

# Waves

## Watercraft & Vessel Safety

The Newsletter from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
RBS Outreach Department

January 2012  
Volume 15  
Issue 1



SCAN TO SEE  
PREVIOUS ISSUES!

## Auxiliary Brings the Paddlesports Safety Message to Waterfowl Hunters

By Paul G. Leuchner, BC-BLC

The day after Christmas might be viewed as a time for rest and relaxation for many of us but it was not so for several members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary who were heading out the door at 0345. They were embarking on a unique mission to bring the paddlesports safety message to hunters on the first day of the Western New York waterfowl hunting season. Gathering at Beaver Island State Park in the Town of Grand Island, New York an island community surrounded by the Niagara River members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary prepared to meet the hundreds of hunters who would be showing up for the daily duck blind drawing. Although sunrise was more than an hour away and the temperature hovered around freezing, the usual icy winds laden with snow were thankfully absent.

An avid kayaker for several decades, Paul Leuchner, Flotilla 35, Grand Island, New York was determined to reach out to members of the paddling community who plied area waters well after the close of the traditional boating recreation season. He put together a recreational boating safety outreach plan intended to raise paddlesports safety awareness amongst waterfowl hunters and recruited fellow Flotilla 35 members Ray Gress and Steve Birtz to assist him.

At 0400 the hunters began to arrive with an armada of paddlecraft consisting of various kinds of duck boats, canoes, kayaks and row boats. The Flotilla 35 team sprang into action with the intent of achieving several goals. The first was to remind hunters of the New York State law that requires the proper wearing of a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket while out on the water during the winter months. A second but equally important goal was to get hunters to fill out and apply the orange identification labels to their pad-



GRAND ISLAND, New York – Paul Leuchner, Flotilla 35 Grand Island hands a paddlecraft identification label to a father and son duck hunting team arriving at Beaver Island State Park (photo by Ray Gress).

dlecraft. These labels contain essential ownership and contact information that first responders need when coming upon a canoe, kayak or rowboat floating empty and adrift. The final goal was to engage hunters in discussions that would increase paddlesports safety awareness.

The anticipated response from this group of paddlers was largely unknown since a project like this had not been attempted previously. It is generally well known that waterfowl hunters often view their boats as a means to an end and as such safety is not always a high priority. The Flotilla 35 team members were elated to find that the response of these hunters was quite positive. It was clear that there was an overwhelming interest in safety. Within an hour the Flotilla 35 team had distributed and affixed identification labels to more than 50 paddlecraft and had given out over one hundred Operation Paddlesmart safety

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## How can YOU change the New Year?

New Years is traditional the time of the year when people make promises to themselves about how they will change for the better. "I will lose 20 pounds." "I will clean up the dinner dishes." "I will take out the trash without being asked." There are probably few New Years resolutions that are bad ideas, but how many are really kept? Yes, I know ... the road to h\*\*\* is paved with good intentions, but that really isn't a good excuse, is it?

So why am I bringing all of this up? Every year the Coast Guard compiles casualty statistics to see whether our efforts to cut down the number of accidents, deaths, and injuries have done the trick. How do you think we did in 2011, or 2010, or 2009? In the 2010 Recreational Boating Statistics report (the most recent available) there was an 8.70 percent decrease in boating accident deaths and a 6.1 percent decrease in related injuries. The number of boating accidents also dropped 2.67 percent. There were 672 recorded deaths, 3,153 injuries and approximately \$36 million in property damage stemming from 4,604 recreational boating accidents in 2010. Only 9 percent of deaths occurred on boats where the operator has received boating safety instruction.

There is good and bad news in this. The 8.70 percent decrease in boating deaths is significant, particularly if you happened to one of those who came home alive after a day of boating fun. 2010 was the first year in over a decade where there was a significant drop in boating casualties, but nevertheless 672 people died on America's waterways trying to have a good time with their families. That's 672 families turned upside down because a father, sister, mother, son will never return.

We in the Coast Guard Auxiliary are truly blessed. We have been given an opportunity to make a difference. Most of us are not important in the conventional sense. We aren't wealthy. We don't have political power. We aren't titans of industry. But we can make a difference. Through our efforts teaching boater safety courses, or working with a boat owner to ensure that they have a safe boat, or working with a teenager to become a safe boater while she or he is very teachable, we can help bring some of those 672 people home safe and sound. No one will probably be the wiser since, through your actions, you prevented a tragedy.

Nothing can beat the satisfaction of knowing that you made a difference. If each of us makes a New Years resolution that we will teach one more class, or examine one more boat, or man an additional safety booth, then when the Coast Guard assembles the next Recreational Boating Statistics report, the number of boating fatalities will be much lower. BUT you have to actually keep your promise.

So, when you're celebrating the New Year with your family and friends, look around the room and ask yourself which ones you would like to save by putting a little more effort into recreational boating safety. The best way to honor our friends and families is to make that resolution ... *and keep it!*

Remember, there's lots of good information about promoting recreational boating safety. Here are a few websites:

- The Coast Guard's Boating Safety Resource Center, [www.uscgboating.org/](http://www.uscgboating.org/)
- AuxBWiki, the Auxiliary's Boating Safety Partnership Center, [auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org](http://auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org)
- The Auxiliary's Education Department, [cgauxed.org](http://cgauxed.org)
- The Auxiliary's Vessel Examinations Department, [safetyseal.net/index3.asp](http://safetyseal.net/index3.asp)
- North American Safe Boating Campaign, [www.safeboatingcampaign.com](http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com)
- Resources for Instructors and Vessel Examiners, [bdept.cgaux.org/peveresources.php](http://bdept.cgaux.org/peveresources.php)

Happy New Years from your shipmates in the RBS Outreach Department!

- Bruce Johnson, DIR-B

<sup>1</sup> These statistics represent a comparison of 2010 and 2009 casualty statistics compiled by the U.S. Coast Guard. [www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.aspx](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.aspx)

brochures. In addition, there were numerous individual and group conversations covering topics such as life jacket wear, the importance of float plans, cold water immersion and hypothermia, overloading, capsizing risks and changes in weather. Without exception every hunter contacted was eager to learn more about being safe on the water while engaged in waterfowl hunting activities.



GRAND ISLAND, New York – Ray Gress Flotilla 35, Grand Island confers with waterfowl hunters during the duck blind drawing at Beaver Island State Park (photo by Paul Leuchner)

At one point the Flotilla 35 team was approached by an experienced duck hunter. He cheered the Auxiliary in its efforts to get hunters to apply paddlecraft identification labels to all of the canoes, kayaks and duck boats that had been brought to the duck blind drawing. When asked why he was so enthusiastic he recounted an experience that really brought home the importance of these labels. Several years ago this particular individual had landed on a remote uninhabited island in the upper Niagara River for a day of water-

fowl hunting. He arrived alone in a canoe that contained all of his gear including the extra warm clothing needed to endure the windy blizzard like conditions. While setting out his decoys, he lost track of his canoe and was horrified to find it was nearly a quarter mile away drifting down the river with the current. Other hunters in the area retrieved the boat and eventually returned it to him but not after spending most of the morning hours huddled in the cold. Although this story had a happy ending the hunter was convinced that he would have received aid much sooner had there been an identification label in his boat.

After the duck blind drawing and with the ensuing daylight the Flotilla 35 team traveled around the 25 mile perimeter of Grand Island passing out paddlecraft identification labels and paddlesports safety literature to other area duck hunters. Their success transcended the day's events as other hunters learning of the paddlecraft identification later sought out the members of this team with requests for additional identification labels and paddlesports safety information.



GRAND ISLAND, New York – A waterfowl hunter prepares to depart in a canoe to check on his duck decoys in the Niagara River (Photo by Paul Leuchner)

## Mustang Survival Issues Recall

### RECALL NOTICE ON MD2010 & MD2012 model 22LB Inflatable PFDs

The United States Coast Guard strongly urges mariners and boaters alike to check their Mustang Survival PFDs. Mustang Survival is recalling all model number MD2010 and MD2012 inflatable Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) sold in the United States during 2011.

This recall notification is for only the MD2010 and MD2012 22LB buoyancy inflatable PFDs. No other Mustang Survival products are affected as they utilize different inflator mechanisms.

Distributors and consumers are urged to contact Mustang Survival's Customer Service department at 1-800-526-0532 between 7:30am and 4:30pm PST, Monday through Friday for specific shipping instructions. Mustang Survival will pay for all testing, repair and shipping costs. Consumers should not return product to their dealer. If you have questions, please access their website at <http://www.mustangsurvival.com/22lb-product-notice>.

# PARASAILING OPERATIONS

## KNOW YOUR ROPES

A series of parasail incidents resulting in fatalities and injuries have occurred over the last few years. Several marine casualty investigations are ongoing and some are near completion. Common causal factors are being identified in addition to causal factors that are unique to a specific event. The Coast Guard believes that communication of known issues is essential in minimizing potential future casualties and strongly reminds parasail operators and those associated with the business of the following:

**R**emember that most parasail fatalities and injuries are related to the failure of the towline. Failures occur significantly below the rated towline strengths due to a variety of reasons that may include cyclic loading, long term exposure to environmental elements, the presence of knots, and overloading.

**O**bserve and monitor weather conditions continuously. Most frequently increases in wind speed impact the relative speed against the chute and cause the overloading. As the wind speed doubles the load on the towline may quadruple. Monitor your VHF radio weather channel and learn to interpret the effect of wind speed on the water surface. Note the formation of squalls, thunderstorms, or when larger weather fronts are expected to pass through your operational area. Cease operations well before such weather features impact your operation.

**P**repare for emergencies by having well documented procedures applicable to a variety of circumstances, normal operations and emergencies such as towline breaks, winch failures, propulsion failures, and other concerns that can impact your own or your passenger's safety. Regularly perform drills to ensure expert proficiencies in accomplishing all emergency or routine procedures.

**E**nsure that all of your equipment is properly maintained on a continuing basis. This includes the winch, and drive motor, hydraulic brakes, hoses and piping, spooling systems, and other tackle. Also check your chute, harness, and related components for stitching failures, degradation, and the need for general repairs. Immediately repair and correct identified problems.

**S**afety is up to you the Operator. *The Coast Guard does not regulate or inspect parasail equipment or regulate parasail operations.*

The Coast Guard recognizes that there are many other issues associated with this sport and encourages owners and operators to work with each other and related industry associations to share best practices and develop safe operational standards to minimize potential injuries and deaths. Coast Guard Licensed Operators are expected to provide an adequate level of care during vessel operations. Administrative action may be taken against the operator if his or her unsafe actions or decisions lead to a casualty.

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# US Coast Guard Prevention Blog

## Did you know ...

The Coast Guard maintains a discussion forum on marine safety, recreational boating safety, and waterways management. The forum is called US Coast Guard Prevention Blog and is focused on protecting maritime commerce and mobility, the marine environment, and safety of life at sea.

The US Coast Guard Prevention Blog can be accessed online at:  
<http://cgmarinesafety.blogspot.com/> .



## Coast Guard Alaska: Search and Rescue

The Weather Channel has a new series that features the Coast Guard unit based in Kodiak, Alaska. It is an elite team that risks their lives in search and rescue missions. The series premieres November 9 at 9 PM and will continue for the following 8 Wednesdays.

More information may be found online at:  
<http://www.weather.com/tv/tvshows/coast-guard-alaska> .



## Why Boat Accidents Occur

Almost three-fourths of all fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those, 88% were not reported as wearing a life jacket.

Only 9% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator had received boating safety instruction.

Operator inattention, improper lookout, operator inexperience, excessive speed, and alcohol rank as the top five primary contributing factors in accidents.

Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; it was listed as the leading factor in 19% of the deaths.

From the Coast Guard's Recreational Boating Statistics 2010:  
[http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.aspx](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.aspx) .



## The RBS Outreach Department

### Mission Statement

The RBS Outreach Department, under the program guidance of the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety and the direction of the Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety Directorate, provides assistance to Coast Guard units, Auxiliary National Departments and Auxiliary District organizations in their efforts to promote and support recreational boating safety programs. RBS Outreach provides both informational and fiscal resource services to the Auxiliary membership. In addition, the RBS Outreach provides liaison with State Boating Law Administrators and other recreational boating safety organizations, i.e., state, federal and the public sector.

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