National Safe Boating Week - Saturday, May 16, through Friday, May 22.

Local News

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SEATTLE - The North American Safe Boating Campaign, an annual campaign that raises life jacket awareness, kicks off with North American Safe Boating Week Saturday, May 16, and runs through Friday, May 22.

There were 67 recreational boating deaths in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana in 2008. Life jackets were not worn in 48 of these tragic accidents. This is compared to only 45 fatalities in 2007. This illustrates that more than 72 percent of boating fatalities could have been avoided if only a life jacket had been worn. In Washington, 23 of the 25 boating fatalities were not wearing a life jacket.

"We've always stressed the importance of having the proper equipment aboard, but the safety of the boat and its passengers is the responsibility of the vessel's operator," said Dan Shipman, Coast Guard Boating Safety Specialist. "The vessel's operator must set the example and make some important choices regarding the safety of passengers, choosing to have everyone wear a life jacket, choosing not to drink and boat and choosing to make sure their boat is properly equipped and maintained is all a part of being a safe and responsible boater."

Boaters can get some assistance in ensuring they are properly prepared by taking advantage of some of the services offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadron; volunteer organizations dedicated to promoting safe boating. Both organizations offer a variety of safe boating courses, as well as free vessel safety checks, which can help ensure a boat is properly equipped. To find out more information about what courses are being offered and to get more information, visit http://www.uscgaux.org/ or http://www.usps.org/. For more information regarding National Safe Boating Week please visit the following link: http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/The mission of the National Safe Boating Council, Inc., is to enhance the safety of the recreational boating experience through education and outreach.The National Safe Boating Council, Inc., (NSBC) was organized in September 1958 under the name National Safe Boating Committee. The NSBC presently has a membership of over 350 U.S. and Canadian organizations, all with an interest in boating safety and education. The NSBC membership is diverse, with an approximately 65 percent of the membership being nonprofit organizations and 35 percent being for-profit organizations.All boaters should follow these important safety tips: Wear a life jacket Carry a VHF-FM marine radio Don't drink and boat Take a boating class, educated boaters are safe boaters Check weather forecasts Make sure the boat is in good repair Check all safety gear and ensure that everybody is trained in its use Make

sure the boat drain plug is securely in place Don't overload your boat Keep a sharp lookout and monitor the weather and sea conditions Keep your distance from military, passenger and commercial shipping In Puget Sound, observe the vessel traffic zones and stay clear of large commercial ships, tugs and barges Don't drink and drive Follow the rules of the road and be a considerate boater Operate at a safe speed, a safe speed is the distance you can safely stop to avoid a collision in the prevailing visibility and or density of boating traffic For more details about the 2009 North American Safe Boating Campaign log onto: http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/ To learn more about boating and paddling safety, visit the following Web sites:U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety: http://www.uscgboating.org/ National Safe Boating Council: http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/ National Association of State Boating Law Administrators: http://www.nasbla.org/ U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary: http://www.cgaux.org/ United States Power Squadrons: http://www.usps.org/