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TO: News / Assignment Desk or News Editor

Safety Tips for Boating Season

The Memorial Day holiday weekend traditionally marks the start of boating season on the Delta. A large number of people are expected to be on the water this weekend and throughout the summer to go fishing, boating or take part in water sports, like water-skiing.

“Each year during boating season, marine patrol deputy sheriffs respond to incidents that include intoxicated boaters, drownings, and collisions,” said Contra Costa County Sheriff David Livingston. “My deputies will do what can they can to keep boaters safe. By following the laws and rules, wearing a life-jacket, and staying away from alcohol while boating, you could help avoid an accident or tragedy.”



The Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff Marine Services Unit would like to remind all boaters to be safe, alert, and obey the rules. Here are some important rules and tips:

-Anyone 45 or under who operates a vessel that is propelled by an engine, regardless of whether the engine is the principal source of propulsion, must have in their possession a California Boater Card issued by the state. By 2025, anyone operating a motorized vessel will be required to possess a California Boater Card. For more information on the California Boater Card, go to <https://www.dbw.ca.gov>.

-All vessels, including stand-up paddle boards (SUPs), must have a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket for each person. The life jacket must fit the person intending to wear it. Children under 13 must always wear a life jacket while aboard any vessel, regardless of length, unless they are surrounded by an enclosed cabin or bulkhead. We encourage everyone, regardless of age, to wear a personal floatation device at all times when on the water.

-You must be at least 16 years old to operate a power boat or personal watercraft. All persons on a personal watercraft are required to wear an approved life jacket.

(continued)

Contra Costa County
Office of the Sheriff
David O. Livingston
Sheriff



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- Boats over 16 feet are required to have a life ring or square type 4 throwable flotation device which must be immediately accessible.
- Always travel at a safe speed. Slow down in narrow channels and blind areas and navigate on the right side of the waterway. In crossing situations, the boat on the right has the right of way.
- The operator of a vessel involved in towing a skier must display, or cause to be displayed, a red or orange water ski flag to indicate: a downed skier, a skier in the water preparing to ski, a ski line extended for the vessel, or a ski in the water in the vicinity of the vessel.
- Blue Light law — Any vessel approaching, overtaking, being approached, or being overtaken by a moving law enforcement or emergency vessel operating with a siren or an illuminated blue light, or any vessel approaching a stationary law enforcement vessel displaying an illuminated blue light, shall immediately slow to a speed sufficient to maintain steerage. Boaters cannot make a wake near a law enforcement vessel displaying a blue light.
- Always have an emergency kit that includes a flashlight, warm clothing, cell phone, VHF radio and chart. For emergencies on the water, boaters should call 911 or Sheriff's Dispatch at (925) 646-2441. Be sure to file a float plan before you depart.
- Be aware of potential carbon monoxide poisoning that can occur while the motor is running while occupying the swim platform or in vicinity of the vessel's transom.

Boating under the influence (B.U.I.) enforcement is a high priority. Those arrested for B.U.I. will face similar consequences as those who drive a motor vehicle under the influence, including fines and possible jail time.

The 'ABC's of Boating', a handbook of boating rules, is available from most boating shops. Boaters can go to the California Division of Boating and Waterways website at www.dbw.ca.gov for information on boating safety and the California Boater Card. If anyone has any questions about boating safety, please contact the Marine Services Unit at (925) 427-8507.

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