

## Watercraft and Vessel Safety

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

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### FROM THE CHIEF

John Potts, DC-B



The role of Department Chief brings with it many responsibilities; among them, the arduous task of traveling to San Diego, CA, in April for the International Boating & Water Safety Summit...hey, someone has to do it!

Just so you aren't *too* envious of me, the air temp hovered around a cool 60°F throughout the summit. Still, that didn't stop some brave participants from jumping into the pool to try their hand at demonstrations like the BoatU.S.-sponsored boarding ladder research project shown below. Pictured is Robin Freeman, the Department Chief of Education, as she tries to scramble onboard an aluminum punt boat using a variety of different ladder options. Well done, Robin! Definitely too cold for me!



An interesting highlight of the summit was learning about the inroads our partners are making in recreational boating safety. The American Canoe Association (of which I am a proud member) presented and gave away samples of their new 8-minute DVD "It's Your Turn". This terrific resource provides a basic understanding of the nautical

"Rules of the Road" as they apply to paddlecraft, and offers common-sense tips on how to stay out of harms' way around bigger, faster boats.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) shared information on their latest RBS thrust in Illinois and Missouri. The USACE keeps raising the bar for RBS, challenging all partner agencies to keep developing innovative methods to get the "safe boating" message out to those who need it most.

At the last two Summits, our own Branch Chief Liaison to the USACE, Atul Uchil, trained a class of USACE park rangers in the VE course as a "force multiplier", so the rangers could conduct VSCs on isolated lakes where there is no Auxiliary presence.

The U.S. Power Squadrons (USPS), in their session on "Educating the Experienced Boater", presented a broad lineup of courses and short seminars, including *Chart Usage*, *On Board Weather*, *Boat Handling*, *Sail Trim*, *DSC Simulator CD*, and *Trailer Boating*. The USPS also introduced their boating course for kids of all ages: *Water Smart from the Start<sup>SM</sup>*, a complete package that includes instructor and student guides, along with approximately 8 hours of interactive "fun and educational" CD courseware.



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A 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception for the National Safe Boating Council was held at Coast Guard Air Station San Diego, complete with a helo and SAFE boat on display, good chow, and a Navy brass ensemble.



Also, see elsewhere in this newsletter about our own Branch Chief, Bill "Griz" Griswold being inducted into the Boating Hall of Fame, and...a must-read piece on the first ever World Drowning Report! These ARE exciting times to be in the *water safety*

field!

*Editor's Note – John has asked me to share a bit about myself. An active-duty lieutenant in the Coast Guard, I was looking forward to another tour of sea duty when, in March, I was diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma. I'm a temporary sandpeep while I undergo chemo and radiation this summer. John assures me that everyone's positive thoughts are with me for a speedy recovery and a quick return to the underwary life I miss.*

**Putting a Face  
ON WHAT WE DO**  
Stu Soffer, N-MS

For several years, all over the country, I have been promoting wearing life jackets, but up until a few days ago, the blunt statistics underscoring thousands of senseless drowning deaths were my driving force. There were also several unfortunate occurrences here in Arkansas where non-swimmers who were not wearing lifejackets drowned when their flat-bottom boats capsized.

Then I had an opportunity to talk to the survivor in our area of operations of a fatality-related boating accident that had just occurred, five hours earlier. We talked while the Sheriff's Department was still dragging the water for his missing nephew. I share this story because while many of us have been promoting the four key messages of boating safety ([wear a life jacket](#), [never boat under the influence](#), [take a boating safety course](#), [get a free Vessel Safety Check \(VSC\)](#)) for years, fortunately, most of us have never been "up close and personal" with this unpleasant situation.

For those who take the time to review annual Coast Guard boating accident statistics, this was a classic scenario. While no fatality should be taken lightly, this was a textbook case. That is to say, it

involved two adult males in a small flat-bottom open outboard motorboat in the early afternoon. The weather was clear and sunny with a light breeze; it was about 80 degrees. The drowning occurred in a calm slack water area at the end of Pine Bluff Harbor less than ¼ mile from the boat ramp, about 30' from shore in about 15' of water. No other boats were involved.

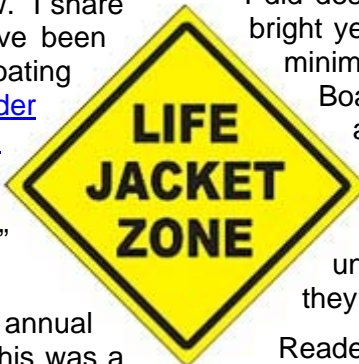
USCG-approved life jackets were in the boat and accessible, but not worn. Alcohol was not a factor. Neither boater had taken a boating safety class.

The two men launched and had only traveled a short distance when the propeller shear pin sheared off. One man leaned over the stern to evaluate the damage and fell in the water. He began to drift away from the boat and the other man jumped in to save him. However, the breeze blew the empty boat away from the person in the water, and the rescuer had difficulty holding onto his boat and trying to reach his companion. Moreover, the rescuer was not a strong swimmer; he had also recently had lower abdominal-area surgery, weakening his efforts. From what he demonstrated to me, the rescuer's swimming ability was limited to a "dog paddle." When help arrived, the survivor was clinging to the boat; the victim had disappeared under the water.

I asked why they were not wearing life jackets, especially if one could not swim well. After thinking, the survivor said they had just launched and didn't think about putting them on yet. He also commented the weather was not too hot, so there was no reason not to. I asked why he didn't put one on before jumping into the water. He said he was in a hurry to help his nephew and didn't think about it. Although he didn't say so, I suspect the victim in the water was probably panicking about then, and so was his uncle. The guy was still pretty shaken up, so I didn't ask if he'd considered using a throwable Type IV, or if one was even in the boat.

I did describe the National Safe Boating Council bright yellow rectangle "Wear It" signs offered at minimal cost as part of the 2008 National Safe Boating Campaign. I asked the man if he and his nephew had seen these signs at the ramp while launching, would it have jogged their memory to put on their life jackets right when getting underway? Without hesitation, he said they would have.

Readers may recall that initially, Operation Boat Smart (OBS) brought together all boating safety partners with a common focus. Then "You're





in Command” provided those partners with a branded product that boaters could relate to, regardless of their location nationwide. “You’re in Command” recently gave way to “Boat Responsibly”, the U.S. Coast Guard’s new public boating safety outreach initiative, which encourages all recreational boaters to take responsibility for their actions on the water. As a boat owner or operator, you are responsible for your safety and the safety of your passengers. That’s why we say: “Boat Responsibly!”



All boating safety partners are also speaking with one voice in broadcasting the “Wear It” message and using the familiar term “life jacket” in place of the cryptic “PFD”. That’s because we still have a long way to go in educating the public: in 2006, there were 710 recreational boating fatalities, 473 of which were from drowning, and 90 percent, or 423 of the victims, were not wearing a life jacket.

We all know there is a hardcore group of knuckleheads who will never wear a life jacket despite statistics, stories, and warning signs. But perhaps this poor guy whose body was recovered around 2000 that evening would have survived his ordeal if we could have somehow gotten the “Wear It” message to him before he launched.

**William Griswold joins  
BOATING HALL OF FAME**  
John Potts, DC-B

At the International Boating and Water Safety Summit in April, William “Griz” Griswold, a Boating Department Branch Chief (BC-BLN), was inducted into the National Safe Boating Council’s **Boating Hall of Fame** in recognition of over 35 years of significant, groundbreaking work in boating safety.



A former pilot in the United States Coast Guard, Captain Griswold’s last active tour of duty was as Chief Director, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (CHDIRAUX) and Chief, Office of Boating Safety. Retiring as a captain (O-6), he continued his involvement with the Coast Guard as a very active

member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, United Safe Boating Council, and several other related committees and organizations.

Mr. Griswold’s enthusiasm and commitment to boating safety have underscored his essential contributions to both the USCG Auxiliary and the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC), where he served as Chair from 2003 to 2004.

Mr. Griswold’s service to the NSBC began in 1993. In addition to his leadership positions as Chair and on the Board of Directors, he has been involved with the NSBC Recreational Boating Safety Grant program, the Outboard Motor Corporation Foundation “Take ‘em Boating” program, the International Boating and Water Safety Summit, and the North American Safe Boating Campaign.

Additionally, Mr. Griswold helped cultivate and expand upon many partnerships with other boating and water safety organizations. This included our partners and friends to the north – the Canadian Safe Boating Council – as well as across the Atlantic, with Italian boating and water safety representatives. Throughout, he lent his knowledge and expertise for the betterment of boating safety.

In 2007, William Griswold received the USPS “Eagle Award”. The award, presented annually by the USPS and the U.S. Coast Guard, recognizes people, organizations, and companies that make significant contributions to boating safety.

Mr. Griswold is serving as President of the United Safe Boating Institute, works with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, and is a member of the Florida Boating Advisory Council.

“Griz”, as he is commonly called, is a tireless volunteer and a tremendous communicator. Numerous organizations rely on his notes and communication skills. His sense of humor and kind but focused manner have endeared him to many, helping him create wide partnerships and alliances.

Capt. Griswold is a good friend of the boating safety community. It is an honor to have him listed among the champions of boating safety in the Boating Safety Hall of Fame.

# ILS Presents 2008 WORLD DROWNING REPORT

John Potts, DC-B

The International Life Saving Federation (ILS), a global non-profit federation of over 100 national life-saving organizations worldwide, has published their first-ever International World Drowning Report. I was privileged to observe as Ms. Barbara Byers of ILS presented this report at the International Boating & Water Safety Summit in San Diego this April. The statistics on worldwide drowning are staggering.



Following is a brief summary of the presentation. For the complete PowerPoint and a PDF document of the full International World Drowning Report, visit <http://auxbdept.org/documents.php>

“Currently, the World Health Organization (WHO) collates the most comprehensive global data on drowning mortality. Even while acknowledging that drowning deaths are significantly underreported, WHO identifies drowning as the third-leading cause of unintentional injury death after motor vehicle collisions and falls. The World Health Organization estimated 409,272 people died from drowning in 2000, and 382,000 in 2002.”



Children play in an industrial waterway in this picture from the ILS “World Drowning” presentation.

Based on 2002 World Health Organization data:

- Injuries accounted for over 9% of the total global mortality.
- Of these injury-related deaths, 7% were from unintentional drowning.
- 97% of unintentional drowning deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries.

With most of the global population growth in the next 40 years predicted to occur in developing countries, the United Nations predicts that the scope of the drowning problem will only worsen.

“The drowning problem is even greater because our data includes only ‘accidental drowning and submersion’. Cataclysms (floods), transport accidents, assaults, and suicide were specifically excluded. Cataclysms and transport accidents cause significant numbers of drowning deaths and are certainly unintentional.

“Counting victims does not save lives or reduce drowning – but understanding the magnitude of the problem and identifying the risk factors does allow ILS to provide effective prevention actions to the highest risk populations, locations and activities.”

“In many countries, children under five years of age had the second-highest drowning risk. Risk factors influencing the frequency of drowning in this age group are the absence of parental supervision and the absence of fencing around backyard pools.

“Although the drowning mortality rate for children less than five years of age is declining in many countries (Canada, Australia, United States, United Kingdom), it remains a key target group for prevention strategies. In Canada and the United States, drowning remains the second leading cause of death for children under 14 years of age, after motor vehicle collisions.”

The ILS focuses on breaking the “drowning chain” – in which death by accidental drowning occurs through a sequence or chain of factors:

- ignorance, disregard or misjudgment of danger
- uninformed or unrestricted access to the hazard
- lack of supervision or surveillance
- inability to cope once in difficulty

ILS and its partner water safety organizations aim to provide intervention strategies at each of these four stages through education, restriction of access, supervision and skill acquisition (i.e. “learn-to-swim”) programs.

“The International Life Saving Federation now has the opportunity to embark on a journey as a research organization to take steps to identify and understand the underlying patterns that are crucial to its core business – the saving of life.”

## Local Flotillas Receive **BOATU.S. GRANTS**

Bill Griswold, BC-BRG

Just in from BoatUS! – BoatUS has announced the recipients of their 2008 Boating Safety Grants Foundation awards, and many Coast Guard Auxiliary units are among the recipients.

The Boating Safety Grants program has distributed over \$735,000 over the last 18 years to a variety of organizations, funding their great ideas for promoting boating safety. More information and a full list of recipients can be found online at: [http://www.boatus.com/foundation/Grants/index.htm?WT.mc\\_id=400086](http://www.boatus.com/foundation/Grants/index.htm?WT.mc_id=400086)

Check out past projects and if you're interested, prepare to apply for one of the 2009 Boating Safety Grants later this year. Policies and procedures for applying for grants can be found in the 2008 Auxiliary Grant Handbook:

<http://auxbdept.org/pdf/GrantsHandbook200801March.pdf>

### **2008 RECIPIENTS**

#### **USCGA 08-01-02 Highlands Ranch, CO**

Produce banners for an information booth that promotes life jacket wear.

#### **USCGA 08-02-23 Durango, CO**

Produce 600 copies of an "On the River" poster that will be distributed to local businesses.

#### **USCGA 07-15-08 Springhill, FL**

Build and install 5 kiosks at local boat ramps that will contain boating safety information.

#### **USCGA 08-08-07 Lafayette, KY**

Produce and erect 14 signs containing safe fueling messages.

#### **USCGA 08-33-02 Papillion, NE**

Purchase "skier down" flags and "I got caught wearing my life jacket" t-shirts.

#### **USCGA 01-22 Northport, NY**

Produce signs promoting life jacket use that will be erected at local boat launches.

#### **USCGA 05-01-09 West Grove, PA**

Promote life jacket use through a poster contest at local schools.

## Get Ready for **2008 NATIONAL MARINA DAY!**

David Delich, DVC-BL

Marinas across the country are gearing up for the seventh annual National Marina Day, to be held August 9, 2008. The Association of Marina Industries (<https://www.marinaassociation.org/nmd/>) organizes this yearly public affairs event to spotlight the important role that marinas play in the recreational boating community.

National Marina Day is a great opportunity for Auxiliary flotillas to engage in outreach of their own. RBS Program Visitors are encouraged to contact their local marinas in advance of National Marina Day to organize Auxiliary participation. Giving free Vessel Safety Checks, advertising upcoming Public Education programs, reminding boaters about America's Waterway Watch, recruiting new members, or setting up displays featuring PFD wear and other elements of safe recreational boating are all ways that local flotillas can capitalize on the opportunities presented by National Marina Day.

Many marinas nationwide have already received "resource kits" including suggestions for partnering with the Coast Guard and Auxiliary during this annual event. Contact your local marina today to find out how you can help make National Marina Day 2008 a success!



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