

Mason County Sheriff's Office Participating in Operation Dry Water

Local News

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The Mason County Sheriff's Office Marine Services Deputies in cooperation with other Washington State and federal marine law enforcement officers will participate in the Operation Dry Water and will be out in force June 24-26 looking for boaters whose blood alcohol content exceeds the state limit of .08%. Operation Dry Water will include all three of the Mason County Sheriff's Office patrol boats operating in Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and on the county's lakes. Deputies will be conducting safety inspections on and off the water. Deputies will be looking for evidence of excessive alcohol consumption during each and every contact. Impaired boaters can expect severe penalties. In Washington State impaired boaters can expect fines up to \$1,000 and/or 90 days in jail. The Mason County Sheriff's Office has a zero tolerance policy for impaired boaters. "We intend to stop intoxicated boaters and to educate as many boaters as possible about the hazards of Boating Under the Influence (BUI)" says Sheriff Casey Salisbury.

A boat operator or passenger with a blood alcohol concentration above the legal limit runs a significantly increased risk of being involved in a boating accident. When impaired by alcohol, boating accidents are more likely and more deadly for boat operators and passengers, many of whom capsize their vessel or simply fall overboard. BUI is a primary contributing factor in nearly 1 in 5 boating fatalities nationwide. Accordingly the State of Washington and Mason County have gotten tougher in recent years in enforcing laws against this high risk behavior. Boaters found operating a recreational vessel with a blood alcohol concentration of .08% or higher will find their voyage terminated and may have their vessel impounded. Operation Dry Water, a multi-agency, education and enforcement initiative launched by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in 2009 in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, puts thousands of local, state, and federal marine law enforcement officers on the water nationwide the last weekend in June to give BUI enforcement high visibility during peak boating season. Sheriff Casey Salisbury said "We want recreational boaters in our county to enjoy themselves on our waters, but there will be zero tolerance for BUI." Operation Dry Water is a joint program administered by the Washington State Parks Commission, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Washington State Department of Wildlife.