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Public Information Statement  
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC  
1015 AM EDT Wed May 15 2013

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

Subject: National Safe Boating Week: May 18-24, 2013

NWS and the National Safe Boating Council will partner for National Safe Boating Week, May 18-24, 2013. The week will highlight relevant weather and safety-specific Public Service Announcements for the recreational boating public. Topics will include:

Saturday, 5/18: Use of Life Jackets. Before you and your family get out on the water this year, grab a life jacket and "Wear It!" 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.

Sunday, 5/19: Vessel Safety Checks. This boating season, make sure that you take advantage of the Vessel Safety Check (VSC), program, a free, no risk service provided in your area by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons. A qualified vessel examiner will conduct an inspection of all the required safety equipment carried or installed on a vessel and certain aspects of the vessel's overall condition. Even if you pay careful attention to safety, dangerous mechanical problems can crop up on the best-maintained boat. That's why the U.S. Coast Guard recommends that all recreational boats (including personal watercraft) get a free VSC each year.

Monday, 5/20: The use of Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs). Emergency beacons, through the worldwide offered service of Cospas-Sarsat, aid in the detection, location and Search and Rescue (SAR) of boats, aircraft, and people in distress. When activated manually or automatically upon immersion, EPIRBs send out distress signals, which are monitored worldwide by satellites. Except for the expense of buying a beacon, this system is free. For additional safe boating, some Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) are designed for use in water and may be attached to life vests. All 406 MHz beacons should be registered with NOAA. Additional information for emergency beacons can be found at:

[www.sarsat.noaa.gov](http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov)

Tuesday, 5/21: Understanding a Marine Forecast. Understanding a marine forecast is critical to safe boating. Weather and wave conditions can change suddenly, catching boaters off guard and creating life-threatening conditions. Take particular note of current advisories and warnings, including Small Craft Advisories, Gale and Storm Warnings which alert mariners to either high winds or waves occurring now or forecast to occur up to 24 hours from now. Before setting out, obtain the latest marine forecast and warning information from [www.weather.gov/marine](http://www.weather.gov/marine) or NOAA Weather Radio. Several days ahead of time, you can begin listening for extended outlooks that give general information out to the next five days in both graphical and text format.

Wednesday, 5/22: Hypothermia. Hypothermia is a condition in which body core temperature drops below the required temperature for normal metabolism and body functions, which is defined as 95°F. If exposed to cold and your body is unable to replenish the heat that is being lost, a drop in core temperature occurs. As body temperature decreases, you may have symptoms such as shivering and mental confusion. Heat is lost more quickly in water than on land. Water temperatures that would be quite reasonable on land can lead to hypothermia in water. A water temperature of 50°F often leads to death in one hour and water temperatures hovering at freezing can lead to death in as little as 15 minutes. Water at a seemingly warm temperature of 79°F will, after prolonged exposure, lead to hypothermia.

Thursday, 5/23: Thunderstorm Safety. Thunderstorms can be a mariner's worst nightmare. They can develop quickly and create dangerous wind and wave conditions. Thunderstorms can bring shifting and gusty winds, lightning, waterspouts, and torrential downpours that turn a day's pleasure into a nightmare of distress. A lightning strike to a vessel can be catastrophic, especially if it results in a fire or loss of electronics. If your boat has a cabin, stay inside and avoid touching metal or electrical devices. If your boat doesn't have a cabin, stay as low as you can in the boat.

Ultimately, boating safety begins ashore with planning and training. Keep in mind that thunderstorms are usually brief so waiting it out on land in a safe building or vehicle is better than riding it out.

Friday, 5/24: Boating Under the Influence. The effects of alcohol and drugs are just as hazardous on the water as on land. Boating under the Influence, or BUI, affects judgment, vision, balance and coordination. These impairments can 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.

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

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

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

For comments or questions, please contact:

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National Public Information Statements are online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/notification/archive>

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