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TO: News / Assignment Desk or News Editor

Safety Tips for Boating Season

Memorial Day weekend marks the traditional start of boating season on the Delta. The Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff is urging all boaters to stay safe while enjoying the water.

“Many boating accidents can be avoided by planning ahead,” said Contra Costa Sheriff David Livingston. “80% of boating fatalities could have been prevented by wearing a life jacket. Following the law and these tips could help you stay safe on the water.”

California Boater Card Required - Anyone who operates a motorized vessel must carry a California Boater Card. Learn more at californiaboatercard.com.

Engine Cut-off Switch -

Last year, California law required the use of an engine cut-off switch—also known as a kill switch or lanyard—on vessels under 26 feet. This safety device must be worn by the operator when at the helm and operating above 5 mph or displacement speeds. This law is designed to prevent runaway boat incidents in the event the operator is thrown from the helm, adding another layer of safety to California waterways.



Life Jackets Save Lives - All

vessels, including stand-up paddleboards (SUPs), must carry a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for each person on board. Life jackets must be the correct size for the intended wearer and children under 13 must wear a life jacket at all times aboard a vessel, unless in a fully enclosed cabin. Everyone is strongly encouraged to wear a life jacket at all times on the water.

Boating Under the Influence (B.U.I.) - Operating a vessel under the influence of drugs or alcohol is illegal and dangerous. Boaters arrested for B.U.I. face similar consequences to D.U.I. drivers, including fines, license suspension, and possible jail.

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Contra Costa County
Office of the Sheriff
David O. Livingston
Sheriff



PRESS RELEASE
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Safe Navigation Practices - Always operate at safe speeds, especially in narrow channels or areas with limited visibility. Stay to the right side of the waterway. In crossing situations, the vessel to the right has the right of way.

Ski Flags and Observers - While engaged in towing activities, an observer who holds the ski flag, at the minimum age of 12 years old, must display the ski flag when required: a downed skier in the water, a skier in the water preparing to ski, a line in the water extended from the vessel, and a ski or similar equipment is in the water in the vicinity of the vessel.

Blue Light Law - Boaters must slow to a no-wake speed when approaching/being approached by any law enforcement or emergency vessel displaying an illuminated blue light, whether the patrol vessel is moving or stationary.



Emergency Preparedness - Carry an emergency kit that includes a flashlight, warm clothing, a cell phone, VHF radio, and navigational charts. Before heading out, file a float plan. Learn how to create a float plan at: <https://uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/floating-plan.php>

Carbon Monoxide Awareness - Be cautious of carbon monoxide buildup, especially when sitting on the swim platform or near the boat's transom while the engine is running.

Youth Operation Rules - Children ages 12–15 may operate boats with motors over 15 horsepower or sailboats over 30 feet only if directly supervised by an adult (18+) who holds a California Boater Card.

Throwables Required - Boats 16 feet and longer must carry a U.S. Coast Guard-approved throwable flotation device, such as a life ring or square cushion, which must be easily accessible.

Additional Resources - The ABC's of Boating safety handbook is available at most boating retailers. Visit dbw.ca.gov for more boating laws, safety tips, and California Boater Card information. For questions or non-emergency assistance, contact the Marine Services Unit at (925) 427-8507.

In emergencies, Dial 911 or call Contra Costa Sheriff's Office Dispatch at (925) 646-2441.

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