

Top 10 Talking Points About Boating Safely

- Always wear your life jacket. Seventy percent of all fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those, 84 percent were not wearing a life jacket.
- File a float plan with a family member or friend and ensure they know how to contact the Coast Guard. Include information about where you are headed, when you will return and how many people are on board your vessel. Including a detailed vessel description helps improve chances of a swift rescue.
- Perform routine weather checks. Conditions on the water can change rapidly and being aware and alert is critical to survival.
- Know your equipment. Ensure lights, anchors and ropes are in good working order. Always carry plenty of fresh drinking water to avoid dehydration. Having updated nautical charts and a global positioning device in good working order will also improve your safety.
- Ensuring your communications equipment is in good working order is critical to your safety at sea. Cell phones, satellite phones, emergency position indicator radio beacons and VHF marine-band radios can improve your survival in an emergency. The Coast Guard discourages cell phones as a primary method of communications on the water.
- Rescue 21, the Coast Guard's advanced command, control and direction-finding communications system, to better locate mariners in distress with DSC registered VHF marine radios.
- EPIRBs can be triggered automatically or manually, but it is vitally important to ensure they are properly registered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The device signals your location to a satellite that relays information to the nearest rescue coordination center.
- Alcohol and water don't mix: It is illegal to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Maintain a safe boating speed at all times, especially in "no wake" zones and when the waterway has heavy traffic.
- Don't overload your boat: Resist the urge to invite more people aboard than your boat is designed to carry.