

Marine Safety Unit Chicago
U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security
United States
Coast Guard



Press Release

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ARE YOU READY TO GET BACK ON THE WATER?

CHICAGO – In recognition of National Safe Boating Council's National Safe Boating Week, May 17-24, 2008, Coast Guard units in Chicago would like to remind all mariners to practice safe boating this week, Memorial Day weekend and throughout the boating season.

The mission of the 50-year-old National Safe Boating Council is to enhance the safety of the recreational boating experience through education and outreach.

Chicagoland mariners are reminded to:

- **Get a vessel safety check or take a boating safety course.** Both are conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and/or the U.S. Power Squadron, and will prepare your vessel for the boating season and educate the boat operator, respectively.
- **File a 'float plan'** with a family member or friend who is not boating with you; and stick to the plan. The world's only lifesaving device on paper can assist the Coast Guard with a search if you are in distress.
- **Wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket or personal floatation device** at "all" times. The law requires you to have them on board; but the Coast Guard recommends you wear them at all times. The worst time to look for a life jacket is when you are already in distress.
- **Have a marine-band radio.** If you are in distress, the Coast Guard can be reached on marine-band channel 16: the distress channel. Use of a cell phone could provide rescuers with a false location of your vessel.
- **Boaters should be vigilant** and keep an eye out for (1) their fellow mariners and (2) anything that looks unusual on the water. "If you see something...say something." Suspicious activity can be reported to the National Response Center at 877-24WATCH; or your local Coast Guard station.
- **Have a sober operator - DON'T boat under the influence.** Alcohol affects judgment, vision, balance and coordination. The marine environment - motion,

vibration, engine noise, sun, wind and spray - accelerates a drinker's impairment; and decreases coordination, judgment and reaction time.

In 2007, local Coast Guard units completed more than 210 search and rescue cases, more than 1,100 law enforcement boardings, and issued violations to more than 35 mariners for boating under the influence. According to Lt. Christopher Kennedy, of the Chicago Police Marine & Helicopter Unit, they also responded to more than 500 calls for assistance or distress in 2007.

The U.S. Coast Guard will continue to work with federal, state and local agencies, to provide safety and security to those who live, work and play on the Great Lakes. The public is asked to take a few steps to make this a safe boating season. For more boating safety information, go to <http://www.uscgboating.org/>.

For information on vessel safety checks, boating safety courses or safe boating practices, contact your local Coast Guard unit or the Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Chicago Public Affairs Office at (630) 986-2155.

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