

# PRESS RELEASE

## CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Divisions of Boating and Waterways, Historic Preservation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

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### For Immediate Release

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## **State Urges Boaters to Focus on Safety in 2018** ***Life jacket wear and boater education top prevention tools*** *National Safe Boating Week May 19-25*

*SACRAMENTO, Calif.* – The Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) urges recreational boaters and water enthusiasts to take the necessary precautions this summer, starting with life jacket wear and boating education, to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. In the last five-year tracking period, three out of four California boaters involved in fatal accidents were not wearing a life jacket and very few had taken a boating safety course.

Life jacket wear is the number one preventive measure boaters and anyone swimming, rafting or wading in California's coastal and inland waterways can take to save lives. Unlike the traditional orange "horse collar" of previous generations, today's life jackets are technologically advanced, making them more convenient, less restrictive – and are now custom designed for specific water activities such as fishing, cruising or tow sports.

"To avoid the tragic loss of life during what should be enjoyable recreation, it is critical that boaters and water enthusiasts wear a life jacket when on the water," says DBW Acting Deputy Director Ramona Fernandez. "No matter what life jacket you choose, be sure it is right for you, your planned activities and the water conditions you encounter."

When selecting and fitting a life jacket, you should take these three steps:

- Check the label for U.S. Coast Guard approval and the manufacturer's ratings for your size, weight and boating activity.
- Raise your arms straight up over your head while wearing your life jacket and ask a friend to grasp the tops of the arm openings, gently pulling up. [View Video](#)
- See that the jacket fits snugly and does not ride up over your chin or face.

Taking a boating safety course is another simple but critical accident prevention measure for boaters to take before going on the water this season. "Whether you operate a speedboat or kayak, a safety course provides vital information on rules of the road, collision avoidance and emergency rescue techniques," says Fernandez. "Even skilled boaters can learn something new in a short online course, studying a course book at home or in the classroom. Find one that works best for you."

DBW has approved a number of [basic boating safety courses](#). Passing one of these approved courses also makes boaters eligible for the new [California Boater Card](#).

The division manages a number of safety programs and provides resources to encourage safe boating on California's waterways. Many programs and events will kick-off during National Safe Boating Week (May 19-25). Every year, recreational boating advocates from across the United States and Canada use this week before Memorial Day weekend to remind boaters on the importance of life jacket wear and other key safety messages.

Below are California's safety programs for 2018. The division encourages boaters and water enthusiasts to take advantage of these resources.

### **Life Jacket Loaner Stations**

In partnership with public and private entities, DBW provides life jackets to loaner boards within park units and loan stations so that an individual or family can borrow a life jacket for a day or a weekend by simply completing a loan form. [View Loaner Sites](#)

### **2018 Life Jacket Trade-In Events**

Beginning Saturday, May 19, boaters and water enthusiasts will have the opportunity to have their life jackets inspected by professionals at trade-in events throughout the state. If a life jacket is found to be unserviceable or the wearer has outgrown it, a new, properly-fitted Coast Guard-approved life jacket will be given in exchange, at no cost while supplies last. Similar events will be added throughout the summer. [View Life Jacket Trade-In Events](#)

### **Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day – May 18**

National Safe Boating Week kicks off with "Wear Your Life Jacket to Work" day on Friday, May 18. Californians are encouraged to wear a life jacket to work, take photos and share them on DBW's social media sites: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) using the hashtags #BoatCA and #SaveTheOnesYouLove. Wearing a life jacket outside of a water activity heightens awareness of different life jacket styles and demonstrates their comfort and versatility.

### **Safety Media Campaign**

In an effort to decrease boating fatalities in California, DBW manages a safety media campaign. This year's message – "Save the Ones You Love" – encourages water enthusiasts to always wear a life jacket. The campaign targets recreational boaters via various communication platforms in the high-boating accident areas of California (San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Inland Empire [Riverside-San Bernardino-Colorado River], and the coastal areas of Los Angeles and San Diego). [View Campaign Material](#)

### **Free BoatCA and Pumpout Nav apps**

DBW has developed a boating facility locator app version of its web-based boating locator - BoatCA. The free [BoatCA app](#) offers an array of boating safety information, float plan emails, clean and green boating practices, as well as information on nearly 1,000 boating locations and facilities. The [Pumpout Nav app](#) directs boaters to pumpout

stations and teaches boaters how to use pumpouts. Both apps are available on iTunes and Android platforms.

For more boating and water safety information or laws, please visit [BoatCalifornia.com](http://BoatCalifornia.com).

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**Division of Boating and Waterways**

*Enhances public access to California's waterways and promotes on-the-water safety to California's more than four million motorized and non-motorized boaters through programs funded by vessel registration fees, boating fuel tax dollars and boating facility construction loan payments. Learn more at [www.dbw.parks.ca.gov](http://www.dbw.parks.ca.gov).*

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