

10 Important Tips from the Water Sports Foundation

to Keep Boaters Safe this Busy 2022 Boating Season

*- Memorial Day is the Traditional Launch to Seasonal Boating Activity -*

**ORLANDO, Fla, May 4, 2022** – With a 35% increase in new boat ownership and 830,000 new boaters taking to the waterways since 2020, boating participation will reach historic levels of participation this summer, says Water Sports Foundation Executive Director Jim Emmons.

With the Memorial Day holiday traditionally serving as the kick-off to summer boating activity, Emmons says the Water Sports Foundation is taking a pro-active approach to promoting safe boating strategies prior to the busy season.

“Especially with so many new boaters gearing up for a fun season of activity on our nation’s crowded waterways, we felt it was important to share these tips to keep boaters safe and alert this year,” said Emmons.

**#1 – Take a Boating Safety Class or Refresher**

The Water Sports Foundation recently reported a major surge in online education [Water Sports Foundation Reports Pandemic Spike in Online Boater Education – Water Sports Foundation](https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/water-sports-foundation-reports-pandemic-spike-in-online-boater-education/) with many safety organizations now offering virtual training options in addition to traditional live instruction. In many states, new boaters are required to take mandated boater ed classes, but now there is a wealth of new online and hybrid classes also available on a variety of boating topics and for all skill levels, through public and private providers.

“Whether a seasoned skipper or a boating newbie, everyone can benefit from a boating safety class, especially when it’s now just an easy click away,” said Emmons. For a list of educational resources, check out the National Boating Safety Media Resource Center: [Boating Safety Education – Water Sports Foundation](https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/media/boating-safety-education/)

**#2 – Buckle Up!**

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, drowning is the cause of death in 79 percent of fatal boating accidents where the cause of death was known; 86 percent of those drowning victims were not wearing life jackets. To maximize safety, make sure everyone on board has been properly fitted with a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket, and wears it while underway.

**#3 –Designate a Sober Skipper**

The U.S. Coast Guard reports that alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents. In fact, where the primary cause was known, it was the leading factor in 23% of deaths.

“For the safety of not only your crew, but others sharing the waterways, we recommend avoiding alcohol altogether while boating, or at the very least, the driver should take the pledge to be a sober skipper,” said Emmons. [Video: Designated Sober Skipper – Family – Water Sports Foundation](https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/video-designated-sober-skipper-family/)

**#4 – Pre-Season Boating Safety Vessel & Equipment Checks**

If it’s been awhile since you’ve taken your boat out, invest in a complimentary boating safety vessel check provided by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in your area. Make sure you’re thoroughly familiar with the operating instructions of your vessel and ensure your equipment is in proper working condition prior to departure. In addition, carry and be proficient in the operation of a VHF radio, EPIRB or personal locator beacon.

Boaters should be aware of two recent federal laws regarding required safety equipment. Effective April 2022, boaters must replace fire extinguishers that are 12 years or older, including both disposable and rechargeable units, with the age starting from manufacture date, not purchase. In April 2021, another federal law was passed requiring operators of boats under 26’ to use an engine cut off switch link (ECOS-L), an onboard safety device that stops a boat’s engine if the operator is throw off the boat. Wireless versions are also available.

**#5 – Be Smart: File a Float Plan**

Before departure, prepare a simple document known as a “float plan” and share with family members, friends and/or your marina staff that includes a list of your crew members, their contact information including cell numbers, along with your itinerary including all destination(s) and your expected return time. This document may prove a life saver should search activities be required.

**#6 – All Aboard: Crew Communication**

At the dock and before departure, the captain should review boating safety requirements with everyone, clearly explaining safety protocols and expectations, especially if new boaters are aboard.

Each passenger should be assigned a designated seat and be instructed to remain securely seated when the boat is underway. The captain should communicate life jacket usage and positioning of throw cushions or other devices, the appointment of observers to watch for oncoming traffic or to monitor water sports activity, etc.

NOTE: Captains should ensure the number of passengers and their collective weight complies with the designated maximum capacity rating to prevent overloading of the vessel.

**#7 – Weather or Not to Go …**

Prior to planning or launching your boating adventure, consult weather forecasts and conditions. *Don’t go if the weather is unfavorable*.

In certain parts of the country, weather conditions can change in a flash, so monitor regularly using available mobile APPS. Storms, lightning, changing tides, currents, winds and other inclement weather conditions can endanger the safety of boaters.

If you find yourself navigating rapidly deteriorating weather conditions, find shelter as soon as possible. If your return plans are impacted, be sure to update anyone with whom you filed a float plan regarding plan modifications.

**#8- Slow Down!**

Accidents can often be avoided when captains obey the posted speed limit and follow rules established to keep boaters safe. Be aware and follow all speed limits and no wake zones.

**#9 - Focus!**

Many boating accidents are reportedly the direct result of operator distraction or inattention. The designated skipper needs to be especially vigilant and to assume full responsibility for the safety of all those aboard. Focus is the watchword!

**#10 – Pick Your Playgrounds with Care**

Busy boating holidays generate busy boating traffic. With that in mind, carefully consider your destinations. If you’re a new boater, avoid the most popular boating venues where the ability to navigate, drop and set anchors and lines in confined spaces is particularly challenging. Choose a less crowded spot while you get your sea legs beneath you.

**About the Water Sports Foundation**

Headquartered in Orlando, FL, the Water Sports Foundation (WSF) is the non-profit educational arm of the Water Sports Industry Association ([WSIA.net](http://www.wsia.net#http://www.wsia.net/category/water-sports-foundation/)). The WSF National Public Relations Outreach including this press release is produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

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**SOCIAL MEDIA POST***: As you prepare for boating fun including the busy Memorial Day weekend, here are ten awesome tips from the #WaterSportsFoundation to keep boaters safe!* [*https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/10-important-tips-from-the-water-sports-foundation-to-keep-boaters-safe-this-busy-2022-boating-season/*](https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/10-important-tips-from-the-water-sports-foundation-to-keep-boaters-safe-this-busy-2022-boating-season/)

**MEDIA NOTES:**

Journalists who wish to access free boating safety content, data, infographics and graphics, royalty-free imagery including video, b-roll and still photography, a list of national boating safety experts and more should visit the WSF’s new **National Boating Safety Media Center** at [www.watersportsfoundation.com/media/](http://www.watersportsfoundation.com/media/)

To coordinate an interview with WSF Executive Director Jim Emmons about this topic or other boating safety issues, contact WSF Communications Team Members Wanda Kenton Smith at Wanda@WaterSportsFoundation.com - text 407.697.8055; or Joel Staley at Joel@WaterSportsFoundation.com – text 407.242.9994.