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**MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN**

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**2019 RECREATONAL BOATING SEASON:**

**SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS MAY SAVE A LIFE**

As we begin the 2019 recreational boating season in southeastern New England, I urge all boaters to adopt prudent safety precautions and make safety a priority on the water. Though the season has not begun in earnest, already we have experienced avoidable boating incidents.

A key boating safety statistic is the number of lives lost annually. The good news is that for calendar year 2017 national boating fatalities were down 6.1% from 2016. (Note that the 2018 recreational boating statistics report has not yet been published. Past statistics may be viewed via the link below.) But what struck me as surprising—and ironic—are the simple precautions that, had they been taken, may have reduced deaths significantly, perhaps exponentially.

Here are some striking facts from the 2017 Executive Summary to the Coast Guard's Accident Statistics report (my emphasis added):

- Where cause of death was known, 76% of fatal boating accident victims drowned. An astounding **84.5% of those victims were not wearing a life jacket.**
- **Alcohol** use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents. Where the primary cause was known, **alcohol was listed as the leading factor in 19% of deaths.**
- Where instruction was known, **81% of deaths** occurred on boats where **the operator did not receive boating safety instruction.** Only 14% of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally approved boating safety education certificate.

- Where data was known, the vessel types with the highest percentage of deaths were:
  - open motorboats (47%)
  - kayaks (15%), and
  - personal watercraft (7%)

The takeaways from the 2017 boating accident statistics report (and precautions to save one or more lives) are simple:

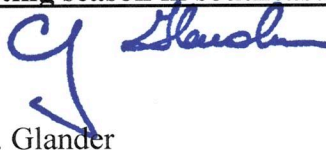
- (1) **Wear a life jacket.** If you take no other safety precautions this year, at least wear a life jacket when underway in a recreational boat, kayak, paddle craft, etc.
- (2) **Don't drink and boat.** As in driving a vehicle, alcohol and boating can be a deadly mix.
- (3) **Take a boating safety course.** Our Coast Guard Auxiliary, state boating safety agencies, and other boating safety organizations offer ample courses at convenient places and times, for little or no cost. Take a course! To locate a Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety course near you go to <http://cgaux.org/boatinged/> and click on "PUBLIC EDUCATION COURSE FINDER (BY ZIP CODE)"

The full Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics report (along with all reports since 2004) may be found here: [http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.php](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.php).

The U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety mobile app can be found at [uscgboating.org/mobile](http://uscgboating.org/mobile).

For additional information on boating safety, go to the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Boating Safety Outreach Website at: <http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=B-DEPT>.

**Let's have a safe and enjoyable 2019 boating season in southeastern New England!**



C. J. Glander  
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard  
Captain of the Port  
Southeastern New England