water Safety Congress and partly funded by a grant from the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund. In the future, I'd recommend that any Auxiliarist would benefit from attending this meeting and urge anyone, especially those living in the immediate area, to apply for a scholarship to waive the registration fee. The next Summit will be in Southern California in 2005. Look for it on the NSBC website, www.safeboatingcouncil.org.

National Safe Boating Week and the North American Safe Boating Campaign are about to launch. Each flotilla commander should have received their kit by now and have their plans in high gear. The kit tells anyone how to plan an event and gives lots of great information, logos, press releases and an order form to get publications. Anyone can visit the Campaign web site at www.safeboatingcampaign.org for free access to the campaign materials. You can download lots of things from this site, and you can even **list your own safe boating event** on the state by state listing. Please visit this site -- you'll be surprised at the information you'll find there.

Spread the word, **BOAT SAFE, BOAT SMART, WEAR IT.** Meaning the life jacket, of course. Have fun out there, and be safe.

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