



Connecticut Department of

**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

National Safe Boating Week Kicks off Connecticut's Recreational Boating Season

As part of National Safe Boating Week, Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), partnering with the US Coast Guard, US Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCG AUX), and the United States Power Squadrons (USPS), is renewing the state's commitment to promote the importance of making safe and responsible boating choices while on the water. We remind boaters to avoid factors that can lead to boating accidents such as inattention, careless or reckless operation, excessive speed, and alcohol consumption.

"After the long cold winter, boaters are gearing up to get on the water," said DEEP Commissioner Robert Klee. "Connecticut's ponds, lakes, rivers, coastal waters and harbors are known for their diverse recreational opportunities and beauty. Our waters are home to diverse wildlife and fish species. Boating enthusiasts attracted to the waters, looking to relax and have an enjoyable experience, should also remember its inherent risks and the need to remain safe at all times."

DEEP wants to remind boaters of a few safety tips in order to ensure that they return home safely. To help ensure that boaters are prepared for the upcoming summer boating season, we encourage all boaters to take every necessary safety precaution before going out on the water.

- **Take a boating or canoe/kayak safety class** - it is required to operate a registered boat.
- **Obtain a free Vessel Safety Check** – contact your local USCG Auxiliary and US Power Squadrons. If you use a state boat ramp, look for our ramp monitors who will perform one.
- **Dress for the water temperature especially when on small boats** - temperatures in Long Island Sound are still in the mid-50s on lakes and ponds they are only in the mid-60s. Ending up in the water when our body temperatures are 98.6 degrees can be a huge shock. Someone that falls in the water quickly loses their ability to function. Additionally, waters this cold invoke an involuntary gasp reflex – a number one cause of drowning.
- **Drink responsibly** – alcohol was a contributing factor in 44% of the fatal accidents reported in Connecticut between 2008 and 2012. Wait to have a drink until you are safely back at the dock. Sun, wind, noise, vibration, and motion are all considered "stressors" common to the boating environment. They intensify the effects of alcohol, drugs, and some medications by causing fatigue, which greatly reduces a boat operator's

coordination, judgment, and reaction time. Last but not least, the use of alcohol makes the body more susceptible to the effects of cold water.

- **Double check the condition of all water and fuel hoses and their connections** – accidents whereby boats sink or have fires onboard are generally a Spring time occurrence. With a little vigilance, such occurrences can be prevented.
- **Wear Your Lifejacket!** - Connecticut joins the National Safe Boating Campaign in its efforts to promote wearing a life jacket. Statistics show that almost three-quarters of the people that died in boating accidents between 2008 and 2012 drowned. Of those, 90% were not wearing a life jacket. Today's life jackets are more comfortable and lightweight than ever. Putting one on before heading out could save your life, so "Get It On Connecticut - Wear It!"

By adhering to these simple steps and practicing responsible boating you can help create a safer, more enjoyable boating environment for everyone on Connecticut waters.

Help promote safe boating practices and pick up some safety tips at the following events during National Safe Boating Week:

Saturday, 5/17

- **"Ready, Set, Wear It!" Events** - see how to use and repack inflatable life jackets; be part of an international event to set a new world record for life jacket wear!
 - **Mystic River Park, Stonington; 8:15am** Join DEEP staff at "Stitches Custom Embroidery", located on the north end of Mystic River Park on Cottrell St, Mystic
 - **West Marine, 401 Shippan Ave, Stamford, noon** – Sponsored by US Power Squadrons
 - **Greenwich Town Hall, 101 Field Park Road, noon** – Sponsored by US Power Squadrons
- **US Coast Guard Open House, 10am-4pm** USCG Sector LIS, 120 Woodward Ave, New Haven;
 - **Ready, Set, Wear It** event at 1pm
- **Look for M/V Prudence**, DEEP's outreach vessel, will be on the water at Mystic Seaport for the farewell ceremony before the S/V Charles W. Morgan casts off
 - The first 10 people who request it, will receive a \$35 Life Jacket Rebate cards for an inflatable life jacket
 - Free "If Found..." decals will be available to place on paddle craft.

Tuesday, 5/20

- **Flare Demonstration; DEEP Marine Headquarters, 6:00-7:30pm** 333 Ferry Rd, Old Lyme - bring your old flares for collection; experience the correct way to set them off and available types.

Thursday, 5/22

- **Join DEEP for its Summer Outdoor Recreation Season Kick Off** including awards for Pumpout Superstars at Marine Headquarters, 333 Ferry Rd, Old Lyme from 11am-2pm –

come hear what is new this year on the water and in our State Parks. Watch demonstrations for proper fit of life jackets, flare use, etc.

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