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small craft advisory

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With a wide variety of boats and boaters on U.S. waterways, boating education is a vital component in the equation for safe boating.



The official publication of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

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Education Plays Pivotal Role in Strategic Plan

“I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think.” – Socrates



Jeff Johnson
NASBLA President

During the past year, our theme for “From the Helm” has focused on our association’s strategic plan and, in the last few issues, linked the strategic plan to the three E’s of injury prevention – engineering, enforcement and education.

By now we know that through engineering and the development, implementation and enforcement of policy, we help prevent boating tragedies from occurring. But to increase the understanding necessary for long-term behavior change, there will always be a need for education. While the education aspect of injury prevention stands alone in importance, the other interventions also contain behavioral components that depend on education. For example, although there may be laws requiring children to wear life jackets, children and families need not only to understand the law but also why it is important to wear life jackets, how to select the proper design for the intended use and circumstances, and how to size and wear them properly.

Design and delivery of boating safety classes and other programs for the public is important, but there is much more to a good boating education program than providing classes and issuing certificates. Because education is critical to achieving individual and social change, making individuals and communities aware of risks on the water and how to assume responsibility for addressing threats requires multiple approaches. Drawing from the closely related field of health education, the best programs would have some or all of the following characteristics:

- Educates and persuades policymakers to support policies and programs
- Works with a community’s existing assets. Looks at existing social structures and support systems (such as established boating organizations) to broaden and support program delivery

- Identifies and deals with barriers to behavior change
- Addresses all social levels
- Programs are locally relevant, and focused on issues within the immediate community of interest and surrounding environment
- Programs encourage activity at the grassroots level, actively involving the community and allowing individuals to feel empowered to both change certain personal behaviors and actively promote community-wide change.
- Brings together persons from multiple disciplines to address the problem from multiple levels and wide perspectives
- Educates the media and serves as spokesperson on boating safety issues
- Educating other professionals (such as health care and injury prevention specialists, teachers, program and organization administrators, and marine dealers and manufacturers)
- Conducts and/or evaluates research and analyzes data to better understand problems and to continually improve programming

Articles in this issue of *Small Craft Advisory* will explore many of these areas, and we invite you to take the opportunity to discover ways we can all improve our education programming.

An old joke says it may only take one psychologist to change a light bulb, but the light bulb has to want to change. It is the goal of boating education programs to raise public awareness to the level of understanding where individual and social acceptance is reached and positive behavior change occurs. Our association (primarily through your hard-working Education Committee) has played and will continue to play an important role in helping our members and partners to achieve our education goals. ■



John Johnson
NASBLA Executive Director

NASBLA Develops Innovations in RBS Technology Initiative

NASBLA is pleased to announce the signing of an exciting new Innovations in RBS Technology Initiative with the support of long-time associate member and corporate ally Boat Ed. As one of the nation's leaders in boater education, the Dallas-based firm will underwrite the cost of a three-year project to highlight cutting-edge technology impacting recreational boating safety (RBS). In addition to the development of a series of in-depth research monographs and a yearly video documentary of featured technological applications, the multi-year initiative will recognize Innovations Awards winners that are making a difference in boating safety.

NASBLA Executive Director John Johnson praised Kurt and Cindy Kalkomey, proprietors of Boat Ed, for their perennial support of the NASBLA annual conferences and for their willingness to go the extra distance in support of this new initiative.

As one of the RBS community's first providers of online boater education, Boat Ed has always been a pioneer in using technology to advance safer boating, said Johnson. In addition to moving forward a key element of the Association's strategic plan, this new program gives us the chance to showcase some of the significant contributions our member states and others are making to recreational boating safety through the effective application of technology whether it is in the real or virtual classroom, on the water or in the administrative interface between the boating public and the RBS agencies.

The Innovations Initiative is planned to launch early next year. Watch *Small Craft Advisory* for more details.

Stakeholders Discuss Future of 17-Character HIN

Matt Long, director of Government Affairs for NASBLA, attended a recent stakeholders' meeting in Washington, D.C. to discuss the future of the 17-character hull identification number (HIN). Other groups in attendance included the American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC), the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the U.S. Coast Guard. The group quickly reached consensus that the previously agreed upon 12 plus 5 HIN would likely continue to be the appropriate format for change.

Representatives from both NMMA and the U.S. Coast Guard stressed the need for this change. The added characters would give the standards-setting organizations a solid tool by which to make recommendations on a national as well as an international perspective. The change would also provide the tools needed by the Coast Guard for completing more accurate cost/benefit analyses and safety studies. The addition of the five characters would enable them to have an exact representation of the boating population.

From the NASBLA perspective, the addition would increase efforts at theft/fraud recovery by adding necessary vessel descriptors that would aid investigators in proper vessel identification. Even more important, however, is that this change would save hundreds, if not thousands, of lives. The additional data would give the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety and the state boating law administrators the ability to study death/injury trends for specific vessels and to act accordingly.



Going Up!

Have you ever found yourself in a situation in which you had a very limited time in which to get your point across? For example, you've just been introduced to a member of Congress and you want to impress on him or her the need for a life-saving boating law. Where do you begin? How do you know what to say to capture the Congressperson's attention?



This is where a well-crafted "elevator speech" comes in handy.

Brant Welch, the assistant marketing manager for Fifth Third Bank, visited NASBLA headquarters on August 16 to discuss creating elevator speeches. An elevator speech is a short description of what you or your organization does and the point you want to make in roughly the time it would take to ride an elevator (about 30 seconds). That translates to about 125 words, which means you'll have to focus on the most important aspect(s) of your message. If your message is successful, you'll have the opportunity to provide more information later.

Welch emphasized that an elevator speech begins with a brief introduction. The key is to describe what you do rather than who you are. Next, you present your deliverables and benefits. The speech should end with a call to action. For example, explain what you could do with additional resources and how your audience can help.

NASBLA staff members are working to craft an elevator speech to explain what NASBLA's all about. The results will be posted on www.nasbla.org. ■

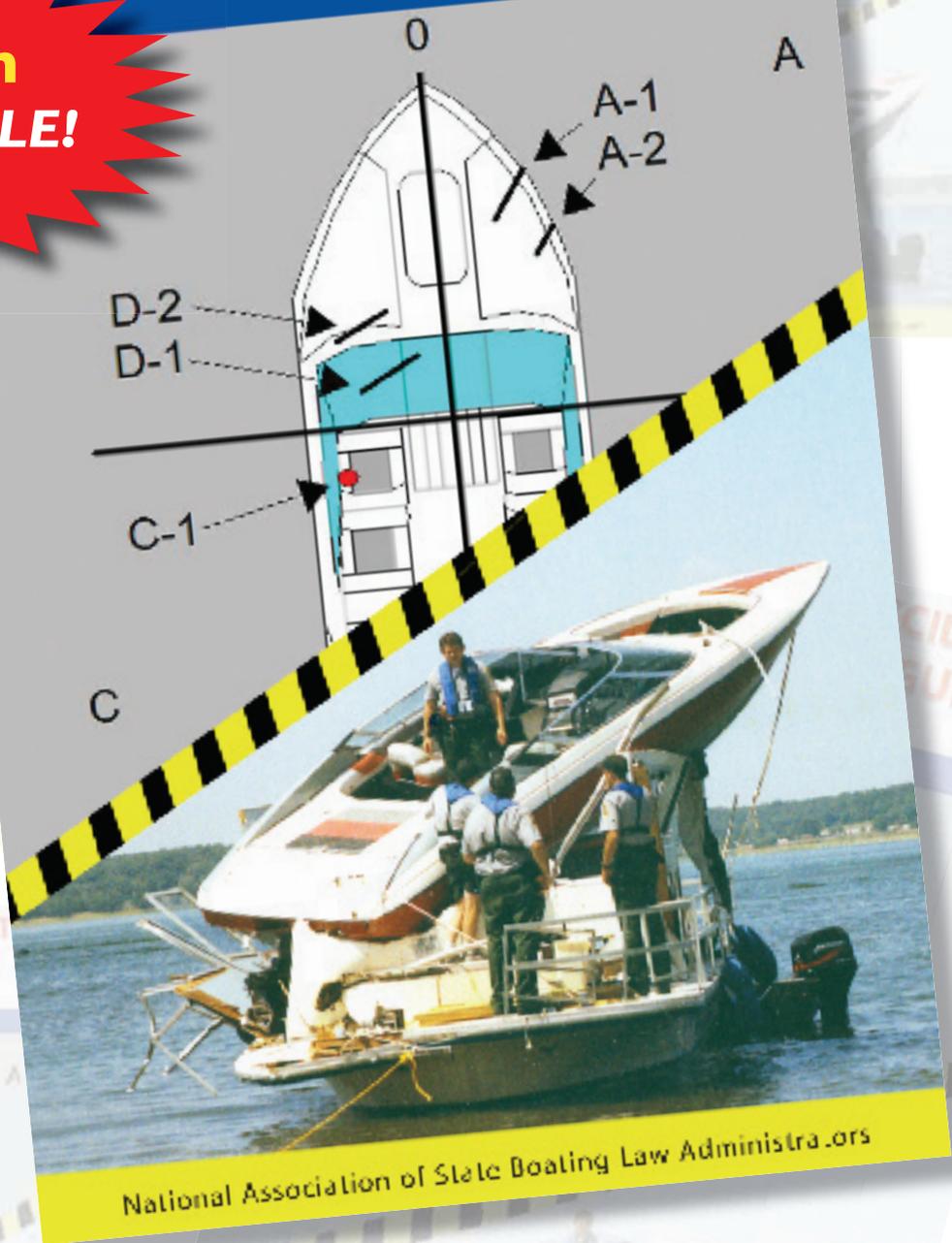
NATIONAL BOATING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION FIELD GUIDE

Second Edition

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- Injury Assessment
- Personal Watercraft



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***Discounts available for government agencies**

Welcome Aboard New Boating Law Administrators Join NASBLA

As people pursue new opportunities, organizations reorganize and politics influence staff appointments, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators continues to see new faces among its members.

We welcome these new members aboard, and we encourage them to become involved in NASBLA and reap the benefits of their membership.

Carlos Farchette — Virgin Islands

A resident of St. Croix, Carlos Farchette became the boating law administrator for the U.S. Virgin Islands in the spring of this year. He began with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) in 1980 as an enforcement officer. In 1987 Farchette was appointed as deputy chief for the Division of Enforcement. In 2007, after the new governor was elected, Farchette was appointed to replace Lucia Francis as director for the territory, which includes St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix.

An avid recreational boater, Farchette sees education as a vital component in boating safety. As BLA he plans to improve compliance by recreational boaters and the commercial anglers in the territory with regards to having the proper life-saving equipment aboard their vessels.

In addition to serving as the territory's boating law administrator, Farchette has many roles within the DPNR. He serves as the chairman of the Local Emergency Planning Committee and secretary for the Fisheries Advisory Committee, and he is a member of the Port Security Committee. Farchette is also a Weapons of Mass Destruction instructor and a Hazmat responder/instructor. In addition, he is the Operations Branch Chief for response to catastrophic disasters such as hurricanes, and earthquakes for the Virgin Islands Emergency Management Agency.



Colonel George F. Johnson IV — Maryland

A resident of Pasadena, Md., Colonel George F. Johnson IV became Maryland's BLA earlier this year. He was appointed as superintendent/boating law administrator by the governor of Maryland and the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources in February 2007.

While he doesn't own a vessel, Col. Johnson does participate in recreational boating with numerous boat-owning friends. In addition to his association with NASBLA, he is actively involved with his local Rotary Club.

When asked his opinion on the biggest pressing need in boating safety today, Col. Johnson explained that his state is known as the land of pleasant living and has 17,000 miles of waterways to benefit from and enjoy.

"Having that vast amount of waterways in our state requires a consistent and aggressive approach to boating safety from members of the Maryland Natural Resources Police," said Col. Johnson. "We direct most of our efforts to promoting safe boating in the areas of wearing personal flotation devices, and strict enforcement of personal watercraft."

Col. Johnson explained that his agency ultimately promotes three components in their boating safety operations: education, awareness and enforcement. To further improve boating safety on the state's waterways, he said he and his colleagues will continue to suggest to local legislators the need to enact new laws addressing the negligent operation of personal watercraft to help prevent personal injury and fatalities.



Sgt. Joe Morelock — Illinois

Raised in Thayer, Ill., Joe Morelock enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps after high school and served as a military police officer for five years. He then worked in municipality law enforcement for five years prior to being employed with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Conservation Police in 1999.

Morelock is an avid recreational boater. He uses his boats – a waterfowl boat, a jon boat and a canoe – to hunt ducks, sport fish and bow fish. Having learned to water ski at age 12, he also skis and tubes every once in a while.

Morelock was promoted to sergeant on Aug. 1, 2007. His primary responsibility is coordinating the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Emergency Response with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. His secondary responsibility was to serve as assistant to the state's boating law administrator. Capt. Greg Hunter, who was serving as BLA, resigned from the position near the time of Morelock's promotion, so Morelock's position was changed to include the BLA responsibilities.

As Illinois' new BLA, Sgt. Morelock views boater education as the biggest pressing need in boating safety. "A significant amount of accidents could be avoided with operators being properly educated and trained in boat operation, navigation and safety issues/water hazards," he said.

Sgt. Morelock also considers boating accident investigation and reconstruction as important steps to improving boating safety.

“It is extremely important to thoroughly investigate boat accidents to determine the cause,” explained Morelock. “In return, the accident findings will be properly reported to the Coast Guard’s Boat Accident Reporting Database. This will assist the Coast Guard, boating industry and state law enforcement in identifying, correcting, addressing and implementing new laws and safety issues relating to products, which will ultimately make our waters safer.”

Sgt. Morelock previously served on the Recreational Boat Safety Committee for Illinois, and he has attended NASBLA’s Level I Boating Accident Investigation and Analysis Course. In addition to being involved with NASBLA, Sgt. Morelock is a member of the International Association of Marine Investigators.



Major Ronald Morris — Louisiana

With more than 28 years of experience in law enforcement, Major Ronald Morris was named Louisiana’s boating law administrator on August 13, 2007. While he’s new to the position, he’s no stranger to NASBLA. He served as an assistant to Charlie Clark, who was Louisiana’s BLA for many years. In fact, the first NASBLA conference Morris attended was one that he helped host in New Orleans after a hurricane made it impossible to hold the conference in its planned Virgin Islands location.

Morris did not grow up dreaming of entering the law enforcement field. He’s from a long line of construction workers and naturally he went into construction as well. However, when the construction business slowed down in the 1980s, he decided to try his hand at something different.

He joined the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries as a field game warden. Eight years later he transferred to marine theft investigation under Charlie Clark. He often worked undercover to recover boats. Morris has been dealing with various marine issues for the past

two decades. Morris specializes in all aspects of marine investigations, accident reconstruction, registration identification & theft recovery, search & rescue and marine law enforcement.

As the state’s BLA, he coordinates statewide boating safety and law enforcement programs including registration and title fraud investigations, compilation of statistical data, reconstruction of accidents and training of all law enforcement officers in marine law enforcement. He also works with the Louisiana Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness ESF-9 Search & Rescue for all manmade and natural disasters within the state.

Morris has been a member of the International Association of Marine Investigators (IAMI) since the organization was established in 1986. Officer Morris’ work as an investigator earned him the distinction of being named Investigator of the Year by IAMI in 1996. He has served on the IAMI Board of Directors since 2004.

Major Morris is currently serving on NASBLA’s Numbering & Titling Committee. This has been helpful in getting a titling law passed in Louisiana. The new law goes into effect July 1, 2008.

A resident of Baton Rouge, Major Morris owns a couple of boats that he uses to go fishing occasionally.



Juan Rodríguez — Puerto Rico

Born in Maunabo, Puerto Rico, and inspired by his life near the sea, Juan M. Rodríguez became a marine biologist at the Humacao precinct of the University of Puerto Rico. In July 1987 Rodríguez started working with the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) as the Navigation Aids Division Supervisor where, because of the lack of personnel, he also acts as a Navigation Aid installer.

In 1992, he was promoted to Division Director with the inherent responsibilities to the job and additional tasks including the evaluation of marine events application, marine sports equipment rental businesses inspection and coast areas evaluation to identify possible dangers and the necessity of signs or any other Navaid installation, evaluation of beach areas with possibilities of becoming bathers’ areas, accident evaluation and statistical report preparation for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Coast Guard.

While serving as Navigation Aids Division Director, Rodríguez hosted the Southern States Boating Law Administrators Association in 1992 and 2001, as well as the NASBLA annual conference in 1994. Owner of a 21’ Sea Breeze, he became the commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of Navigation (OCN) of the DNER in 2005 when the former commissioner retired. In this position, he also serves as the boating law administrator (BLA) for Puerto Rico.

As Puerto Rico’s BLA, his biggest concern at this moment is to make the nautical community aware of the importance of the use of personal flotation devices (PFDs). “Even though the law makes it mandatory for boaters under 12 years of age to wear life jackets, the ideal scenario would be that anyone on board a vessel wear a PFDs all the time since no one knows when or under what circumstances an accident will occur,” said Rodríguez.

Rodríguez also plans to improve patrol equipment. “We plan to equip the maritime law enforcement units with adequate gear to emphasize research and rescue tasks as well as preventive patrolling to protect bathers and preserve the natural resources impacted by such activities. ■



BoaterExam.com Enhances Test with Visuals

By Kimberly Hermes Jenkins

longer the question stem, the harder it is for some to understand. By using visuals, BoaterExam.com can now simply show a question.

“The difference is fairly noticeable once you add visuals to the exact same question,” said Kerry Moher, Vice President of Business Development with BoaterExam.com. “We’ve always felt that visual learners would struggle with the online and classroom exams as they were presented in the past. Now when we ask a student to identify the operating requirements for a personal watercraft, it makes sense to show what one looks like.”

Incorporating illustrations into the exam questions was a challenging task. Questions had to be asked differently. Illustrations had to be designed. A challenge with developing the illustrations was to create illustrations that would be appropriate for the questions yet would not give away the answers.

After implementing the changes, BoaterExam.com surveyed students about the changes to the exam format. The response from students has been very positive. When asked if the graphics helped to better understand the exam questions and answer choices, 86 percent of those surveyed answered “Yes.” In addition to surveying

the test-taker, Moher also ran some numbers on the test’s pass/fail rate. The numbers show that after just a month with the new visual questions, exam scores noticeably increased. Moving to a visual format took considerable time, but it was time well spent. ■

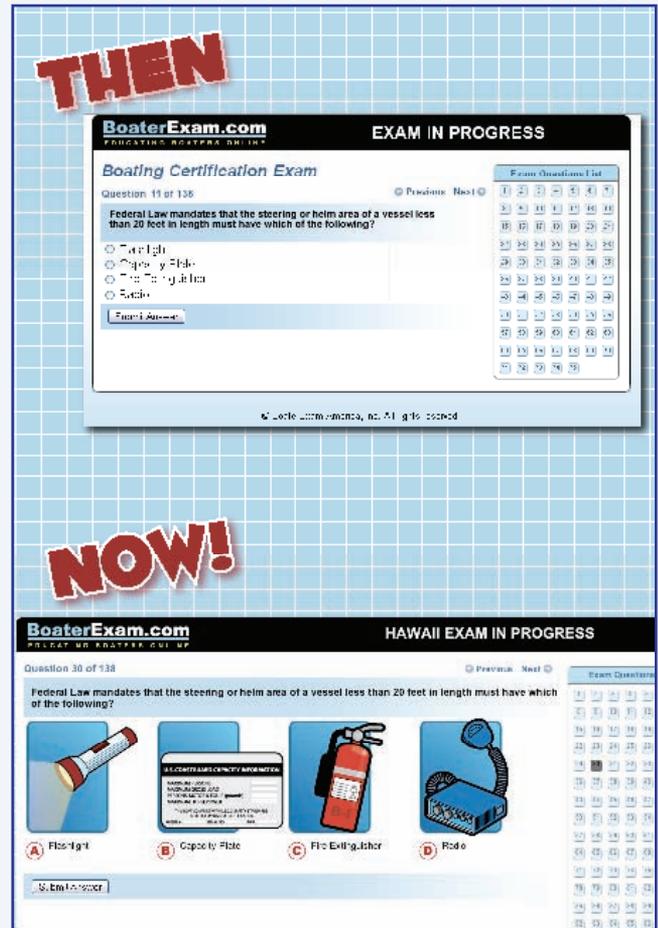
In class, Susie can read a paragraph and process the information quite easily. However, Bobby does better if the information is shown at the front of the class on an overhead transparency. Why is this? It is well-documented that individuals favor particular methods of interacting with, taking in and processing information. Based on this concept, the idea of individualized “learning styles” originated in the 1970s.

A learning style is the method of learning particular to an individual that is presumed to allow that individual to learn best. There are three basic types of learning styles:

- Visual learners who learn through seeing. These learners may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and handouts.
- Auditory learners who learn through listening. They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say.
- Tactile/Kinesthetic learners who learn through moving, doing and touching. These are the folks who learn best with hands-on exercises.

Using these concepts, BoaterExam.com, a strategic partner of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, has updated its online boating safety course exam. The exam originally included straight text questions. Over the last several months, the company has worked to revise the exam so it’s more visual. This makes it easier for students to understand, especially those who prefer to process information visually. The

“**The difference is fairly noticeable once you add visuals to the exact same question**”



REALITY CHECK: *Women & Boating Education*

By Jo Calkin, U.S. Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety

Many women are simply not prepared to operate a boat in the absence of a partner or spouse. The reasons are many, but foremost among them may be that it's just habit to let the male do the captaining. Also, women are often tasked with juggling many responsibilities – on or off the water – so learning to operate a boat safely may not rank quite as high on their priority list.

However, as illustrated by the story below, this is a safety issue that should not be overlooked. Women whose partners or spouses typically do the captaining need not become experts. But they – and any adult who might have to take the helm if the captain becomes incapacitated – should certainly know the basics of what to do in an emergency.

Communication is Key

My friend Robin learned a big lesson in just a few seconds of panic on the water. As boating safety advocates, we need to communicate the value of that lesson as much as possible. We can all do a lot to make women – and their husbands or partners – aware of this important safety issue.

All women who are boaters should share the responsibility with the boat owner or operator to ensure their own safety and the safety of other passengers. The best way to do this is to take a boating education course from the local Coast Guard Auxiliary, United States Power Squadrons, state boating officials, or participate in any other boating course that's been approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators before going out on the water.

A multitude of courses, both online and in the classroom, may be found on the Office of Boating Safety's website at <http://www.uscgboating.org/safety/courses.htm>.

The U.S. Coast Guard is asking all boat owners and operators to help reduce fatalities, injuries, property damage, and associated healthcare costs related to recreational boating accidents by taking personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of their passengers. Essential steps include: always wear a life jacket and require passengers to do the same; never boat under the influence; successfully complete a boating safety course; and get a Vessel Safety Check annually from local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliaries, United States Power Squadrons®, or your state boating agency's Vessel Examiners. The U.S. Coast Guard reminds all boaters, "You're in Command. Boat Responsibly!" For more information, visit www.USCGboating.org.

HOW A FEW SECONDS OPENED MY EYES TO THE LESSON OF A LIFETIME

By Robin Freeman

Chief, Department of Education, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

For the first few years of our marriage, my husband, Rick, and I fished from a 10-foot inflatable "starter boat." It soon became evident that I enjoyed the water, so we purchased a larger offshore fishing boat.

It was during one of our first few trips offshore that Rick asked me to stand by the wheel while he tied up some fishing jigs. I was admiring the coastline, which I'd never seen from such a dramatic perspective, when suddenly I heard a gurgling, choking sound. I whipped around to find Rick doubled over, his face bright red.

I feared it was a heart attack. Three horrible thoughts struck simultaneously: "I don't know where I am... I don't know how to call for help... PLEASE don't die!"

While I knew how to steer the boat, I'd never driven it, and I certainly didn't know how to use the radio. Thankfully, Rick wasn't having a heart attack. He'd chewed the tag off the end of the monofilament fishing line, accidentally inhaled it and was trying to cough it up. Though the episode seemed to last an eternity, it was actually only a few seconds. Rick recovered and I eventually calmed down, but I've never forgotten that feeling of helplessness.

I told Rick later that night that I was not comfortable operating the boat, and I wanted us to take a boating education class. I also told him that I wanted him to show me how to run the boat. He agreed, we did, and I am now fully confident in taking our boat out, with or without him.

Mandatory Education Widely Supported

In recent months mandatory boater education has gotten the thumbs-up from a number of organizations, each with a stake in recreational boating safety.

Currently, 47 of the 56 states and territories have implemented one of the three types of mandatory boating education. The three types of mandatory education are as follows:

1. education is required based on the born-on or after date of the boat operator;
2. mandates education for all boaters with a phase-in approach over a period of time; and
3. education required for only a specific age group of boat operators (i.e., teens).

Statistics show that those states that have implemented some form of mandatory boating education experience an overall decrease in the number of fatalities.

Editor's Note: For more information on this data, see "What Constitutes an Adequate Boating Safety Education Program?" on pp. 10-11.

Considering the evident link between mandatory boater education and reduced boating fatalities, on Sept. 10, 2007, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) adopted a policy position on State Mandatory Boating Education. With this policy position, NASBLA officially endorses the efforts by its member states to require mandatory boating education for recreational boat operators. Further, NASBLA will support the efforts of its member states to draft and submit bills to their state legislatures for this purpose.

Another boating-related association that's gone on record in support of boater education is the Marine Retailers Association of America (MRAA). This group of marine dealers strongly supports an educated boat operator, rec-

ognizes the importance of all forms of boater safety education, and believes that an educated boater improves safety on the water and enhances the boating experience.

MRAA credits the passage of the Boating Safety Act of 1971 with the vast improvements made in recreational boating safety over the last three decades. The organization also acknowledges the value of the education efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the United States Power Squadrons and the states. MRAA believes these successful education programs have contributed to the outstanding safety record of recreational boating.

With continued growth in recreational boating and the influx of thousands of new families every year, MRAA believes it is imperative that education be expanded to reach out to both new boaters and to boaters with experience.

Participants at a recent boater education discussion hosted by Sea Tow Services International Inc. agreed on the need for boater education to be mandatory on a state level. The 2007 Boater Education Roundtable included a cross-section of marine industry representatives from key business segments who are committed to discussing the various issues related to mandating boater education, including the U.S. Coast Guard, NASBLA, marine retailers, marine manufacturers and marine insurance representatives.

At the beginning of the meeting, the participants established a goal of identifying a way to provide a minimum level of education for every boater and agreed on the need for that education to be mandatory on a state level. It was further agreed that such a mandate should be based on a phase-in model and be compliant with NASBLA-approved guidelines.



Studies show that boating education does save lives, prompting various boating safety organizations to voice support for mandating education for recreational boaters. Photo courtesy Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks



In a survey of boat owners, the majority favor mandatory education for all boaters. Photo courtesy Massachusetts Environmental Police

However, there were differing opinions among the participants as to whether a federal mandate would be the most effective, or perhaps only way to ensure that the states establish these minimum education requirements. Some of the debate over the issue of a federal mandate revolved around the misconception that enforcing mandatory education would result in a mandate for licensing.

According to Capt. Keith Cummings, president of Sea Tow and moderator of the roundtable, “The central issue is figuring out how to get all of the states to require the minimum level of education for all boaters and then standardizing that education through NASBLA approval. The next step would then be to move for reciprocity between states.”

The group agreed to formalize a Boater Education Steering Committee to lead this education initiative. The committee also plans to develop a clear, concise message that communicates the need for boater education and identifies the proper channels within the boating industry, including existing grant holders, who will help communicate that message to the masses.

While it may be expected that boating safety professionals, law enforcement officers and industry leaders would support mandatory education, policymakers had run into barriers when discussing the prospect with the boaters themselves. However, the tide seems to be changing.

Boaters Support Mandatory Education

Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatU.S.) recently conducted an online survey to gauge member opinion on mandatory boater education as well as to determine whether boaters should be required to carry a separate identification card/license for national security purposes.

Based on the first 25,000 responding, 61 percent favored mandatory education for all boaters as long as an exam substitute was an option. An additional 9 percent were even more strongly in favor saying that no exam substitute should be allowed. The survey was sent to 325,000 of the association’s 650,000 members for whom it has an e-mail address, BoatU.S. stated.

“The bottom line is that BoatU.S. members believe that recreational boaters should complete some type of instruction, be tested and certified to ensure that they have the knowledge to properly operate a boat,” said BoatU.S. President Nancy Michelman.

On the issue of being required to carry an ID card, while 75 percent had no problem with being asked to produce a state driver’s license or passport if requested by law enforcement, over half disagreed with being required to carry a separate boater ID card/license.

“It is fair to say that boaters want to be treated no differently than any motorist or aircraft passenger required to produce a current photo ID,” noted Michelman.

Survey results indicate that BoatU.S. members have a considerable amount of boating experience. Most have been boating for more than 20 years, 68 percent had taken a boating safety course taught in a classroom, 19 percent had taken a safety class on the water, 19 percent had taken a class at home and 19 percent had taken a course online.

“Based on these results, it is clear to us that we need a diversity of boating safety course formats,” said Michelman. ■

What Constitutes an Adequate Boating Safety Education Program?

By Gail Kulp
NASBLA Education Director

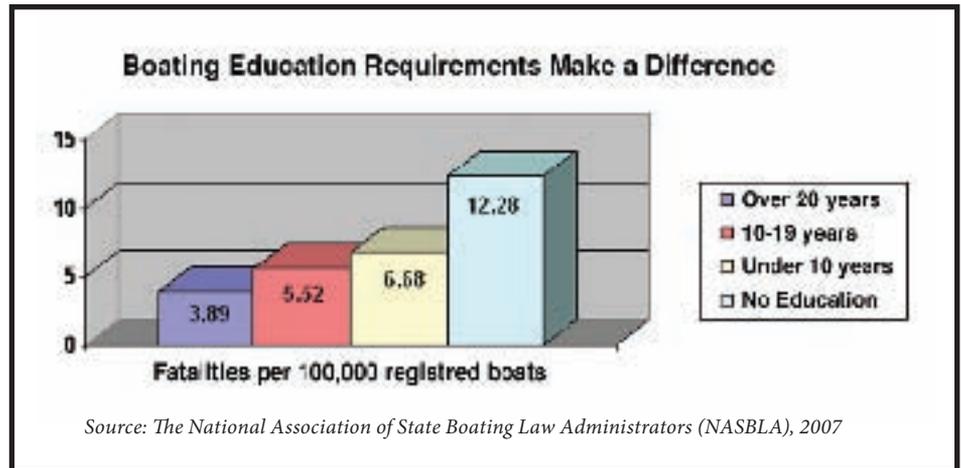
In the spring and summer months of 2006 and 2007, the NASBLA Education Committee conducted the education best practices survey.

The first part of the survey, conducted in 2006, showed that mandatory boating education does make a difference in the fatality statistics for those states which enact the legislation. The survey found that those states that have the longest history of boating education requirements also have the lowest average fatality rates of all the states. Also, the longer the boating education requirements have been in place, the lower the fatality rates become.

“Those of us who have worked in the boating education field for years have known intuitively that there is a correlation between education and lower fatalities, but now we have the data to prove it.”

In contrast, the states with no boating education requirements have the highest average fatality rates.

“Those of us who have worked in the boating education field for years have known intuitively that there is a correlation between education and lower fatalities,” said Emily King, NASBLA Education Committee member from Ohio, who led the sub-committee working on this study, “but now we have the data to prove it.”



The first part of the survey also found that other factors in the states affected the fatality rates. For instance, states which required a specific age group of boaters or specific water activity participants to wear life jackets had lower fatality rates across the board. In addition, those states with the lowest fatality rates had at least one full-time employee devoted to boating safety education.

After studying the results of the first survey, the Education Committee decided to complete a second survey to learn more about those other factors that influenced the states' fatality rates. This information was then used to create a checklist that could be used by education coordinators, boating law administrators and state legislatures to assess existing programs and determine how those programs might be strengthened to better meet both short-term and long-term boating safety goals.

Results from this second survey, conducted in 2007, showed that a total of 33 of the 56 states and territories require boating safety education course instructors to be certified. And, those instructors were required to be periodically recertified as well. Although this training is occurring in over half of the states and territories, the survey found that the length of training varies from just 2 hours to 64 hours for the instructors.

Another area assessed by the second survey was the number of boating education employees on staff within the states and territories. While 70 percent of the states and territories reported that they have at least one full-time person on staff devoted to boating safety education, there are still 17 states and territories that do not have someone working full-time to further boating safety. The state staff is in charge of the entire boating safety education program from the teaching of the courses to the administration of course certificates.

Boater Education Checklist

Boating Education

- State has a mandatory boating safety education law.
- State has a NASBLA-approved course.

Instructor Competency (Classroom courses only)

- NASBLA-approved boating safety courses are taught by certified instructors.
- Instructors must meet recertification requirements or instructor updates.
- Students complete an evaluation form at the conclusion of each course.

Education Management

- State has staff assigned to carry out the boating education program.
- State maintains records of NASBLA education certificates issued.

Partner Involvement

- State works with partners to offer educational programs.
- State provides partners with state-specific information to meet NASBLA Standard 8.

Boating Safety Awareness

- State participates in national campaigns to raise boating safety awareness.
- State uses outreach methods to disseminate boating safety messages.
- State provides boating publications to the public.
- Boating publications are offered at public venues and events.
- State's boating agency has a boating-specific web page.

For a more detailed checklist, please visit the NASBLA website at www.nasbla.org

The number of employees on staff is especially important when the state or territory wants to participate in national campaigns to raise boating safety awareness. The most popular campaign among the states and territories was the National Safe Boating Week, which is managed by the National Safe Boating Council. A total of 40 states and territories participated in this campaign. Other campaigns dealing with topics such as cold water immersion or alcohol prevention showed involvement on the part of the states and territories, but nowhere near the same level of participation as with the National Safe Boating Week.

The campaign information is made available to the public through a number of venues such as boat shows and promotional events. However, a state is limited on how many boaters can be reached when the staff has only a few people. That is when alternative venues including radio, television, billboards, podcasts, and the state agency's website can come in handy. Utilizing various forms of media can get the boating safety message out to more boaters when a state's staff is limited by size or time.

Finally, the survey results show just how important partners can be to a state or territory. Groups such as the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons can be of immense help to a state. Members of these groups can help teach the boating safety education courses, spread the boating safety message, and be a visible resource to the boating community at events and boat shows.

After analyzing the results of the surveys, the Education Committee developed a checklist to show what an adequate boating education program would look like in the states. Many factors affect the fatality rate in the states and territories. Marketing, staffing, education, awareness campaigns and other uncontrollable factors such as the weather all play a part in a state's boating fatality rate. Those states and territories which have the lowest number of fatalities consistently over the last five years have accomplished this because they have been proactive in education. ■

Marine Police Partner with Students to Produce Video

By Rebecca Leigh White

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Alabama Marine Police officers wrote 111 citations in 2005-06 for boating under the influence of alcohol. Of those, 97 were written for illegal possession of alcohol. Alcohol affects judgment, vision, balance and coordination, increasing the likelihood of accidents afloat – for both passengers and boat operators. Data from the U.S. Coast Guard shows that in boating deaths involving alcohol use, over half the victims capsized their boats and/or fell overboard.

the video targets young people, stresses safe and responsible boating practices, and warns that drinking and driving on the water – just like on the road – can kill.

S.O.S. is the brainchild of ADCNR Marine Police Officer Mark Fuller who felt a message targeting teenagers on the water was needed. “After viewing the ‘Every 15 Minutes’ video produced last year by BRHS Media for their school that outlines the dangers of underage drinking and driving on the roadways, I thought that a video containing the same message pertaining to watercraft would be well-received and maybe save lives,” said Fuller.

As part of BRHS Media, each year the video production class, taught by Laura Gullidge, produces videos for state agencies and nonprofit organizations as well as the school’s closed-circuit television show W.I.L.D. Twenty BRHS students participated in the S.O.S. production that began in July 2006. The video depicts a fatal boat crash at Wind Creek State Park Marina on Lake Martin. Marine enforcement officers statewide will use the S.O.S. video as

a training tool, and DVD copies

will be offered to marine enforcement agencies nationally.

Additionally, it will be included as part of Alabama’s Boating Safety Course, currently taught in Driver Education classes in the state’s high schools.

ADCNR Marine Police Director Corky Pugh hopes the “Sink or Swim” video will remind teenagers about the potentially dangerous consequences of operating boats and personal watercraft while impaired.

“This video will serve as a valuable educational resource to make kids think about the major responsibilities of operating watercraft,” Pugh said. “Also, I would like to see the kids take the message home to their parents that underage drinking and/or being intoxicated at any age while operating watercraft on Alabama’s waterways is against the law and that the law will be strongly enforced.”

For more information on acquiring the S.O.S. video, contact the ADCNR Marine Police Division’s Boating Education Section at 800.272.7930. ■



To help raise awareness of the dangers of drinking and boating, officers with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources worked with students at Benjamin Russell High School to produce a video. The video, titled “Sink or Swim”, targets young people, stresses safe and responsible boating practices, and warns that drinking and driving on the water can kill.

Photos courtesy Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

In an effort to reduce those numbers, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Marine Police Division and the Benjamin Russell High School (BRHS) Media Department produced a new video focusing on the dangers of operating watercraft while intoxicated. Titled “Sink or Swim” (S.O.S.),

Coast Guard Auxiliary Celebrates 68 Years of Service to America

On June 23, 2007, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary celebrated its 68th year of service to the U.S. Coast Guard and the American people.

Created by an Act of Congress in 1939, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed volunteer component of the U.S. Coast Guard. The Auxiliary directly supports the Coast Guard in all missions, except military and law enforcement actions. The Auxiliary is the primary provider of boating safety outreach and education for the Coast Guard.

Adm. Thad Allen, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, commented, "The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary provides an invaluable service to our Nation. We rely on their generosity and patriotism to help keep Americans safe and secure all around the country."

The Coast Guard's philosophy is to be SEMPER PARATUS (Always Ready) against all threats and all hazards. The Coast Guard Auxiliary is an integral part of that philosophy and the Coast Guard Forces.

"The Auxiliary is an integral part of the Coast Guard and they assist with virtually every Coast Guard mission. We couldn't do what we do without them," said Adm. Allen.

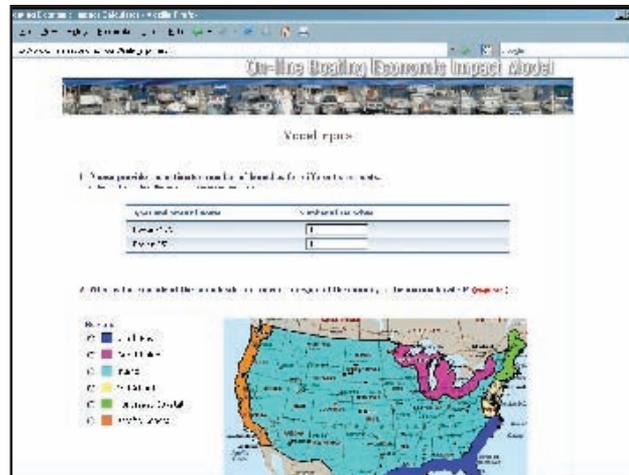
Auxiliary members conduct safety patrols on local waterways, assist the Coast Guard with homeland security duties, teach boating safety classes, conduct free vessel safety checks for the public, as well as many other activities.

The Auxiliary has members in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American

Samoa, and Guam. For more information about the Coast Guard Auxiliary, call 877.875.6296 or visit www.cgaux.org.

New Device Measures Economic Impact of Marinas

In late July, several organizations within the U.S. recreational boating industry unveiled the Online Boating Economic Impact Tool – the nation's only web-based means for estimating the economic impact of marinas across the country. This online tool consists of an interactive system designed to understand boater spending and provide estimates of the overall economic impact existing and planned marinas can have on a local, regional and national level. It can also be used to estimate the impact of the potential loss of marinas.



The Recreational Marine Research Center (RMRC) developed and maintains the Impact Tool on behalf of the Association of Marina Industries (AMI), Great Lakes Commission (GLC), National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). It can be accessed at no charge at www.MarinaEconomics.com.

"For the very first time, this innovative tool allows marinas across the country to produce information that verifies their direct and indirect economic impact," said Dr. Ed Mahoney, director of RMRC. "In

addition to the organizations and agencies involved, more than 800 marina operators and 10,000 recreational boaters contributed their time to provide the data required to develop the tool's economic models."

The Tool was designed to be convenient and easy to use so visitors to the site can immediately obtain information about specific marinas or groupings of marinas (e.g., in a harbor) such as estimates on boater spending and associated economic impact. It can also be used to estimate the economic impact of boat access/launch sites, and all registered powerboats and sailboats in a designated region. The Tool also estimates local impacts such as jobs, sales, income and the added value associated with the ownership (e.g. craft spending) and use (e.g. trip spending) of different types of recreational boats, to produce a customized report.

BoatU.S. Foundation Rewards Grassroots Environmental Projects

The BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water has awarded more than \$25,000 in Clean Water Grants to 13 grassroots organizations across the country. The annual grant program gives local groups up to \$4000 each to fund programs that reduce debris in our nation's waterways or for other clean boating efforts. The Foundation has awarded nearly \$1 million in grassroots grants since 1989.

With over 100 organizations applying, competition was very tight. The selected projects range from creating signage and brochures to developing a litter collection contest and establishing a local marine debris reporting system.

“By working with these on-the-ground partners we are able to influence boaters with information that has a distinct local point of view,” said Susan Shingledecker, director of Environmental Programs for the BoatU.S. Foundation. “It’s exciting to see the interest in environmentally sound boating from groups all over the country,” she added.

In addition to the 13 newly announced Clean Water Grants, the Foundation also completed its review of last year’s Clean Water Grant programs and awarded its “Clean Water Grants Excellence Award” to the Oyster Bay Power Squadron of Oyster Bay, N.Y. The Excellence Award, which comes with an additional \$1000 to continue their efforts in educating boaters, is given annually to the one organization that achieves the greatest success in completing its Clean Water Grant project.

For more information about the Clean Water Grants, visit www.boatus.com/foundation/cleanwater/grants.

Florida Leads U.S. in Boating Deaths, Second for Accidents

Florida led the nation in boating fatalities last year, according to statistics recently released by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Florida’s boating accident rate (671) for 2006 was second only to California’s 757. Florida led the nation with 69 fatalities, compared to 47 for Texas and 44 for California. All but eight of the 69 fatalities were the result of drowning, and none of the victims were wearing life jackets. The FWC said the high numbers reflect the reality that Floridians own more than 1 million registered recreational vessels, and they use them throughout the year.

The most likely county for boaters to be in an accident was Monroe, followed in order by Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, Pinellas, Lee, Broward, Collier, Brevard, Escambia and Duval. The most likely

month for the accident to happen was July. The most likely time of day was 4-6 p.m., and the most common type of accident was a collision with another vessel or a fixed object.

Accidents occur most frequently on rivers or creeks, but the number of accidents on the ocean or gulf, or in a bay or sound, is almost as high. Nearly 600 of the state’s accidents occurred while the vessel was cruising. Small vessels, especially those under 18 feet, were the most likely to be involved in accidents.

A typical accident involved a privately-owned vessel, operated carelessly or without a lookout, with the operator being a male at least 22 years old — most likely 36 to 50 years old.

The 85-page report on 2006 boating accidents in Florida is available at www.MyFWC.com/law/boating.

Alaska’s Kids Don’t Float Program Saves Two More

In July, two boys capsized a dinghy and were dunked suddenly into the water off an outer finger in South Harbor in Petersburg, Alaska. They were wearing life jackets – from the local KIDS DON’T FLOAT loaner board.

One child immediately self-rescued, then tried to assist the other, screamed, and alerted nearby boaters. Within minutes, the other child was safely pulled to safety. Both boys were assisted by emergency medical technicians and transported to the local hospital. Without



Life jacket loaner boards such as this one have helped saved children’s lives in Alaska.

Photo courtesy Alaska Office of Boating Safety

the Kids Don’t Float life jackets, the outcome might have been a disaster.

This raises the number of Alaskan children saved to a total of 14. Kids Don’t Float is a statewide injury prevention program that was developed to address Alaska’s high child and youth drowning rate. A collaborative effort between several state and federal agencies, organizations, and local grass-roots sponsors, the program includes both a life jacket loaner station component and an educational component.

Auxiliarists Help Save Prop Strike Victim

On July 4, 2007, a Coast Guard Auxiliary crew in Sacramento, Calif., played a key role in saving the life of an 18-year-old woman who’d been struck by a boat propeller. At approximately 6:30 p.m., the Auxiliary vessel answered a request for assistance on the marine radio by a boat on the American River about an unknown problem. Upon arriving on scene, the crew of the Auxiliary vessel observed several hundred boats all rafted up, with the majority of the people on board drinking and partying. They were ultimately waved down by a boat that was in the middle of about 10 boats all tied together and anchored. All the occupants of that vessel, and the surrounding vessels, appeared to be in various stages of intoxication.

“The scene was pure chaos,” said Steve Allen, owner of the Auxiliary vessel THIS SIDE UP, and a crewmember on board. “People were screaming, and it was difficult to ascertain what was going on or what the real problem was.”

Cal Boating Turns 50

The California Department of Boating and Waterways (Cal Boating) celebrated its 50th anniversary in September. The department has designed a new logo to commemorate the occasion.



Since 1957, the Department has provided **\$786 million** to local agencies and businesses, and for Cal Boating capital outlay projects, for the construction of marinas, boat launching facilities, floating restrooms, sewage pumpout stations, coastal beach erosion control and sand renourishment.

Cal Boating provides boating education, safety, law enforcement, consumer protection, environmental, and aquatic weed control programs for the benefit of the boating community.

The department's programs are paid by boaters for boaters through a special fund that is self-supporting.

Recreational boating contributes nearly \$20 billion to California's economy annually.

Minnesota Conservation Officers Assist after Bridge Collapse

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conservation officers were involved in emergency operations at the scene of the Interstate 35-W bridge collapse in Minneapolis on August 1. Conservation officers responded immediately following the collapse. At least three DNR watercraft were used in search, rescue and recovery efforts throughout the evening. The next day, 14 conservation officers worked alongside other law enforcement and rescue personnel in search, recovery, and security capacities. The conservation officers brought six watercraft, including jet-boats and air-boats, for use in the debris-laden Mississippi River.

The collapse killed 13 people and cut off a major Minneapolis artery. The emergency response, site cleanup, stepped-up inspections of other spans, traffic diversions and new bridge could cost state and local governments \$393 million if incentives in the reconstruction contract are earned in full.

After a few minutes on scene, the Auxiliary crew learned that an 18-year-old woman had been recently struck by the propeller of a passing boat. The Auxiliary crew, which included coxswain Ed Sweeney and crewmembers Leanne Sweeney and Steve Allen, immediately assessed the situation and administered basic first aid to the victim. The crew then transported the woman to shore. They were met at the ramp by the Sacramento Fire Department, who then transported the victim to a hospital in Sacramento.

No further information was available on the vessel who struck the woman.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary warns boaters and swimmers about the danger of "prop strikes" and the need to be extremely vigilant whenever swimmers are observed in the water near a vessel. For more information on propeller strikes and how to prevent them, visit www.uscgboating.org/safety/USCG_prop_bro.pdf.

Georgia Increases Penalties for Owners of Abandoned Boats

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue has signed a bill into law that stiffens penalties for boat owners who abandon their vessels in public waters. Owners who don't properly dispose of sunken boats will be barred from registering a new boat or renewing their automobile registrations.

The state's Senate President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson (R-Savannah) said vessel abandonment has become epidemic in Georgia. In most cases, there is no insurance coverage or any surety bond to address the removal of the boat or trawler or the debris associated with it.

A conservative estimate based on Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement reports indicates that there are more than 85 boats, barges, tugs and shrimp trawlers abandoned in the state's tidal water bottoms. The cost to remove these boats is anywhere from \$60,000 to \$80,000 each.

NMMA and SOBA Commit to Strengthen Relationship

In June, the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) signed an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that promises to ensure a much closer working relationship between the two organizations.

Under the terms of the MOU, which was signed June 19 at the Small Vessel Security Summit in Arlington, Va., NMMA will provide management services to SOBA, including oversight of association finances; maintenance of its membership roster and database information; responsibility for website development, hosting and content; assistance with monthly SOBA board meetings; direction of in-house communications and publications; and assistance with SOBA's annual conference and awards program. The organizations will also work closely on regulatory and legislative initiatives aimed at helping preserve and expand boating access.

Bernice McArdle, director of Affiliates based in NMMA's Chicago headquarters, will serve as the executive director of SOBA, implementing plans and programs approved by the SOBA Board.

"There are so many synergies between the goals of NMMA and SOBA that it just made sense to forge a stronger alliance and working relationship," said NMMA President Thom Dammrich. "Together, the two groups will combine their greatest strengths and help lead the charge to not only protect but also grow boating access."

"Signing the MOU solidifies the commitment both groups made to one another and ensures a strong effort will be made on behalf of the boating industry and boating enthusiasts all across the country to maintain ample water access for future generations to enjoy," added SOBA President Terry Boyd.

For additional information regarding SOBA, visit www.sobaus.org or contact Bernice McArdle at 312.946.6280 or SOBA@nmma.org.

Virginia Cracks Down on Boaters

On August 18, 2007, Virginia law enforcement officials took part in Operation SWEEP — Safer Waterways through Enforcement and Education Programs.

At the end of the day, 715 boats had been inspected on the state's inland waterways, 180 charges were made and 126 warnings were issued, according to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Most charges were related to boats that were not in compliance with safety requirements; however, among the charges were four arrests for boating under the influence; 10 for reckless operation of a watercraft; three drug possession charges; and seven charges of underage alcohol possession.

The 65 boating patrols focused on the most heavily utilized waters including Smith Mountain Lake, Lake Anna and the Potomac, James and Rappahannock Rivers. Seven BUI check points were conducted as part of this detail.



Staff with the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources of Puerto Rico checked out one of the eight new patrol boats received in May. Among those pictured are Javier Vélez Arocho (standing next to the boat), secretary of Natural and Environmental Resources, and Juan Rodríguez Vélez (standing at the left inside the vessel), boating law administrator for Puerto Rico. The vessels were manufactured in Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Photo courtesy Department of Natural and Environmental Resources of Puerto Rico

New Boats Help Improve Water Safety in Puerto Rico

In May of this year, the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources of Puerto Rico received the first of eight vessels for coastal patrolling. Puerto Rico has 11 coastal detachments that use patrol vessels. Currently each detachment has only one vessel per unit. The department's goal is to have at least two vessels per unit.

Increasing the number of patrol vessels will allow for each unit to have a vessel in use while the other is receiving maintenance and preventive service. It will also provide the ability to ramp up patrol on active dates such as San Juan Night (June 23), Independence Day (July 4) and Commonwealth Constitution Day (July 25). With additional patrol boats, the department could give assistance to other law enforcement agents and have more equipment available for search and rescue. Additional boats would also help improve the surveillance on the coast to protect the coastal natural resources, improve boaters' safety, and assist in Homeland Security details.

Indiana Conservation Officers Participate in Disaster Preparedness Drill

In June, conservation officers with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources participated in a three-day disaster preparedness drill called SONS 07 (Spill of National Significance). The training event was orchestrated by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency, with many national, state and local emergency response agencies as well as private industry participating at the different multi-state venue sites.

The exercise took place on the Ohio River near Evansville, Ind., and simulated a large-scale earthquake incident within the New Madrid fault system, along with all the

response issues and infrastructure failures that might accompany such a catastrophic event. The simulated earthquake and subsequent environmental disaster were designed to test the implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), along with the agency's ability to respond with personnel and equipment to react to different emergency scenarios.

Conservation Officer Major Felix Hensley, who serves as Indiana's boating law administrator and is a member of the Sector Ohio Valley Area Maritime Security Executive Steering Committee, was involved in the year-long planning of the event and served as a controller-evaluator of the marine operations taking place on the Ohio River during the drill.

Indiana conservation officers partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard and responded with personnel and watercraft. They were called upon to quickly adapt to the many differing scenarios primarily dealing with search and rescue and a variety of maritime security issues on and along the river. Public information officers from the Law Enforcement Division also participated by working within the NIMS system to inform the general public of the importance of the activities occurring in the immediate area and dispel any concerns generated from the public during training activity.

"SONS 07 provided an excellent platform for all participating agencies to test and evaluate their ability to respond and work within NIMS guidelines, and do so without the fear of loss of life or personal property," said Major Hensley.

The first day involved responding to a mock spill, collapse of a bridge with victims in the water and other situations that were of a quick-response nature,



The command center is a hub of activity during a recent disaster preparedness drill held near Evansville, Ind. The event simulated a large-scale earthquake incident, along with all the response issues and infrastructure failures that might accompany such a catastrophic event. Photo courtesy Indiana Department of Natural Resources

all designed to test the flow of information from a Unified Command Center to ongoing field operations.

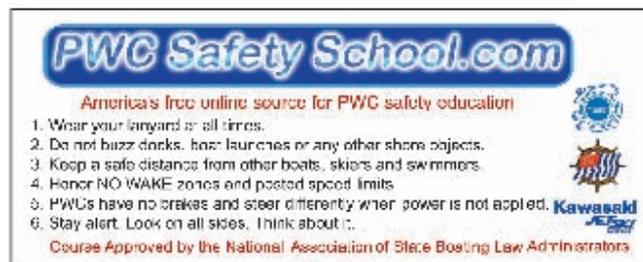
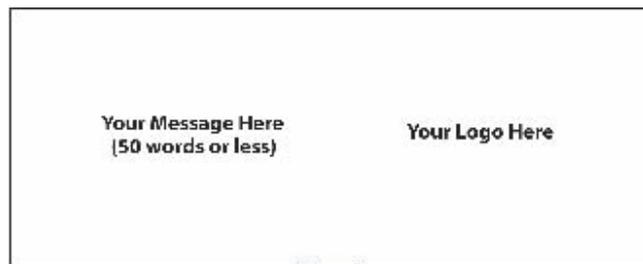
The second day involved the implementation of the Area Maritime Security Plan and elevation of the MARSEC Level in the training area, which brought increased security concerns within the river miles affected. This also gave

each participating agency an opportunity to test their emergency response plans for waterside events.

Free Customized PWC Safety Handout Available

Thousands of personal watercraft users (and other boaters) have used PWC Safety School.com as a free boating safety online learning resource. The course offered at www.pwcsafetyschool.com is approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators and is geared toward boaters who use personal watercraft (PWCs).

PWC Safety School.com has developed a clever handout (see images below) to help improve safety on the water. Roughly the size of a bookmark, the two-color handout is water-resistant, making it a practical item to pass along to boaters on the water. One side of the handout provides tips on safe use of PWCs. The opposite side can be customized with local boating safety information, PWC safety rules, regulations, guidelines and contact information.



These water-resistant, pocket-sized PWC Safety School.com handouts have been widely distributed by marine patrol officers in several states. The ability to localize the safety handout provides another tool for marine law enforcement officers to use as they educate PWC riders and boaters about safe and responsible operation of watercraft in their jurisdictions.

Local marine patrol jurisdictions can order 500 of these safety handouts at no cost by visiting www.pwcsafetyschool.com. ■

Advanced Boating Education

To boating safety professionals, volunteers and boaters, the information in this article will not surprise you. It will appear to be common sense. Yet, after you read this article, ask yourself if we've taken the topic of advanced boating education and boating skill levels for granted. Ask if we've given this topic the attention that it deserves.



Jeff Hoedt
Chief, Office of Boating Safety
U.S. Coast Guard

For years, some national organizations have recognized the need and provided advanced boating courses and skill training to the boating community. Examples include U.S. Sailing, the American Canoe Association, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons. Other organizations have focused primarily on providing basic level education, such as a classroom or online basic boating safety course.

Both levels of education/training are vital to the recreational boater. Yet, the emphasis has been overwhelmingly directed toward just one of these – the basic boating safety course.

The need for more emphasis on advanced boating education, including skill training, was officially recognized in the strategic planning process for the National Recreational Boating Safety Program. During one meeting, the National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NBSAC) and Strategic Planning Panel members brought up the point that skills need to be practiced and learned, in addition to having the basic level of education. As they stated, you wouldn't conceive of allowing a person to drive a car alone without having completed appropriate practice driving sessions with an instructor.

The result of this discussion was the adoption of Objective 3 of the Strategic Plan, "Advanced Boating Education." Each of the strategies listed under this objective focus on advanced courses and skill training; and each will play a vital role in helping us all to make boating safer and more enjoyable for all of the participants. (The strategic plan is posted online at www.uscgboating.org.)

Read the article below to get more information on this topic. Then, consider this issue yourself and see what you can do to promote the continuing enhancement of the capabilities of our nation's boaters.

Boating Skills Go Beyond the Classroom

By Wayne Stacey
Office of Boating Safety
U.S. Coast Guard

A citizen has just received your state's recreational boating safety certificate for completing a NASBLA-approved boating safety course. Your state is one of many that has a mandatory boating education law requiring an operator to be licensed or certified before he or she can operate power-driven vessels on state waters.

They are proud of their accomplishment, having spent hours learning the rules of the road, safety equipment, buoys, charts and a host of other related subjects. The classroom instructors were great. They told enough relevant "sea stories" that provided a new perspective on boating safety.

Now that they are aware of how to operate a motor boat, they consider themselves a "Master Mariner." Not so fast – what about the practical skills and experience needed to properly operate a boat? Do they recall that 30-minute discussion on boat handling and seamanship skills in your boating course? Did they remember everything the instructor taught them?

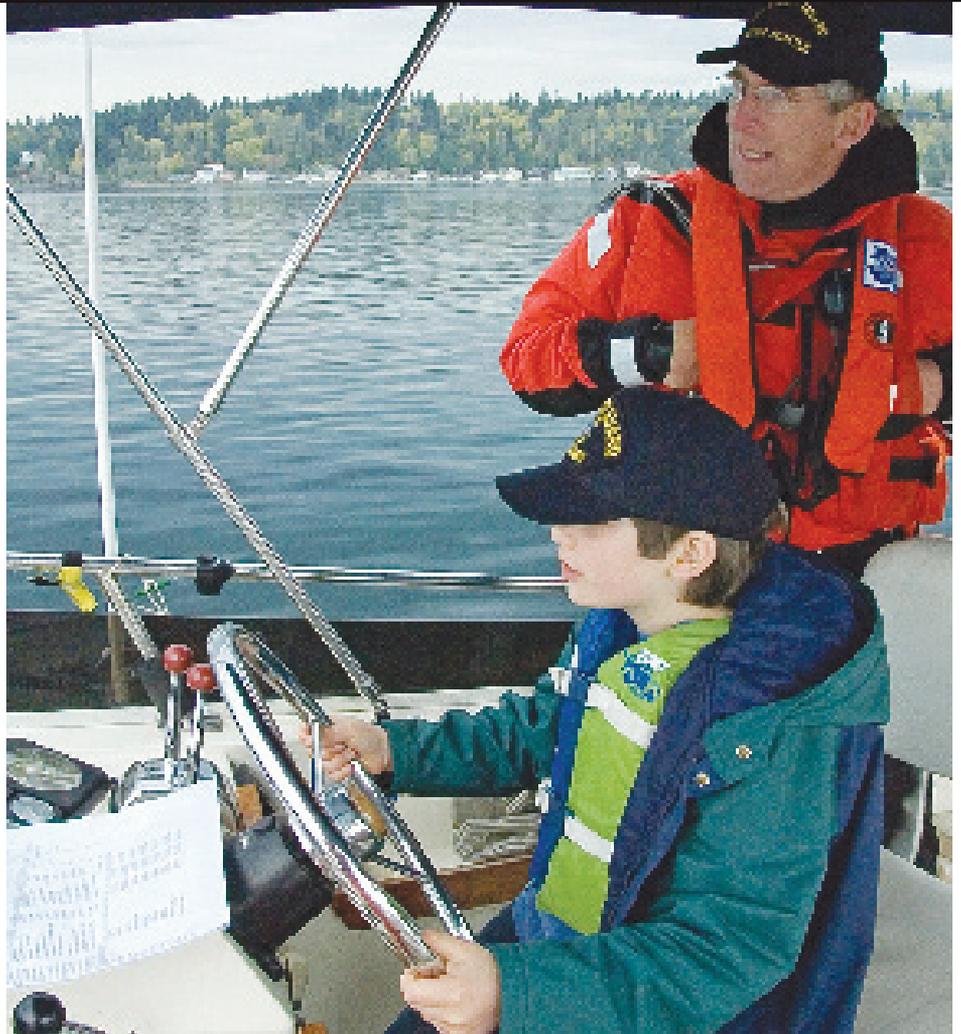
Many novice boaters are faced with this situation. Having successfully completed a classroom course, they still lack the necessary on-water practical boat handling skills. Ask yourself, "Do they have the necessary skills to be on a busy waterway? Are they confident enough in their boat handling skills to maneuver their boat safely in any given situation? Do they have sufficient skills to have fun?" Before you answer these

questions, visit your local marina or boat ramp on a summer weekend. Try to gauge or determine the skill levels of the boaters. You will witness many of them struggling as they try to launch or recover their boats from the ramp. Watch as they make their approach when attempting to dock their vessels. Chances are you will witness the operator's frustration, and the ire of other boaters nearby.

For whatever reason, whether it is a new boat or just the lack of familiarity on how a boat handles, inexperienced operators can place themselves and others at risk. An eight-hour boating safety course may not teach them everything they need to know. However, an on-the-water training program can supplement and enhance their boating education and can help bridge the gap from classroom instruction to a safe, enjoyable experience on the water.

It is in the interest of your students to explain to them that the boating safety course they are taking is the "minimum" required, their true "start" as a recreational boater. To be truly proficient they need to seek further training, preferably skill-based training. If available, point them toward local providers. If not, point them to the Internet where they can search for themselves. There are, of course, many areas of the country where this sort of training is simply not available. At the very least, encourage your students to learn from friends and family members who have more experience. Encourage the more experienced students to share their skills and experience with others.

As a proponent of boating education and water safety, compare the process of obtaining a driver's license to operate an automobile on our nation's highways to that of a motorboat on our nation's waterways. First, you must study the rules of the road and all the applicable highway safety regulations. Then you take an eye examination, followed by a written examination. You now have your "learner's permit" and you must practice with an older, more experienced, licensed



On-the-water training helps reinforce the knowledge boaters learn in standard boating courses.
Photo courtesy U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

driver in the car with you. Many states require driver's education instruction that includes so many hours of classroom training as well as so many hours of behind-the-wheel training with a certified instructor. Just look at the process that you have to go through simply to drive a car. It can easily be argued it takes at least as much skill, if not more, to safely operate a boat. Therefore, it begs the question, "Why do we require so little of our boat operators?"

Professional mariners often question the minimum training required for a recreational boater to become certified/licensed, if it is required at all. They are quick to point out that many other countries have strict recreational boat operator requirements that include an on-the-water practical examination by a certified examiner. In the future, will we as a nation adopt standards that are more rigid for our recreational boaters?

In the meantime, as recreational boating safety professionals, we have a responsibility to inform the boating public that there are risks associated with boating activities. We know that education and experience can mitigate a large portion of those risks, and that it is in the best interest of the boater to be as educated as possible. Encourage them to take a class and partake in training beyond the minimums required. It will make them a better, safer and more confident boater, which makes for a more enjoyable experience on the water for everyone. ■

Educating Our Instructors



Commodore Jesse L. Harrup Jr.
National Directorate
Commodore for
Recreational Boating Safety
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

Each year, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCGAUX) National Department of Education develops and presents an instructors workshop. This workshop fulfills an annual goal of the Auxiliary to maintain an efficient and effective corps of instructors to ensure that boaters receive the best recreational boating safety education possible. This also works to maintain the lifeblood of the organization, which is recruiting and retention of members.

Educating the Auxiliary instructors usually takes two forms: 1) providing them new education material to impart, and 2) providing recruitment strategies to use in the classroom. Through our instructors, the Auxiliary educates more than 150,000 people every year teaching them how to share the waters in a safe manner. If you add to that total the “mini-course” taught during Vessel Safety Checks, the USCGAUX actually reaches out to over one-quarter million boaters annually with safety education messages. Moreover, these instructors often are certified by many state agencies to teach state courses as well. Whether Auxiliarists are teaching a basic eight-hour boating course or an advanced class on navigation, we are an effective instrument of preventive search and rescue. If American boaters are safer, then there will be fewer boaters in distress for the U.S. Coast Guard and others to look for and rescue.

In addition to properly educating boaters, public education serves as the Auxiliary’s primary interface with the public. So the public’s impression of the organization rests largely on its instructors. Hence, it’s important for our instructors to be well-trained to ensure a positive experience for the boaters in the classes. Moreover, public education is the organization’s richest source of new members, and new member satisfaction is proportional to the quality of the training received.

As you can see, it’s imperative for the Auxiliary to reach out to instructors so frequently via an annual workshop.

The Auxiliary provides and reinforces several strategies for the instructors to use for promoting public education:

- 1) Contact a local court to offer an eight-hour course for boating infractions;
- 2) Liaison with local insurance agents and ask them to mail class schedules to clients;
- 3) Use mini classes for clubs, schools, etc.;
- 4) Think “non-traditional” and reach out to hunting and fishing clubs, paddlesports clubs and Public Works departments;
- 5) During vessel safety checks, go with the vessel examiner or provide class schedules;
- 6) For Recreational Boating Safety Program Visits, go with the program visitor or provide class schedules;
- 7) Conduct a media blitz;
- 8) Employ the Internet to distribute information;
- 9) Post flotilla schedules and keep them current; and
- 10) Sign up potential class members at boat shows (don’t simply hand out schedules – get them to sign up on the spot).

Auxiliary instructors also receive strategies during the education workshops to use in fulfilling the National Commodore’s goal of recruitment and retention each year. Ways suggested to recruit in classes include: 1) Issue invitations to meetings; 2) Provide hand-outs to showcase various Auxiliary missions; 3) Actively mention flotilla needs such as financial wishes, computer skills, etc.; 4) Make yourself available for one-on-one discussions; 5) Talk to the students about the Auxiliary’s missions; and 6) Work in local pictures or anecdotes during classes to help students relate to the Auxiliary. Our common mission with NASBLA is prevention through education. Professional, quality instructors also ensure better recruiting and higher retention; instructors need to practice their craft and our workshops are one tool in our “arsenal” to do so.

In conclusion, effective Auxiliary instructors are professional, enthusiastic, and constantly practicing their craft because our members and students deserve it! ■

BE A LIFESAVER!



WEAR IT!

ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!



www.SafeBoatingCampaign.com



NOVEMBER 2007

7-9 **NASBLA**
Executive Board Meeting
Lexington, Kentucky
859.225.9487
info@nasbla.org

JANUARY 2008

7-11 **NASBLA**
National Boating Accident Investigation
& Analysis – Level 1 Training
Montgomery, Alabama
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

9-13 **U.S. Sailing**
National Sailing Programs Symposium
St. Petersburg, Florida
401.683.0800
www.ussailing.org

16-20 **National Sheriffs' Association**
Winter Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana
703.836.7827
www.sheriffs.org

23-26 **National Safe Boating Council**
Executive Board Meeting
Ft. Myers, Florida
703.361.4294
www.safeboatingcouncil.org

24-27 **U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary**
N-TRAIN
St. Louis, Missouri
www.cgaux.org

FEBRUARY 2008

1-2 **NASBLA**
Vessel Identification, Registration &
Titling Committee Meeting
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
859.225.9487
ron@nasbla.org

3-6 **International Association of
Marine Investigators**
Annual Training Seminar
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
866.844.4264
www.iammarine.org

4-8 **NASBLA**
National Boating Accident Investigation
& Analysis – Level 1 Training
Boulder City, Nevada
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

4-8 **NASBLA**
Winter Executive Board Meeting
Location TBA
859.225.9487
info@nasbla.org

14-18 **National Marine Manufacturers Association**
Miami International Boat Show
Miami, Florida
www.miamiboatshow.com

19-24 **United States Power Squadrons**
Annual Meeting
Dallas, Texas
888.367.8777
www.usps.org

MARCH 2008

10-11 **NASBLA**
Enforcement & Training Committee Meeting
Lexington, Kentucky
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

10-14 **NASBLA**
National Boating Accident Investigation
& Analysis – Level 1 Training
Springfield, Illinois
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

12-13 **NASBLA**
Spring BLA Workshop
Lexington, Kentucky
859.225.9487
info@nasbla.org

13-16 **US Sailing**
Spring Meeting
Newport, Rhode Island
401.683.0800
www.ussailing.org

14-15 **NASBLA**
Engineering, Reporting & Analysis
Committee Meeting
Lexington, Kentucky
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

APRIL 2008

7-11 **NASBLA**
National Boating Accident Investigation
& Analysis – Level 1 Training
Cleveland, Ohio
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

12 **National Boating Federation**
Spring Meeting
Hyannis, Massachusetts
508.394.5670

14-15 **NASBLA**
Education & Awareness Committee Meeting
San Diego, California
859.225.9487
gail@nasbla.org

16-18 **NASBLA**
National Safe Boating Council &
National Water Safety Congress
International Boating and
Water Safety Summit
San Diego, California
703.361.4294
440.209.9805

27-29 **American Boating Congress**
Washington, D.C.
www.nmma.org/abc

MAY 2008

12-16 **NASBLA**
Spring Executive Board Meeting
Washington, D.C.
859.225.9487
info@nasbla.org

12-16 **NASBLA**
National Boating Accident Investigation
& Analysis – Level 1 Training
Helena, Montana
859.225.9487
chris@nasbla.org

13 **National Safe Boating Week**
Congressional Reception
Washington, D.C.

17-23 **North American Safe Boating Week**

JUNE 2008

3-6 **Western States Boating
Administrators Association**
Annual Conference
Juneau, Alaska
info@nasbla.org

27-July 2 **National Sheriffs' Association**
Annual Conference
Indianapolis, Indianapolis