

Boating Ranger Safety Tips

Tip #1

As ice begins to melt off reservoirs, we want to remind everyone to be aware of sudden spring storms and cold water temperatures. “You never know when you might end up in the water. Life jackets not only keep you afloat, but provide an extra layer of warmth. The combination of additional heat and flotation might mean the difference between life and death.”

We recommend these additional cold water boating safety tips:

- Have a ladder or a method to re-board your boat
- Carry a signaling device, such as a mirror or flare gun
- Carry a cell phone or marine band radio with service where you boat
- Always tell someone your boating plans including where you are going and what time you will return
- Check local weather conditions before heading out
- Carry proper equipment on board your boat

Tip #2

Remember three basic navigation rules to keep you safe on the water - proper lookout, safe speed, and safe distance. These three key principles will help you avoid a collision with another vessel, a person in the water, or potential water hazard.

The boat operator is required to keep a proper lookout, by sight and hearing, at all times while on the water. Boaters must be aware of where they are going and pay attention to the actions of other boaters. Make sure to look for other boats before making any turns.

Boats should be operated at safe speeds at all times, in order to react to potentially hazardous situations. In some situations the best speed may be wakeless speed. Never operate a boat faster than you feel comfortable or that your skills will allow.

Operate boats at safe distances to have adequate time and distance to react to prevailing circumstances. Utah’s Speed and Proximity Law requires boaters to operate their vessel at a wakeless speed when they are within 150 feet of another boat, a person in the water or who is being towed by another boat, shore anglers, launch ramps and docks, designated swimming areas, or whenever in a wakeless speed zone.

Tip #3

Wear your life jacket! Approximately 700 people each year drown in recreational boating accidents. Much like a helmet to a mountain biker, life jackets are an essential part of boating safety equipment and should be worn at all times.

Life jackets are no longer the orange, hot and bulky vests that are commonly associated with on-the-water safety gear. New life jackets are smaller, sleeker, and much more comfortable, leaving no reason not to wear them.

Although many boaters stow life jackets on their boats, very few choose to wear them. During accidents, there often isn’t time to grab a life jacket and put it on properly. Wearing a life jacket provides an additional measure of safety and the ability to assist others who may be in danger.

This year, remember to practice safe and responsible boating, always wear a life jacket, and be alert and aware while on the water.

Tip #4

If you are arrested and convicted for boating under the influence of alcohol (BUI) in Utah, it can mean jail time, a large fine, cancellation of auto insurance, and loss of your driver license.

Alcohol impairs your balance, coordination, reaction time, vision, depth perception, and ability to process colors, especially red and green.

Utah law prohibits motorboat operators to have open containers of alcoholic beverages when boats are in operation. In Utah, a boat operator is considered to have given consent to take a chemical test requested by a peace officer if they appear to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Play safe, play sober!

Tip #5

If you are involved in a boating accident on Utah's waterways, you should contact a Utah State Park Ranger or any other law enforcement officer as soon as possible.

In addition, boat operators must complete and submit a Recreational Boating Accident Report to Utah State Parks within 10 days if there is: combined property damage in excess of \$2,000; if someone sustains personal injury and medical treatment beyond basic first aid; or if there is a fatality.

Required report information includes boat operator name, address, accident date and location, boat vessel number, boat owner name and address, and names of fatalities. Accident forms are available online at stateparks.utah.gov/boating/accident.

Tip #6

Be aware of carbon monoxide dangers while boating on Utah's waters. Carbon monoxide is a potentially deadly gas produced anytime a carbon-based fuel, such as gasoline, propane, charcoal or oil, burns.

Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless, and tasteless and mixes evenly in the air. It enters the bloodstream through the lungs and displaces oxygen in the body. Do not confuse carbon monoxide poisoning with seasickness, intoxication, heat or marine stressors.

"If someone on board complains of irritated eyes, headache, nausea, weakness, or dizziness, immediately move the person to fresh air and seek medical attention if necessary," advises Boating Education Specialist Chris Haller.

Sources of carbon monoxide on boats include gasoline engines, generators, cooking ranges, and space and water heaters. Cold and poorly tuned engines produce more carbon monoxide than warm, properly-tuned engines. Boat exhaust leaks can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. These leaks can migrate throughout the boat and into enclosed areas. Regular maintenance and proper boat operation can reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

It is illegal to operate a motorboat or have the engine of a motorboat run idle while a person is occupying or holding onto the swim platform, swim deck, swim step, swim ladder or while a person is being towed in a non-standing position within 20 feet of the vessel. These restrictions do not apply when the motorboat is docking, or while persons are entering or exiting the vessel.

