

# 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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## Division of Boating and Waterways Urges Water Enthusiasts to Take Safety Precautions over Labor Day Weekend

*Crowds, Cold Water and Alcohol Are Not a Good Mix*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – As the last hurrah of the boating season begins this Labor Day weekend, the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) is reminding everyone to take extra precautions to prevent a tragedy for you and your loved ones. With many boaters and water enthusiasts out on California's lakes, rivers and along the coast, DBW has three simple tips to stay safe.

### First, Always Wear a Life Jacket:

"Life jackets are the easiest and best preventive action you can take to increase your chances of survival," said DBW Acting Deputy Director Ramona Fernandez. "Everyone, not just children, should wear a life jacket at all times when near, in or on the water."

Life jackets are a non-negotiable on any boating trip. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that more than 80 percent of those who drowned were not wearing a life jacket. Don't let your family and friends be part of this statistic. Assign each passenger with a properly fitted US Coast Guard-approved life jacket prior to departure.

Under California law, a life jacket is required for each person on board a recreational vessel. Children under 13 years of age on a moving vessel of any length, all personal watercraft riders, and anyone being towed behind a boat are required to wear a life jacket while recreating. The law does not apply to children under 13 years of age who are on a sailboat and are constrained by a harness tethered to the sailboat, in an enclosed cabin, or a vessel engaged in an emergency rescue situation.

### Second, Leave Your Alcohol on the Shore:

Buzzed boating, or boating under the influence of alcohol or other substances is involved in one out of three boating fatalities. Do not bring or consume alcohol or drugs while on the water. Alcohol use is the primary contributing factor in over 30 percent of boater fatalities

according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics. Tragedy can be avoided when boaters choose not to drink while boating.

Consuming alcohol negatively impacts vision, balance and reaction times and can cause dehydration. The effects of alcohol are heightened on the water compared to on land, with the environmental stressors such as wind, noise, and vibrations of the boat.

Boating under the influence is illegal on all bodies of water. Law enforcement can terminate your voyage and issue citations if you are found to be impaired.

### **Third, Know About the Dangers of Cold Water Immersion and Shock:**

Even on a hot day, the water temperature can be cold and trigger cold water immersion and shock, which is the cause of many boating-related fatalities. The danger increases as water temperature decreases below normal body temperature (98.6 degrees F).

If you find yourself suddenly in cold water, try to control breathing, don't gasp. An unexpected fall into cold water causes an involuntary gasp. You have about one minute to adjust to the cold shock response. When you remain calm, you will have a greater chance of self-rescue.

Always stay with your boat or paddleboard for flotation aid or to be more easily seen by rescuers. If possible, remove heavy shoes/boots and look for ways to increase buoyancy. If in the water with others, huddle together with everyone facing inwards to help stay afloat and keep warm.

Visit [BoatCalifornia.com](http://BoatCalifornia.com) for general boating safety information or the following DBW webpages specifically for: [cold water survival](#), [summer safe boating tips](#), [boating under the influence facts](#), and [life jacket wear](#).

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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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